THE UNIVERSITY OF HULL

CONTESTED SPACE: HERITAGE AND IDENTITY RECONSTRUCTIONS.

An Enquiry into Conservation Strategies within a Developing Asian City, George Town, Penang, Malaysia.

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Gwynneth Ann Jenkins BA(hons) Kingston University

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ABBREVIATIONS

AKS	*Akta Kawalan Sewa* (Control of Rent Act)
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
ASEAN COCI	Association of Southeast Asian Nations, Committee of Culture and Information
ASN	*Amanah Saham Nasional*
AWPNUC	Asian and West Pacific Network for Urban Conservation.
BA	*Barisan Alternatif* (Alternative Front – Coalition)
BN	*Barisan Nasional* (National Front – Coalition)
CAP	Consumer Association of Penang
CAPU	Central Area Planning Unit
CDA	Comprehensive Development Area
CF	Certificate of Fitness
DAP	Democratic Action Party
DG	Director-General
EIC	East India Company
E&O	Eastern and Oriental (Hotel)
EPU	Economic Planning Unit (Also known as UPEN)
FMS	Federated Malay States
FTZ	Free Trade Zone
FPH	Friends of Penang Hill
Gerakan	*Parti Gerakan Rakyat Malaysia* (Malaysian Peoples Movement Party)
GTZ	*Gesselshaft fur Technische Zusammernarbeit* (German Technical Cooperation)
HAC	Heritage Advisory Committee
HDA	Housing Developers' Association
ICOMOS	International Council of Monuments and Sites
IKRAM	Institute Kerja Raya Malaysia (Public Works Research Institute)
IMT	Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand (Growth Triangle)
ISA	Internal Security Act
KeADILan (PKN)	*Parti Keadilan Nasional* (National Justice Party)
KKBS	*Kementerian Kebudayaan Belia dan Sukan* (Ministry of Culture, Youth & Sports)
KLIA	Kuala Lumpur International Airport
KOMTAR	Kompleks Tun Abdul Razak
LALA	*Lebuh Acheh, Lebuh Armenian* (Heritage Development Project)

LAM	*Lembaga Akitek Malaysia* (Government Architects Board)
LEAP	Local Effort and Preservation
LGA	Local Government Act
MAC	Malayan Architect Co-partnership
MAIPP	*Majlis Agama Islam Pulau Pinang* (Pinang Islamic Religious Council)
MAS	Malaysian Airline System
MCA	Malaysian Chinese Association
MIC	Malaysian Indian Congress
MoCAT	Ministry of Culture Arts and Tourism
MPPP	*Majlis Perbandaran Pulau Pinang* (Penang Municipal Council)
MPSP	*Majlis Perbandaran Seberang Prai* (Seberang Prai Municipal Council)
MSC	Multimedia Super Corridor
NCC	National Consultative Council
NCP	National Culture Policy
NDP	New Development Policy
NEP	New Economic Policy
NFC	National Finance Council
NGO	Non Government Organization
NLC	National Land Code
OC	Occupation Certificate
OPP1	First Outline Perspective Plan (1971-1990)
OPP2	Second Outline Perspective Plan (1991-2000)
OWHC	Organisation of World Heritage Cities
PAM	Pertubuhan Arkitek Malaysia
PAS	Parti Islam Se-Malaysia (Islamic Party of Malaysia)
PEA	Penang Eurasian Association
PEGIS	Penang Geographical Information Service
PDC	Penang Development Corporation
PHC	Penang Heritage Centre (PDC)
PHT	Penang Heritage Trust (NGO)
PKN	see KeADILan
PORR	Penang Outer Ring Road
PRM	Parti Rakyat Malaysia (Malaysian Peoples' Party)
PPPP	*Perbandaran Pembangunan Pulau Pinang* (Building Department)
RM	Ringgit Malaysia
RMIT	Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology
RTM	Radio Television Malaysia.
SAM	*Sahabat Alam Malaysia* (Friends of the Earth Malaysia)
SACON	South Australian Government Department of Housing and Construction
SDB	Streets, Drainage and Building Act
Semangat '46	Spirit of '46
SERI	Socio-economic and Environmental Research Institute
SOS	Save Our Selves (evicted AKS tenants action group)
SPEAD	Surveyors, Planners, Engineers, Architects, and Developers

SPU	Structure Plan Unit
State Exco	State Executive
TCPA	Town and Country Planning Act.
TDR	Transfer of Development Rights
TOL	Temporary Occupation Licence
UBBL	Uniform Building By-laws.
UMNO	United Malays National Organisation
UNCRD	United Nations Centre for Regional Development
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization
USM	Universiti Sains Malaysia (Science University Malaysia)
Wawasan 2020	Vision 2020
YTL	Yeoh Teong Lay (initials of the founder and the YTL company)

PREFACE

George Town, more commonly referred to as '*Penang*', is a bustling Malaysian West Coast city [Fig.1-1], situated on the north-eastern tip of *Pulau Pinang*, Penang Island. *Pulau Pinang* is also the name of the state, including both mainland and island, in which George Town is located [Fig.1-2]. In this thesis, other than in direct quotes, the city will be referred to as George Town.

My first impression of George Town, on arrival in June 1995, was that I had returned to a familiar environment. This was not due to the ethnic diversity of its population, nor its streetscapes, built-forms, activities, architectural styles, nor from noises and smells but from an impression of its historic completeness, the sense of place and human scale.

It seemed possible to identify the historical layering of each cultural group living within the inner city; their creation of architectural symbolism, their use of space and place, establishing and reconfirming, generation by generation, the cultural identity of each group in both religious and vernacular architectural forms. When the architecture has taken on an eclectic mantel, the personalised and collectivised creation of place and the evolution of its uses reflect characteristics of each culture, their history and traditions, their political and educational influences, their economic rise and decline, their cultural growth, and sense of identity and belonging.

Malays, Europeans, Arabs, Armenians, Jews, Burmese, Thais, groups from Southern and Northern India, Cantonese, Hokkiens, Hakkas, Teo Chews, Hainanese and other South Chinese groups, followed later by the Ceylonese, Sikhs, Japanese and Filipinos, established a cohesive landscape through respect of scale. More recently, tourists, from the affluent to the budget backpackers, have influenced the uses of the physical environment in which this plethora of ethnic communities now lives.

During my first few weeks in George Town I came to discover that the earlier impressions which had endeared me to the city, the small-scale streets, crumbling limewash facades, shady arcaded terraces and terracotta-tiled shophouses, were being eroded by out-of-scale, impersonal, faceless buildings that gave neither clue nor identity to either their use, meaning or purpose. Springing out of the streetscape like

undesirable weeds, they gave little cohesive impression as to the overall shape George Town's development was to take. Nor did they provide any sense of cultural or national identity other than that perhaps impersonal architecture, influenced in style by cultures other than Malaysia's own potpourri, which could be called 'Malaysian'.

The inner city had largely remained unscathed by such intrusions due mainly to the restrictions of the *Control of Rent Act 1966* (*Akta Kawalan Sewa* [*AKS*]), which protected both tenants and pre-war buildings from development pressures. Modern, concrete buildings have, however, slowly eroded the edges of the historic inner core. Until the *Control of Rent Act Repeal (AKS Repeal)*, the communities, architecture, and enclaves were complete enough to draw the encouragement of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) and the proposal for a government nomination for the status of World Heritage Site. However, the disparity between the dilapidated historic inner city and modern suburbs indicated that the path to UNESCO listing would be fraught with challenges.

I arrived in Penang in the midst of a building frenzy. New suburban townships were springing up almost overnight. New shopping malls in competition with the 1970s *Penang New Urban Centre*, constant flooding, damage caused by irresponsible developers, and inadequate parking areas, added to the appeal of new commercial spaces and began diverting consumer loyalties away from the historic centre.

By October 1997, at the beginning of the Asian economic crisis, all building projects, with few exceptions, stopped including the low-cost housing projects intended to house displaced *AKS Repeal* tenants. Whilst building sites were left as grey scars across the state, it gave a breathing space for the inner city, a supposed time for the local governments, state and Council, to prepare for the impending *AKS Repeal* and subsequent changes to the urban landscape. In view of the scale of the change, I decided to study the potential impact of the *AKS Repeal* and consider the future of the inner city communities and architecture.

Working first as a lecturer in interior architecture and subsequently as a practising interior architect, and a volunteer for the Penang Heritage Trust and the state government, I became involved in the issues surrounding the communities of the inner city amongst whom I lived.

On 1 January 2000, the *AKS Repeal* came into effect; evictions were plentiful and many buildings were left vacant; some were demolished and a few were occupied by new businesses more suited to the economic advancement of suburban life. The historic core was left to the religious worshippers, owner-occupiers, wealthier commercial tenants, endowment tenant communities and the few traditional trades that relied on reciprocal loyalty. Those original tenants who could afford to redistributed themselves in nearby streets. Some properties were revitalised from their once-derelict state giving a confusing picture to the situation. However, what could

have been mass tenant and community displacement, demolition and abandonment of properties, took place gradually until 2002, when the changes became evident. Approximately 8,500 properties were affected in the inner city alone leaving it clearly at a crossroads and despite efforts by non-government organisations (NGOs) and government alike to encourage revitalisation through conservation, it still wavered about which direction to take.

What holds the physical environment together in a period of change such that George Town experienced following the *AKS Repeal*? Religious buildings, clear indicators of Penang's ethnic mix, began to undergo conservation works. However, will George Town lose its identity and become just another developing Asian city without the historic artisan districts, Malay *kampongs* (villages), mansions, colonial monuments to former leadership and commerce, Chinese shophouses, clan jetties and *godowns* (warehouses)? Is their role that of defining cultural identities, or are these cultures expressed through the use of the buildings rather than the physical forms? Thus, without the communities for whom they were intended would they become hollow edifices of a rich history of peoples?

Would the loss of reciprocal trades dilute the richness of the community? If the wood workshops are relocated to small industrial sites away from their clog-making neighbours or the local wet market becomes a 'bijou' tourist attraction, would these trades be a loss to the fast-changing society? Would dispersal of communities affect their active religious street festivals and change the symbolism and meaning? Is there a social and cultural need to keep in place the historical patterns of events reflected in the spaces in which they were once formed? Is the authenticity of this diverse cultural heritage recognised and is there the political and communal will to retain a balance between the established and the unprecedented?

This thesis sets out to understand the many variables and processes that have led to George Town's current (2003) urban structure and character, and investigates whether the conservation of the old historic core, its communities and buildings has a place in a developing Asian city. It also explores the more recent struggle between those who wished to 'modernise' the city either through new buildings, conservation and 'gentrification' with particular focus on tourism, and those who wished to retain the living cultural heritage of the urban communities and restore their built environment.

It must be emphasised that this thesis is only one possible interpretation of the place of conservation in George Town, for which I acknowledge sole responsibility, and must be read as such. I am conscious that I may have misunderstood a concept or misinterpreted a meaning; all efforts have been made to avoid such a situation. However, any errors are my own and unintended.

Sources of Information

In order to address the questions raised in this thesis, the current climate for urban conservation requires research and analysis using diverse resources both published and unpublished (See Bibliography and Sources). In addition, I found a range of other sources of particular value. Malaysia's English language newspapers, the *New Straits Times*, the *Sun*, and the *Star* report daily and provide 'live' information. For alternative political and social comment NGO publications were sought; Consumer Association Penang's *Utusan Konsumer; Aliran Monthly;* the Penang Heritage Trust's newsletter; international publications such as *The Economist; Asiaweek;* and *Time* magazine, and web sites such as *Malaysiakini.com*.

The Universities of Singapore and Malaysia, particularly Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM) in Penang, as well as private libraries have provided valuable historical information. More recent material came from conversations and interviews, though often these oral histories needed verification in order to compensate for bias, memory lapse and nostalgia.

Equally valuable were hours spent in discussion with architects and conservationists such as Dr. Ghafar Ahmad, Laurence Loh, Lim Hooi Siang, Tan Yeow Hooi, Ooi Bok Kim, writer-historian Khoo Salma Nasution, heritage tour guide Teresa Capol, and anthropologist Dr. Goh Beng Lan as well as many, many others. They not only opened my eyes wider to the richness of George Town's heritage architecture and the cultures that created it, but gave me opportunities to discuss its future as a developing Asian city.

Thanks must also go to those who have guided the assemblage of this research into a written form; Joseph anak Renang who supported me throughout, Lewis Hill of the Centre for Southeast Asian Studies at the University of Hull, who originated my supervision and Professor Victor T. King whose encouragement, interest, humour and tenacity made it possible to complete.

Jenkins, August 2001

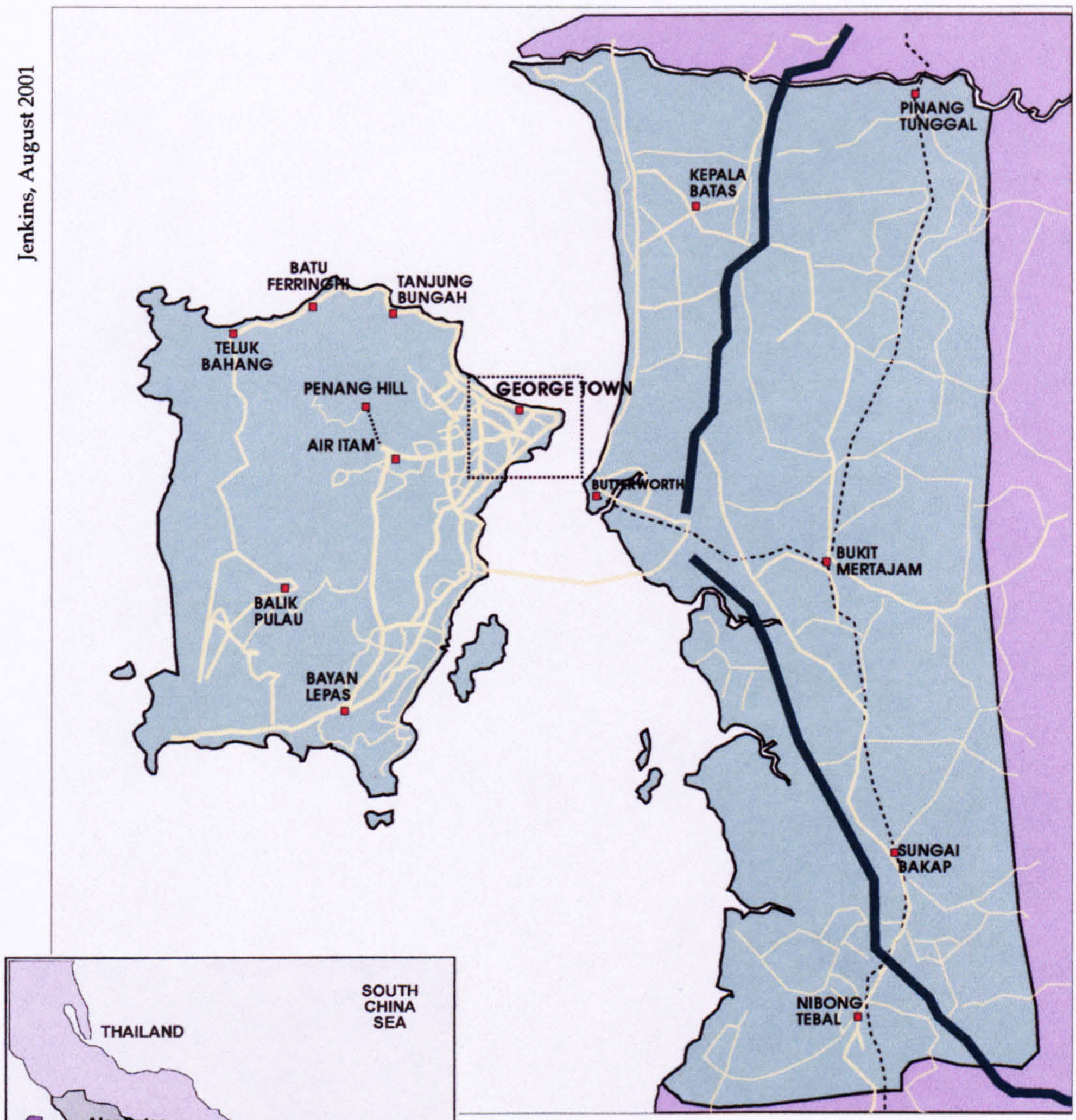


Fig. **1**- 2 Penang State, Island and Mainland, 1996

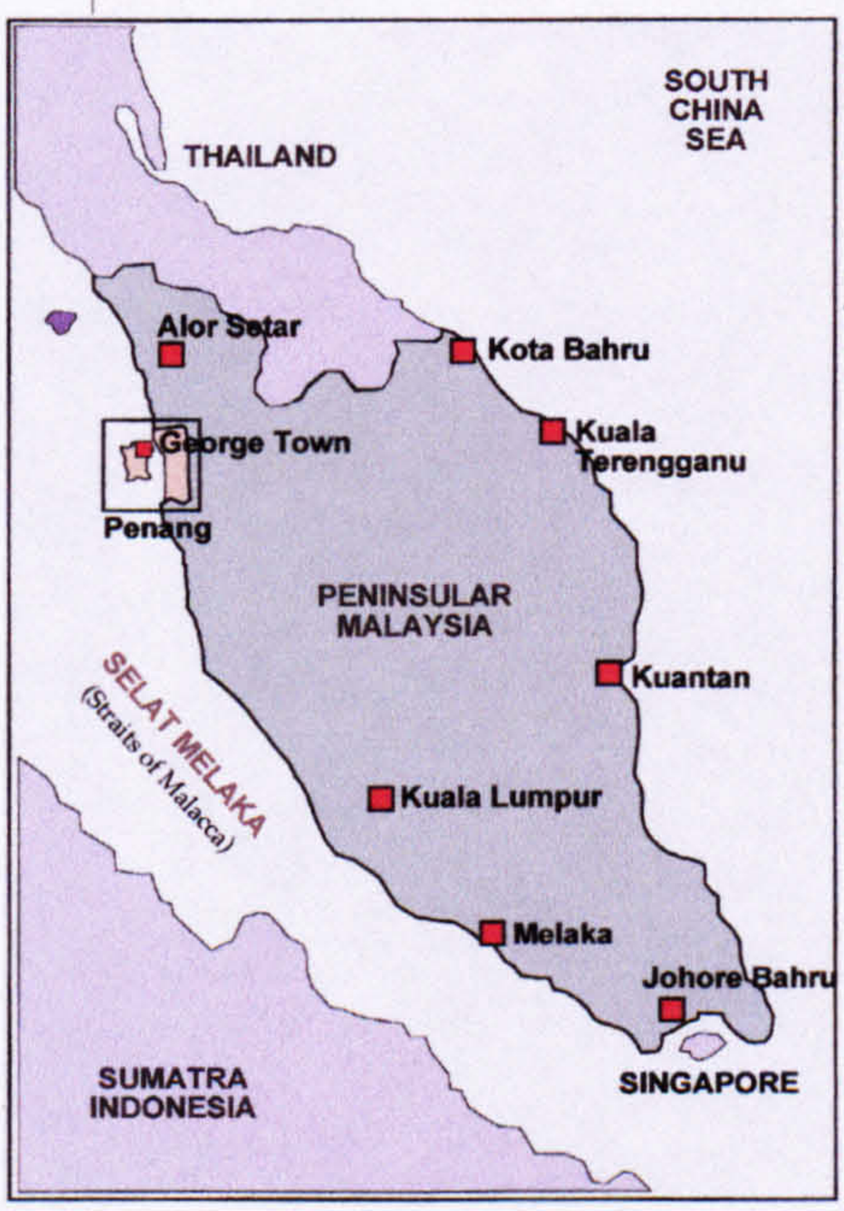


Fig. **1**-1 Peninsular Malaysia, 1996

1

INTRODUCTION

The objective

The aim of this thesis is to investigate how the cultural heritage of the multicultural Asian urban settlement of George Town has been promoted, protected, conserved or discarded, as a form of identity reconstruction. This is particularly in the context of Malaysia's post-colonial national development and its global promotion through the tourism industry. Mainly due to the rapid rise in tourism and the quest for new destinations, heritage has become a 'global currency with local value' (Nagata, 2001: 198). Judith Nagata also questions, 'Heritage for whom? Is it to glorify the nation, keep grassroots communities alive or to protect tourism?' (cited in Hwa, 2001b).

It is recognised that each of the terms 'culture', 'heritage' and 'conservation' and more importantly 'authenticity' have various interpretations depending on the context in which they are placed. When combined with the diverse socio-economic and cultural composition of a multi-ethnic developing society such as Malaysia, they increase in complexity. In order to explore these interpretations it is necessary, therefore, to place them in both the context of Malaysia's national development policies, including tourism development, and those of the Asian region.

The task, therefore, is to present a regional and national context for George Town's urban growth and the cultural identity of its communities and then explore the history, form and development of its architectural heritage and the built environment. I shall also examine the political, economic, social and physical environment of George Town focussing on the process of nation-building and economic development since independence in 1957, and the effects of government policies and visions on Malaysia's diverse population.

'Cities ... are, with all their complexities and artificialities, man's most imposing creation, the most prodigious of human artefacts' (Parks, 1936: 133, cited in Agnew Mercer and Sopher, 1984: vii). It is these 'complexities' and 'artificialities', created and

implemented by the rich mixture of cultures that embody George Town's value in the context of urban history. For not only does a wealth of knowledge lie in the cultural, religious and ethnic mix of the peoples, but also in their traditions, religious practices and places of habitation, worship and ritual.

The period of study for this thesis, from 1996 to 2000, coincided with events that challenged the identity of this historic settlement. The early 1990s had been a period of economic boom with the implementation of large-scale land development projects. However, the Asian economic crisis, from September 1997, curtailed such activity. The focus turned to joint-venture projects between developers and landowners of large areas of inherited pre-war properties, as the 27-month transition period of the *Control of Rent Act Repeal, (Akta Kawalan Sewa [AKS])*, began. As a counterbalance to these development pressures on the historic inner city, in 1998 the Penang state government began the process of application to the UNESCO *World Heritage List* and the encouragement of cultural tourism. A year later, the World Monuments Fund listed George Town as one of the world's 100 most endangered historic sites, which emphasised the need for conservation planning. Of much greater impact on the vibrant inner city, however, was the *AKS Repeal* when, at the turn of the millennium, over 8,500 properties were released from rent control restrictions threatening to displace the inner city communities and leave their tangible and intangible cultural heritage to an unknown fate.

The *AKS Repeal* served to highlight social, economic, and physical challenges which arose in response to the change in legislation and the preparedness of the tenants, landlords, trustees, and governing authorities effectively to steer such change in support of the existing living cultural heritage. As the historic inner city became a contested space, heritage and identity reconstructions became evident in many spheres: traditional landownership, the conservation movement, historic communities, and the ambitions of 'beautification' projects. This thesis, therefore, examines these challenges and explores the argument that it is impossible to comprehend the values placed on George Town's cultural heritage without an understanding of the diversity of the local cultures and their relationship to the Malaysian development process in the context of the Asian region.

Culture, heritage tourism, and authenticity

Culture is a difficult concept to define. The western concept makes the distinction between high culture reflected in the participation in high arts (theatre, museums, galleries, music, and architecture for example), which suggests elitism and the superior knowledge of the participants, and low, popular or mass culture 'mediated by mass production and mass consumption, [which] provides commodified, unsophisticated,

throwaway instant gratification' (Meethan, 2001: 116). For the purpose of this thesis, 'culture' is defined as a series of codes, symbols, forms of knowledge, and strategies for survival related to location and common values. It is communicated as a mode of identification within a cultural group and used as a means of differentiating one group from another. This description encompasses both western definitions of high and low culture as well as notions of 'traditional' culture that reflect ways of life that are passed from one generation to another.

'Culture,' seen as traditional life-styles, plays a rather complex and somewhat uncertain role in the modernisation process of developing nations and is influenced by government interventionist policies and national identity reconstructions as a form of political control (ibid.: 135). For example, both Singapore and Malaysia categorise their four main ethnic groups, as 'Malay', 'Chinese', 'Indian', and 'Others' -overtly promoted as such in the Malaysian tourist literature (King, 1993: 101). However, both Malaysian and Singapore citizens identify themselves in more precise categories: Hokkien, Hakka, Tamil and Sindhi for example (Wood, 1997: 12). The national categories, therefore, reflect neither self-identity nor ethnicities, particularly in the case of the term 'Malay' in Malaysia, which is based on the criteria of religion, i.e. Islam and language, and is defined by the *Federal Constitution*. As Francis Loh Kok Wah and Joel Kahn note, all Malaysian ethnic labels have been culturally reconstructed particularly after the imposition of a 'single set of cultural values for all' through the National Culture Policy in 1971 (Loh and Kahn, 1992: 14). Victor King also points out 'Malaysian culture is a construct of Malaysian officialdom to serve national purposes and to assist in the promotion of tourism' (1993: 103). This is confirmed by the establishment of the Ministry of Culture, Arts and Tourism, formerly the Ministry of Culture, Youth, and Sports.

Malaysia is not alone in the reconstruction process. In 1971, when the Indonesian State commissioned the *Bali Tourism Study*, it brought in European anthropologists to identify aspects of the culture that could be 'safely' commercialised (Picard, 1993: 79; 2003: 108). As Trevor Sofield suggests, Balinese tourism is so dependant on Balinese culture it is in the industry's interests to protect it (2002: 113). However, as Michel Picard points out, in its designation as a national asset Balinese culture has been both 'manipulated and appropriated' by both the state and the tourism industry, becoming a detached object to be marketed and displayed (2003: 109). Following the oil crisis of 1988, the recommendations of the study were abandoned and mega-tourism development took place. Even with a change in regime and local governor, the establishment of a Cultural Heritage Conservation Unit in 2000 failed to challenge the proposal for a 50-hectare Formula One racing circuit (2003: 116). The challenge now is not only the re-establishment of a sustainable tourism industry, but also the redefinition of Balinese cultural identity.

Cultural heritage tourism

If we follow Meethan's observation, in western societies participation in cultural activities, such as art gallery visits, usually takes place in non-working time with an element of 'self-improvement' embedded in the concept. Cultural tourism, therefore, is seen as an extension of the high arts, consumed in non-working time, and authenticated by the museum definition of provenance (Meethan, 2001: 116). Recent studies support the interconnectedness of cultures (Sofield, 2002: 104). However, the tourism industry neatly packages 'people + location = culture', marketing the delights of cultural groups or environments that are pristine and unspoilt and therefore carrying the stamp of authenticity, and thus value. For western-influenced tourists, even greater credibility and value are given to cultural heritage sites endorsed by UNESCO, which has become a stamp of quality, a 'brand name' for heritage tourism 'products.'

The UNESCO *World Heritage Convention* broadly defines 'cultural heritage' as monuments, and groups of buildings of '... outstanding universal value from the point of view of history, art, science.' It also includes sites of '...outstanding universal value from the historical, aesthetic, ethnological or anthropological point of view'. These definitions stress the physical representation of historic cultural identities (UNESCO, 1972: www). Heritage tourism endorses this perception and concentrates on exotic sites of ancient civilisations such as Borobodur in Indonesia and Ayutthuya in Thailand. In addition, cultural heritage tourism, promoted by UNESCO, combines interests in both historic environments and cultural 'others' [people] who continue to celebrate their festivals and traditional ways of life. It is endorsed as a benefit as 'tourism, offers unparalleled opportunities for the economic development of local communities living in or near heritage sites in Asia and the Pacific' (UNESCO, 1999: www). Thus it has become 'the fastest growing and one of the most profitable industries in the world', tempting nations to include tourism, and hence cultural reconstructions, in their development policies. UNESCO's value system, therefore, has become the criterion by which many nations categorise their cultural heritage and tour operators evaluate their products.

Concepts of cultural heritage

Marketing culture for tourism, as Meethan suggests, 'requires commodified essence such as the creation of forms of heritage' (2001: 126). Referred to as 'tangible and concrete elements of the past which are presented and re-presented in the present' heritage, or cultural heritage, is presented as a commodified, marketable product (Hitchcock and King, 2003: 3).

'Elements of the past' suggest a static state as promoted -often overinterpreted- by the tourism industry and a concentration on the tangible (physical) forms. However, the definition of heritage as an element 'that is or may be inherited' suggests a perpetual process and one that embodies cultural values, knowledge, and action. For some, these tangible and concrete elements are resources for the advancement of the creative processes of both culture and its more visible form in architecture. This concept is by no means new. For example, the Renaissance architects and artists took inspiration from older civilisations; equally postmodernist architects of the late twentieth century explored the semiotics of both the Renaissance and the ancient civilisations, contemporising both use and meaning in their architectural forms. Similarly, students of Chinese, Mongolian, and Japanese arts copied the works of old masters in order to develop the techniques, composition, and methods of creation. Only on mastering these were the students permitted to express their own creativity. Taking inspiration from the material past, therefore, is part of the process by which future heritage is created. This suggests that the authenticity of cultural heritage is related to its role and importance as an educational resource, more than as a commodified object for tourist consumption. Cultural heritage, in this thesis, therefore, is considered as both 'tangible' or physical forms, in particular buildings and landscapes, and 'intangible'; the ideas, beliefs, and values held by each culture which inhabits these buildings and landscapes.

Values and authenticity

The *Operational Guidelines* of the World Heritage Committee refers to four different aspects of heritage authenticity, i.e., design, material, workmanship, and setting (Jokilehto, 1997: 4). By 1994, an international workshop in Nara, Japan, entitled *Authenticity in Relation to World Heritage Convention,* in co-operation with such global bodies as UNESCO, expanded the definition to recognise cultural diversity and relevant value judgements. The workshop acknowledged the forces of globalisation, homogenisation and the suppression of cultures and minorities in the aggressive search for national identities. It saw the consideration of authenticity in conservation as a means of correcting such reconstructions stating that

> [i]t is thus not possible to base judgements of values and authenticity within fixed criteria. On the contrary, the respect due to all cultures requires that heritage properties must be considered and judged within the cultural contexts to which they belong.
> (Lemaire and Stovel, 1994: www)

However, UNESCO's criterion for acceptance of a proposed heritage site is that it must be of 'outstanding universal value', contradicting the Nara document's recognition of local diversity. As Jokilehto confirms, values are subject to change over generations, and cultures are 'continuously formed in the processes that establish and re-establish the living culture and social context of society'. He goes on to suggest that continual reassessment of heritage values and verification of authenticity is an essential part of heritage conservation management (Jokilehto, 1997: 2).

In the *Management Guidelines for World Cultural Heritage Sites*, (Feilden and Jokilehto, 1993, cited in Jokilehto, 1997), three value criteria are identified

1. the 'identity values' based on recognition
2. the 'relative artistic or technical values' based on research and
3. the 'rarity value' based on statistics.

Whilst the 'relative artistic or technical values' and 'rarity values' are more easily established, it is the 'identity value' which is most often contested. As Jokilehto forewarns 'lack of this identity, or its negative interpretation could lead to neglect and/or destruction' (1997:3).

The perceived authority of such global conservation bodies as UNESCO and the *Operational Guidelines* of the World Heritage Committee, have influenced how Asian nations have attempted to evaluate their cultural heritage in the context of tourism and development. In 1978, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations' Committee on Culture and Information (ASEAN COCI) was established, amongst other things, for the positive promotion of the ASEAN countries for investment and tourism using cultural heritage as its medium (ASEAN COCI, 1978: www). Due to the diversity of its member countries, the Committee's focus is on high culture, and most recently (March 2003) it began to explore the field of 'protection, preservation, management and promotion of its tangible cultural heritage', with an Australian Heritage company which adheres to UNESCO's criteria.

The *ASEAN Declaration on Cultural Heritage, 2000*, has recently expanded on the Convention's definition of cultural heritage by incorporating the 'intangible', such as 'significant cultural values and concepts ... oral or folk heritage, myths, customs and beliefs, rituals and other living traditions'. It also includes 'popular culture, television, and cyber art in technologically-orientated urbanised communities', recognising cultural evolution and the value of living cultural heritage (ASEAN COCI, 2000: www).

Given the focus of UNESCO's criteria one has to question whether a management strategy proposed by alien value systems, struggling to comprehend cultural 'authenticity' is sustainable in particular Asian contexts. An examination of

current approaches to cultural heritage conservation throughout the region begins to challenge the conventional western methodology.

The changing face of Asian cities

The unprecedented growth of Asian cities, during the last decades of the twentieth century, has followed a move from agricultural to industrial-based economies. By 1990, almost 41% of the world's urban population lived in Asian cities (Logan, W., 2002: xii). It appears to observers that the once 'frozen mosaic' of urban centres, created from a flow of regional and global influences over the centuries, has been challenged by a new more dominant, less pliable globalisation and the development of a 'common' set of lifestyles relating to dress, food and entertainment and the built environment (McGee, 1994: vii; Sofield, 2002: 104).

Few communities, particularly urban ones, have avoided external influences, but it is the way that such influences are addressed that expresses and strengthens a community's ethnic identity and the cultural distinctions which it makes between itself and others perceived as different (Barth, 1969: 10). The diverse communities in George Town are no exception, and the trading connections on which the settlement was based together with the constant regeneration of peoples from the region served to keep the cultures alive and flourishing. Some fusion of cultures and identities also took place through intermarriage, creating subcultures, such as the *Baba Nonya* and *Jawi Peranakan*. An overseas-educated élite brought back images of western modernity. Thus, following independence from the colonial powers, or the opening up of former regimes in the Asian region, there came the desire for modernity. As a result, 'tradition' and 'modernity' were perceived as opposites, the former representing 'backwardness' as against the latter which expressed the desired goal of western-style industrialisation and development (Abel, 1997: 118).

Two trends have emerged in the current debate over the impact of globalisation on culture, (Meethan, 2001: 115). Whilst some recent observers like T.G.McGee see a clash between the 'local' and 'global' throughout the Southeast Asian region (1994: vii), others such as Logan suggest that 'globalisation and localisation are occurring side by side'. Logan goes on to suggest that, having wholeheartedly adopted and developed the high-rise building to suit Asian aspirations, these have become as Asian as they are western (2002 xiii).

Amos Rapoport once observed that as physical artefacts cities are experienced through the senses, they 'look smell, sound and feel different; they have different character or ambience' (1984: 54). Concerns about homogenisation, however, expressed by global conservation bodies and the cultural tourism industry, suggest that Asian cities are losing their identifiable 'Asianness', particularly in terms of 'traditional'

architecture, in favour of 'unAsian' modern architecture and planning. This has prompted the recent publication of a set of studies under the title *The Disappearing 'Asian' City* (Logan, 2002). The volume notes that for many Asian cities, the real need of providing basic infrastructure, fresh water supplies, sewerage systems and the clearance of slum areas has taken precedence over the conservation of built heritage, particularly if some of these buildings are symbols of past colonial regimes. A country's development history, its political and cultural composition, and even its climatic conditions play a part in its approach to its built environment. What has emerged from this volume and other recent literature is a fascinating array of approaches to the management of regional cultural heritage. Three themes present themselves for further exploration. The first concerns the relationship between alternative value systems and authenticity in approaches to cultural heritage conservation and its promotion. The second explores the variable responses to tangible colonial heritage and the third examines impositions of alien conservation strategies in the context of cultural realities. Let us now look at these themes in more detail.

Alternative value systems and cultural authenticity

As Michel Petzet of the International Council of Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS, Germany) has noted, the Western concept of cultural conservation has an 'exaggerated reverence' for the physical aspects of buildings and artefacts 'as the single legitimate transmitter of heritage value' (Petzet M. cited in Hajdu, 2002: 91). In these terms, the Japanese perceptions of the authenticity of cultural heritage in conservation practice would be highly questionable. Japan has a long history of heritage protection legislation dating from the *Protection of Antiquities Order* of 1871. However, as Joseph Hajdu points out, due to the predominant use of timber in a moist climate, which reduces the life span of buildings as well as a land prone to catastrophic earthquakes, the concept of rebuilding is considered as 'best conservation practice' (Hajdu, 2002: 92). The most noted example of this is the Ise temple, first rebuilt in 690 AD and then rebuilt regularly on an adjacent, alternate site. This not only perpetuates the skills of the local craftsmen but also the spiritual knowledge of temple construction. It is therefore arguable that this method, which has maintained a sustainable resource of skilled craftspeople and materials, respects the authenticity of the localised cultural heritage more than in countries where 'minimum intervention' is considered 'best practice', which results in the loss of skills and the need to import 'foreign experts and materials'.

Similarly in the Lao People's Democratic Republic (Lao PDR), William Logan, Colin Long and Roz Hansen note underlying tensions between western conservation agencies and Lao conservation philosophy suggesting 'continuity of use may well be more important [to Laotians] than originality of physical material' (2002: 66).

In a further case study, Jeffrey Cody, challenges the appropriateness of the western concept of 'cultural heritage' in Hong Kong, where it is usually translated as *wenwu* (cultural relic) referring to any treasured old object. The value placed on the 'intangible' cultural heritage including family, clan and Chinese ethnic heritage and festivals such as Chinese New Year, however, holds more importance than physical or 'tangible' aspects of cultural heritage (2002: 195).

Seoul, Korea, offers a further example of an alternative value system, where both the intangible heritage and its pre-colonial architectural heritage are relevant to its urban population. Hae Un Rii observes that as the quality of life improved through modernisation, the preservation of the ancient city of Hansong, which expresses and embodies Seoul's pre-colonial past, is seen as important to 'the national and local community's cultural identity, pride, cohesion, and continuity'. More recently it is recognised as a resource for tourism (2002: 82). The reconstruction of the *feng shui* (geomancy) has been carried out through the demolition of Japanese colonial heritage which stood in its path. During the occupation the Japanese deliberately destroyed the *feng shui* in an attempt to break the city's spirit. This restoration has gone on hand-in-hand with urbanisation and modernisation, demonstrating the significance that cultural heritage holds in the re-establishing of cultural identity.

'Shanghai Culture' in mainland China, was also well established before the arrival of external influences, in this case from various western traders. It has therefore variously perpetuated, adopted, adapted, and discarded cultural influences following constant exposure to changing fashions and technologies. Questioning the development pressures mounting on areas identified as 'of heritage value', Susan Balderstone, Qian Fengqi and Zhang Bing ask whether or not 'the heritage protection in Shanghai [is] just one of many foreign urban planning concepts, part of a long line of imported ideas' and 'yet another fad'. They also ask whether or not 'the disappearance of the physical evidence of Shanghai's past [is] inherent in the intangible heritage of 'Shanghai Culture', as demonstrated by its residents' ongoing enthusiasm for new city models' (Balderstone, Qian, Zhang, 2002: 33).

These four examples suggest that the challenge to the Convention's concept of authenticity in 1994 was timely if the intangible cultural heritage of non-western cultures is to be respected. Will such noble intentions, which state that 'heritage properties must be considered and judged within the cultural contexts to which they belong', be endorsed, when tangible heritage may be demolished but the intangible cultural heritage is conserved? This dilemma is currently being debated in George Town, over diverse interpretations of the intangible cultural heritage of Muslim *waqf*, endowment property, which suggest that the intention behind the *waqf* is more important than the physical form (see Chapter Seven).

Variable responses to tangible colonial heritage

Countries whose histories have included periods of colonial rule are often left with physical reminders of this experience, through architecture and planning. The approach to such heritage varies throughout the Asian region. In Nagasaki, Japan, for example, two districts of distinct early western architecture and planning, which survived the Allied bombing during the Pacific War, were conserved in recognition of their place in Japan's development history. As culturally different forms of buildings, they had little appeal for adaptive-reuse by the Japanese (Hajdu, 2002: 90).

In Yangon (formerly Rangoon), Than Than Nwe and Janette Philp discuss how Myanmar's military junta has constructed imposing modern edifices for municipal purposes, converting some of the former colonial government buildings into hotels, residences, and guesthouses. They also suggest that as identifiers of colonial dominance they may serve to reinforce the position of the junta as unifiers and stabilisers of the Myanmar nation (2002: 154).

In contrast, Hong Kong's cultural heritage identity is currently in a confused state whilst it re-establishes itself under the new Chinese regime. In some instances it has erased 'dangerous memories' of colonial heritage such as the royal crest on British colonial post boxes, whilst leaving the Government House vacant following the 1997 handover by the British. However, it has retained colonial street names (Cody, 2002 195), which are often the first victims to national identity reconstructions following the departure of colonial regimes. Lewandowski records that on gaining control of Madras in 1967, the Tamil nationalist party reconstructed Tamil identity by, amongst other things, renaming streets and roads, and changing the name of the state from Madras to Tamil Nadhu (1984: 242).

The diverse relationships with remnants of tangible colonial heritage within the region, suggest evolving national confidences in their cultural identity and promotion. In Penang, having previously received cursory and inappropriate maintenance, the millennium saw a rash of restoration work begin on former colonial buildings, which coincided with a self-sustained economic recovery following the Asian economic crisis, and the completion of Malaysia's prestigious landmarks of modernity.

Conservation strategies versus cultural realities

During the third International Symposium of the UNESCO of World Heritage Cities (OWHC), held in Bergen in 1995, the *Management Aid for Historic Cities* was formed. It states

> A special cultural challenge is the pace of change telescoping centuries of development within decades in countries with no tradition of modernisation. In such countries, practitioners of conservation are required

> to break with living traditions in order to effectively conserve them, and to ask society to do the same. Many 'developing countries' are now struggling with this conundrum, and focusing, in the name of conservation, on ways to keep traditional life alive, unselfconsciously.
> 'Section B: *Management of World Heritage Towns*, Item five: Cultural Adaptability' (OWHC, 1995: www).

This conundrum has meant that advocates of western conservation practice are often frustrated by diverse local responses. William Chapman demonstrates the inappropriateness of present planning and conservation initiatives facing Phnom Penh and claims that two foreign studies, commissioned in order to evaluate future planning issues, serve to emphasise the gap between researchers and their subject matter. Both, Chapman suggests, 'create a sense that Cambodians themselves, especially the residents [were] not consulted' (2002: 48) and therefore their concept of cultural heritage is not sought. His own proposal, however, returns to western conservation methodology, introducing legislation and control in order to conserve the historic character of Phnom Penh. He also proposes that education programmes, pilot conservation projects, the writing of publications on Phnom Penh's architectural legacy and the development of tourist walking tours would serve to inculcate a sense of value in the heritage environment. What he does not indicate is the cultural value placed on the built environment by Cambodians themselves. Without such understanding only the European-educated Cambodians or visitors would find relevance in such proposals.

Patricia Fels and Lee Boon Thong also support western conservation planning methods proposing an 'inventory of priority buildings, laws and regulations', as measures to conserve George Town following the *AKS Repeal*. Although Fels was involved in the compilation of George Town's first inventory, neither she nor Lee have addressed the context in which such proposals would be placed in order to evaluate their potential success or failure (Fels, 2002; Lee, 2002).

Equally the lack of inclusion of local communities in the process and custodianship of cultural heritage conservation and tourism projects seems to be a recurring theme in the recent literature. Penang's government is attempting to address this issue, but is confused by the outcome. As noted by Nagata, 'Local communities and [the] intellectual elite often have conflicting images about the meaning of heritage' (cited in Hwa, 2001a)(see Chapters Six and Seven). In practice, and interpretation, such plans often fail to consider the needs of living populations who follow their long established ways of life within their original environments. Black's and Wall's examination of UNESCO's involvement in Borobodur and Ayutthuya concluded that the approach to the conservation projects failed to encourage collaboration with the

site communities. For example, the Muslim communities living at the Buddhist temple site of Borobodur remain distant from it, which potentially threatens the sustainability of their tourism products and national symbols (2001: 126).

The Intramuros project, a ruined Spanish fortress in Manila, is regarded as the capital's premier heritage zone and tourist attraction. Revitalisation and tourism promotion efforts have been in place since the 1970s. For this purpose the Intramuros Administration was formed by presidential decree, clearly indicating that Intramuros was part of Philippine national identity. However, Maclaren and Villalon observe that the Filipinos view Intramuros as a nostalgic memory of the Spanish; and few have visited it, preferring instead the 'American idea of constant change as a symbol of urban progress'. The government's vision of creating a 'living museum of reconstructed vanished heritage as a monument to the Spanish colonial period' failed both to regenerate the area with everyday life and to reconstruct accurately the original structures. As a result, it failed to gain UNESCO Heritage Listing in 1989 (Maclaren and Villalon, 2003: 18). Maclaren and Villalon suggest that the focus was too dependent on tourism and that in order to create sustainable revitalisation the inclusion of local inhabitants in the decision-making committees is vital to the project's sustainability.

Successful application for World Heritage Listing may have unintended side effects. As Logan, Long and Hansen note, the Lao Government has concentrated on the protection of the Luang Prabang World Heritage Site which has brought much needed tourist revenue, whilst neglecting or even destroying built heritage elsewhere (2002: 67). This is particularly evident in the modernising capital, Vientiane, where expatriates 'swoon over what is left of French colonial architecture, or traditional Lao wooden houses' and where Laotians 'dream only of the new concrete houses designed for the Thai nouveaux riches' (Evans 1998, cited in Logan, Long and Hansen, 2002: 61).

Kathleen Adams, in her paper on the *Politics of Heritage in Tana Toraja, Indonesia* (2002: 91-107), observes, whilst UNESCO recognised the Torajan village of Ke'te' Kesu as 'endangered' and warranting protection, World Heritage Site designation brought in global forces through accelerated discourse with the outside world, thus threatening its *'genius loci'* (2002: 92). UNESCO listing was originally sought to encourage the youth of the village to recognise that their cultural heritage had both local and global value. Some residents envisaged that the rise in tourism revenues would allow Ke'te'Kesu'ers 'to pay off dept, stage long postponed mortuary rites and modernise their homes'. Ironically, UNESCO's emphasis was on the 'preservation of an imagined past that would stave off modernizing influences'.

A trend that directly affects the sustainability of cultural practices and the environment in which they take place, is the dislocation of populations, often the urban poor, from historic urban centres. Among many examples are the re-housing of

squatters living in Intramuros (Maclaren and Villalon, 2002: 15), the transfer of over 200,000 residents from central Yangon to new satellite towns (Than and Philp, 2002: 149) and the relocation of Vietnamese families to make way for foreign residents' apartments in Hanoi (Logan, 2002: 171). The eviction of the Khoo Kongsi tenants in favour of a heritage-theme-park tourist attraction in George Town also suggests that the conservation of cultural heritage expressed by traditional ways of life, is often in conflict with national identity reconstructions (Khoo and Jenkins, 2002: 220).

Thus the 'cultural challenge' mentioned in the *Site Management Guidelines* appears not to be '[how] to keep traditional life alive unselfconsciously', but rather for the proponents of World Heritage doctrines, how to come to terms with diverse cultural responses to their 'well intentioned' but often culturally inauthentic conservation criteria.

Why is the conservation of the physical past, either through reconstruction or preservation, considered? Is it to retain symbols of former social status in an environment of socio-economic reconstruction? Is it to retain a particular ethnic identity to strengthen or re-establish a minority group? Is it to court a tourist industry for the perceived economic returns? Is it to maintain the credibility of global organisations in the conservation industry? Alternatively, is it purely for the fear of loss and the fear of change?

Urban transformations and identity reconstructions

Like many emergent Asian cities, those of Malaysia are witnessing a rapid transformation. High rise towers, fast roads, and highways, flyovers, new airports and suburban sprawl increasingly dominate the landscape; new malls throng with shoppers and cars choke the roads. The drive for Malaysian modernity has created a 'fetish' or 'national obsession' for architectural icons of modernity (Goh, 1997).

Urban development appears to be poorly planned and co-ordinated presenting a clumsy and incongruous mix of residential, commercial and industrial buildings. Discordant and often illegal building projects disturb the once harmonious environment. All of this highlights the energy of human agency and the apparent disregard or incomprehension of Federal legislation when for example, buildings are extended beyond legal boundaries after the issuance of occupation certificates.

Non-existent or broken pavements, stinking drains, neglected historic buildings, abandoned development projects and a general disregard for the maintenance of the existing urban infrastructure suggest a 'build now clear up later' approach to urban development. There is seemingly little comprehension of the possible implications of mismanagement or the consequences of 'redefining' the planning and building laws. Such an approach is reminiscent of the changes which overtook Georgian England

during the frenzy of the Industrial Revolution. The few complaints in the press are usually orchestrated by opposition party representatives and politicians and as a result are viewed as politically motivated. As Dr. Leong Yeh Kwong, Director of Penang's Socio-economic and Environmental Research Institute (SERI), points out the Malaysians' lack of attention to the effects of actions in the present coupled with a sense of 'immunity and optimism' about the future, is similar to the boiled frog syndrome

> If you put a frog into a pot of water and start heating the water at a progressive one-degree increment, the frog does not show any distress and swims around in the pot until it is boiled along with the water.
> (cited in James, 1998)

It would appear that the gap between development visions and the discordant reality of their implementation goes unnoticed. However, a great deal of attention is paid to the built environment, though currently more in relation to potential profit and the vision of modernity, than civic awareness. In such an economic and political environment 'sensitive' conservation projects have little support from either developers or their champions.

George Town's development

Prior to Francis Light's arrival on the island in 1786, and even more so following the formation of the urban settlement, George Town was an active port and global trans-shipment centre attracting peoples regionally as well as conducting trade between India and China, [Fig.1-3], Europe, America and the Middle East. Many of the traders settled and brought with them the building methods and codes of their origins creating a visible potpourri of architectural styles (see Chapter Two). Most of the old inner city still follows the original grid set out by Light, and has retained much of this richness, both in the physical form and in the population. This includes descendants of the ethnic-based neighbourhood communities whose forefathers travelled there along the original trading routes, together with those of the indigenous ethnic Malay population of the island and neighbouring sultanates. It was not until the late 1800s that European life-styles began to greatly influence the Asian merchant families when decorative items, fashionable in the homes of wealthy Europeans, began to appear. The result of this, placed alongside elements of the Asian cultures, produced a rich eclectic style of its own.

The success of the settlement encouraged continual suburban expansion [Fig.1-4]. However, little was created that disturbed the urban form even after independence in 1957 when a desire for symbols of nationalism began to appear. The patterns of

urban production of George Town appear to have evolved in a continuous flow until the 1970s when the once harmonious physical environment became increasingly disturbed.

The relocation of port activities to the mainland in 1969 resulted in the decline of the traditional business centre of Beach Street and the creation of strategies concerned with an economic revival. The focus of investment turned towards the periphery of the town creating new commercial areas, free trade zones for international factories, new townships, and a suburban sprawl dedicated to the emerging middle classes and the 'betterment' of the poorer population. The inner city, comprising mainly working-class, tenant communities remained, protected by the *Control of Rent Act (AKS);* they continued to celebrate their festivals and pursue their long-established ways, creating a lively and vibrant atmosphere within the historic pattern of streets.

As modern development crept towards the historic city, the apparent rejection of 'all things old' in favour of 'all things modern' escalated. It was encouraged by national development policies drawn up in the 1990s, one of which was *Vision 2020* (see Chapter Three); from this time fine pre-war buildings began to vanish. Had it not been for the constraints of the *AKS*, much more of George Town's historic urban centre would have disappeared under concrete.

In response to the changing landscape a fledgling NGO conservation movement emerged in various parts of Malaysia; the Badan Warisan Malaysia (Malaysian National Trust) in Kuala Lumpur in 1982, the Atelier Sarawak in Kuching in 1986, the Penang Heritage Trust in 1989, and the Perak Academy in 1999. Penang's movement advocated an application for UNESCO World Heritage Listing; its methodology and effectiveness are discussed further in Chapter Six.

In 1999, *The Economics of Heritage*, a UNESCO conference held in Penang and Melaka, attempted to offer solutions to the declining inner city by focusing heavily on the economic value of tourism. It was then that the Local Authority turned towards inner-city revitalisation. However, their experience of urban planning was on green-field suburban sites aimed at the emerging middle-class, whose original cultural identities had been diluted by suburban living, rather than historic sites with an existing and active population. As Mai Lin Tjoa-Bonatz observed there was a general feeling of lack of vision. Nevertheless, there has been much debate, and the struggle to decide George Town's direction certainly continues (Tjoa-Bonatz, 2000: 67).

Challenges to the conservation of cultural heritage

Two major influences have greatly affected the development patterns of Malaysia since independence. One was the interventionist *New Economic Policy* (NEP) promulgated in 1971, in order to effect the social and economic advancement of the Malay population (see Chapter Three). The other was a vision of modernity supported by the new

generation of overseas and locally trained architects and planners (see Chapter Five) and the government's promotion of physical development projects.

Although Malaysia's history has been one of cross-cultural influences and hybrid worlds, recent national-state constructions have lead to ethnic-based policies, intent on the redistribution of economic power (Gomez, 1999; Loh and Kahn, 1992; Milne and Mauzy, 1999). In a bid to sustain economic dominance in Malaya, the British had encouraged immigration of diverse ethnic groups in specific economic positions and had maintained a policy of divide and rule (Gomez 1999: 172). The legacy of such a policy has led to the formation of political representation along ethnic lines. Power-sharing through ethnic representation has been designed to manage and resolve ethnic tensions. However, as R.S. Milne and Diane Mauzy suggest, 'unless the government is watchful, resentment may accumulate'. Equally, identity reconstructions may ensue in which cultural heritage plays a part.

The NEP, initiated in 1971, followed by the *New Development Policy* (NDP), was designed to aid the advancement of the Malays and indigenous groups known as *bumiputera* (sons-of-the-soil). However, within a predominantly Chinese city such as Penang, such support offers competition, particularly in the area of identity. As Lévi-Strauss states

> So long as cultures regard themselves simply as diverse, they can readily either ignore each other or consider one another partners for a mutually desirable dialogue... The situation is altogether different when the notion of mutually acknowledged diversity is replaced by one culture's feeling of superiority based on force, and when positive or negative recognition of the diversity of cultures gives way to the affirmation of their inequality. (1985: 8)

It must be noted that because of the untypical composition of Penang's population, there is a great sensitivity towards the goals of the NDP that, to a degree, has led to a reinforcement of all ethnic identities. The 1980 census shows a population of 32.8% Malay and 54.6% Chinese in the state as opposed to 55.25% Malays and 33.9% Chinese in Peninsular Malaysia as a whole. Unlike the other Malaysian state heads, the Chief Minister is Chinese, and is specifically appointed by the Prime Minister. The ruling National Coalition (Barisan Nasional) comprises a majority of political parties based on ethnic identity, including the United Malays National Organisation (UMNO), the Malaysian Indian Congress (MIC), and the Malaysian Chinese Association (MCA). Non-communal parties exist, such as Gerakan, however, the membership is predominantly Chinese. Division by ethnicity or 'race' is therefore a predominant factor of the Malaysian political and policy-making environment. Lévi-Strauss argues

that anthropologists have been trying unsuccessfully to define 'race' for the last two centuries (1985: 3). Malaysians, however, use 'race' broadly to refer to ethnic and particularly religious differences in the population.

Enigmas occur where a minority community has a Barisan Nasional (BN) candidate representing the constituency's majority ethnic group and are encouraged to be 'card-carrying' members of their BN ethnic party. In George Town, one example of this is within the *Heritage Action Plan Area* in which the *Mesjid Melayu Lebuh Acheh,* Malay Mosque, Acheen Street, is situated. Here the Muslim population's BN assemblyman - the state government's elected representative- is from MCA whilst their Federal Member of Parliament is Chinese from the opposition party. The Muslim community, therefore, are encouraged to support the local branch of the ruling Barisan Nasional party, UMNO, which takes an interest in the development of the Malays and other Muslims in George Town. Such issues as 'development', 'heritage', and 'conservation', are therefore linked with the cultural identity reconstructions of a minority group in a predominantly Chinese city.

The concept of 'Malayness', however, is subject to a variety of definitions. According to the *Federal Constitution* article 160(2) for a person to be called Malay, they must meet the following four criteria:

1. The person must profess the religion of Islam
2. The person must habitually speak the Malay language
3. The person must conform to the Malay custom
4. The person must have roots in the country by way of birth in Peninsular Malaysia or Singapore before Merdeka Day, or must be descended from parents one of whom was born in Peninsular Malaysia or Singapore, or must be descended from parents one of whom was domiciled in Peninsular Malaysia or Singapore on Merdeka Day.

   (Shad Faruqi, 2002)

As Dr. Shad Saleem Faruqi explains, the ethnic Malay Muslims of Sarawak or Sabah are not Malays constitutionally, but the ethnic Indian or Chinese Muslims of Peninsular Malaysia or Singapore, who meet the above criteria, are by definition Malay (ibid, 2002). Thus, there are two definitions of Malay, the Constitutional and the 'ethnic', and they are not necessarily the same. There are, therefore, various constructions of 'Malayness' and hence identities in which cultural heritage plays a part.

Recent anthropological and ethnographical literature on Penang has identified the relevance of human agency, cultural interpretations and the influence of identity

politics on urban transformations (Goh, 1997; Kahn, 1997; Nagata, 2001; Tjoa-Bonatz, 2000). An example of these interrelationships can be found in the Penang Eurasian community. In order to reaffirm their politically expedient link with the *bumiputera* identity, the Penang Eurasian Association (PEA) committee chose to emphasise the historical link between the Portuguese-Eurasians, or Portuguese-Malays of Melaka, and the Melaka Sultanate, instead of their historical origins from Kedah (Northern Malaysia) and Phuket (Thailand). The Melaka Sultanate is considered as the foundation of Malay history, and therefore that of the nation.

Such reconstruction also takes place within the built environment. One of the earliest highly publicised struggles, which initially began in 1980, was between the land-owning Roman Catholic Church and the community living in the historical *Kampong Serani* (*Serani* is a local term for Eurasian). *Kampong Serani* was located in Pulau Tikus, a fashionable location for the rising middle and upper-middle classes. Goh Beng Lan's examination of the identity struggles that emerged following the battle to save the *kampong* from the development of an upmarket commercial and residential complex in a desirable suburb, reflects many of the issues that were to be repeated for other vulnerable village or *kampong* communities in the suburbs of Penang (Goh, 1997).

As a minority group, the *Kampong Serani* community fought and lost against a real threat of development. What emerged, however, were the diverse interpretations of 'heritage' and 'modernity' between the developers, the land-owning Catholic Church, the Penang Eurasian Association, the residential *kampong* community itself and the committee members of the Penang Heritage Trust. In analysing this encounter, Goh recognises the current evocations of 'identity' and 'heritage' as political practices of different urban groups in pursuit of their individual and collective goals.

The Church entered into the development arrangement possibly out of fear of land acquisition. Its position as owners of large tracts of land had been in a state of flux following the state takeover of mission schools. The *kampong* houses were typically built of brick and timber with many additional rooms added as families expanded, which gave an appearance of randomness rather than a tightly constrained order. This 'organic' appearance was thought by the Church and the PEA committee leaders to reflect an image of non-development in an area that was fast becoming 'upmarket'. The developers were keen to gain a foothold in the area and provide the new upper middle classes with 'heritage' style condominiums. They agreeably negotiated with the middle class members of the Penang Eurasian Association committee (none of whom lived in the *kampong*) who settled for a 'heritage club house' within the condominium compound as their form of heritage identity. The Church was clearly uncomfortable negotiating with the 'less educated' *kampong* congregation. Although the residents finally received monetary compensation, they were seen as of no importance to the image of development or to the 'Eurasian community' and were not offered low-cost

housing. The need to establish or re-establish cultural identities, therefore, is synonymous with the development process generally and urban development in particular.

In his examination of the *Lebuh Acheh-Lebuh Armenian, Heritage Action Area (LALA)* project within the historic city of George Town, Joel Kahn attempts to 'uncouple its apparently intimate relationship' with tourism policies and argues that the concept of the urban renewal project reflects a more general cultural process taking place within Malaysia. This is particularly related to identity and culture-building amongst the educated middle class urban Malays (1997:104). Kahn focuses on the issues surrounding the restoration of the Syed Alatas Mansion and the *Mesjid Melayu Lebuh Acheh*. However, he neglects the challenging complications of fragmented identity reconstructions taking place, motivated by the multi-ethnic composition of the *LALA* conservation area. It was the area's inclusion of Muslim (of ethnic Malay, Arab, Indian and Sumatran descent), Indian Chettiar and Chinese communities which created an opportunity to present images of Malaysia's harmonious pluralism, through the tourism industry, particularly for domestic consumption. The multi-ethnic composition was of major value to the *LALA* concept and received political support through the *Seventh Malaysia Plan*, creating a 'politically correct' potpourri within the enclave, and reflecting the 'Malay, Chinese, Indian, and Others' national population categories. Thus, it became the *Historic Melting Pot* presented by Penang's Economic Planning Unit (EPU) for inclusion in a *Five-Year-Plan*, to the EPU within the Prime Minister's Department.

The challenges that took place following the completion of the conservation of the Syed Alatas Mansion and the *Mesjid Melayu Lebuh Acheh* (see Chapter Seven), reflect the search for identity and culture-building within the urban Muslim community of George Town. Furthermore, diverse interpretations of ethnic identity are emerging as the aspirations for heritage conservation of the mosque compound housing and adjacent Muslim shophouses on Lebuh Acheh, have been challenged by a development vision amongst the middle class Malays themselves. The Federal government is a powerful investor of development capital in support of the *New Development Policy, Vision 2020*, and Malay entrepreneurial growth. Therefore, unless the quest for the conservation of the traditional urban Malay architecture is presented and understood as a form of development, rather than the current concept of non-development and perceived backwardness, then demolition and new development of the 'traditional' urban Malay *kampong* is likely to take place.

Tjoa-Bonatz in her analysis of a survey on young people's perceptions of the inner city, conducted by Susan Thieme, Markus Knigge and David Schenke, suggests that the youth see the conservation of the historic centre as important for national and cultural history (Thieme, Knigge and Schenke, 1999). She suggests an opportunity

offered by the inner city area is 'the use of built heritage as an integrative force to overcome ethnic boundaries' (Tjoa-Bonatz, 2000: 67). This thesis explores the relevance and utility of such a perspective.

Sustainable development and inclusion of cultural heritage

The comprehension of and advice offered for the conservation of historic buildings or the revitalisation of the traditional urbanscape in Penang have concentrated on physical conservation for regeneration through tourism, rather than reflecting the needs of the 'living cultural heritage communities'. Government-supported conservation projects, therefore, rather than serving as catalysts have tended to widen the gap between reality and representation. The Australian design for the *Heritage Area Action Plan* (see Chapter Six), the Federal design for the *Gold Bazaar* and the Municipal Council's original beautification design for the *Little India* project are further examples, where local projects were planned without grass-roots consultation.

The latter two projects occurred after my field research was completed but have been included for analysis in Chapter Six as they reveal two different local approaches to the revitalisation of historic community spaces. In both projects, symbols were chosen for decoration rather than their cultural significance, creating a 'Disneyfication' and a trivialisation of the enclaves' cultural integrity. Not only the new design, but also the implementation of the projects themselves were in danger of destroying the area they were intended to enhance. To their credit the government officers responsible for the *Little India* project, became cautious as protest banners were raised, and they commissioned a *Cultural Impact Assessment*. The later Federal project of the *Gold Bazaar*, has not had such foresight, thus its progress has become interesting to follow, in terms of the diverse cultural identities of the designer, the communities within the area and both the cultural and conservation NGOs.

The potential for sustained cultural heritage conservation, is therefore explored in this thesis through an examination of the urban history and communities of George Town, national and state policies for development, and conservation initiatives. It goes on to examine how the historic urban environment is viewed from different perspectives –those of the tourism industry, suburban communities and both cultural and heritage conservation NGOs. It continues with a study of the community realities of the inner city, highlighting the dislocation of a community through the mistranslation of living-cultural-heritage-tourism, and the growth of cultural heritage awareness within the Muslim community that reinvented a rural ceremony for its urban population and began to question the reinterpretations of its heritage endowment property (*waqf*).

The re-interpretations of cultural heritage are further explored through the response to the *AKS Repeal*, its effect on the inner city communities, and the efforts for

urban renewal. As the city itself becomes contested space, six physical conservation case studies are examined for their contribution to the conservation debate.

What emerges from the study of George Town is an awareness that cultural heritage has many interpretations on which its value, identity, and authenticity depends. For example, the desire to retain physical memories of the past may be inappropriate to diverse Asian cultures. If tangible and intangible cultural heritage are to retain their authenticity, the value systems on which that authenticity is based, must be respected. As Black and Wall have observed in heritage conservation the 'values and motivations involved are largely imported' and when such international heritage protection bodies are involved the heritage site changes 'ownership' and becomes a global commodity (2001: 122-135).

Case studies

In order to illustrate the challenges facing the conservation of the historic inner city case studies have been selected to demonstrate political, public and private restoration projects and the identity reconstructions that have emerged. They also demonstrate the 'development strategies and community realities' affecting the historic inner city, particularly the effects of the *AKS Repeal* and the proposal for UNESCO Heritage Listing (Khoo and Jenkins, 2002: 208).

Examination of these case studies, (see Chapter Seven), leads to the conclusion that a 'successful project (a sustainable one) must be 'culturally owned'. In other words, the implementers and end-users require a cultural relationship with the project, in order to maintain a sense of identity and place, and respect for its conservation. Through the analysis of these cases, a gradation of sustainability emerges and falls loosely into three categories: cultural discord, cultural contests, and sustainable conservation. Any one of the cases can oscillate between categories depending on their relevance to identity reconstruction.

The term **cultural discord** identifies the first category whereby the owners or custodians have no clear identity or sense of ownership. These projects have a greater risk of failure in terms of reuse and support. The Syed Alatas Mansion, Khoo Kongsi enclave, and Suffolk House projects fall into this category.

The Loo Pun Hong temple project demonstrates the category of **cultural contests**, whereby two cultures, sharing the same broad ethnic identity, contest 'ownership' of the conservation work, which was 'hijacked' from the cultural owners by the conservators. As a result, the temple and association are still in active use whilst the 'hijackers' are no longer involved in 'live' conservation projects.

Projects that demonstrate **sustainable conservation** are those whereby the cultural identity and use concur, in other words when a building is conserved for

continued use by its community, for example, the *Mesjid Melayu Lebuh Acheh*, or when the philosophy behind the conservation and reuse creates a new sustainable identity and community as in the Cheong Fatt Tze Mansion restoration.

The analysis of these categories provides an understanding of the areas of discord, contest, and sustainability in order to identify the potential for cultural heritage conservation in George Town.

Methodology, fieldwork, and personal reflection

Given that early colonial anthropology or ethnology was embedded 'in other fields of study and often than not undertaken as spare-time activity by individuals working as civil servants ...' I decided to return, in part, to this tradition (King and Wilder, 2003: xiii). I therefore sought employment within a Malaysian company that would offer me exposure to different aspects of heritage and cultural reconstructions and allow the opportunity for participant-observation fieldwork. This provided in-depth qualitative research opportunities rather than data gathering through structured interviews and questionnaires.

My first employment was lecturing in the discipline of my degree, Three Dimensional Design, to middle class, multi-ethnic students of a Penang art college. Through this I became aware of how cultural and ethnic roots shaped perceptions of space, place, and restrictions related to built environments. This is seen particularly in the 'sciences' of geomancy such as Chinese *feng shui* or Indian *Vaashtu Shastra*.

Initial communication difficulties with my students stemmed from the need to adapt the European degree course, part of a twinning programme with De Monfort University, to the Malaysian context. A series of projects were initiated that gave lecturer and students exposure to each others' cultural identities within the built environment. From a residential design project we learnt how we inhabited space, our responses to the family unit and the hierarchy of spaces within a family home. A temperate climate design project introduced heat-generating and conserving elements in contrast with the cooling requirements for equatorial Malaysia. The difficulty came in designing a single occupancy space; in 1996, the concept of living independently of the family unit was little practised in provincial, 'outstation' Penang.

After completing a full academic year at the college, I joined an inner city architectural practice, known for 'intellectualised', award-winning modern architecture, and which later became the main architectural conservation practice in Penang. The first year was the greatest learning curve, for although I was highly qualified in my field, and experienced in Europe, New Zealand and even Singapore, it was necessary to put to one side all the methods and practices I had established in order to contribute effectively to the practice.

Firstly, I had to gain an overall understanding of national and local politics, become familiar with land and building laws and their local interpretation, as well as comprehend building practice, malpractice, and the workings of the Majlis Perbandaran Pulau Pinang (MPPP) -the Municipal Council. It was also necessary to gain a solid comprehension of the deep-rooted cultural factors that have an impact on the significance of space, and semiotic elements that create challenges to a design other than building codes, budgets, and timeframes. For example, the commencement of building projects is avoided during *Por Thor Kong*, the Hungry Ghost festival, in case a wandering spirit is trapped in a hole, particularly if the owner or contractor is Chinese. *Feng shui*, introduced to me by my students, is one of the most influential factors and is a guide to living harmoniously with the environment in order to bring well-being to the inhabitants of a building.

Work within the practice and association with clients, consultants, developers, and contractors gave me first-hand insight into local, particularly Chinese businesses both corporate and family-run, and their attitudes to work, statutory laws, the quality of workmanship, the sense of fairness or foul play, betrayal and loyalty and their style of negotiation.

When I came across issues outside of my realm of knowledge, which ranged from structural engineering to cultural requirements, I benefited from the practice of experience sharing and knowledge distribution, from many local overseas-educated professionals. This was undertaken without creating a sense of superiority either towards myself or towards their locally educated colleagues.

Concepts of social hierarchy were perhaps the most challenging to grasp. After many puzzling situations I realised oscillations in status would occur during a discussion depending on the composition of the group. I was either a consultant or a subordinate, and sometimes required an intermediary in order to address someone of superior status even though we may have talked face to face before the composition of the group changed.

As I am able to sketch, I anticipated little problem in using this skill as a means of communication where language abilities failed. I had not anticipated the misinterpretation of lines that occurred when the context was not understood. For example, if a line was drawn to form a circle it could be read either as the rim of a hole or the outline of a sphere, a void, or a solid form. With spoken languages, understanding what people talked about, how they communicated with each other, and what made them feel comfortable, became more relevant to communication than a vast lexical knowledge. With so many different languages spoken, a sentence would comprise two or three languages; therefore, my own efforts in speaking Malay would have a few locally used English or Hokkien words added.

Working in a male-dominated profession, I found more respect for my education and experience, irrespective of my gender, than in European-based cultures and countries. However, in my non-professional experiences, particularly in NGOs, I came across a preference for those who perceived themselves as 'educated' and 'cultured' to delegate research, fieldwork, and report writing to others, seldom reading what was written, though claiming in-depth knowledge and credit for the work. This dependency created a conscious vulnerability. I often witnessed public high praise coupled with private backstabbing of the same person, which usually led to good ideas being shelved. I was therefore cautious and curious as to how my work would be received. All of these experiences provided invaluable insights into the cultural and social composition of the 'society' in which I worked and enabled me to structure my participant-observation fieldwork.

A social and physical survey for the AKS Repeal Sub-committee, 1998

In addition to employment, I sought contact with government bodies, NGOs, and the communities of George Town. One such opportunity was an invitation to join the state government's *AKS Repeal* Sub-committee, as an observer following an interview with the Sub-committee Chairman. In September 1998, the sub-committee commissioned a social and physical survey of Muntri Street and Love Lane within the inner city in order to anticipate the potential affect of the *AKS Repeal*. The study focused on the ownership, tenancies, family structure and connections of the tenants, their occupations, how they used the city and the likelihood of them remaining after the Repeal (Jenkins 1999).

Two earlier studies were also made available: the 1993 Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM) identification of properties affected by the *AKS Repeal* and the 1997 field survey data for the registration of households for government housing. This research gave me access to the Directors of various Departments and their staff who often gave a further perspective on their Departments' roles. It also exposed me to an approach to accuracy and detail, as well as data storage, retrieval and interpretation which challenged my own concepts of order and organisation.

Given an office and computer within the local assemblyman's service centre in Muntri Street, I worked closely with his team dedicated to the inner city issues. Their in-depth knowledge of their community made it possible to crosscheck earlier data. They also translated the many languages spoken by the community when discussions were held. Working together, the report became an up-to-date analysis of the situation and was presented to the State Executive Council in April 1999.

A social housing study for the AKS Sub-committee,1999

Following the presentation of the Muntri Street and Love Lane surveys, the Chairman of the Repeal Sub-Committee commissioned an inner city social housing study from the Penang Heritage Trust (PHT), in August 1999, in which I became involved. In order to gain greater knowledge, I moved to live in a pre-war shophouse within the study area. Preliminary research for the feasibility study was carried out but never assembled into a printed report. However, it gave sufficient information to present a pilot project proposal to the Penang State Task Force dealing with the issues of rehousing of the *AKS* tenants.

The proposal looked into the feasibility of converting a row of seven pre-war properties, considered their suitability for different cultural and ethnic groups, and examined the original structural forms of the buildings in relation to environmental conditions. Whilst the Task Force considered the proposal, the long-established communities and interconnections changed dramatically.

Tenant evictions and the AKS Repeal; the effects on the city

During the sensitive election period of November 1999, *AKS* tenant action groups formed and threatened the safe seats of the political candidates, including the Chief Minister. By January 2000, as evictions became a regular fear of the tenant communities, they sought help from many quarters.

Again working jointly with my local assemblyman's office personnel, we collected tenant and landlord data for monthly analysis, with input from all the tenant help groups, both government and NGO, which was presented to the Chief Minister. By April 2000 over 1,600 cases had been examined and showed a disturbing trend of clearance of ethnic quarters.

Representing the Penang Heritage Trust, I was invited to join the Task Force in March 2000, chaired by the Chief Minister. Two issues were discussed, firstly the ex-*AKS* tenants' housing issues, and secondly the promotion of a newly acquired RM 100 million urban revitalisation fund (see Chapter Six). By June 2000 the revitalisation scheme was launched. It was at this point that I became aware that my views of inner city revitalisation conflicted with those of the Trust, which I represented. I therefore withdrew from the committee hoping to identify the Trust's response to community issues without my involvement.

By October, the promotion of the fund had met with poor results and I was requested to attend a post-mortem of the response. I was invited in my own capacity for 'my knowledge and understanding of the current situation'. I was cautious of this reasoning and assumed that another agenda lay beneath (see Chapter Six).

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Heritage and cultural identity, practical involvement

During my four-year study period, September 1996 to October 2000, the practice in which I worked became known for its work in heritage conservation. Having lived within, and having become involved in conserving and researching the architecture over the years, in October 2001, I was asked to become principal author of an architectural description of the *Historic Island Port Settlement of George Town*, a section of the UNESCO Heritage Listing application dossier. My research for Chapter Two of this thesis formed the foundation of the dossier script. The assembly of photographic images to illustrate the written descriptions became an enormous challenge. Following the *AKS Repeal*, fires or neglect destroyed many fine properties, which had been emptied of tenants, whilst others were altered irretrievably through modernisation.

In May 2002, the practice was requested to examine a design proposal, by the Municipal Council, for the beautification of Little India. As a result, cultural impact assessment research was carried out within the Little India community, which had not previously been consulted. Designs that challenged cultural authenticity (for example the position, material, size and colour and even the permitted use, of the Indian Hindu *kolam* pattern as a secular decoration), were discussed with community and temple priests. We were subsequently invited to join the Council project implementation team, and continued to discuss issues with the community as the site works commenced.

A further beautification project, the *Gold Bazaar*, was presented to the public in May 2003. Again, the cultural identity of the space was contested by a design created without an awareness of its challenge to authenticity, heritage, and the identity of the communities in which it was placed (see Chapter Six).

Although these projects occurred after my field research period was completed they have been included as they reflect a strengthening of the awareness of cultural identity amongst the George Town communities and the Municipal Council officers, and offer further insight into heritage and identity reconstructions taking place within the historic city.

Personal reflections

As the deadline for the submission of this thesis grew closer, and hence the need to find more time to write, it became increasingly difficult to extract myself from such interesting employment. However, in my view, my engagement with this thesis has given me a chance to look back on my studies and work experience from a more objective perspective.

I am continually aware that my field research methodology has a very personal flavour, which causes some concern. In living and working within George Town, I needed to understand the environment in order to function. Thus, I created my own culture, a mixture of both British and Malaysian, blurring the boundaries and allowing

me to record and analyse experiences directly, rather than through comparisons with my original culture.

When I moved to live in the shophouse, I was already 'known' to my local community from my Muntri Street and Love Lane surveys. My professional community gave me opportunities for discussions with a broad spectrum of people which a series of well-orchestrated interviews could not have achieved. If I look at my diary for one year of study, it offers a vignette of a complex situation and little insight into the issues. Further years of research have allowed me to follow the twists and turns of Malaysia and Penang, with greater understanding, and enrich what would have been an interesting, but fleshless piece of research.

Before my involvement in the *AKS Repeal* Sub-Committee, in 1998, I was treated with polite arms-length caution. As familiarity grew, I was given opportunities to experience how the different ethnic groups communicated with one another. This was essential in order to work with my colleagues and to communicate with contractors and suppliers in order to complete projects. My work became a form of context checking; if my projects had difficulties, I had to rethink my method of communication. Although my 'education' has come through the English-speaking public, in the main, this covers a wide spectrum of people: those educated under the former English medium education policy or in European institutions; the youth who watch American TV and films; local university graduates whose libraries are filled with English texts; and my office colleagues who use English as a bridge between their various Chinese languages.

The greatest challenge I came across in my work, the understanding of which aided my research, was the fear of losing face. To admit to an error particularly to a non-Malaysian, would have brought great shame; secondly, to point out that a non-Malaysian caused the error would have been impolite. Great ingenuity was used to cover up an error, in the building process for example, that was often aesthetically awful and even structurally dangerous. But at least nobody was embarrassed. The time-won reassurance that my intention was to analyse a problem in order to put forward a solution for discussion, won me apparent trust in surprisingly different areas and, in 1998, I was invited to join the Muslim communities of the inner city during a UNESCO *Local Effort and Participation (LEAP)* project. However, to be lulled into a false sense of security would be to ignore the complexities and intricacies of Malaysia's political and socio-cultural milieu.

I am conscious, in addition, that to be involved is also to influence. Teamwork, therefore, gave me opportunities to learn from, as well as discuss issues within a group, sometimes posing hypothetical questions to gauge the response. My own love for architecture and history made me cautious in my approach and made me aware that the conclusion reached could not be tainted by my own preferences.

My empirical experiences came from both the living and working environments in the suburbs and the inner city, and the wide spectrum of people I met. This included; my colleagues in the architectural practice, clients, consultants, contractors, and suppliers; taxi drivers, fellow bus passengers, the coffee-shop owners and customers where I ate; my neighbours in the inner city and suburbs, a mosque women's group and the Chulia Lane *Por Thor Kong* Committee; lecturers I worked with, foreign wives and foreign experts employed on conservation research; and local 'characters' including the Chief Minister, my district assemblyman, Directors and officers of various Local Government Departments, as well as the teachers and students of my Malaysian husband's school. They have all contributed in myriad ways to my understanding of the multiple factors affecting life in George Town.

Participant-observation fieldwork and secondary research in various archives, therefore, have formed the basis of my study. The subject itself is huge with many variables, as an intricate web arises between politics, religion, ethnicity, culture, and class that shape the cityscape, the interpretations of Malaysia's visions of modernity and the search for meaning and identity. To take one community group or monument in isolation without awareness of the complex society in which it exists would be a misrepresentation.

This thesis is only the beginning and serves as a record of what remains of the physical heritage, the struggle of those who wish to redefine the cultural identity of George Town, and of those who wish to secure the sustainable living cultural heritage.

The enquiry into conservation strategies within a developing Asian city requires an examination of both heritage and identity reconstructions at national and local level. This allows an assessment of the relevance of conservation within the changing society and the place of a historic inner city within Malaysia's modernity. The chapters have been arranged in the following way in order to explore these issues.

Chapter outline

The **Introduction** outlines the main themes of the thesis, and describes the concepts of 'culture', 'heritage tourism', and 'authenticity' in the global and regional context of national development and tourism. This is in order to explore the 'contested space' of George Town's historic inner city in the urban transformation process, and ascertain the heritage and identity reconstructions that have taken place. I have also examined the fieldwork methodology employed, and included a personal reflection on living and working within the inner city.

Chapter Two considers the history, form, and development of the architecture and urban landscape of George Town from its inception as an East Indian trading settlement until the introduction of national development policies in 1971. It reviews,

trade and immigration patterns, and the establishment of ethnic districts and class relationships. It also looks into the cultural identities associated with built forms and space, in order to establish the current urban composition.

Chapter Three examines the national development policies since Malaysian independence, and identifies the hybrid worlds of modern and post-modern identity arising from Prime Minister Mahathir's *Vision 2020*. It outlines the Federal government structure, political system, and legal framework with respect to freedom of expression, and investigates the practices and ownership of the media and the role of NGOs in order to explore the level of public participation in cultural identity issues.

Chapter Four explores Penang's local government structure (the state government, the MPPP, the state government's development arm - the Penang Development Corporation [PDC], and the formation and implementation of urban development plans as an expression of national aspirations). The changing patterns of inner city trade, social and cultural life, and the embryonic conservation movement are reviewed.

Chapter Five identifies the process of cultural change and the challenges to Penang's urban landscape and communities during the last decade of the twentieth century. These are viewed in relation to both the ambitions and identity reconstructions of the state planners, landowners, Malaysian architects, property developers, and the conservation movement.

The conception, promotion, and gradual implementation of the *Lebuh Acheh, Lebuh Armenian Development Project* is reviewed as an indicator of the emerging identity contestations taking place. State initiatives such as the inception of the Penang Heritage Centre are considered; foreign expert participation in projects, conferences and seminars as educational opportunities for landowners, developers, and government officers, are evaluated for their effectiveness in promoting heritage conservation.

Finally, this chapter examines the process underlying the state's application to become a UNESCO *World Heritage Site*, and considers whether such an award is relevant to the conservation of cultural heritage.

Chapter Six reviews the cultural identity and consumption of the inner city through the tourism industry, the conservation NGOs, and the suburban communities, all of which view the city from afar. The view from within is provided through an examination of the traditional inner city communities and issues that have challenged or reinforced their cultural identity, the Khoo Kongsi tenants' evictions for example, and the redefinition of *waqf*.

The *AKS Repeal* placed George Town at a crossroads in its social, cultural, and physical history. Chapter Six therefore identifies the communal life of the city through the *Muntri Street and Love Lane Social and Physical Surveys*, and analyses the potential

effect of the Repeal on established urban patterns. The chapter then examines the political and communal response to the physical (mainly historical) and social (mainly traditional) challenge of the Repeal. It goes on to investigate urban revitalisation efforts through loan/grant schemes and urban-landscape beautification projects, and the changing value perceptions of the historical environment and communities.

Chapter Seven examines case studies which have been chosen for the diversity of investors, conservators, building forms, and related communities. During my study period four projects were completed and two had begun. However, I continued to monitor these sites for a longer period of research, which created a better understanding of their sustainability. Each case study is examined for its relationship with the 'desire' for UNESCO World Heritage Listing, the affect of the *AKS Repeal* and identity politics and notes the significant changes in attitude towards the value of conservation as a form of identity reconstruction.

The Final Chapter presents an analysis of the empirical research, particularly working with the *AKS Repeal* Sub-committee and the UNESCO dossier as well as reviewing the case studies, as a context from which to observe the national and local movements towards George Town's conservation.

This chapter also summarises the current slow pace of conservation projects, including those highlighted in the case studies, the delayed efforts for UNESCO Heritage Listing, the most recent activities of the Municipal Council, the pro-conservation NGOs and the position of the remaining communities within the urban reconstruction process. From this analysis, the chapter concludes with a hypothesis that places the relevance of cultural heritage and its conservation within a developing Asian city. My hope is that it will form the foundation for future studies in which the conservation of architecture and environments are considered in terms of cultural authenticity and their relevance to a variety of cultural identities.

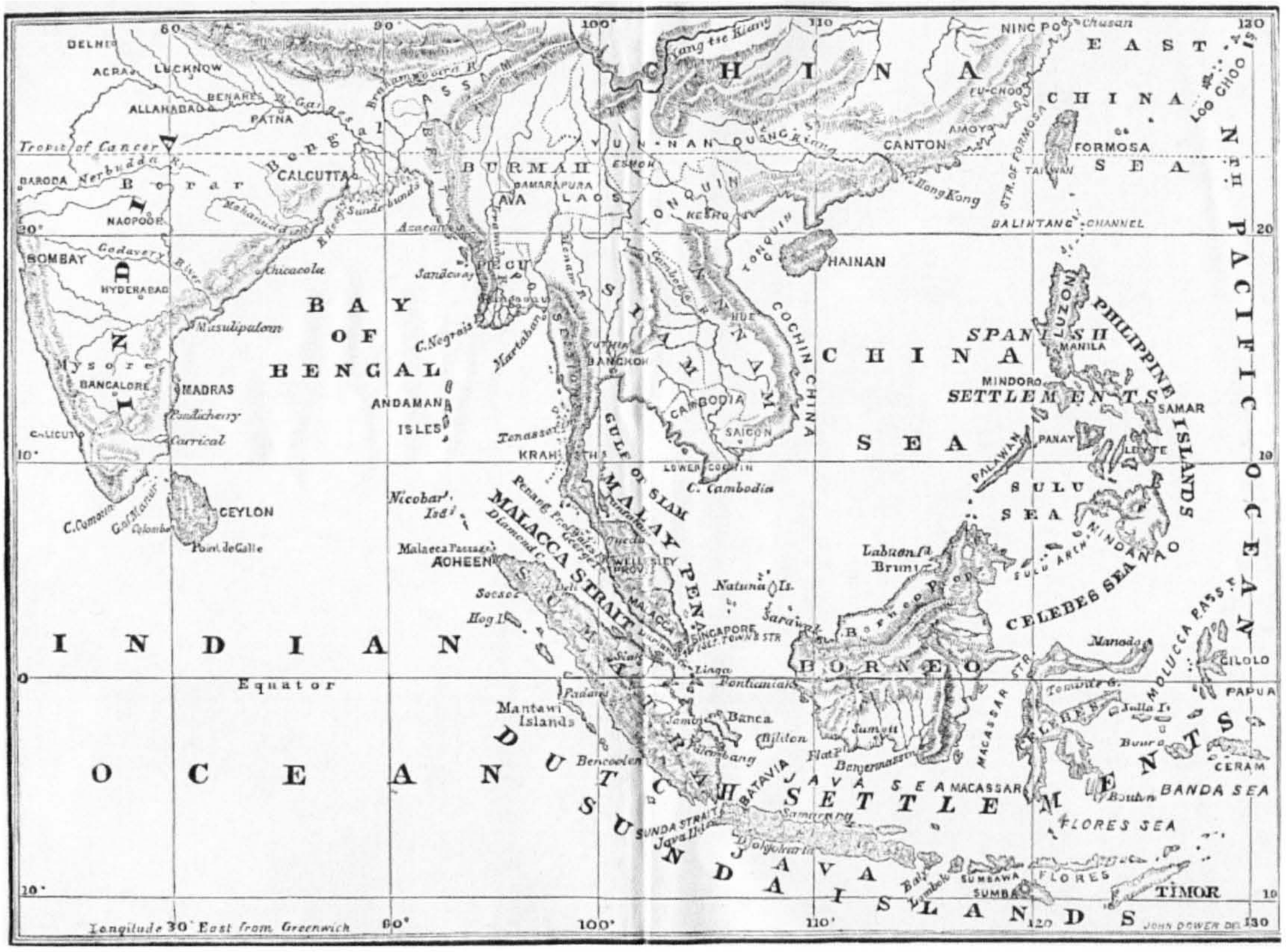


Fig. **1**-3 The Straits of Malacca showing the location of Malaya within the Indian Ocean and the China Sea, *Illustrated London News 1874* (reproduced from Hayes Hoyt, 1991)

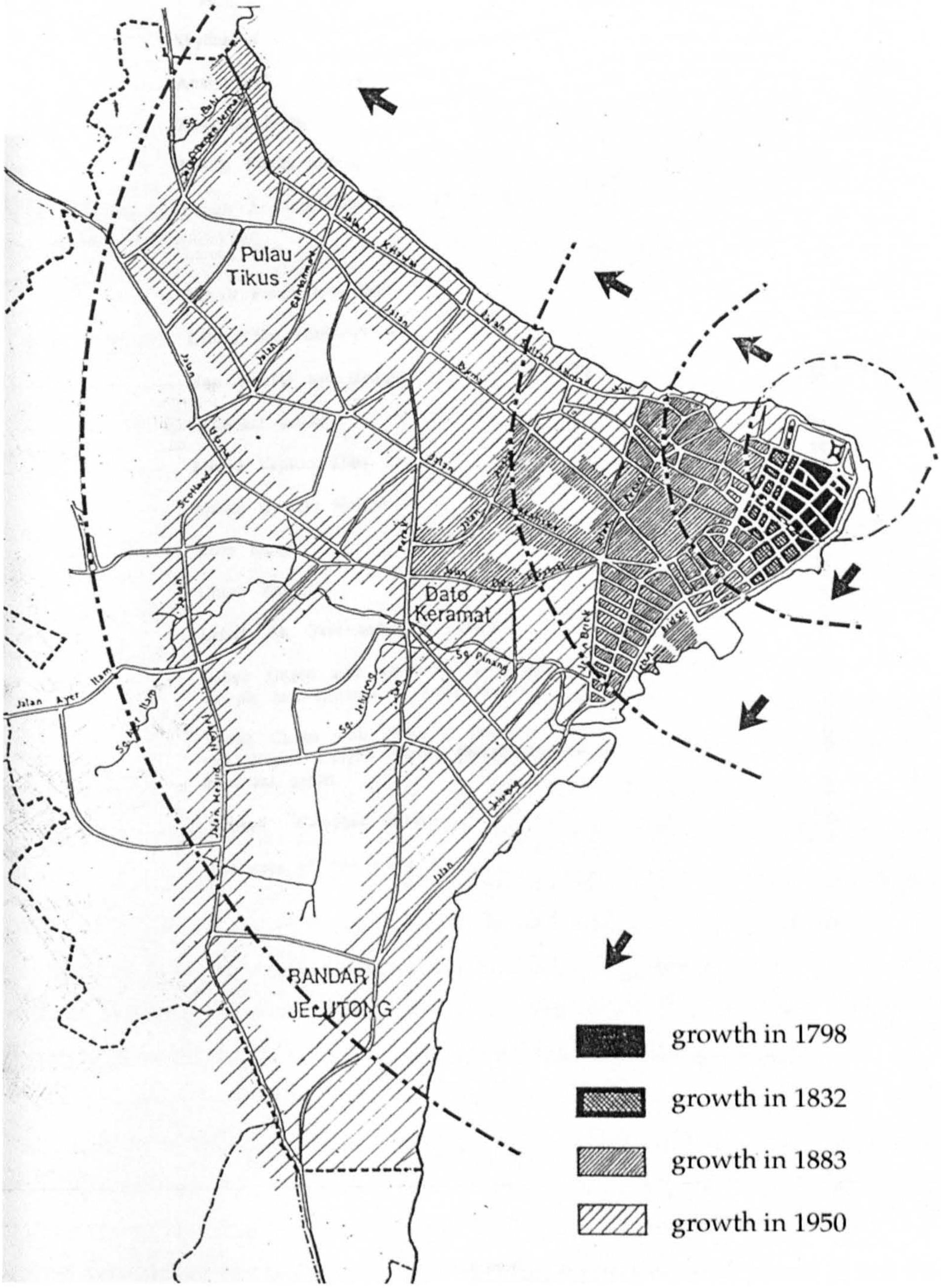


Fig. **1- 4** Map of Penang's urban growth (reproduced from the MPPP and GTZ (1989) *George Town Urban Conservation Programme, Pilot Study,* MPPP-GTZ cooperation)

2

URBAN HISTORY, COMMUNITY, AND ARCHITECTURAL IDENTITY 1786 - 1970

Introduction

In September 2001, in preparation for the application for UNESCO World Heritage Listing, the architectural practice in which I was employed, was requested to write the physical description of *The Historic Island Port Settlement of George Town*. This chapter formed the foundation of the description. Placing it within the context of subsequent conservation experience, I realised I had only skimmed the surface of more than two centuries of George Town's urban evolution. Further research into 'what makes George Town so unique?' was needed in order to meet UNESCO's criteria.

Almost undisturbed since the *Control of Rent Ordinance* in 1948, the tangible architectural heritage of the inner city remains, although in a fragile condition. The human legacy, however, greatly affected by the loss of the port, social and cultural development policies since independence, and the *Control of Rent (AKS) Repeal* is uncertain. Without the communities and their way of life, the heritage architecture that survives, will be all that is left of a once vibrant multicultural port settlement.

This chapter looks briefly at the historical formation of George Town under the administration of the East India Company (1786-1867), and the British and Japanese colonial governments - until Malayan independence in August 1957. It explores global and regional influences, migrant populations, and the patterns of urban growth. The cultural identities of the indigenous and migrant populations are investigated through the architecture, as a reflection of waves of economic and social change, which have created the rich diversity of forms, fusions, cultural semiotics, traditions, and fashions.

Global and regional influences

The story of George Town's urban growth revolves around the port, secured in 1786 as an East India Company (EIC) trading settlement, in order to protect its interests along its Indian seaboard against rival European nations. Negotiations with the Sultan Abdullah of Kedah, by an English merchant, Francis Light, for the establishment of a settlement on the island of *Poolo Pinang*, were concluded in 1786 (Andaya and Andaya, 1982: 107). On 11 August of that year, the British flag was raised and the island claimed as a possession under the name of Prince of Wales Island (Logan, 1850: 631). Light was later considered to have double-crossed both the EIC and the Sultan, having offered protection to the Sultan against his enemies, unsupported by the EIC (Cheah B.K., 2001:21).

Throughout its history this pivotal position as a trading port between the Indian and Chinese trade routes and their connections to Europe and the Americas, has served to expose Penang to extensive global influences. For example, although thousands of miles from Europe, during the Napoleonic Wars (1793-1815), following the French capture of Holland, the Dutch government sought British protective custody for its possessions in the East (Khoo and Lo, 1992:7). On Napoleon's overall defeat in 1815, the former Dutch port of Malacca was returned by the EIC, its fortifications destroyed in order to weaken the Dutch position in the Straits.

Whilst British trade was continually threatened by rival European nations, the Sultan of Kedah attempted and failed to oust the EIC from the island. A treaty of 1790, agreed an annual payment of $6,000 Spanish dollars from the British to the Sultan for loss of trading profits. Province Wellesley, a strip of land on the mainland, was annexed in 1800 for a further sum of $4,000 [Fig.2-1], still paid today (2003) by the Penang State Government (Cheah, 2001: 22). No provision for military assistance was included in the treaty (Clodd, 1948: 82). By 1821, the Siamese had invaded Kedah, expelled the Sultan from his lands, and forced the migration of many Malays to Province Wellesley and Prince of Wales Island. However, with the accession of King Mongkut to the Siamese throne in 1851, the Siamese threat weakened and more stable trade relations were established.

Further north the imperial government of China, in 1838, attempted to quash the import of Indian opium by British traders. Torn by rebellions, secret society activities, and an enfeebled army, China was soon forced into negotiations. The *Treaty of Nanking* in 1842, and the *Treaty of Bogue* the following year enabled the British to trade openly in specific treaty ports and a firm stronghold was established when the Chinese ceded Hong Kong to the British (Khoo and Lo, 1992: 694). As Asia became the commercial stage for Europe, the trade routes were exploited continually. This was often to the advantage of Europe, but to the disadvantage of its trading partners. Prince of Wales

Island, located in the midst of these feuds, continually sought new opportunities to advance trade both as a transhipment port and as a distributor for regional goods.

Administrations and Trade

Francis Light, as the first Superintendent of Prince of Wales Island, and four officials, established the settlement of George Town, as a dependency of the Presidency of Bengal, under the Governor-General of India. By 1805, Penang was elevated to the Fourth Presidency of India and was granted a large staff and government investment. However, the Indian government was less than convinced of the value of its investment, and its support fluctuated.

In 1819 the British founded Singapore and then secured Malacca from the Dutch in 1824. Together, in 1826 these three ports became the 'Straits Settlements', administered from Penang, which enhanced its regional status. Following the abolition of the Fourth Presidency in 1830, however, the Straits Settlement administration was removed to the commercially more successful Singapore by 1832. Following the abolition of the EIC in 1858, the India Office took over these responsibilities (Hall, 1955: 561). Finally, in 1867, under pressure from the commercial community of Singapore, the Straits Settlements acquired Crown Colony status under the more stable control of the Colonial Office in London (Mills, 1966: 82).

Local issues in the Malay States began to influence British interests, particularly the Larut Wars in Perak, which arose over the control of tin revenues by the Malay chiefs, and later the Chinese struggle for the mines. The British brought about a settlement under the Pangkor Treaty, 20 January 1874, which stabilised the tin industry and the states of Selangor and Perak were brought under the supervision of a British 'Residential System' (Khoo and Lo 1992:108). Joined by Negri Sembilan (1885) and Pahang (1887) they formed the Federated Malay States (FMS) administered from Kuala Lumpur. The British continued to create appropriate administrative arrangements throughout the Malay Peninsula in order to protect their commercial interests, until the Japanese invasion in December 1941. The secrecy surrounding the British evacuation of Penang created a feeling of mistrust. Thus, on returning as a British Military Administration, following the Japanese surrender, they found a population much changed towards them. To support the aim of a united Japanese protectorate, the Japanese had weakened the position of the Malay rulers and encouraged a vision of a Malay-wide entity. The British returned to a country preparing for independence (Andaya and Andaya, 1982: 248).

In 1948, the various British administrative structures came together under a centralised government, which formed the Federation of Malaya. In 1950, City Council elections were introduced and on 1 January 1957 Penang was give City status (Khoo Su Nin, 1993:14). Independence was finally gained from the British and an elected

democratic Federal government was formed in 1957. Throughout all the administrative changes George Town fought to maintain its position as a regional and global trading hub.

Economic development

The local administrations for the island underpinned British trade in the region, often with the interests of traders and administrators combined. Light and his trading partner, James Scott, were prime examples. Light established a commercial port 'free from all restrictions' (Logan, 1850: 653) in contrast to the commercial constraints of the Dutch ports. The revenues raised came from gaming, *betel* leaf, *atap* (palm leaf), and tobacco farms, and a small tax on shops. The bulk of revenue came from spirit (1789) and opium (1791) farms; the gaming farms continued only until 1810. Light offered British protection to all those who traded and settled there, and in consequence commercial enterprise flourished and the island became a 'liberal haven' for those escaping persecution, poverty and strife (Khoo Su Nin, 1993:5).

Napoleon's closure of the European markets, the oversupply of pepper and the concentration on the more lucrative cargo of opium from India to China, severely threatened a pepper industry in which Light had invested. Arab and Indian Muslims, who became the urban élite of the settlement, until the decline in trade in the 1850s, dominated the pepper trade. By 1845, America had transferred its source of pepper from Acheh to Penang and exported arms and ammunition; but trade was badly affected by the American Civil War 14 years later (Turnbull, 1972: 178).

Spices, including cloves, nutmeg, and cinnamon, were cultivated on the island, and there were more than thirty spice plantations by 1818 (Tregonning, 1966: 46). In 1837, following earlier developments in Singapore, a few European merchants established the Penang Chamber of Commerce and together the Straits Settlements Chambers were able to exercise decisive powers (Khoo and Lo, 1992: 19). By 1840, cultivation of coconuts, *betel* nut, rice and sugar cane, was dominated by European plantations and processing plants, particularly in Province Wellesley. Spice plantations also attracted Chinese farmers and smallholders, and by 1850, large areas, were cleared and cultivated.

Trade potential with more distant lands and the transport of diverse cargoes became possible with the arrival of steamships in 1838 which also helped to combat piracy in the Malacca Straits; pirates were easily outrun by the speed of steam craft (Thomson, 1864: 219). Contact with Europe was also brought closer as the four-month journey by sail was reduced to 40 days by steam (Turnbull, 1972: 28). The opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 further increased communication and competition.

George Town's harbour had been the transhipment and distribution centre for both North Malaya and the region, suitable for lighters with cargo and passenger ships

anchored out at sea. This provided multi-tiered employment for both small *sampans* and larger lighters to transport goods and people back and forth. The cutting of a deep-water wharf in Belawan-Deli, Sumatra, threatened this position (Martin, 1952:70).

Penang's immigration, particularly of Chinese labour, accelerated between 1851 and 1861, with the opening of tin mines in Larut, Perak. Penang's merchants imported mine supplies, established opium farms, and exported the tin. However, growing chaos between two rivals, mainly Chinese 'secret' societies in Larut and Penang, brought tensions and severely threatened the trade (Andaya and Andaya, 1982: 149). This resulted in the Pangkor Treaty, following which the first lines of the FMS railway were built to carry the tin to Penang to be smelted and shipped as ingots to Europe and America (Khoo Su Nin, 1993:13).

Penang's global and local trade increased by 400% between 1883 and 1908 aided by the new 600 foot-long Swettenham Pier, opened in 1905 (Wright and Cartright, 1908: 730). The port, and indirectly George Town, entered a 'golden age' with a world demand for tin and rubber; such companies as the Dunlop Rubber Company also established branches in George Town. The heart of commercial activity, Beach Street, was described in 1904 as ill-planned and thronged with *godowns* and shops owned by such diverse nationalities and cultures as Swiss, Germans, Armenians, Indian Muslims, Chinese and Japanese, many of which were branches of Singapore businesses. By then the Europeans monopolised the steamship and insurance agencies, the Chinese continued to dominate as licence-holders of the spirit and opium farms, and both Chinese and Europeans were storekeepers, merchants, and importers. One Indian Tamil Muslim, M.M. Noordin, however, was noted for his trade with India, China, London and Marseilles, a possible importer of the Marseille roof tiles which graced the Straits Eclectic villas and mansions of the new millionaires along the north beach, Northam Road (ibid.: 752).

George Town's fortunes fluctuated with the price of tin and rubber, and by the time of the Japanese occupation, fortunes had suffered under the Depression of the 1930s and the 'golden age' was on the decline. The Allied bombing of strategic Japanese locations during World War Two caused damage to the harbour area, where government offices were located. However, as a lighter harbour, recovery was relatively fast and trade recovered as the world demand for Malaya's commodities grew. As Clark describes in *Penang's Illustrated Guide*

> In the harbour Chinese junks and native craft, their brown sails swelling to the breeze, drift past rusty tankers and spotless liners from all the countries of the world. Along the waterfront, Chinese junk builders ply their ancient craft in yards sandwiched between the offices of busy merchant firms (Clark, 1952: 19).

This description of activity, and plans to extend the port facilities in 1952 were short lived. In order to maintain a high profile as a regional transhipment and distribution centre, a container port was built on the mainland shore opposite. Whilst trade continued and fortunes were still made, the raison d'etre of George Town changed.

The creation of urban villages

Light's siting of the early settlement was based on two criteria: firstly a suitable position for a jetty to project out into the sea, allowing the use of small craft; and secondly a fort to protect the jetty and the commercial district which grew up around it. The easterly projection from the cape was chosen and from there Light established the formal grid of streets [Fig.2-2]. By October 1786 Light noted

> Our inhabitants increase very fast, Choolias, Chinese, and Christians. They are already disputing the ground, everyone building as fast as they can (City Council, 1996: 1).

The island was already established as a fresh water anchorage and evidence of even earlier settlers (tombs, cleared furrowed land and fruit trees) were discovered supporting an account of 'a great many inhabitants on the island, not less than 2,000' (Macalister, 1803: 23). Inland, a small Malay *kampong* was said to have already existed in the *Datuk Keramat* area (Clodd, 1948: 47).

Traders and settlers came from far and wide; 'British, Dutch, Portuguese, Armenians, Arabs, Parsees, Chinese, Chooliahs, Malays, Burgesses, Burmahs, Siamese and Javanese etc. etc. etc....' and created a patchwork of ethnic villages throughout George Town (Leith, 1804:24 -25). Within the first six years the inhabitants totalled 7,000, including 1,000 East India Company servants and 'followers', and at least 2,000 itinerants. Labour shortage, however, was a continual problem and chain immigration was actively encouraged.

Even before possession was declared, Light records that the 'Data of Qualla Moodoo', a Muslim leader from a northern mainland trading port, requested permission to build a house (cited in Logan 1850: 629). Indian Muslim traders were amongst the earliest settlers, often marrying local Malay women, and they formed the urban business élite. Their offspring became known as the *Jawi Peranakan* or Straits-born Muslims (Khoo Su Nin 1993: 15).

Light also notes 'a prahu from *Queda* [Kedah] likewise arrived with Kapitan China Koh Lay Huan and some Christians of India' and 'erected a small bazaar near

the cantonments' (cited in Logan, 1850: 629). Kapitan Koh Lay Huan established a settlement of over 500 Chinese from *Kuala Muda* in China Street in 1787 (Chung and Yeoh, 1986: 82). Marriage with local Malay and Sumatran Malay women ensued.

> 'From Asahan alone, there used to be sometimes 300 slaves, particularly females, exported to Malacca and Pinang in a year. The women get comfortably settled as wives of opulent Chinese merchants and live in great comfort' (Anderson, 1971: 297, cited in Lubis, 2002: 4).

The Chinese Hokkien and Teow Chew migrants developed a patois introducing many Malay words into their daily language. Daughters of such unions were married off to suitable *sinkehs* (new arrivals) from China, giving rise to what became known as the *Baba-Nonya* or Straits Chinese culture and they developed their own cultural identities. Seeking better opportunities, such Chinese-Malay, or *Baba-Nonya* families, already established in Malacca, migrated to Penang and Singapore.

Whilst the Chinese settled within the urban areas, the Muslims from Kedah and Sumatran Arabs from Acheh formed villages of random housing patterns at the edge of the grid. The Muslim Bugis traders, also referred to by the general term 'Malay', from Borneo and Celebes (Sulawesi), settled in a *kampong* on the Penang River. The Burmese too established a small town, west of George Town, subsisting on fishing (Leith, 1804: 28).

Malay *kampongs* were formed around sources of food and transport routes (for example the coastal fishermen's villages or the rice farmers' villages along rivers) and were essentially rural. They cleared timber, fished and farmed rice and were noted as excellent goldsmiths (ibid.: 28). Their more rural and settled patterns of life contrasted strongly with the Asian immigrants who came to work, make their fortunes and if possible, leave.

As George Town expanded these rural *kampongs* were either pushed further out to the perimeters, overlaid by rows of terraced shophouses or absorbed completely into the urban landscape, identifiable only by street name or remaining places of worship [Fig. 2-3].

To the south of Light's grid of streets, 'Malay Town' evolved around the natural town boundary of Prangin Creek. In 1792, the wealthy Arab Muslims -Tunku 'Seyad Hussain Idid' of Achehnese royal descent (and Yemeni ancestry), and Seyad Juffar, settled with their extensive families in the area now known as Lebuh Acheh (Acheen Street) (Logan, 1850: 655). Tunku Seyad Hussain Idid established the brick built *Mesjid Melayu Lebuh Acheh,* in 1808, around which were clustered dwellings, a *madrasah* (religious school), and gathering places for community activities, a land use pattern which mirrored the spatial arrangement that Muhammad first developed in Medina

(*Utusan Konsumer*, 2002: 11). The earliest urban Muslim community prospered, and Lebuh Acheh became the focus for pilgrims from Borneo, Sumatra, and Thailand departing to Jeddah. Ticket offices and pilgrim lodgings and shops thrived together with printing presses -later printing the first modern Malay novels and publishing Islamic literature for the region (Khoo Su Nin, 1990: 17; *Utusan Konsumer*, 2002: 12).

In the early 1800s, houses were numbered in both *Jawi* and Malay, suggesting that the majority of the population were Muslim (City Council, 1966: 8). Typically, their settlement pattern centred around the mosque, which was built when more than 40 males were in the community. Although today the typical random pattern of a *kampong* has all but disappeared in the urban setting, the inner city of George Town is peppered with small mosques, indicating the presence of Muslim communities. In the 1970s, the Muslim population was discouraged from practicing traditional superstitious beliefs. As a result, their small shrines or *keramats* were taken over by the Chinese and can still be seen around the inner city as an indication of the extent of the ethnic Malay population.

Tunku Seyad Hussain Idid requested responsibility for governing his own people according to their customs. Light agreed and considered self-governance as prudent in a population brought up under 'feudal laws and customs' with various languages, prejudices and religions (Logan, 1851: 8). Superintendent Macdonald continued this approach and appointed a 'Captain to each language', answerable to himself, the Lieutenant Governor.

Early writings using the term 'Malays' refer to a mixed ethnic grouping, as Light notes in a despatch, 25 Jan 1794; 'The Malays, comprehending a great variety of people from *Queda*, through all the Malay Peninsular [sic], the Islands, Sumatra and Java, form another considerable part of our inhabitants.' (Logan, 1851: 10). In the 1790s, Light also notes 'about 1,000 Indian shopkeepers and coolies settled on the island' (Sandhu, 1969: 47); they were both Muslim and Hindu. The term 'Indian' used today, implies Hindu. However, Indian Muslims settled alongside their Indian Hindu neighbours from the southwest Malabar Coast and the east Indian Coromandel Coast using Tamil as their common language.

Of the Indian migrations to the island the Muslim and Hindu Malabaris, (later known as Malayalees) were amongst the earliest settlers from the spice-trading Malabar Coast of southwest India. Evidence of their settlements from the sixth century can be found in Kedah and along riverine settlements of Province Wellesley. Late eighteenth-century migrations to Penang comprised traders such as cloth merchants; artisan carpenters, masons as well as convicts (from 1789) and later educated white-collar workers employed in administration (Suresh, 2001: 6-12).

Although Malabar Street in George Town and a Malabari market was recorded in a despatch from Light (City Council, 1961:1), and the Malabar language was known

to have been taught in a Muslim school in the 1830s, few other references have been made to the community (Khoo Su Nin, 1993: 73). Suresh Narayanan argues that Muslim Chulia migration from the Coromandel Coast of southeast India, which followed soon after the establishment of the settlement as well as and intermarriage of Malabaris with local women, caused their identity loss. Malabar Street very soon became Chulia Street and *Kampong Malabar, Kampong Kaka* and an area along the western town boundary adjacent to the Dato Koyah shrine, a common Malabari name, became Malabari settlements (Suresh, 2001:5).

The Tamil Muslim 'Chooliah' arrived to settle as merchants and possessed 'Property to a very great amount' (Leith, 1804: 27). Long established on the mainland they migrated to Penang for the new trading opportunities. By the early 1800s, the Tamil Muslim Chulia leader, Kapitan Kling, built a simple brick mosque for the community, importing materials and labour from India, replacing an *atap* mosque built on arrival by the company's Sepoys. Eighteen acres of land neighbouring the Achehnese-Arab Muslim district between Lebuh Acheh and Chulia Street were granted under the *East India Grant No. 367*, in 1801, '... not to be sold or transferred but to revert to the Honourable Company should it cease to be used for the purpose intended' (Land Office, 1932:10). This endowment or *waqf* land was intended to provide an income for the upkeep of the mosque.

Later Chulia migrants became porters, field labourers, sampan boatmen, stevedores, and coolies and stayed perhaps two or three years, returning to India, only to be replaced by a new influx of labour. The *sangams*, male labourers' hostels, still exist today but most of the inhabitants are retired and unable to return to their families. A later wave of migrant Chulia white-collar workers, police officers, and merchants remained as established settlers.

The southern Indian Chettiar Hindus at first concentrated in the textile trade and arrived in Penang as employees of Madras-based companies. Granted land on Queen Street in 1801 by the EIC, the present Sri Mahamariamman Chettiar Temple was not built until 1833. As part of the temple tradition, it is renovated every twelve years. Penang's wealthy Chettiars became moneylenders and businessmen, whilst the poor worked as labourers, including Chettiar-owned recycling companies close to the *Mesjid Melayu Lebuh Acheh*. Penang Street, between Market Street, and Chulia Street, was known as Chetty Street (Lo, 1900: 216). This was where the Chettiars owned much property mainly due to forfeited mortgages (Khoo Su Nin, 1993: 144).

Tamil Hindu print-workers in and around Madras were brought over to Penang to aid the publication of the *Penang Gazette* (Rajavelan, 2001: 3). They were housed in an area known as *Kampong Kuil*, referring to the Indian temple there; it comprised Argyll, Transfer, Penang and Northam Roads, where many of their descendants remained until the dislocation of communities following the *AKS Repeal*. Argyll Road

was also called *Bang-ka-li-hang,* (Bengali Lane). In this instance, Bengali refers to Indians who came across the Bay of Bengal. Tamil Hindus were also brought over as indentured labour to serve in plantations both on the island and in Province Wellesley. Hindu labourers arrived in greater numbers at the turn of the twentieth century, and settled around the port and godown areas. Thus a Tamil-speaking neighbourhood of south Indian Muslim and Hindu communities stretched between the Arab Muslim community of Lebuh Acheh and the Hindi-speaking northern Indians of Bishop Street. Boundaries were not strict and a peppering of different peoples within the main community groups can still be found.

The northern Indian Bengalis, Gujeratis, and Parsees who came to George Town were mainly merchants. Although they may have married locally, many saved for their eventual return home (Turnbull, 1972: 8). Both Hindus and Muslims, they settled in George Town in the nineteenth century, dominating the textile trade and establishing an area in the commercial district, speaking a common Hindi language for communication (Binwani, 2001:1).

The northwest Indian Bengali community arrived in the early 1800s. A later wave of migration, of the early 1900s, brought clerks and administrators who filled government positions. After their term of tenure they returned to India leaving only a small number in Penang today. The Bengali mosque on Leith Street was originally founded in 1803. As a private mosque the money was raised from the Bengali Muslim community for the rebuilding in 1958, which suggests a sufficient congregation to support its continued existence (Abdul Kahar et al, n.d.).

Some of the earliest north Indian families in Penang were the Sindhi originating from the Sind province, now Pakistan, who arrived in the mid-nineteenth century, many with affiliated businesses in Indonesia and Singapore. The first business was established in 1860 in Beach Street attracting more to the area in the 1920s; at the same time Punjabis came to join the civil service. Only a few Sindhis settled before partition in India in 1947. However, migration increased following their loss of a homeland (Binwani, 2001: 1).

The area of George Town favoured by the north Indian traders for businesses and residences was the earliest laid out by Light namely Beach, Bishop, Penang, King and Chulia Streets, though their temple, the Sri Kunj Bihari Temple (1833) is on Penang Road, opposite *Kampong Malabar,* once associated with southern Malabari Indians (Satish, 2001:1).

Sikhs first arrived in Penang as political prisoners following the Punjab wars of 1848. Their main introduction, however, was as a police force to bring order in the Larut wars. Tall, bearded, and imposing they had already proven their ability to control the Chinese in Hong Kong in 1867. Many were sent to Penang to staff the police and the Security Force of the Penang Harbour Board. The Chinese and

European businessmen, recognising their talents as protectors, engaged them as *jaga* or guards to sleep on the five-foot-ways on *charpoys* (camp beds with webbing) outside their businesses.

Sikhs were to be found in the transportation business, either using handcarts or bullock carts. They also controlled the fresh milk supply, transporting it in large brass containers along the streets. As education was much revered many of the children of the first generation in George Town became the professional backbone of Penang as lawyers, doctors, veterinary surgeons, interpreters and clerks. Many of their legal practices remain located within the historic inner city close to the courts (Rajindar, 2001: 4).

The first Sikh *Gurdrawa* temple was sited within Fort Cornwallis, alongside the police barracks. In 1901 a site in Brick Kiln Road was granted to the community and the Diamond Jubilee Gurdrawa built, in honour of Queen Victoria, from the donations of every Sikh 'police and guide' (Yong, 1999a). This and other *gurdrawas* in Penang are possibly the only built legacies of the Sikh community.

In 1789 convicts, of all castes and religions, were sent from India as labour for government projects, increasing rapidly in number to 1,300 by 1821. They were given relative freedom whilst employed (Crawfurd, 1828: 20). European fears for the safety of the population grew when mutineers were sent following the Indian Mutiny of 1857 and Indian-style secret societies became commonplace from this time (Turnbull, 1972: 105). By 1860 the importation of convicts stopped and as no provision had been made for repatriation upon release, convicts would often marry locally, joining the peaceful and established Indo-Malay community known as *Jawi Pekan* – 'Town Malays' (Turnbull, 1970: 90). They settled in the *Kampong Malabar* area and as petty traders started the Chowrasta Market, opposite the building of their internment.

Malabari construction convicts continued to be employed by the Public Works Department on release, others sought private employment with Indian and Chinese contractors. The most enterprising became contractors themselves securing government contracts for public buildings and government quarters in the expanding suburbs. Malabaris also built and manned the Penang Hill railway and Penang's early trams (Suresh, 2001:9).

Until the mid-nineteenth century, George Town was predominantly an Indian-Malay settlement. By 1830, out of a population of 40,000 only 9,000 were Chinese (Turnbull, 1972: 8). This proportion changed significantly with Chinese immigration to the tin mines and processing plants of Perak and Penang from the mid-nineteenth century. The Chinese population was then set to become the dominant group in Penang. They comprised five major groups from the southeastern Chinese provinces of Fukkien and Kwantung where internal disorder was widespread. These were Hokkien, Hakka (Kek), Cantonese, Teow Chew, and Hylam (Hainanese).

The wealthy Hokkien Khoo clan, from Amoy, Fukkien province, claim early migrations to the island between the fifteenth and seventeenth centuries (Lim-Khoo, 1998). Until the late 1800s these and other Straits Chinese adhered to Chinese costume, wearing the *queue* as a badge of honour, a badge of servitude under the Manchus (Clammer, 1980:4). Later they adopted western dress and hairstyle, whilst their women blended into the Chinese household, with their culinary arts and dress and continued to wear the *baju panjang* (long blouse) and *sarong* (wrap-around cloth). The more famous *kabaya* (thin blouse), still favoured by elderly *Nonya* ladies today, was adopted in the 1930s. Proud to be British subjects, they developed social clubs of their own where no 'native of China' was permitted (Vaughan, 1879: 3). Many of their sons received English education either in Penang or overseas, neglecting to learn Mandarin, although on return they were ruthlessly 'forced back into the old order of things' (ibid.: 4). In 1857, under the Naturalisation Act, all those born in the Straits Settlements automatically became British subjects broadening the gap between the Straits-Chinese and China-born Chinese (Turnbull, 1972: 36).

As plantation owners, tailors, merchants and shopkeepers the wealthy Hokkiens built clan association temples, or *kongsis*. As benevolent associations, they provided aid to new arrivals of the clan, offering social services, ancestor worship and funeral rights for a predominantly male population. Thus, the associations substituted the social function of 'family'. These temples were often sited within a courtyard walled with clan houses replicating a clan village complete with hidden entrances, and in effect isolating the clan from the surrounding population.

There are five major Hokkien clans in George Town: Cheah, Yeoh, Khoo, Lim and Tan. Four clan *kongsis* established their association temples between *Mesjid Melayu Lebuh Acheh* and *Mesjid Kapitan Kling*. The first to be built was the Cheah *Kongsi* in 1820, followed in 1844 by the Khoo-dominated Hokkien secret society Khian Teik or Toa Pek Kong temple, concealed behind a row of shophouses. The *kongsis* also acquired land, plantations, and houses and became some of the largest landowners in Penang today.

With the abolition of the African slave trade in 1833, the British set up the *coolie* trade, mainly from Amoy, to supply human labour to Cuba, Peru, and the Straits Settlements plantations (Khoo and Lo, 1992: 703). On arrival, the new employer would pay the passage of the *sinkehs*, obtaining the right of their labour for a year. The trade flourished even though conditions for travel were deplorable and many never reached their destination.

The vast majority of these mainly Hokkien immigrants were illiterate, transient, single male peasants who came to make their fortunes in the tin mines and plantations. Much of their income was sent to families in China, with the remainder spent on sustenance, gambling, and opium. Respect for material success replaced the traditional

Chinese respect for scholarship and the Mandarin class (Turnbull, 1972: 126). Although immigration from China was illegal until the 1860s, the Taiping rebellion against the Manchu Imperial Dynasty in which 20,000,000 lost their lives, resulted in an influx of 2,000 to 3,000 new arrivals, mainly Hakka, to Penang each year (Khoo and Lo, 1992: 702; Turnbull, 1972: 122). Chinese women who migrated were often sold into prostitution for which there was a high demand.

The Hainanese, from Hainan Island, often came as cooks to the wealthy Hokkiens. The Hakka, from Kwantung, Kwangsi and Fukkien mountain areas were known as the 'Jews of China', many becoming rags to riches businessmen with interests in the spirit and opium farms (Andaya and Andaya, 1982: 137). They also set up rice and sugar mills in Province Wellesley and were fishmongers processing the produce of the Malay farmers and fishermen (Khoo and Lo, 1992: 18).

The disparity in wealth between the impoverished Chinese-born labourers and the wealthy, mainly Hokkien, Straits-born communities was immense. The former often lived in conditions little different from their lives in China. Trapped into poverty through addiction to opium and gambling they had little hope of raising the funds to return (Khoo and Lo, 1992: 12). Farmers, tin miners, carpenters, smiths, shoemakers, and other artisans were amongst the poorer Cantonese from Kwantung.

Cantonese and Hakka were quickly absorbed into '*Hui*' brotherhoods which were established in China to overthrow the Manchu (Ching) and restore the Ming dynasty. In the vastness of China the differences between the brotherhoods' ideologies did not cause friction. In the closeness of Penang, their differences were magnified (Jackson, 1967: 130). Continuous rivalry over the control of the pepper and tin trade, opium, and gambling farms and the importation of women for prostitution caused jealousy. The predominantly Cantonese *Ghee Hin* society joined the Malay White Flag Society and the Hakka *Hai San* society joined both the Hokkien *Khian Teik* and Malay Red Flag Societies (Khoo and Lo, 1992: 38). Ready to honour and protect their members from slight, a minor incident over a *rambutan* skin was said to be the catalyst, which started ten days of rioting in 1867 by 30,000 Chinese, and 4,000 Malays, known later as the Penang Riots (Purcell, 1948: 168). The government attempted to keep the peace between the societies by enrolling society leaders as special constables. These secret societies were suppressed but not outlawed until much later.

Community areas established by the first arrivals expanded through migrations of kin or village neighbours. Pitt, China, Armenian and Acheen Streets (Lebuh Armenian, Lebuh Acheh), were considered Hokkien areas whilst Bishop, Church, Penang and Chulia Streets were Cantonese. The Armenian Street, Carnarvon Street junction was Teow Chew (Mak, 1981: 78). The Hainanese formed their association and temple on Muntri Street and settled around the area. The Hakkas settled along Queen

and King Streets (Khoo Salma, 1997 b: 4). Having made their fortunes, they moved to large villas in Leith Street and Church Street by the late 1890s.

Midway along Pitt Street facing China Street, the Kuan Yin, or Goddess of Mercy Temple was built, in 1800, to serve the Canton-Hokkien communities, although built in Hokkien style (Khoo Su Nin, 1993: 150). It is one of the most active Chinese temples today. China Street, second only to Beach Street, in commercial importance was called 'big street' by the Hokkien traders and 'Kuan Yin Temple straight street' by the Cantonese worshippers.

Aside from the rapidly increasing Chinese communities, there was the smaller Eurasian community. The Eurasians fled from Phuket and joined other Catholics of Portuguese decent from Kedah, arriving on a ship sent by Light, on the 15 August 1786 (Logan, 1850: 632). They first settled in Church Street and Bishop Street, where they established their Catholic church. They later moved to Stewart and Argus Lanes close to the European quarter and their new church, the Church of the Assumption established in 1802 (Khoo Su Nin, 1993: 91) Hokkien names for the streets around the area indicate the extent of the Eurasian community, *Sek-lan-ni hang,* means Eurasian Lane. St. Xavier's Institution (1852) the Catholic Mission School of the Le Salle Brothers is called *sek-lan-ni-oh,* or Eurasian School, and the Church of the Assumption, *sek-lan-ni le-pai-ting,* Eurasian Church (Lo, 1900).

Finally, we come to the small European community of George Town. They remained close to the fort and their commercial activities and they built *godowns* along Beach Street on the east shore and bungalows along Light Street and Farquhar Street on the north shore. 'Vague' traces of European houses in this area exist. The first governor's house, now within the compound of the Convent Light Street School and St. George's Anglican Church, built in 1818, remain as evidence of their community.

From the few available accounts the social lives of the Europeans, certainly of the upper classes, seemed to be highly entertaining, as Thomson recounts during his visit in 1838 (Thomson, 1864: 31). European men outnumbered women, thus 'marriage' to local wives took place, and later sisters of European settlers came out to join their brothers. Thus, intermarriage between the families was common as noted in the parish records (Garnier, 1923: 10). Not all Europeans came as senior Company servants, plantation owners, and merchants. They were equally as diverse in economic standing as were all the other ethnic groups. A blacksmith, a builder, a tavern keeper, and even English domestic servants were amongst the first arrivals.

Steamships, which had opened new trading opportunities, also improved the communication with Europe and brought about an influx of members of the stiff, Victorian middle-class; they were conscious of their Britishness and this threatened the established European residents who socialised easily with their Asian counterparts. Social life became more sophisticated, snobbish and exclusively European (Cameron,

1865: 287-8). The young Turnbull Thomson in 1839, however, described the new arrivals as bringing some form of decency and moral values to a European community corrupt with greed and powerful local wives.

Many Europeans benefited from the informal style of Light's governance that continually gave land away without grants and appropriated large estates for himself (Hall, 1955: 545). However, Light neglected to reserve land for public purposes. Those clearing and settling land 'became thereby virtually possessed of a property in the soil to him and his heirs for ever' (W. E. Phillips, cited in Tregonning, 1966: 37). In India government requirements for private Europeans to hold residence licences, and the prohibited land ownership, was not enforced. Light's successor, Superintendent Macdonald (1796), was disliked for his attempts to formalise the 'arrangement' by which permits to settle and obtain land had been established (Turnbull, 1972: 11). Macdonald complained in a dispatch to Bengal in 1796 that 'European settlers here are of the pale of all legal control' (cited in Logan, 1851:107). In 1801 when the position of Judge and Magistrate was appointed it was mainly to administer justice on the unruly Europeans. Leith points out that no European could be imprisoned for debt and as such, 'there is no redress for them [natives] against the many usurious and shameful practices which some Europeans are but too ready to employ' (1804: 35).

Ethnically, linguistically and economically diverse, the general population, both settled and transient, of landowners and labourers, convicts and predominantly single illiterate Asian males who swelled the ranks of the warring secret societies, formed the foundation of Penang's population. And as Leith confirms

> There is not, probably any part of the world, where, in so small a space, so many different people are assembled together, or so great a variety of languages spoken (1804: 25).

The architectural legacy

Throughout George Town's urban history the myriad of cultures that both traded with and settled, introduced building styles from all over the world. As the hub of both regional and global trade, the influences stretched from Malacca (with Portuguese and Dutch styles), Junk Ceylon (Phuket), Kedah, and Acheh to China, India, Europe, America, and the Arab world. The early architecture of the island, therefore, related to the cultural values of the immigrant and indigenous builders. Its evolution can be divided into periods of influence, the first period saw building techniques developed by master craftsmen and apprentices, and was adapted to suit climatic and cultural needs, materials and transport constraints. The influences of the twentieth century, professional architects, engineers, and new technologies were predominantly western.

However, even the introduction of Modernism in the 1920s, maintained some of the essences of the individual cultures in the traditional building forms, creating an eclectic appeal. As new forms were introduced, for which there were no cultural precedents, such as the cinemas and car showrooms, the architecture followed its place of origin, that of America and Europe.

The remaining section of this chapter has attempted to describe this rich architectural legacy, sourced from the few scattered written and visual descriptions that exist. The true source of information to be 'read', however, is the rich heritage of the site itself. This description is by no means exhaustive and remains to be revised and enriched through further 'discoveries'.

Materials (1876 - 1900s)

From an early settlement of tents, the town was quickly established [Fig. 2-4a]. The site chosen for the settlement, however, was mainly swampland. This required the use of the indigenous Malay-style timber stilt building form until the land could be properly drained. By 1789, some two hundred properties had been built of these highly combustible materials, but much was destroyed in a fire. As a result, by the 1790s some 40 brick buildings were constructed (City Council, 1966: 106), although Leith mentions the 'lathing of houses', suggesting the use of 'lathe and plaster' for walls as found in India, England and China. He goes on to note that 'the Cajun Houses, of which George Town was originally built, are disappearing very fast' (Leith, 1804:14).

Easily available mangrove (*bakau*) timber trunks, from the coastal swamps, were used to form solid platforms or rafts beneath the brick and lime mortar columns and walls. As relatively flexible materials, they were highly suitable for variable soil conditions and water tables. Buildings on sites with lower water tables used burnt brick footing or granite to support the footings and brick walls. Improved drainage greatly enhanced building conditions, and was partially funded by the sale of Beach Street mud-bank in lots for reclamation (ibid.: 14). Improvements continued with raised, 'airy' 65 feet-wide streets, which were built by convict labour (City Council, 1966: 2).

The width of buildings was determined by the availability of materials and methods of transport. Thus, typically, early terraced buildings were of twelve feet between party walls, later sixteen feet to 20 feet dependent on the length of local hardwood beams and the wealth or status of the owner. With improved drainage, buildings were able to increase significantly in height with the benefit of better ventilation. The earliest shophouses, however, were short and low-level, thus prone to floods. As wealth and drained land increased so did the building length which was also raised above the roadway with an open public veranda known as the 'five-foot-way'.

Buildings before the late nineteenth century, when reinforced concrete was introduced, were essentially built from three materials, clay, timber, and lime, all locally obtainable. Clay was used for roof and floor tiles, and bricks; timber for beams and frames to openings; and lime as a mortar, plaster and coloured wash to the walls.

The Chinese introduced the use of granite as heel stones, thresholds, and the lower steps of staircases, avoiding materials prone to rot from sitting on damp surfaces. It was also a symbol of a strong and permanent foundation. Granite was also used as edging along the street side of the five-foot-way, and for *godowns* as the hardwearing surface for the five-foot-way itself, as well as the steps and bridges across the open drains. Granite was quarried locally, though large pieces for temples and mansions came from China as ballast in ships.

Internally terracotta-tiled floors allowed moisture from the damp earth beneath to evaporate through the tiles cooling the ground floor rooms in the process. The later fashionable use of decorative cement tiles reduced the practical effect. The upper floors were of timber beams, joists and planks, and in more elaborate and larger buildings, granite corbels were set into the brick wall to support the beams offering greater support and a place for carved symbols of good fortune for the Chinese users.

Cantonese temples required a grey clay brick as the traditional wall colour which possibly came from China, though in 1787 Captain Kyd notes that 'there is earth on every part of the island fit for making bricks, and a kind of white clay which when burnt remains of the colour and makes a very hard durable brick...' (cited in Logan 1850: 641). By 1788, Light had sent for ten Chinese bricklayers.

The soft burnt clay bricks, found in Little India, vary in size with one-and-a-half-inches or thinner, used in the earliest buildings. It is not known whether better manufacturing methods increased the size of bricks, or it was an attempt to avoid the imposition of the *Brick Tax, Act of 24*, under George III, reducing the number of bricks used for a construction, hence reducing the tax (Lloyd, 1925: 52). Bricks were also shipped from Malacca following the destruction of the Dutch Fort and other buildings in 1816.

Captain Kyd, in his review of natural resources, reported that '... at *Perlees*, a river to the northward of *Queda*, an excellent stone *chunam* may be produced which, in appearance, is much like that from Sylhette' (cited in Logan, 1850: 641). Lime or *chunam* was brought from Kedah until limekilns were established on the island. Lime plaster was applied as a breathable skin on the brick and lime mortar jointed walls, allowing moisture to rise from the base and evaporate as it rose, adding to the cooling 'mechanism'. In more noble edifices the *chunam* was rubbed with granite blocks until 'polished'. Whitewash or limewash, was used to deflect the light and heat from the exterior walls. As the fashion changed, yellow (from urine of cows fed on mango leaves), indigo blue (from the indigo flower), and later green (from a local leaf *pandan*),

were added to the limewash producing an array of pastel colours. Even a mock brick patterning and colouring was used by Chinese clan associations in the 1830s as can be seen on the Khoo and Tan Kongsi temples and buildings.

Early shutters were simple framed timber boards which later took on the embellishments and traditional carvings of the culture for which they were made and used. To allow both light and ventilation but to afford privacy and more importantly security, shutters began to incorporate louvers. The openings of tall, door-size shutters rose from floor level, accompanied by decorative, carved balustrades. Open fanlights above the door and shutter openings allowed cooling breezes to move though the buildings providing spaces for the development of fine carvings and were an extension of the glazed cartwheel fanlight typical of Georgian England. Glass casement windows, replacing shutters, were introduced after the 1900s.

Doors, significant in their cultural meaning, particularly for the Chinese, were often carved. On Chinese temples, huge monolithic slab doors were painted with images of protective door gods. For shophouses, the outer doors were carved with sections of lattice and open figures and landscapes allowing ventilation and a secure but private view of the street from within. The inner, solid pivoted timber doors were barred only at night against intruders. In later refiguring of entrances for commercial use, horizontal timber bars, incorporated into a sliding panel across the entrance, between the inner solid doors and the outer half doors, were traditionally used by the Cantonese.

As early as 1787, Trapaud's painting of Fort Cornwallis captures the use of unglazed terracotta roof tiles, alongside the combustible *atap*, palm leaf roof [Fig. 2.4b]. Ideal for hot and humid climates, they absorbed moisture, cooling the air beneath. These came in a variety of forms amongst which were the Indian 'v' shaped tiles, used for both the 'ridge' and 'furrow', and Chinese tiles, wide shallow 'furrow' tiles and semi-cylindrical 'ridge' tiles used mainly in temples. Terracotta Marseille tiles were introduced in the 1900s and were incorporated into both new and existing building forms.

As time progressed, embellishments appeared on these basic structures. They were both traditional to each culture and a fusion of decorative forms contributing to the eclectic mix of ornamentation; the carved wood panels and fascia boards of the indigenous and Indo-Malay forms; the elaborate mythological images of the Chinese; the domes and arches of Mogul India, and the neoclassical and gothic elements of British architecture. As Khoo describes

> The material culture and architecture of each historic community expressed claims of assimilation -through identification with the local society- and at

> the same time statements of difference -through reference to cultural origin (Khoo Su Nin, 1993: 21)

Form and meaning

George Town became a tapestry of global architecture and forms, and the basic materials the ingredients of a century of built forms and styles. A painting of the cape, in 1800, [Fig.2-4c] shows timber, stilt structures at the water's edge, possibly indicating an early 'jetty' settlement, the forefathers of today's clan jetty communities. James Wathen's painting of George Town of 1811 [Fig. 2-4d] captures his written description

> Turning the eye southward, Georgetown and the harbour are seen. The various styles in the construction of habitations of this small town have a strange effect- the European house, the Hindoo [sic] bungalow, the Malay cottage, the Chinese dwelling and the Burman hut are mingled together with regularity and apparently without plan, the first settlers having each built his residence according to the custom of the country
> (cited in Clodd, 1948: 120).

As the harbour grew and George Town became more established, the diversity of architectural forms became more evident, particularly in the places of worship which were built out of more permanent materials. This followed the issue of land grants in 1801. The white stucco church of Saint George's followed the influences of Georgian architecture of England imported through India. Hindu temples from southern India adorned with a 'mountain' of colourful figures above their main entrance, were sited close to Hokkien temples with their sweeping swallow tail roofs, Cantonese temples of sombre grey brick and the Indian-influenced mosques with onion domes and Mogul arches [Fig. 2-5]. Often the builders and craftsman would leave traces of their cultural practices on the buildings of other cultures.

Early bungalows, adapted from the indigenous Malay building form, were detached, and raised on stilts above the ground allowing cooling air to flow beneath the first floor [Fig. 2-6]. With drained land and the use of brick, manufactured by Indian convict labour, the **Indo-Malay** style evolved. This was adapted by the Arab and Sumatran Muslims living around the *Mesjid Melayu Lebuh Acheh* and later influenced the building forms used in the Argyll Road, Chulia Street, and Burmah Road areas. Brick columns replaced timber stilts supporting the timber floors above. The first floor external walls remained timber framed with continuous pairs of louvered shutters of door height, with decoratively carved balustrades within the openings. In effect the entire walls could be opened to provide ventilation. Above the

frame of the shutters, the timber wall plate supports the Indian tiled, hipped roof structure. This detached housing form can be found typically clustered around, or close by, the older mosques of George Town [Fig.2-7].

The *Jawi Peranakans* adopted this style in the 1850s, with noticeable differences. Here the first floor was reached by external stairs to one side of the main building, leading to a small platform inspired by the traditional *anjung* (porch) of a Malay house. A large pitched roof with decorative latticework to the upper parts protected the stairs. The bottom flight of stairs comprised masonry, decorated with ceramic and cement tiles, and known as Malacca Stairs, the upper section was timber with finely carved flat balustrades. Bargeboards and fascia boards were also finely carved. The shutters were more sophisticated, divided into two sections, the lower ending at balustrade height was solid, the upper section louvered, above which permanent ventilation would be achieved through arched fanlights [Fig. 2-8].

What are not evident are the ceremonies used in creating these masonry and timber buildings. The erection of a *kampong* house would have been a community affair and the siting of the main post or *tiang seri* (main post) divined through an elaborate ceremony led by the female of the household. The Indo-Malay houses would no doubt have included Sumatran, Arab, and northern Indian traditions in their customary building practices as well as the functions and hierarchical spaces within the house. Many of these properties remained in use by these cultural groups until the *AKS Repeal*, but many have now been abandoned.

A further bungalow type, the **Anglo-Indian** bungalow, first emerged in India in the 17th and 18th centuries. Two forms appear in George Town; the first is a development of the rectangular Indo-Malay bungalow, often built by Europeans [Fig.2-9]. The grandest example of this style in Penang is Suffolk House, once used by the island's governors. It follows the proportions of a double cube volume and the division of the façade into three bays, with emphasis on the centre. Colonnades of twin *chunam* plastered Tuscan columns flank its outer walls, similar in form to the Royal Circus in Bath, England. Sequential openings, for both people and air, from one side of the house to the other, demonstrate a respect of climate conditions learnt from India (see Chapter Seven). Other early 1800s bungalows are found today along Chulia Street and Market Lane.

The second form of Anglo-Indian bungalow, extended the Indo-Malay plan with a *porte-cochere* providing shelter for carriages or pedestrians below with a further room above, and was greatly favoured by the Straits Muslims [Fig. 2-10]. The plan was symmetrical, entering below the *porte-cochere* into a central hall flanked by rooms on either side. The front and rear portions of the building opened the full width of the space allowing ventilation into the hall and providing an area to one side of the front door for the timber stairs. In both forms, brick and lime plaster replaced timber walls

both internally and externally on both floors. Openings became more ornate with arched cartwheel fanlights above tall louvered shutters, and turned balustrades within the openings.

The predominant building form which has survived in large numbers, is the terraced shophouse, built for many different uses -religious, commercial, residential and mixed commercial and residential- and developed, in over a century, from the simple early shophouse to ornamented confections for the prosperous élite.

Built perpendicular to the streets, each shophouse, within a row, was separated by party walls. The roofs, façades, and interiors were independent to each unit. A sheltered, public walkway, *kaki-lima* or five-foot-way, was created by setting back the ground floor façade, with the first floor supported on columns at the street edge, providing a continuous passageway below.

Depending on the function of the shophouse, the ground floor façade was either open for commercial use, secured with timber shutters at night, or a solid brick wall pierced by a tripartite arrangement; a central door opening flanked on either side by window openings. The decoration and patterning of the mouldings around these openings and the dressing of the openings themselves varied according to the culture and traditions of those who built or used the premises. The upper storey also evolved in form as well as decoration, and this became a more marked indication of the period of shophouse design.

Early shophouses of George Town, of which a few still remain in Queen Street and Love Lane, were simple in construction [Fig. 2-11]. Shorter than their later counterparts they comprise a single pitched roof with the ridge perpendicular to the party walls. The ground floor façade was usually of brick with a central pair of timber doors flanked by simple rectangular windows with shutters, in heavy wooden frames. The first floor façade, between the first floor beam and the roof beam, consists of a short timber wall above which solid panelled shutters stretch the full width. The roof covering of Indian tiles and timber roof structure is exposed internally. These houses were not equipped with gutters, thus the open street drains were essential elements in handling rainwater flow.

Entering into the full width of the building, the ground floor is one continuous level with the staircase cut across the width below the main ridge of the roof. The remaining spaces are determined by the cultural and traditional needs of the occupants. The Chinese, for example, divide the front space from the inner area by a screen in front of which, facing the front doors, is placed an altar. Internal timber walls separate other sections of the building with lattice for ventilation above. As the early population was predominantly male, the spatial use may well have ignored traditional gender divisions. The dictates of Chinese *feng shui* became evident as the shophouse style evolved.

A large, double height wall surrounds the open section to the rear. This was partly covered with a tiled roof or first floor terracotta-tiled balcony on one side. This area would be used for cooking, the open ventilation ideal for natural extraction of fumes and heat. The open back area allowed the collection of rainwater in either jars or later granite reservoirs, which were used for bathing. Night soil was collected, although many properties were built back-to-back which meant the daily collection was carried through the shophouse.

After the mid-nineteenth century, as the Chinese population grew, their influences and cultural requirements in architectural forms began to dominate the urban landscape. Longer than the early shophouse form, often over 100 feet, the **Early Traditional Chinese** shophouse, necessitated the introduction of air-wells for ventilation and light [Fig. 2-12]. This form has been found in the southern Chinese 'Treaty Ports', and dates back to the thirteenth century and was thought to be based on the traditional Chinese courtyard house, though reduced in width in the urban setting. (Tjoa-Bonatz, 1998: 123). Row tube-houses, which occur in the commercial quarter of pre-colonial Hanoi, are a further example (Logan, 1994: 50). European colonisation brought with it sixteenth century Portuguese, Dutch and later English planning principles which influenced groups of buildings of similar forms (Tjoa-Bonatz, 1998: 123) as can be found in Dutch-Indonesia, Malacca, British Singapore, Malaya and Burma.

The internal courtyard or air-well is a basic element in Chinese architecture, for both practical and philosophical reasons, representing *Yin* (void) and *Yang* (solid). Rain from the gutterless roofs around the air-well falls to the ground floor, sunken at this point and lined with granite slabs; the water is then channelled through to external drains. Inevitably, this arrangement helps to cool the building interiors as well as provides a primary reservoir in heavy monsoon rains, avoiding external flooding. It was also used as an element of *feng shui,* as water flowing through a building was required to exit at an auspicious point determined by a geomancer, in order to bring prosperity and harmony to the Chinese owner.

Although the tripartite grouping of doors and windows remained on the ground floor, further ventilation requirements necessitated the incorporation of openings above the windows which reflected cultural forms. The short timber wall on the first floor façade was replaced with a moulded masonry wall often shaped with three indented panels. Chinese green-glazed ceramic ventilation tiles were inserted along its length below louvered shutters. This area of the façade has been identified as the *spandrel* (Fels, et al., 1994). The beams above the shutters and below the roofline became a further place of decorative embellishment where a decorative frieze depicting tales of Chinese mythology was either painted or decorated with the ceramic cut-and-paste shard work (*chien nien*). The plaster mouldings on external columns

carried the Chinese cloud motif embellishment, though often only the uppermost 'consoles' directly below the roof were afforded any decoration.

The party wall between Chinese shophouses rises above the roof tiles dividing the ridge of a terrace. The peaks of the **Chinese** gable ends were shaped to express the five elements of *Wu Xing*. These are: round for gold/metal (*Jin*); straight for wood (*Mu*); curved for water (*Shui*); pointed for fire (*Huo*); and square for earth (*Tu*) [Fig. 2-13]. The smaller early shophouses of more Indian influence can be identified for the lack of a dividing party wall above the roof. The shophouse gable-end forms, found in George Town, originated from the Fujian and Kwantung districts of China, and became adapted to local tastes and interpretations by the turn of the twentieth century. A building commissioned for a specific owner-occupier would be shaped according to the owner's *feng shui* reading which dictated the symbolic form and decorations (Tan, 2001).

The gable end forms varied according to the a dialect group or community. For example, the Hokkien clan settlements around Armenian Street and southern Beach Street used the *Jin,* gable-end. The Cantonese district of Campbell Street and Cintra Street built the simpler inverted V-shaped gable and both the Hakka and Teow Chew used the *Mu* form, found along Leith and Kimberly Streets (ibid., 2001).

The form of the **Late Traditional Chinese** shophouse was an expansion of the Early Traditional through height and decoration [Fig. 2-14]. The front central entrance opened into the ceremonial or ancestral hall and was used by the male members of the household and their guests and screened from the remaining interior used by the females and children. The kitchen remained in the open area at the rear. Internal screens of carved timber were designed for visual privacy and lattice for ventilation divided up the internal spaces. They were solid and open, the volumes light and dark, enclosed or overt, positive and negative, reflecting *yin* and *yang*, creating a balanced environment for the comfort and traditions of the occupants.

Whilst the joists supporting the first floor remained exposed, the ceiling panels of the first floor became embellished with timber patterned mouldings. As an indication of prosperity, large cupboards with glazed door panels decorated with the Chinese cloud motif beading, were inset into the cool brick walls, and were exaggerated with heavy lime plaster frames. Clearly this was an indication of prosperity, as these were items for display rather than utility or for religious purposes.

In residential properties, the utilitarian terracotta floor tiles were replaced with decorative cement tiles still found in Vietnam today, though their origins in Penang are probably from a mixture of sources. These were often used for the five-foot-way indicating a difference between residential and commercial use.

Elements guided by *feng shui* began to affect the physical form of the shophouse. As the land was comparatively flat, the need to place a building with its back to a hill

was achieved by raising the floor level by one step progressively through the building, usually in line with the air-well beam furthest to the rear. The increased height required a taller staircase, which rose from within the building to face the front, thus only the underside was visible on entering the second space from the front altar hall. It was thus positioned to allow positive energy *(chi)* to flow into the building and be contained; a staircase rising from the front would have directed the *chi* up the stair and out through a rear opening.

Towards the end of the 1880s, ceramic air vents were replaced with cast iron filigree work, mainly from Scotland, where such foundries as Walter Macfarlane & Co. produced extensive catalogues for the overseas market. Glass was also introduced in timber casement windows and the small louvered panels above first-floor shutters. The tall columns and pilasters followed the new emphasis on height and became decorated with lime mouldings, broken by a stringcourse to emphasise the first floor and rooflines.

Urban bungalows also took up elements of the Late Traditional shophouse façade. Thus, an Anglo-Indian bungalow would incorporate the shuttered first floor of the *porte-cochere* and the Chinese tripartite entrance form for the ground floor complete with five-foot-way, creating an **Early Straits Eclectic** or **Sino-Anglo-Indian** bungalow [Fig. 2-15]. Conversely the shophouse first-floor façade took on the tripartite arrangement of the Anglo-Indian façade above the *porte-cochere,* by replacing the continual row of shutters with three louvered-shuttered openings, divided by a wall or decorative pilasters, and arched fanlights, creating the Sino-Anglo-Indian shophouse [Fig. 2-16]. However, internally it followed the cultural requirements of the household.

At the turn of the twentieth century the fashion for the European mansions, set within extensive gardens outside of the urban centre, began to appeal to the wealthy *Jawi Peranakan*, Hakka Chinese, and Eurasians merchants who toyed with the idea of moving out from their street-front shophouses to a life behind gates and walls (Khoo Su Nin, 1993: 20). In the 1880s, Penang's Hakka millionaires, whose fortunes came from the tin industry, built Early Straits Eclectic mansions fusing a symmetrical arrangement in their external appearance, a late Victorian, neo-classical style. The heavy classical pediments and ornamentation were merely a façade behind which lay the form and hierarchical arrangement of a Chinese courtyard house [Fig. 2-17].

Whilst his wealthy Hakka cousins were building eclectic extravagances along Leith Street, ('Hakka Millionaires Row'), Cheong Fatt Tze built a fine courtyard mansion with both the internal and external appearances true to Chinese form [Fig. 2-18]. However, he incorporated both Scottish cast-iron columns, juxtaposed with finely carved Chinese timber capitals and English encaustic floor-tiles. Chinese stylised, Art Nouveau stained glass was installed in the main house and ornamental shard, *chien nien,* work decorated the gable ends as well as allegorical panels set into the loggia

walls, typical of Chinese mansions. The command of *feng shui* is particularly expressed in the flow of water from the roofs, skilfully directed to arrive at the most auspicious point of exit on the ground, water being a spiritual expression of wealth and prosperity.

A further example of Hakka Eclecticism is the courtyard mansion of Hai Kee Chan on Church Street. The façade lies directly on the street edge and includes both a five-foot-way and Victorian bay windows, in its 'shophouse' façade [Fig. 2-19]. Like the Cheong Fatt Tze Mansion, a large quantity of cast iron has been incorporated alongside Chinese carved screens and decorative glass.

The long Straits Eclectic shophouse, continued to be built for elite middle-class residential use, though they became highly decorated, using lime plasterwork highlighted with refined plaster 'paintings', mixing traditional Chinese with European motifs.

During this period, many Late Traditional Chinese shophouses were extensively renovated in the **Late Straits Eclectic** style [Fig. 2-20]. Internally, carved or painted traditional screens intermingled with fine chandeliers from Czechoslovakia, and decorative ceramic tiles from France. Externally the shophouse continued to be embellished with both the traditional shard work and painted friezes but began to incorporate Europeanised lime mouldings, swags and cartouche, together with 'egg and dart' string courses and an indulgence for stylised Corinthian or Composite columns. New materials were introduced, and decorative tiles from Europe and Japan were used as a dado panel along the ground floor façade.

Penang's Chinese Kongsi clan associations, though established in the early nineteenth century, built or remodelled their temples and offices towards the turn of the twentieth century. There was no standard design for these buildings; those that could afford to build grandiose replicas of temples from their clan village did so. Others adapted shophouses to suit their needs. The Cantonese were stricter in their building style and followed the traditions of their Cantonese architecture, building both district and professional associations (Tan, 2001).

As well as the use of grey brick, Cantonese temples, created for specific deities, guilds and district associations are identified by a 'loggia' façade divided into three bays by two granite columns that stand on elevated granite platforms [Fig. 2-21]. Typical 'bow' shape beams span above the two side bays with a stone lion sitting on the centre of each beam. Gilded and heavily carved timber trusses run from the columns, perpendicular to the façade, defining the central bay, while mural paintings run along the top of the wall set back from the roof edge. The single pitched roof overhang offers deep shade at the entrance. The roof ridge of Cantonese architecture is either decorated with pre-cast *Shek Wan* porcelain figurines, imported from Kwantung, or black, white and red stucco ornamentation together with *chien nien* porcelain work.

The first hall or second hall is for ancestors and sometimes deities are included; behind the screens are air-wells and further halls often providing accommodation for new arrivals.

In contrast, the Hokkien Cheah, Yeoh and Khoo Kongsis, built magnificent eclectic temples. All three temples are two storeys, with Chinese tiled roofs highly decorated with large *chien nien* medallions perched precariously above the tiles, and curved swallow tale roof ridges. In plan they follow the three bay, projecting porch, of the Anglo-Indian bungalow style; in the Cheah and Yeoh Kongsis the upper section of the porch has been translated into a prayer pavilion for the clan, fusing the southern Fujian and Anglo-Indian form with eclectic decorative features.

New technologies and western forms

With the arrival of electricity and George Town's first power station in 1904, followed by ceiling fans in 1907, the architectural features, more suitable for cooler climates, began to appear in the homes of the wealthier property owners. Residential terraced houses built within the inner city continued to enjoy the Straits Eclectic decorations. Timber shutters and traditional Chinese screens and interior layouts remained whilst technological and material advances such as reinforced concrete, Indian and French 'Marseilles' tiles, tinted glazing and wrought ironwork, and in particular the *shanghai plaster*, a durable external plaster mixed with white marble chippings, were introduced.

The majestic simplicity of the former Magistrates' Courts on Light Street seemed too spartan a style for the new buildings of the **administration and governance** of the twentieth century. The Town Hall, built in 1880, was considerably extended and refashioned in 1906, changing the position of the grand staircase to two, more suitable for *feng shui*, following the building of the City Hall in 1903 [Fig. 2-22]. Colonnaded verandas became arched arcades, reminiscent of European Renaissance architecture. The Town Hall and Government offices evolved a more classical form of ornamentation with expressed quoins, and triangular pediments, whilst the City Hall's Esplanade façade included Dutch gable ends augmenting the central and end bays. European styles influenced other buildings too. For example, St Xavier's School, destroyed during World War Two, was a fine example of French Renaissance, whilst Penang Free School, now the State Museum, built between 1896 and 1906, shows influences of Flemish Renaissance, revived during the period of High Victorian architecture in England.

By the turn of the twentieth century, following outbreaks of the plague, cholera, malaria and small pox, the urban form changed (City Council, 1966: 42). This outbreak was due largely to massive overcrowding and the unsanitary conditions of the urban

centre; new building ordinances were introduced matching the more health conscious codes developed in Britain (Tjoa-Bonatz, 1998: 134). Back lanes were created to allow access for the night soil collection from outside rather than through the shophouses, and a new form of residential building was introduced. The shorter 'terraced houses', similar to the Victorian terrace of England's suburbs of the 1890s, returned to the Early Shophouse proportions, though internally guided by *feng shui*. This change in building size in turn affected the middle class family structures in particular. It became necessary to distribute both older family members and children amongst smaller households, all once accommodated in the cavernous shophouses of over 100 feet long.

Terraced houses were set back from the street behind small compounds bounded by low Shanghai-plastered garden walls [Fig. 2-23]. A pavement was introduced into the language of the street, becoming a common feature of the suburbs. When later introduced to the inner city the compound and pavement fractured the continuity of the shophouse streetscape, changing the urban form by separating the shaded space of the ubiquitous five-foot-way from public use. The exposed pavement, set away from the front doors, created a hostile non-communal space.

Following the enthusiastic patronage of high Victorian and Edwardian ornamental frivolities, the western-educated Straits Chinese experimented with an alien lifestyle of a compound house known as *ang-moh lau* (European bungalow) (Khoo Su Nin, 1993: 129). Thus, the **Straits Eclectic** villas and mansions abandoned the introspective courtyard form, for more overt European asymmetrical forms with views and vistas. Architects experimented with the known classical forms of pediments, colonnades, or exaggerated quoins and later added turrets and fish-scaled domes.

With the introduction of European architects from Singapore and later western-trained local architects, bungalows continued to evolve, fervently embracing an eclectic style, mixing forms and ornamentation from a myriad of influences. European architectural firms operating from Singapore or Kuala Lumpur, with branches in Penang, created much of the architecture of the turn of the nineteenth century. Such companies as Stark and McNeil designed memorable Straits Eclectic villas, such as Homestead in 1918, and Charles Miller produced Woodville in 1925 [Fig 2-24]. It became fashionable for the interior furnishings to be designed by companies such as Maples of London. By 1910, Western-trained Malaysian and Singapore architects began to appear (Khoo Su Nin, 1993: 20). One of George Town's most prolific and adept was former draughtsman, Chew Eng Eam whose portfolio included numerous villas, mansions, shophouses, commercial chambers, and a bungalow style incorporating traditional Malay elements. The traditional **Malay Style** bungalow continued to evolve throughout the century, raised on short brick columns, with walls of post and panel construction, timber and glass windows, Indian tiled roofs and an adaptation of the *anjung* and *porte-cochere*, arched with lattice work [Fig. 2-25].

As European decoration became popular, the decorative style of **Art Nouveau,** exemplified by Guimard's Paris metro street entrances of 1900, appeared briefly in the form of wrought iron, wall tiles, lamps, and furniture [Fig. 2-26]. Perhaps the most popular article still in regular use is the bentwood coffee shop chair. Originally designed by the Austrian company Thonet, they were imported by the emporia of Beach Street, from factories in Poland and Czechoslovakia.

The **Cubist Style,** rarely used outside Czechoslovakia, appears modestly, in George Town. The angular window openings and door canopies of a row of terraced houses, owned by the Mohammedan and Hindu Endowment Board, shows this influence [Fig. 2-26]. These are set back behind a low garden wall allowing trees and landscape within an urban street.

By 1920-21 there were seven cinemas within the heart of the inner city (City Council, 1966: 64). This new form of permanent entertainment houses exposed a large population to the influences of British and American cinema and its architecture – particularly the **Art Deco Style** [Fig. 2-27]. Its adoption by the film industry encouraged worldwide influence. The early 1930s saw the introduction of movies from Bombay as well as the first Malay film in 1933, from an industry monopolised by directors from Bombay and Madras. The Rex Cinema, no longer in operation, is an example of this style. Further leisure and entertainment ventures began to appear using the Art Deco style; The Great World Amusement Park, now demolished, presented a fun fair where 'Chinese Opera with its rich traditional costumes is performed side-by-side with a modern cinema and a Malay concert party' (Clark, 1952.19).

Hybrid forms began to filter through to Penang, an example of which is the **Shanghai Art Deco Style** of the Penang Kwantung and Tengchow community assembly hall, designed by C.E. Boutcher in 1938. Here untypical of the origins of Art Deco, curved Chinese roofs embellish each corner turret as well as the main hall (Fels, et al, 1994:190). Characteristic of the style was the emphasis on height, often culminating in a flagpole, not previously used in George Town's shophouses. The building height required of the style was compatible with the Late Traditional Chinese shophouse. It therefore did not disturb the existing lines of the older streetscape, or the cultural meaning of the spaces and openings, retaining a comfortable homogeneous environment. Some existing commercial shophouses replaced their older façades with new Shanghai-plastered and glass Art Deco styled ones - an early form of façadism. Residential shophouses were more conservative.

Even though George Town's Art Deco buildings remained no more than three or four storeys high, some owners, eager to adopt modern technology, installed lifts. Banks, within the commercial quarter of Beach Street, provided a new form of commercial space with chambers on their upper floors. These monumental examples

of **commercial architecture** echoed the new style and changed the scale of the existing streetscape, augmenting the visual importance of the commercial centre around the port [Fig. 2-28].

The Lim Leang Teng Mansions in Farquhar Street introduced several floors of **residential apartments**, from studio to four bedrooms per unit, with commercial space and garages below, similar to the mansion blocks of Kensington, London. Its location opposite the Eastern and Oriental Hotel (E & O Hotel) and adjacent to the more upmarket car showrooms made it a natural focus for the expatriate Europeans or European-educated, who had a greater affinity with its form, cultural concept and style, although newly introduced to George Town.

Not all innovations were for Penang's élite. Opposite to the Kapitan Kling Mosque, on *waqf* land granted by Leith, two mansion blocks were built. The first, built in 1934, provided commercial accommodation at street level and two floors of independent residential flats above [Fig. 2-29]. Each unit was accessible off a staircase tower rather than from a five-foot-way or pavement. Fashioned in the American Arts and Crafts style with an overhanging terracotta roof, exposed fare-faced brickwork, and tall chimneys for the extraction of cooking fumes it incorporates both European and Moorish elements (Fels, et al,1994: 239).

The success of this new commercial and residential arrangement was used for a second *waqf* residential block opposite, in the late 1930s, designed by Charles Miller. A third, later block in *Kampong Kolam* developed a form of raising the five-foot-way into layers above the street with housing units inset from the main façade to gain shade, shelter, and ventilation. This was to become the prototype for later 1950s housing blocks.

The **International Style** of early modernism is epitomised in workers' housing in Holland in 1927 and began to influence George Town's architecture much later [Fig. 2-30]. The introduction of reinforced concrete meant the first floor could cantilever over the five-foot-way dispensing with the colonnade street boundary, which also indicated house divisions. This style, which incorporated flat roofs, low ceilings, an emphasis on horizontal cantilevered planes, and large areas of glass with thin steel frames, was not fully exploited until the introduction of air conditioning in the 1940s. New technology meant the tropical climate no longer dictated the building form and architects were at liberty to explore the new machine-age designs free from localised climatic needs. Cultural elements were harder to ignore in particular *feng shui*, which continued to dictate auspicious placing of buildings as well as the interior arrangements.

Although the first car arrived in George Town in 1904, and its popularity introduced a new building form, the car showroom, the requirement for large covered spaces and window openings unhindered by columns was only achieved much later. The structural challenge was met with a mixture of Art Deco and the International

Style, with its emphasis on streamlined horizontal facades. Showroom proprietors chose to build around the E & O Hotel, fashionable with the elite business families and wealthy planters.

Small two-or three-storey purpose-built hotels began to appear within the inner city in the 1950s, located on prominent corner sites, they used the International style to great effect and gave emphasis to the glazing which wrapped, unhindered by structural columns, around the façade. Clearly a popular concept and supported by a buoyant economy, more hotels began to appear along Penang Road which leads from the E & O Hotel, creating a hotel district.

The Japanese occupation (1941-1945) ceased all building activity, other than temporary shelters. Recovery from the war was relatively fast, supported by a high demand for Malaya's resources, by which time the small, but affluent middle class, demanded better quality housing and more commercial space, and so construction resumed. As Straits Eclectic style merged with Art Deco, so too Art Deco merged with the International Style and hybrid forms of the styles developed for residential terraced and commercial shophousing in the suburban areas of George Town. These hybrid styles began to open the way for exploration and freedom of design expression in the new building forms. The subsequent influx of European architects brought with them the more functional style of the modern movement together with the knowledge of new materials and their structural implications. Simple in design, economic in materials and fast to build, a local form of Modernism began to appear. Transplanted into developing tropical countries, such as Malaya, Nigeria and Brazil this form of Modernism evolved to suit the perceived needs of these nations (Fry and Drew, 1956). The style epitomised the new Malay(si)an nationalist spirit, and was presented by homegrown heroines and heroes of the Malay(si)an film industry.

One of the first major modernist buildings in George Town was the Tunku Syed Putra Building, the former state administrative offices, rebuilt in 1962 following the destruction of the original in World War Two. At twelve storeys it acted as a focal point in the commercial district where corporate offices were four or five storeys. The majority of early modernist buildings, however, were placed within the shophouse streets, without creating visual chaos. The simplicity of materials and form, and controlled height enabled **Federal Style** buildings to avoid consuming the existing environment and made the juxtaposition between traditional and modern possible [Fig.2-31].

In residential buildings wrought-iron door panels, screens, and grilles replaced traditional carved timber and latticework for ventilation and security. The styles were influenced by **Modernism**, but there developed a local tropical style using the image of bamboos, which were made in the local foundries. Colourful mosaic tiles from China replaced the more floral designs used on the external dados of shophouses.

To alleviate the problem of post-war urban migration and housing shortage, the local council began to provide housing for its own workers in 1948, using the 'walk up-flats' form (City Council, 1966: 86). The population, however, grew faster than residential development and so the *Control of Rent Ordinance* was introduced, which restricted rentals for all properties built before 1948. The government continued to provide for its workers, building out-of-town housing estates of small cottage-style semi-detached bungalows but its efforts proved unable to alleviate the problem. Thus, in order to meet demand the Public Works Department produced standard building plans including those for government flats. The Beach Street Fire Station flats are a modernist adaptation of the *waqf* mansion block form; raised on tapered *piloti*, perhaps influenced by Greater London Council's Roehampton flats. This style became widely used in developing tropical countries as illustrated by Maxwell Fry and Jane Drew.

This accommodation became highly desirable amongst the working class. A typical rental arrangement would have seen a family rent one room within a shophouse in which they would sleep, sharing the kitchen and washing facilities whilst socialising on the five-foot-way or street. The new public housing provided individual units incorporating a kitchen, bathroom, toilet, a small communal hall, and two separately divided rooms per family. Many sublet their rooms to other families. Open public walkways in front of each unit echoed the five-foot-ways of the inner city streets, retaining social contact with neighbours. No more than five storeys high the disturbance to the community structure was minimal and incorporated climatic needs into the design.

British architects came to join both the public and private sectors in the period of reconstruction directly after World War Two, but an insatiable market demand for buildings of nationhood encouraged a new generation of western-trained Malayan architects to flood the profession. They joined either the Public Works Department or firms in Malaya and Singapore where commercial and administrative buildings continued to be expedited by established expatriate practices (Mohamad Tajuddin, 1998: 111).

Although the racial riots of 1969 suspended the commissions of many young architectural practices, **Modernism** appeared in George Town's administrative district, Light Street. Bank Negara designed by a young Malaysian team, Malayan Architects Co-partnership, and was built adjacent to the Anglo-Indian High Court which demonstrates a more western influence rather than that of its location. Arguably more successful in terms of form within the historic environment is the Dewan Sri Pinang [Fig 2-32]. Designed by the Public Works Department, the three-storey Dewan's reference to streetscape and proportion have allowed it to fit comfortably within the surroundings of the monumental style of the former government buildings, the High

Court, the City and Town Halls. A layering of planes and volumes creates shade and ventilation in much the same manner as the five-foot-way.

However, the Dewan Sri Pinang's function; enclosed auditorium, library and art gallery appealed more to the middle class, English-educated, suburban population many of whom would have attended stage performances at the Town Hall, known as the *ang mo kong kuan* - European Club (Khoo Su Nin, 1993: 84). Its purpose was perhaps difficult to comprehend by the majority of locally-educated George Town residents for whom the streets and temples still provided the environment for traditional theatrical performances.

By the early 1970s, Federal and Modernist style hotel developments reached twelve storeys in a predominantly two-to four-storey landscape [Fig 2-33]. They introduced a new sophistication of the hotel coffee lounge in contrast to the 'spit and grease' coffee shops of the urban streets. These were not simply for the Malaysian or Asian tourist but were well used by the middle class Penangites. Their height, however, began to disturb the balance of the neighbouring environment and was clearly a foretaste of what was to come.

The removal of port activities from Penang Island in 1969 created high unemployment; a stagnant economy and racial riots ensued in both Penang and Kuala Lumpur. The hard-earned wealth of the rags to riches millionaires already reduced by the Depression of the 1930s and the Second World War, was often squandered by playboy sons or grandsons with a 'penchant for fast women and slow horses' (ibid.: 130). A new direction for economic investment was needed, and Federal funding brought in foreign expertise to research and prepare Penang's future development –the Penang Master Plan.

The direction towards predominantly western influences in architecture had evolved gradually over the previous seventy years, born from an eager appetite for new technology and the wealth to support it. Thus, through global influences and eclectic fusions, Modernism became part of the architectural language. However, coupled with the new national economic and cultural polices of the early 1970s, which were designed to address the imbalances that had sparked the racial riots, and a small but expanding generation of western-trained, Malaysian architects and town planners, the position of George Town's architectural heritage in the planning for the city, appeared uncertain. Chapter Three therefore, goes on to explore the Federal interventionist and development policies in order to assess their influence on the multicultural population with respect to their identity and sense of cultural heritage.

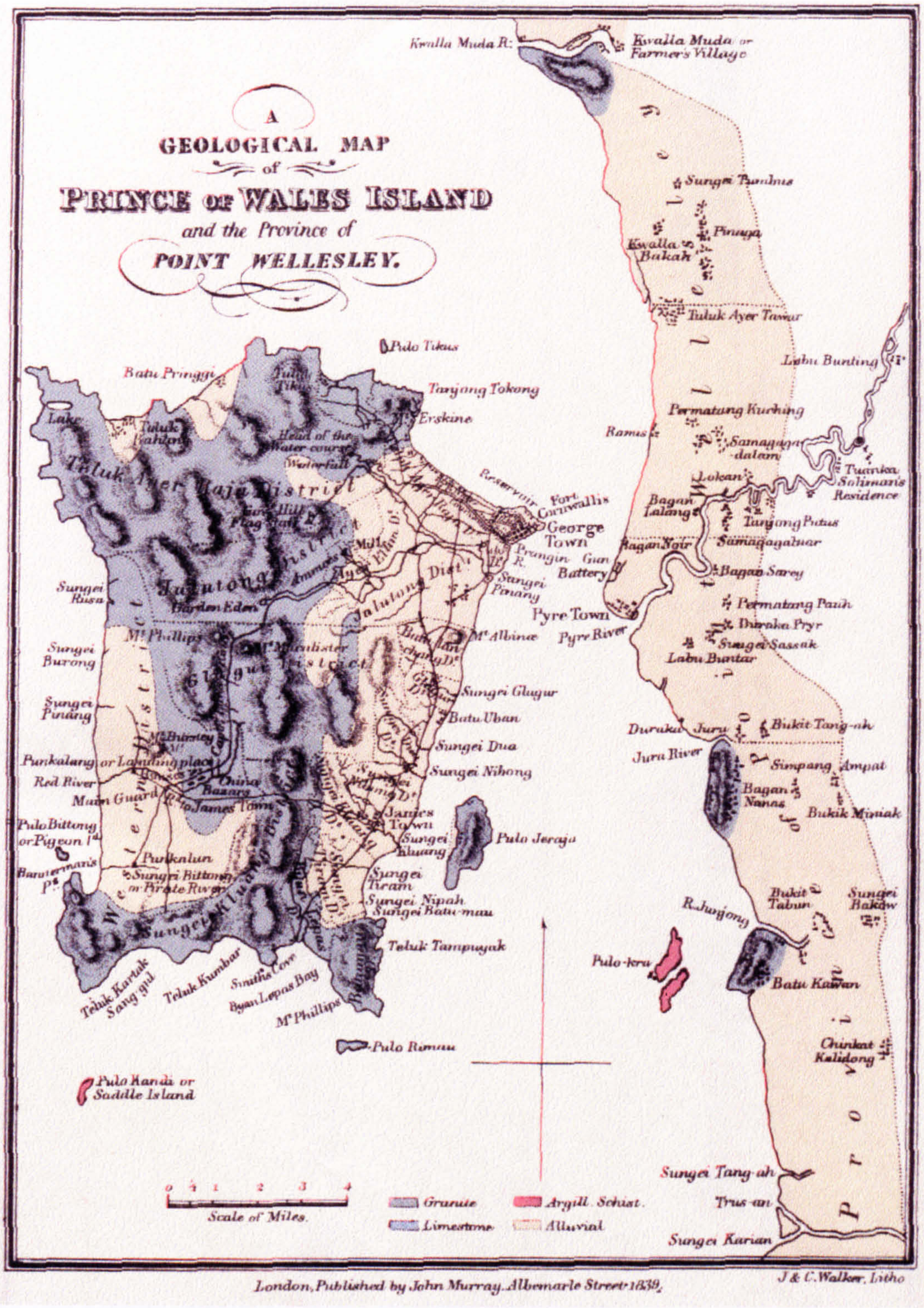


Fig. **2** -1 A geological map of Prince of Wales Island and the Province of Point Wellesley. Published by John Murray, Albermarle Street, London. 1839, J& C Walker, Litho

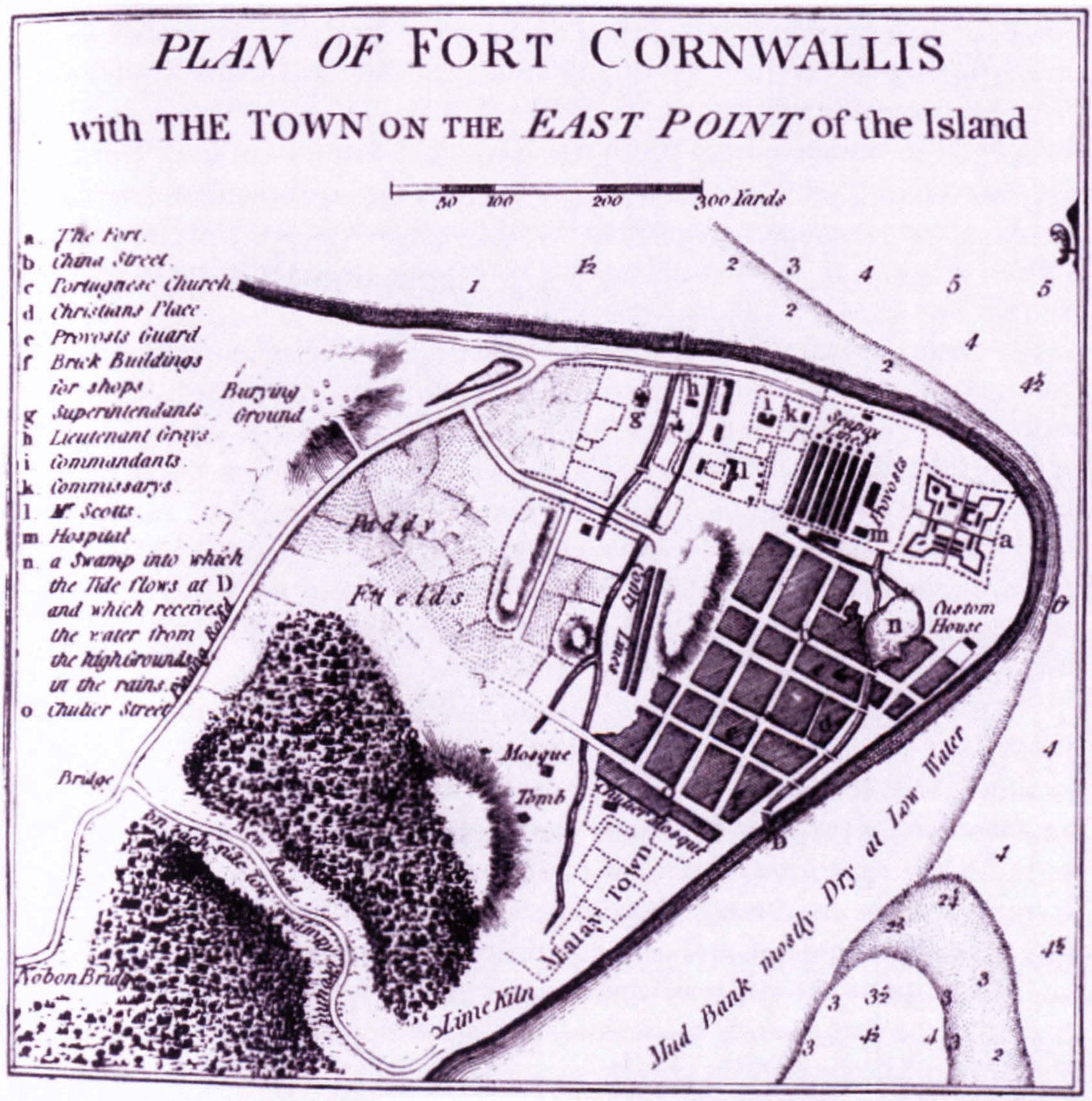
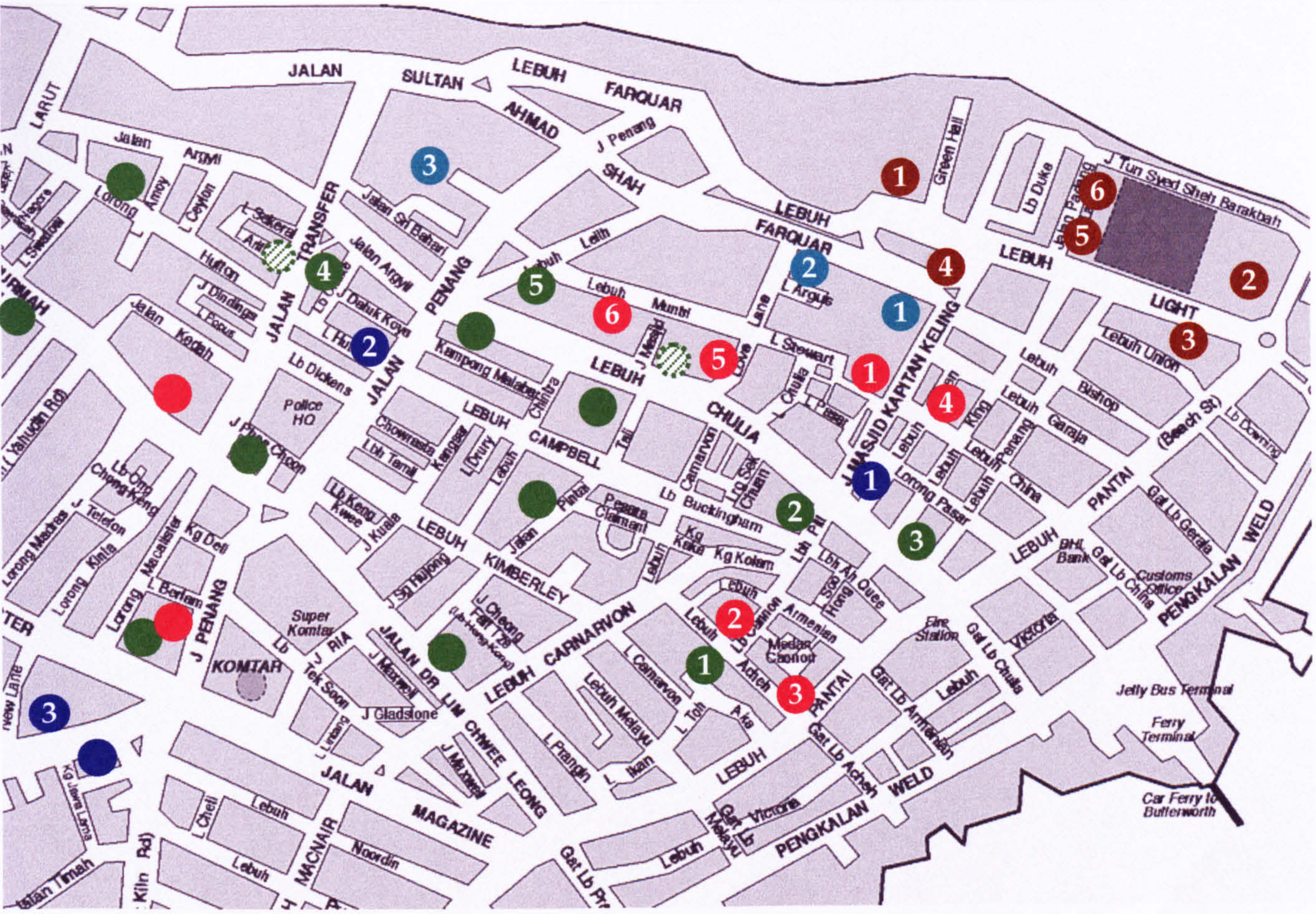


Fig. 2-2 Capt. Home Briggs Popham 1798. *Plan of Fort Cornwallis with the town on the East Point of the Island.* (reproduced from Lim, 1986). Part of the grid pattern seen in this map, is today called Little India


JALAN SULTAN AHMAD SHAH
LEBUH FARQUAR
LEBUH FARQUAR
LEBUH LIGHT
JALAN TRANSFER
JALAN PENANG
JALAN MAGAZINE
LEBUH CHULIA
LEBUH CAMPBELL
LEBUH KIMBERLEY
LEBUH CARNARVON
LEBUH PANTAI
JALAN SID KAPITAN KELING
JALAN DR LIM CHWEE LEONG
PENGKALAN WELD
Jalan Argyll
Jalan Kelawai
Jalan Sri Bahari
Jalan Sri Rejang
Jalan Kebun Bunga
Lebuh Leith
Lebuh Muntri
Lebuh Melayu
Lebuh Acheh
Lebuh Union
Lebuh Penang
Lebuh Pasar
Lebuh China
Lebuh Bishop
Lebuh King
Lebuh Queen
Lebuh Victoria
Lebuh Buckingham
Lebuh Cannon
Lebuh Armenian
Lebuh Aceh
Lebuh Tek Soon
Lebuh Chulia
Lebuh Pantai
Lebuh Ah Quee
Lebuh Carnarvon
Lebuh Melayu
Lebuh Ikan
Lebuh Chell
Lebuh Noordin
Lebuh Drury
Lebuh Tamil
Lebuh Pintal
Lebuh Kuala
Lebuh Kimberley
Lebuh Farquar
Lebuh Light
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Lebuh Noordin
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Lorong Ceylon
Lorong Hutton
Lorong Kedah
Lorong Madras
Lorong Kinta
Lorong Mecalister
Lorong Berjaya
Lorong Selamat
Lorong Pasar
Lorong Garaja
Lorong Penang
Lorong Chulia
Lorong Victoria
Lorong Armenian
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Lorong Melayu
Lorong Ikan
Lorong Chell
Lorong Noordin
Jalan Kelawai
Jalan Sri Bahari
Jalan Sri Rejang
Jalan Kebun Bunga
Jalan Argyll



a. Capt. Elisha Trapaud, 'View of the North Point of Prince of Wales's Island & the Ceremony of Christening it, 1786.' (reproduced from Hayes Hoyt, 1991)

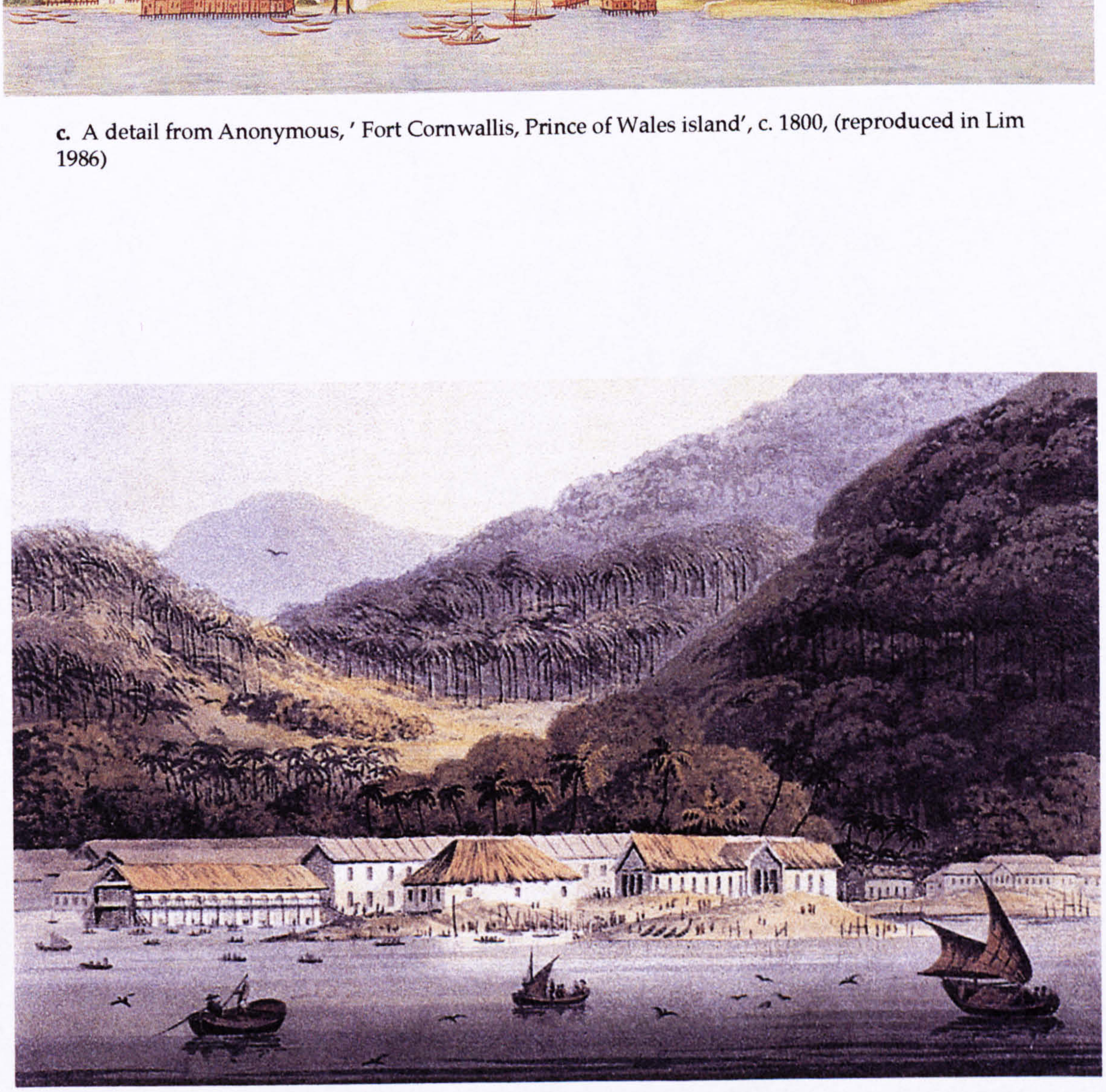


b. A detail from Capt. Elisha Trapaud, Fort Cornwallis, c 1787, India Office Library London, (reproduced from Lim,1986)

Fig. 2-4 Architectural legacy, evidence from early paintings



c. A detail from Anonymous, ' Fort Cornwallis, Prince of Wales island', c. 1800, (reproduced in Lim 1986)

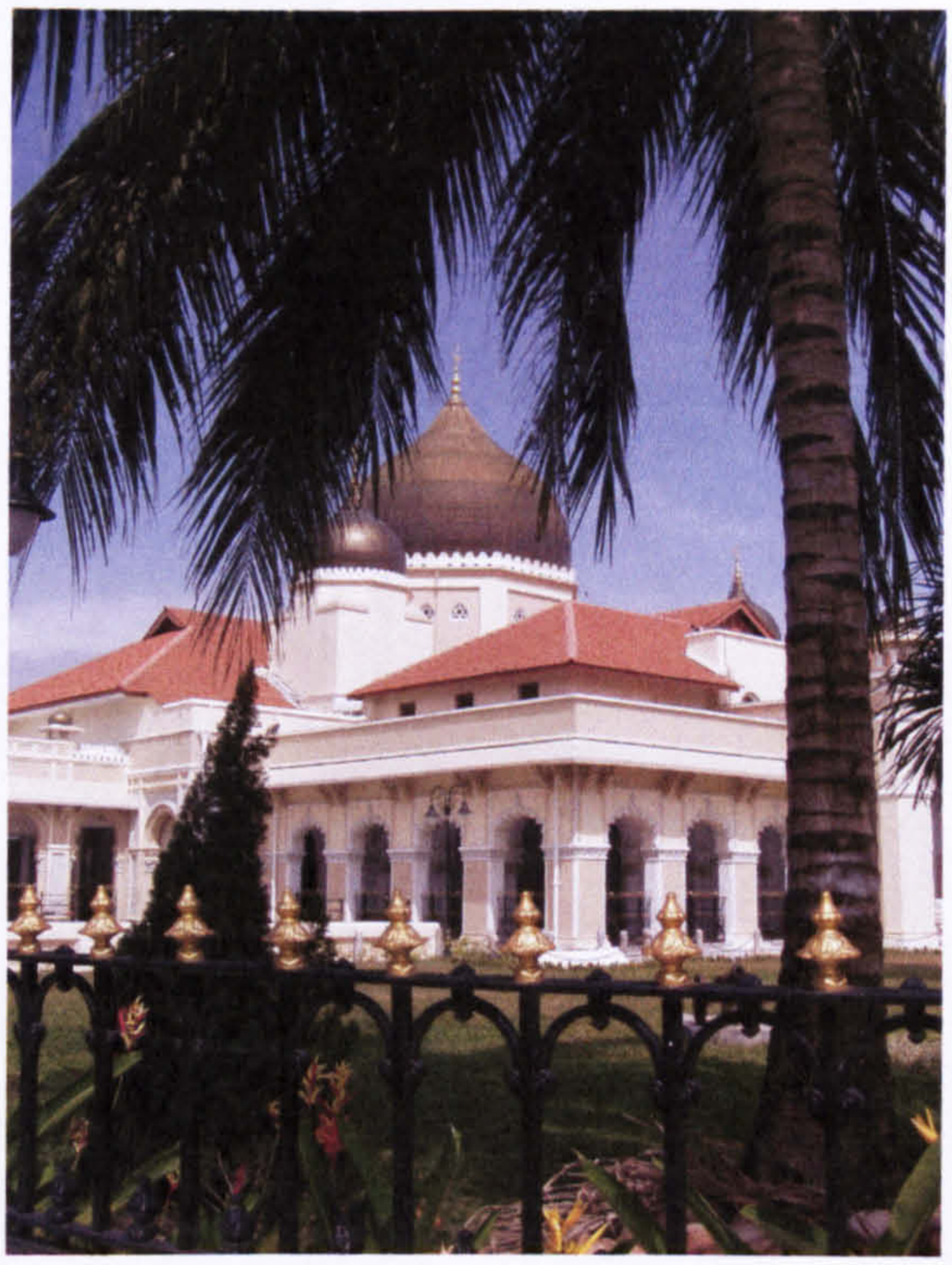


d. James Wathen, View of George Town, 1811, (reproduced from Lim 1986)

Fig. 2-4 Architectural legacy, evidence from early paintings



a. St George's Church, 1818, Faquhar Street



b. *Mesjid Kapitan Kling*, land granted in 1801, Mosque remodelled in 1916, restored 2002 . Pitt Street, Jalan Kapitan Kling



Ooi Bok Kim

c. (left) Hindu, Sri Mahamariamman Temple, Queen Street, built 1833

d. (below) Hokkien style, Kuan Yin Temple, dedicated in 1802, Pitt Street



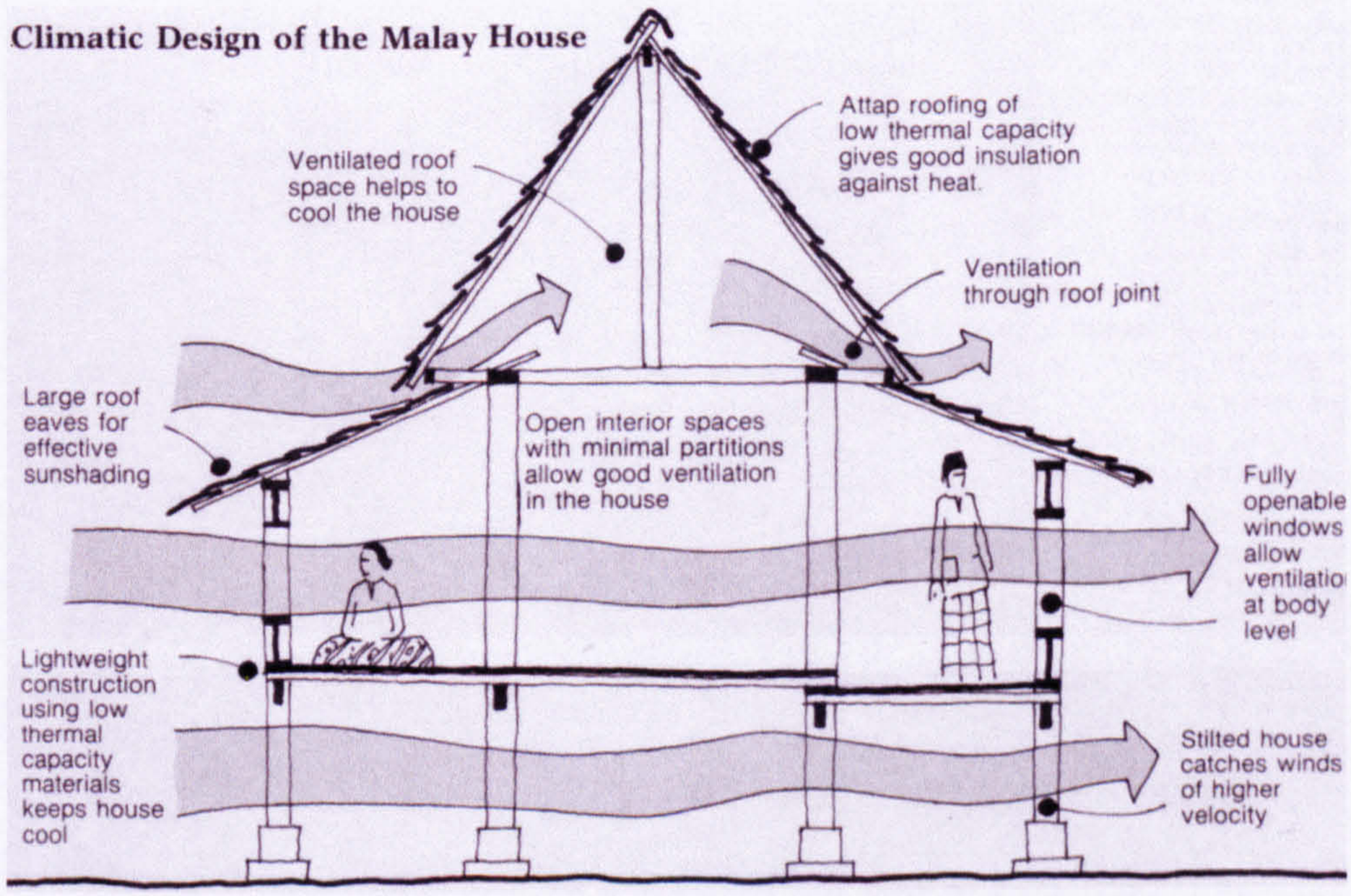
e. Cantonese style, Chong San Wooi Koon founded 1800, built mid-1800s, King Street



Fig. 2-5 Architectural legacy, a tapestry of global architecture



a. James Wathen, 1811, *Amee's house*, (reproduced from Lim 1986)



b. A section showing the climatic and material design of a Malay house (Lim Jee Yuan, 1987). Note the house (above), was adapted to suit local conditions and climate and shares similar design considerations to the Malay house below

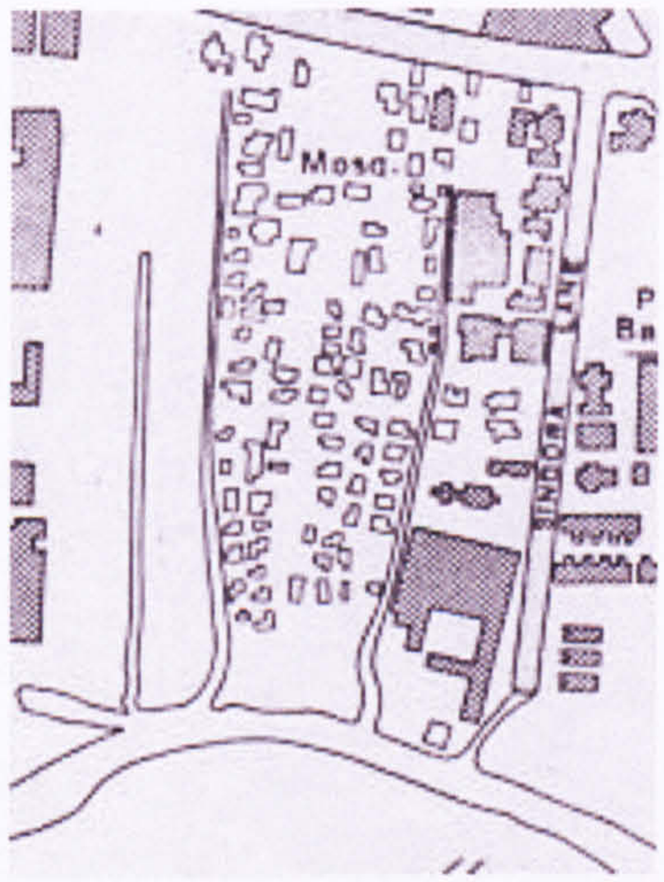
Fig. 2-6 Architectural legacy, forms and adaptations



a. Indo-Malay houses in *Kampong Mesjid Melayu. Lebuh Acheh*



c. A view through *Kampong Mesjid Melayu*



b. Typical Malay kampong arrangement of buildings (e.g.*Kampong Makam*)



d. (right) An Indo-Malay house, York Road

Fig. 2-7 Architectural legacy, **Indo-Malay** architecture



a Indo-Malay-the typical adaptation for the *Jawi Peranakan* was the external staircase, reflecting the *anjung* of a rural Malay house. Kedah Road



c. Indo-Malay house with Chinese residents, Argyll, Transfer Road junction



b. An Indo-Malay house, Jalan Sekerat, abandoned



d. An Indo-Malay house, Jalan Sekerat, abandoned and burnt down

Fig. **2**-8 Architectural legacy, **Indo-Malay**, Jawi Peranakan



a. An Early Anglo-Indian Bungalow on Chulia Street, the Chinese gate was a later addition (reproduced from Khoo, 1993:71)



b. (left) The Anglo-Indian Bungalow, now the Nobel Hotel, can be traced in the roof shape and Tuscan style columns. The windows and façade were changed in the 1950s

c. (below) The Hotel's 1950s façade, Lorong Pasar





d. Suffolk house, the grandest example of an Anglo-Indian bungalow in Penang

Fig. 2-9 Architectural legacy, **Anglo-Indian**, European



a (left) The plan of the Anglo-Indian Bungalow often incorporated a *porte-cochere* as seen in the Aloes, built in the early 1800s. Now abandoned this bungalow was one of the few original European residences to remain (reproduced from Khoo Su Nin, 1993:135)

b. (below) Early Straits Eclectic style, Muslim bungalow, mid-C18, Armenian Street. Note the star and crescent below the apex of the roof indicating Muslim ownership





c. An Anglo-Indian bungalow on Jalan Dato Koyah, now used as a metal workshop



d. Georgian cartwheel fanlight plaster moulding, Jalan Dato Koyah



e. (right) Early Straits-Eclectic, Muslim bungalow, Hutton Lane. Note the star and crescent motif

Fig. **2**-10 Architectural legacy, **Anglo-Indian** with porte-cochere



a Early Shophouse, with undressed timber beams supporting the first floor - Argyll Road



b. Early Shophouse adjacent to later shophouses, showing their small size and unbroken roof line- Argyll Road





c. Early Shophouses on plan in Market Street

d. Simple shophouse with Indian tiled roof, showing the solid shutters and timber façade typical of early forms. Square, ground floor window openings, the metal door is modern. Queen Street

Fig. 2-11 Architectural legacy, **Early Shophouse** form

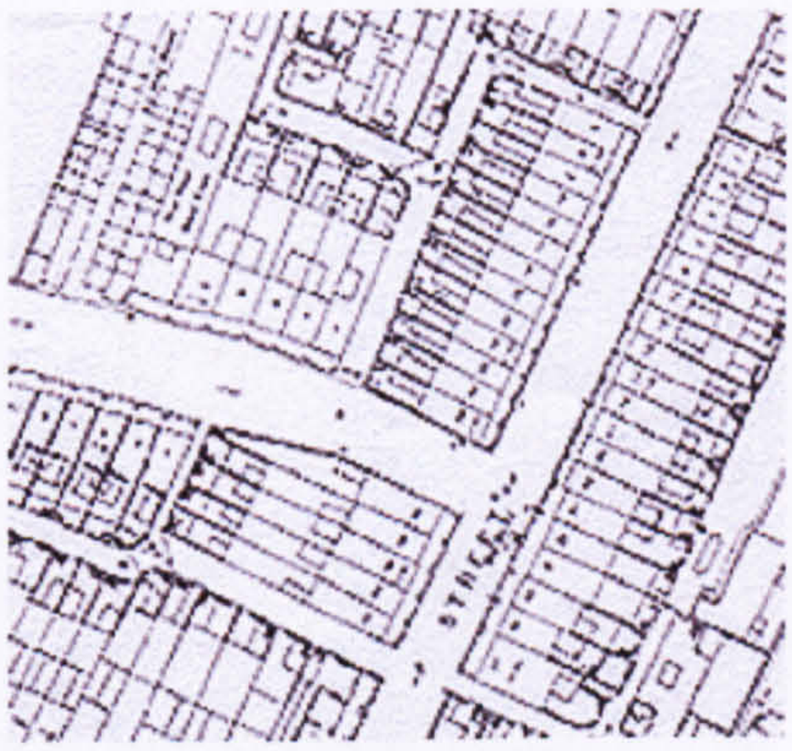


a Early Traditional Chinese shophouse, with terracotta tiled roof, timber louver shutters and decorative Chinese ceramic air vents. Stewart Lane



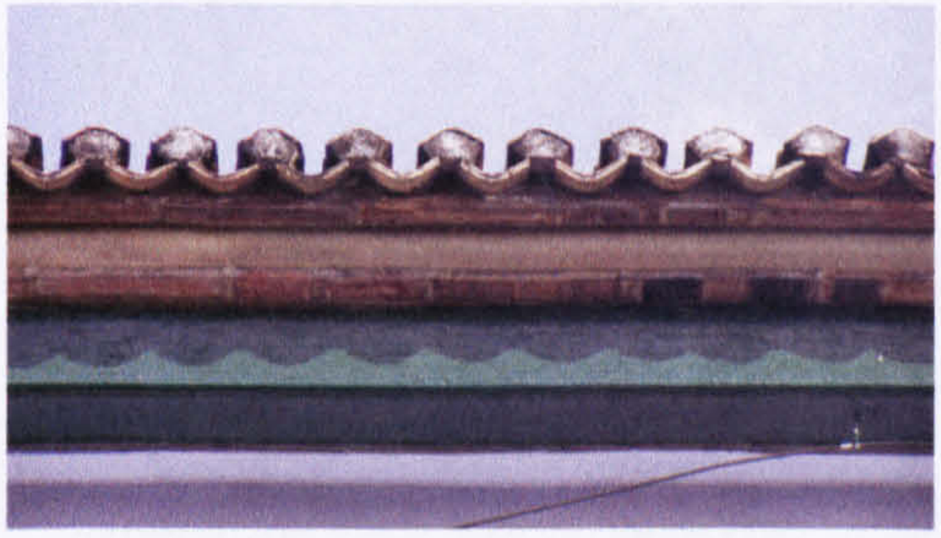
b. Early Traditional Chinese Shophouse with indented moulded panels to the spandrel. Butterfly air vents above ground floor windows, Stewart Lane





c. Early Traditional Chinese shophouses, on plan showing both with and without air-wells

d. (left) Internal air well, features match the front façade. Here 'modern' rainwater goods have been installed. 116 Armenian Street



e. 'Indian' ridge and furrow roof tiles, 116 Armenian Street

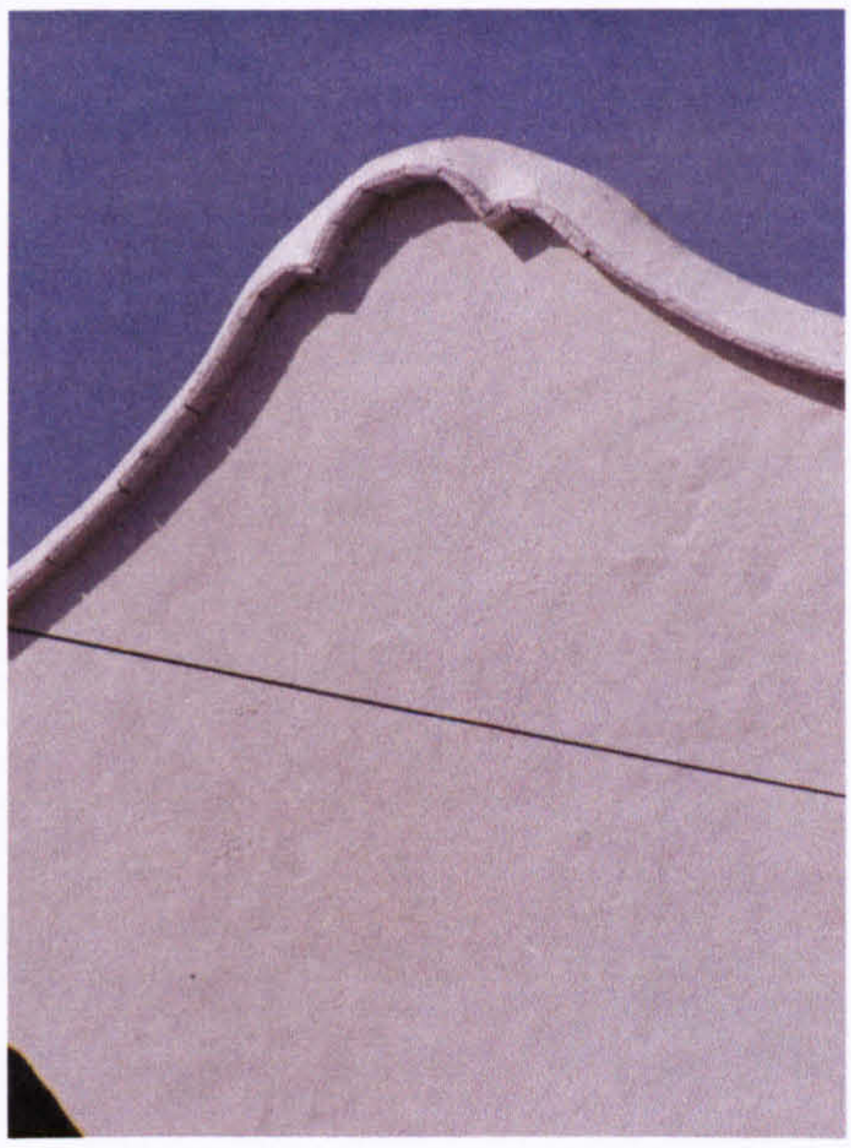


f. Chinese painting to beam below roof line is often found on front facades, 116 Armenian Street

Fig. 2-12 Architectural legacy, **Early Traditional Chinese** shophouse



a. *Jin* (gold) gable ends used by the Hokkien Chinese, a fairly common sight



b. *Shui* (water) gable end, rarely used. Amoy Lane



Jin (gold/metal) *Mu* (wood) *Shui* (water) *Huo* (fire) *Tu* (earth)

c. Shapes of Gable ends interpreted in *Wu Xing - Feng Shui* (reproduced from Tan 2001)



d. *Mu* (wood) used to identify a Hakka Early Eclectic shophouse, Church Street



e. Exaggerated *Huo* (fire) gable end, 1919 Late Straits Eclectic Shophouse

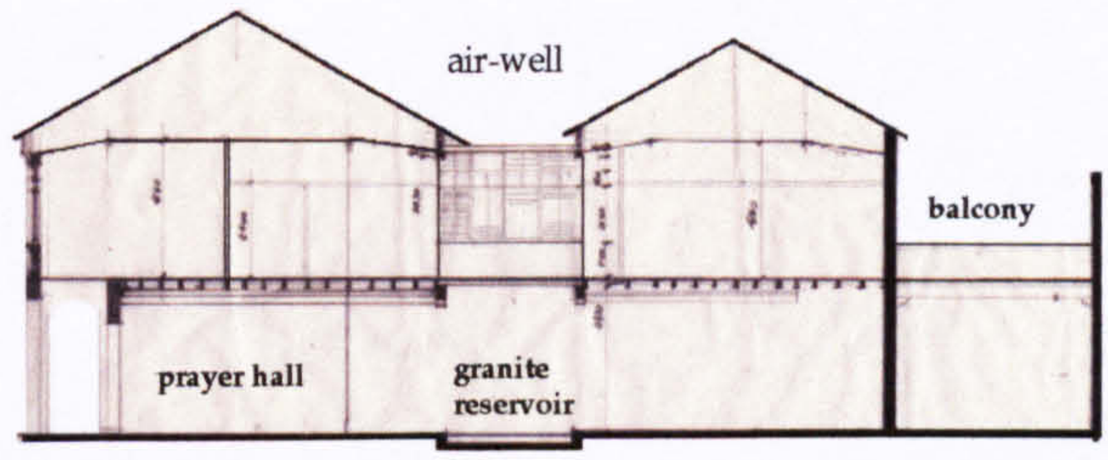
Fig. **2**-13 Architectural legacy, **Chinese** gable ends



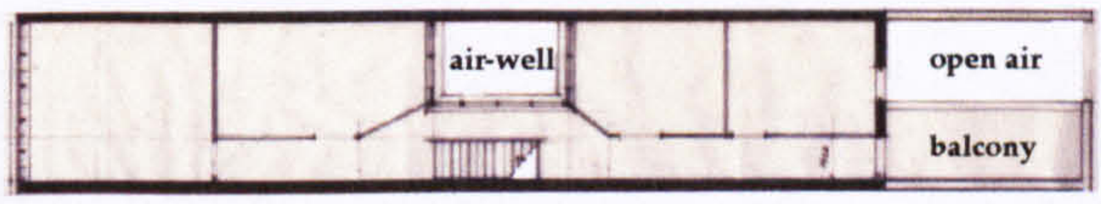
a. First floor of the air well and timber and lattice walls, dividing spaces



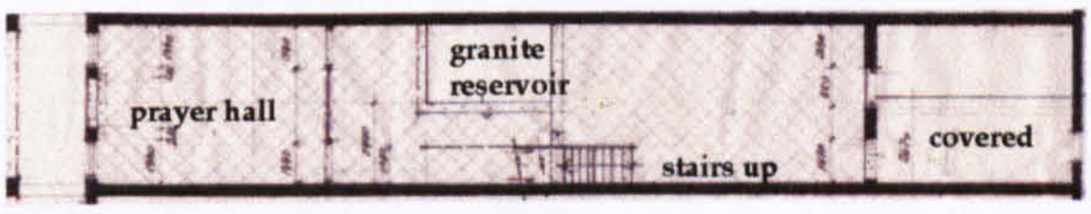
b. First floor rear balcony provides a sheltered area below for the open air kitchen



Section



First Floor



Ground Floor

c. Late Traditional Chinese shophouse section and plans



d. (above) Ground floor looking towards the front. Terracotta tiled floors. The traditional sunken granite reservoir has been filled in and the air well opening covered by a sliding roof



e. (right) Taller shophouse still with Chinese cloud pattern mouldings and corbels

Fig. 2-14 Architectural legacy, **Late Traditional Chinese** shophouse



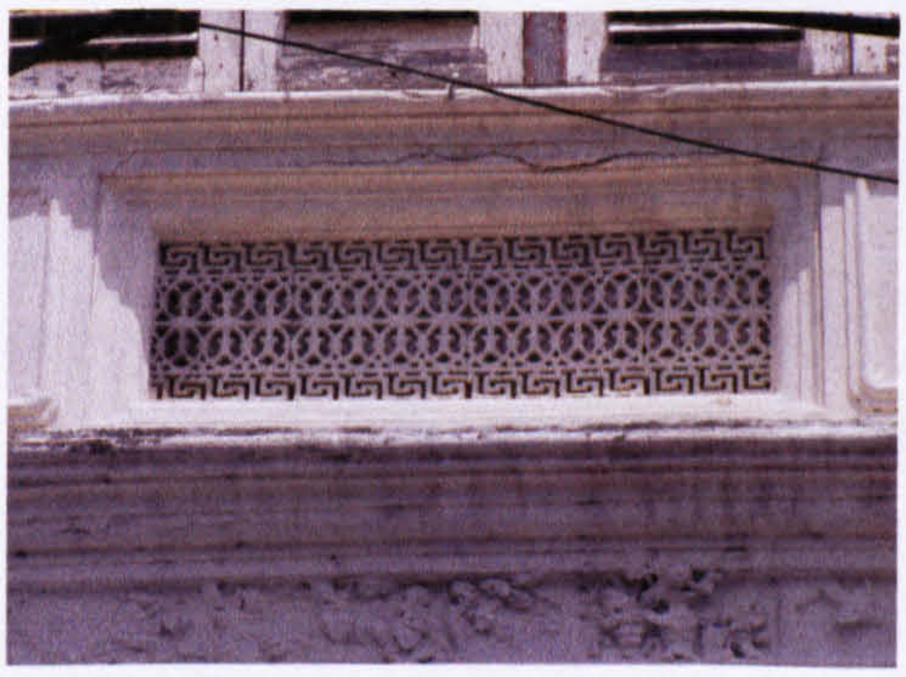
a. The Sino-Anglo Bungalow is Anglo-Indian in plan with a five-foot- way, and shophouse shutters to the *porte-cochere* (Stewart lane)



b. Chinese cut and paste shard work and corbel form



c. Early Straits Eclectic shophouse, Chinese and European elements



d. Scottish cast iron air vents



e. Glazed ceramic tiles



f. English encaustic tiles

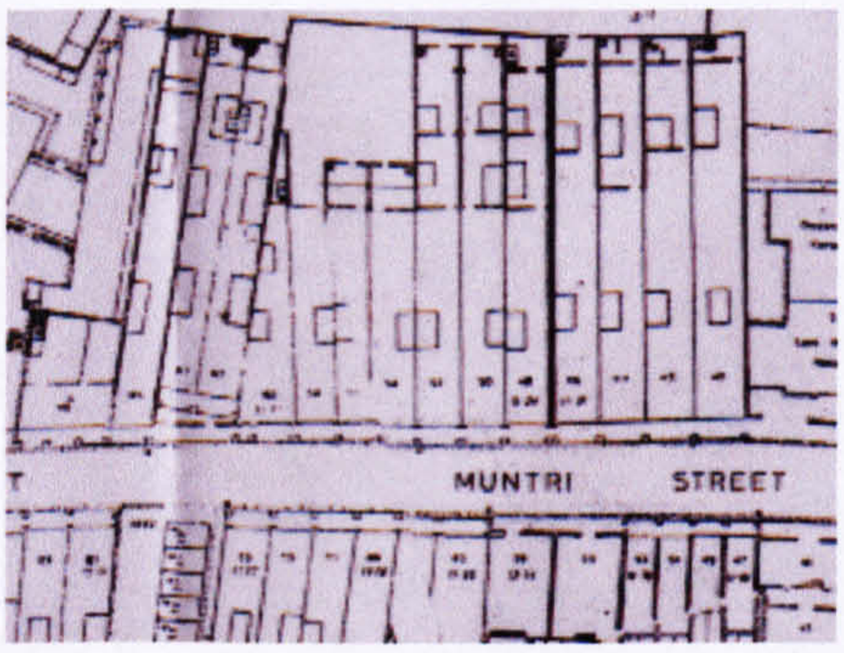
Fig. 2-15 Architectural legacy, **Early Straits Eclectic** bungalow and shophouse, with Late Traditional first floor facade



a. (above) Outer door with Chinese carved air vent and English glass



b. (right) Sino-Anglo or Early Eclectic shophouse divides the first floor into three window units, similar to an Anglo-Indian *porte- cochere*, Muntri Street



c. Plan of Late Traditional, Early Eclectic shophouses on Muntri Street



d. Heavily moulded ceramic tiled dado panel



e. Tripartite arrangement of central door and windows with Chinese carvings. Note also the house owner's name carved on a plaque above the door

Fig. 2-16 Architectural legacy, **Early Straits Eclectic** shophouse with tripartite first floor facade



a. (right) Early Straits Eclectic Mansions, appears to follow the Anglo-Indian plan with the extended *porte-cochere* and Classical detailing (Leith Street)

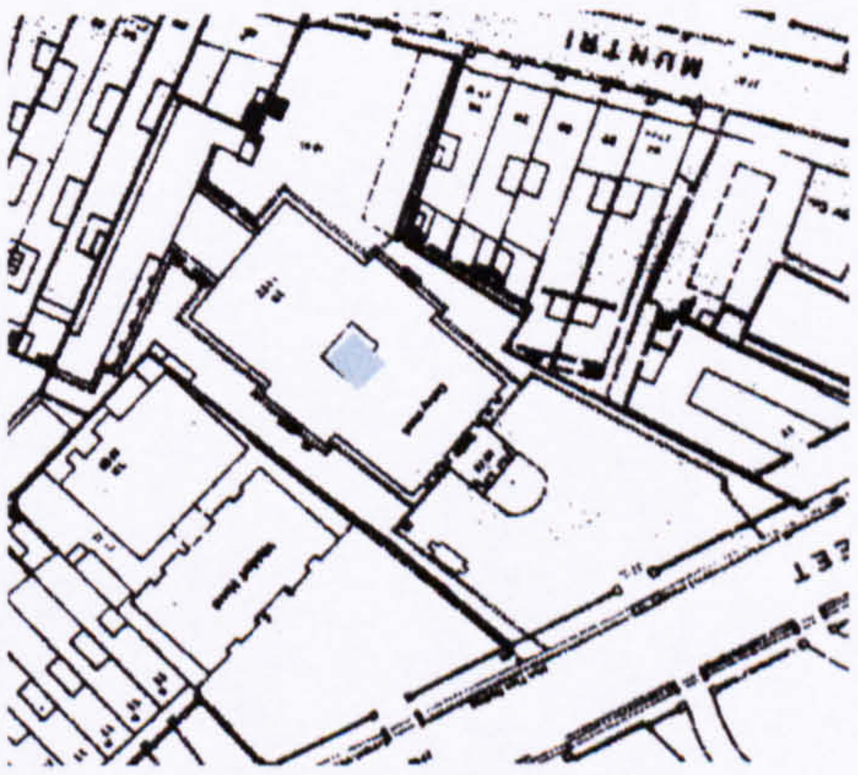


b. Former veranda now infilled shows classical detailing of European origin



c. Inner courtyard air well, with Macfarlane's of Glasgow cast iron work





d. Plan showing central air well (in colour)

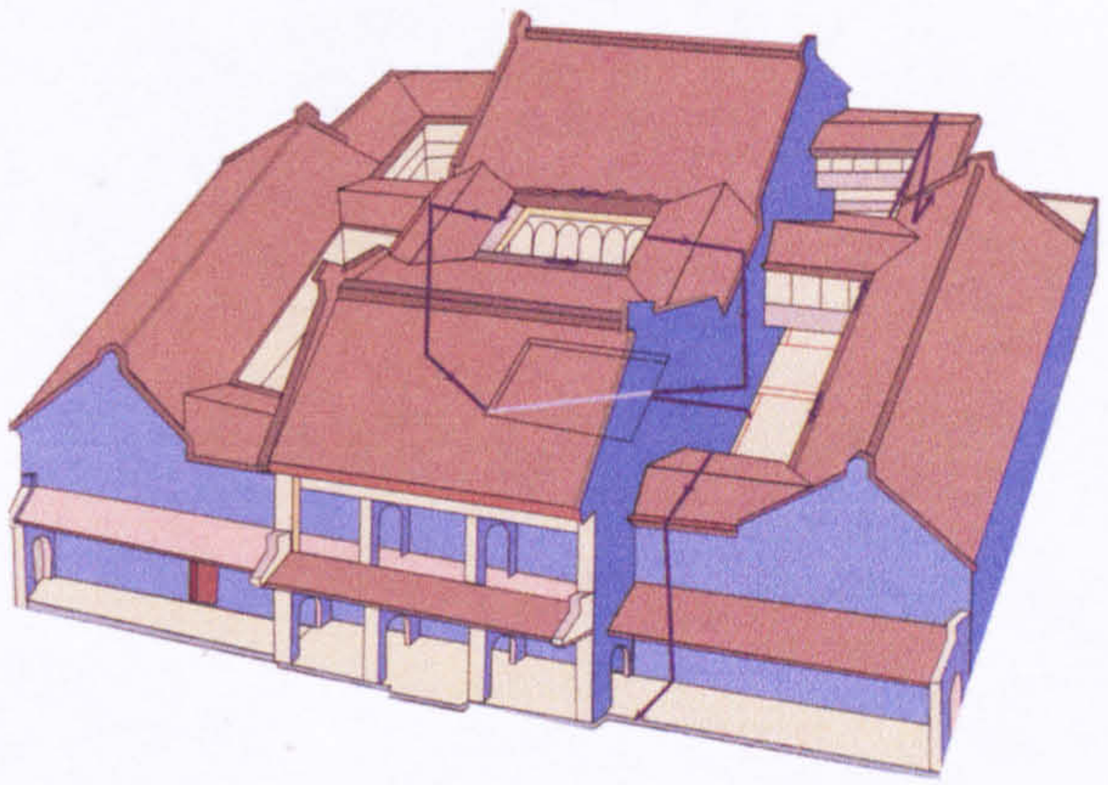
e. (left) First floor hall above the *porte-cochere*. Vaulted ceiling, with carved air vents into the roof space

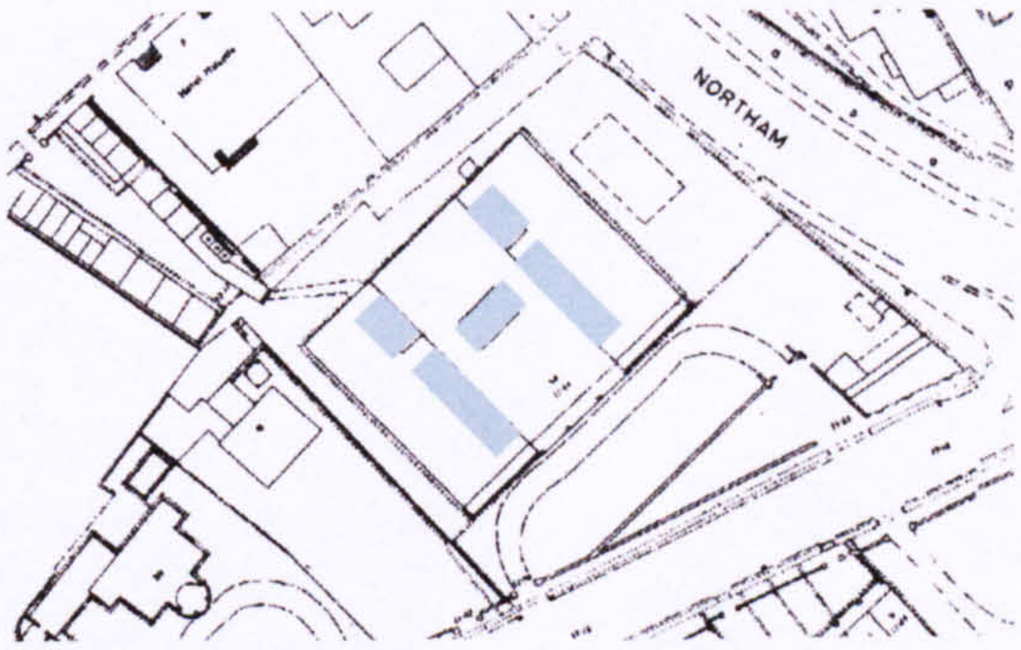
Fig. 2-17 Architectural legacy, **Early Straits Eclectic** mansion Neo-Classical courtyard style

a. (right) Early Straits Eclectic, Hakka Chinese courtyard mansion owned by Cheong Fatt Tze (Leith Street) (reproduced from Chen, 1998)



b. (above) Central of five, this courtyard is embellished with Chinese screens and Scottish cast iron work





c. (above) Plan showing five air-wells (courtyards) shown in colour



d. (above) *Chien nien*, cut and paste porcelain work, depicting garlic bulbs and flowers along the roof eaves





e. (above) Macfarlane's of Glasgow's cast iron, dragon's head capital, sits below the Chinese carved dragon



f. (left) Art Nouveau stained glass windows to the central, main part of the house. The yellow shape depicts a Chinese fan motif

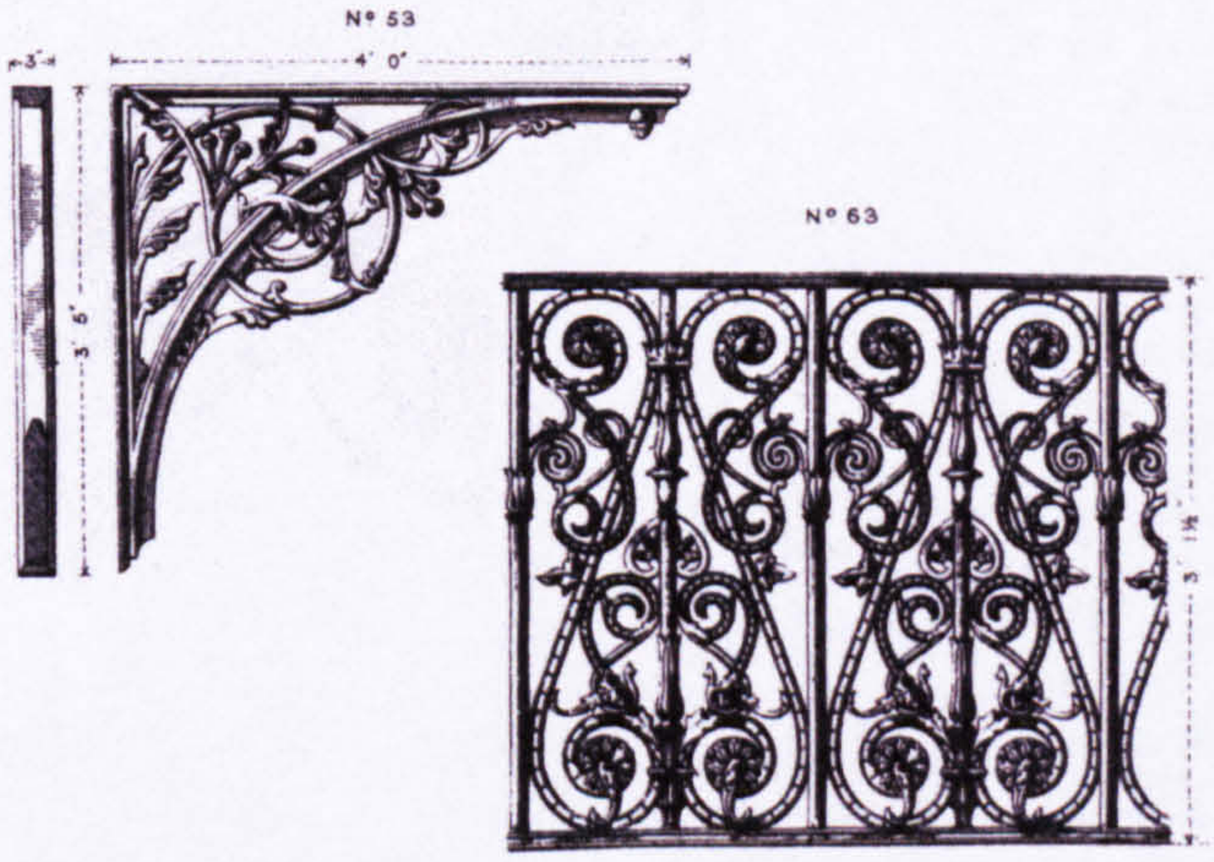
Fig. 2-18 Architectural legacy, **Early Straits Eclectic** mansion
Chinese courtyard style



a. The bay window is an unusual feature in Early Straits Eclectic architecture. Here in the glass is etched Chinese images of the four seasons



b. Hai Kee Chan Office and Residence of Hakka millionaire Choong Keng Kwee is placed on the street edge and incorporates a five-foot-way into the front façade, Church Street



c. Images from the Macfarlane's foundry catalogue items 53 and 63 (reproduced by e-mail from *Glasgowwest* Conservation Society)

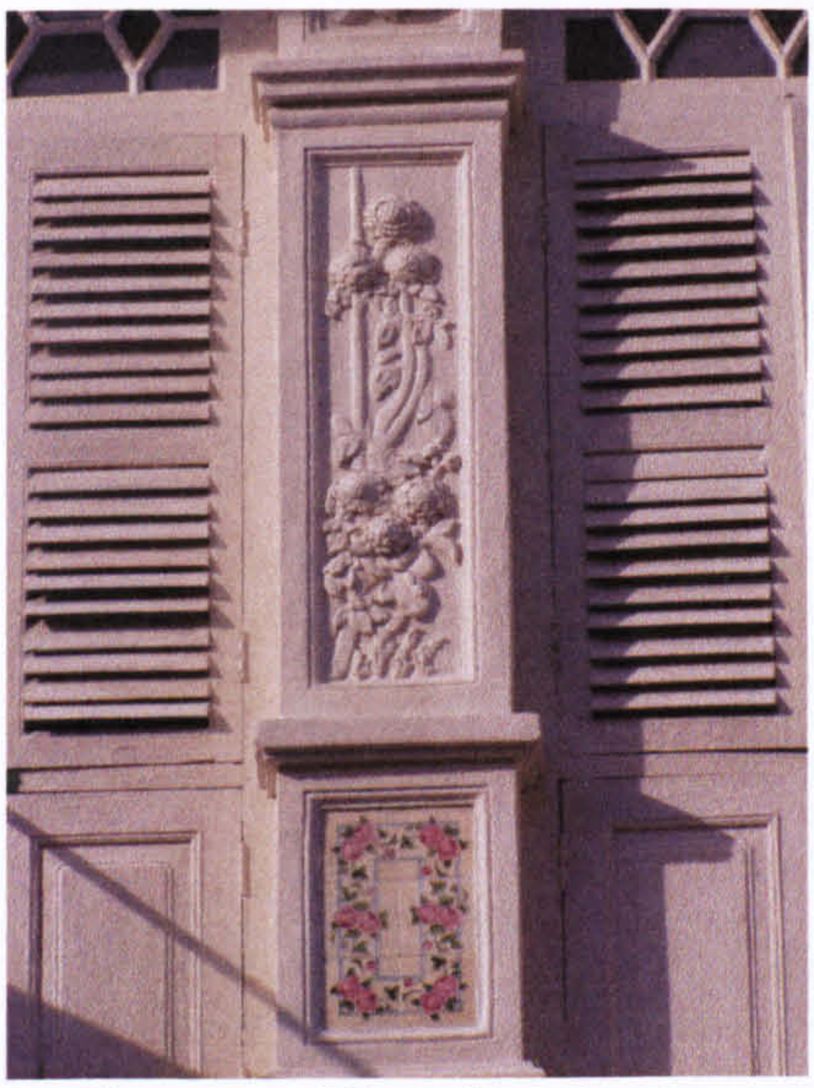


d. Macfarlane's of Glasgow's cast iron, column and brackets, item 53 in the catalogue



e. (right) View of central courtyard air well, Scottish cast iron with carved Chinese screen behind

Fig. 2-19 Architectural legacy, **Early Straits Eclectic** mansion
Shophouse courtyard style



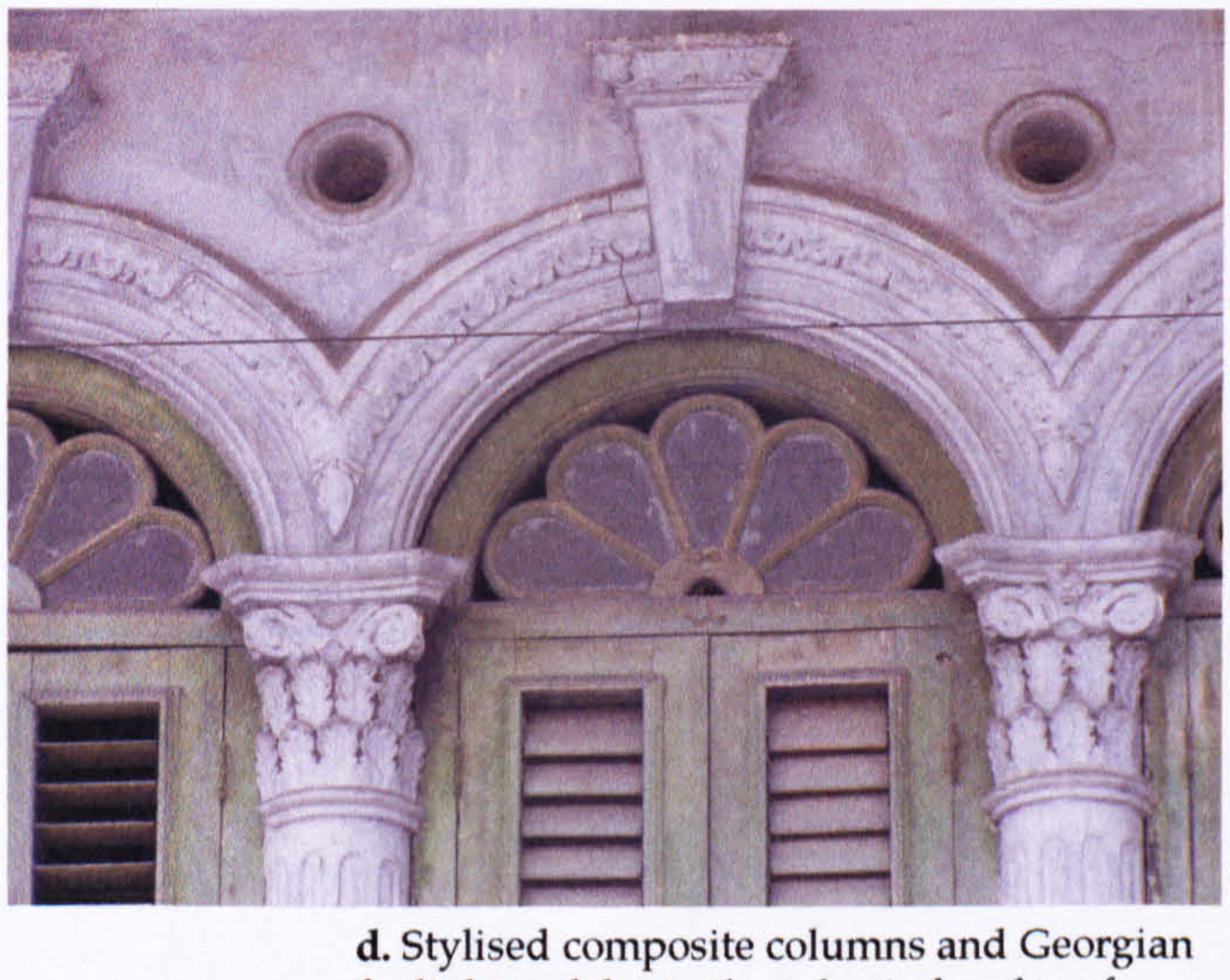
a Plaster mouldings depicting the four seasons of flora, and ceramic tiles, Chinese



b. Late Straits Eclectic shophouse façade, fully tiled ground floor. Glass and shutters on the first floor, with re-enforced concrete brackets and deep overhanging roof



c. Plaster mouldings of garlands and sways with 'egg and dart' string courses were typical of this era



d. Stylised composite columns and Georgian fanlights celebrate the eclectic facades of renovated Late Traditional shophouses on Muntri Street



e. Hakka shophouse of Cheng Ho Sheah association, with both chien nien and plaster mouldings

Fig. **2**-20 Architectural legacy, **Late Straits Eclectic** shophouse



f. Smaller shophouses still carry a mixture of motifs and materials



g. Pilasters become rusticated and glass more common



h. Flat panels of fret-cut balustrades, act as ventilation panels



i. A possible Indian Eclectic shophouse on Victoria Street. Now used to breed swiftlets for their edible nests

j. (right) The manner of the archway shows Indian influence, the exaggerated keystone and indents, typical of Straits Eclectic design





k. Ground floor window of a Late Eclectic shophouse which takes reference from the Late Traditional style



l. (left) Cement floor tiles either replaced original terracotta or were laid new in sub-urban Straits Eclectic developments

Fig. 2-20 Architectural legacy, **Late Straits Eclectic** shophouse



a. The Cantonese Temple of the Goldsmiths Association, Ta Kam Hong on Muntri Street, founded in 1832, this building was built in 1903, with simple black & red roof ridge



b. Features of Cantonese Temple Architecture are the grey brick, bow beams and lion, and raised platforms



c. Awaiting renovation works, the Chung Keng Kwee temple on Church Street, is an example of the elaborate Cantonese pre-cast *Shek Wan* roof ridge



d. The Cheah Kongsi, Armenian Street, 1930s renovations added lions' heads and Straits Eclectic mouldings to the ground floor, whist maintaining the Hokkien temple on the first floor (reproduced from Khoo Su Nin, 1993: 33)



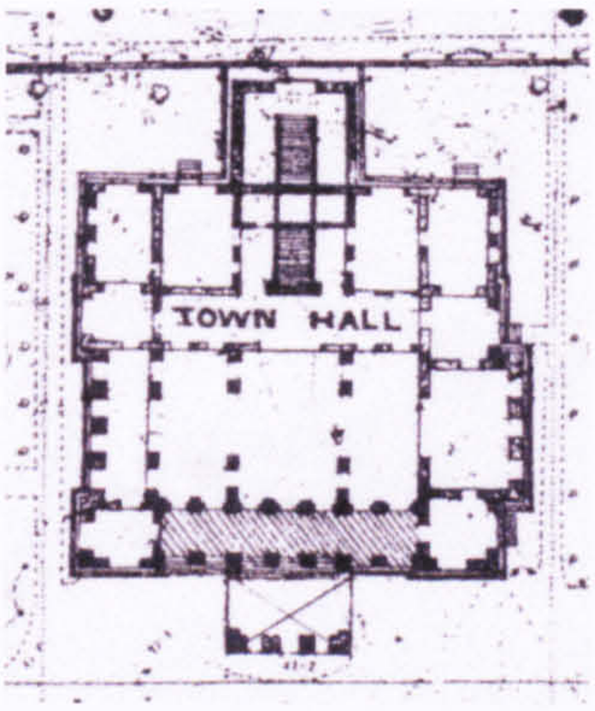
e. A detail from the Khoo Kongsi showing the elaborate roof forms with decorative *chien nien,* cut and paste porcelain work

f. (left) The Khoo Kongsi, a two storey temple based on the Anglo-Indian bungalow plan with projecting porch built in 1906 and restored in 2001 with craftsmen from China and India

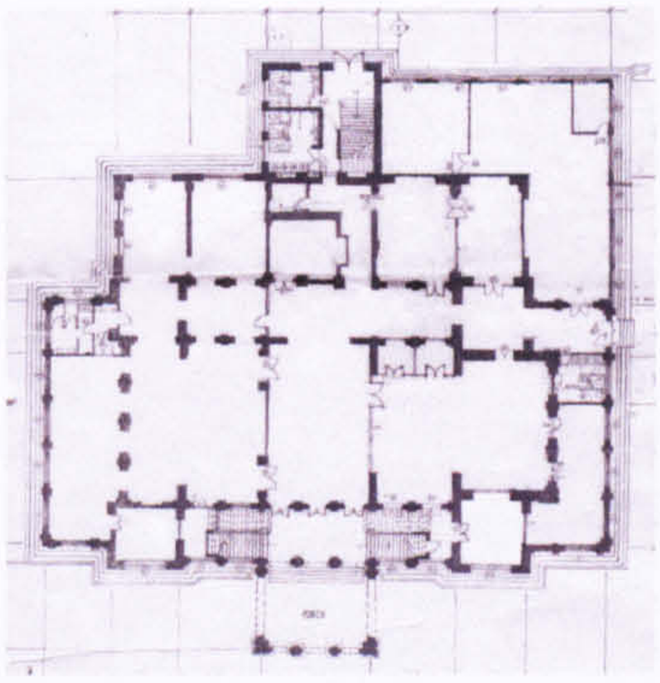
Fig. 2- 21 Architectural legacy, **Chinese Kongsi** and **Associations**



a. The Town Hall, undergoing renovation, 2002, built 1880 and extended and refashioned in 1906



b. The1893 Town Hall plan shows the stair on the Duke Street entrance (top of plan)



c . The 1999 survey plan shows the Duke street stair relocated and two staircases either side of the *porte-cochere* entrance



d. The Classical Georgian façade of the Recorder's and Magistrate's courts, early 1800s, now the State Assembly building



e. The City Hall, still used as Council Chambers and offices, added Dutch gable to the palette of eclectic styles in 1903



f. (left) Formerly Penang Free School, bombed by Allies during the Pacific War and is now the State Museum. 1896-1906 echoes Flemish Renaissance architecture

Fig. **2**-22 Architectural legacy, **administration** and **governance**



a. Shanghai plastered walls introduce a new barrier and social division, to the street



b. The terraced compound house introduced the pavement into the streetscape



c. Argus Lane, terraced housing no longer incorporates a five-foot-way in the façade. Shade, however, has been provided with additional awnings



d. The five-foot-way remains, with compound in front



e. Where space did not permit a front compound, the social barrier has been created by the inclusion of the balustrade

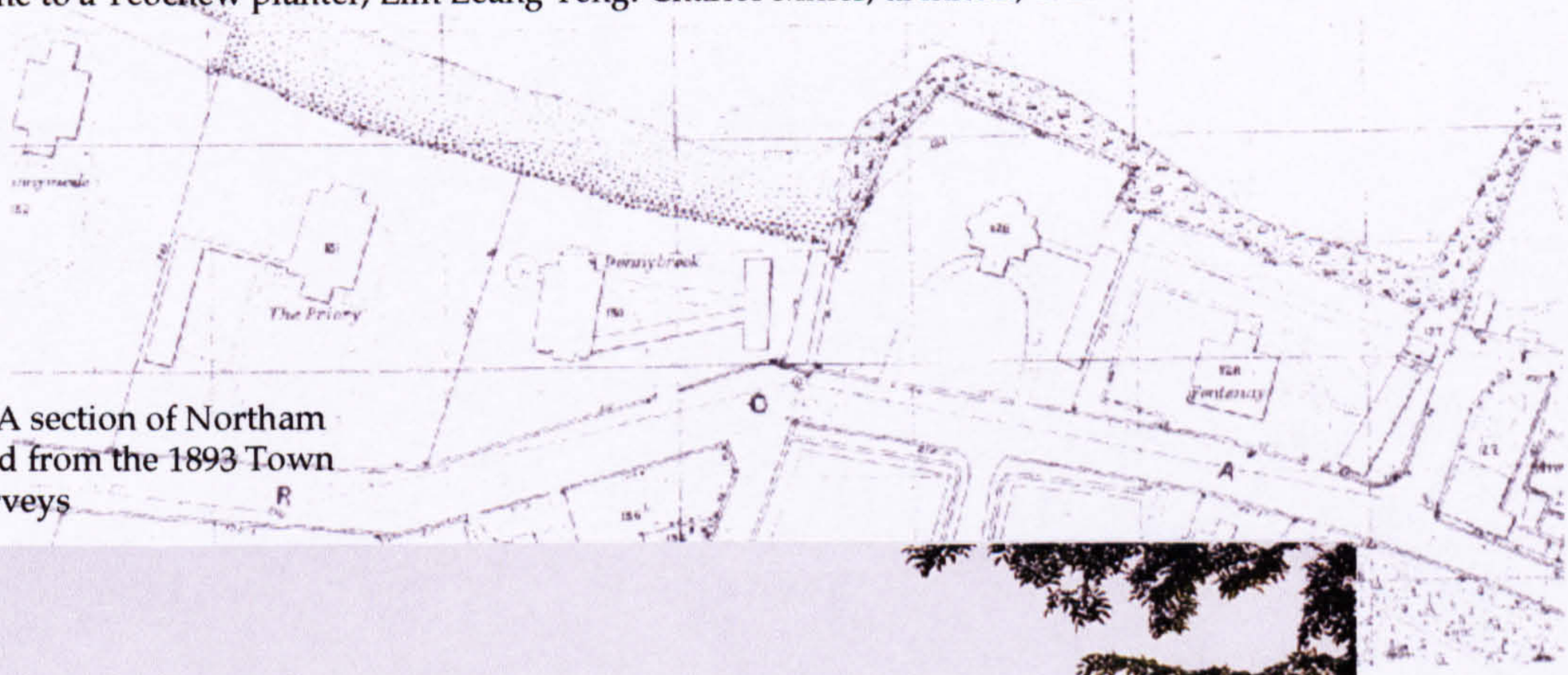


f. (left) An unusual compound and traditional Chinese shophouse arrangement

Fig **2**-23 Architectural legacy, **Terraced house** form



a. Woodville, an example of a Straits Eclectic Villa on Northam Road, was home to a Teochew planter, Lim Leang Teng. Charles Miller, architect, 1925



b. A section of Northam road from the 1893 Town Surveys



c. Homestead, a Straits Eclectic Mansion, built for shipping magnate Lim Chin Guan by Stark and McNiel, 1919

Fig. 2-24 Architectural legacy, **Straits Eclectic** villas and mansions



a. (right) York Road, *Ku Kah Lau*, similar to one designed by Ung Ban Hoe, 1926 Barrack Road - former employee of Neubronner (Lim, 1992), symmetrical plan, though the open veranda is only on one side of the porch



b. Jazz musician Jimmy Boyle's House, Kelawi Rd, late 1920s in the style of Chew Eng Eam (Lim,1992). Asymmetrical plan with porch to one side

c. (right) Barrack Road, *Ku Kah Lau*, similar to one on the same road designed by Ung Ban Hoe, 1926, (Lim, 1992). Symmetrical plan, since demolished



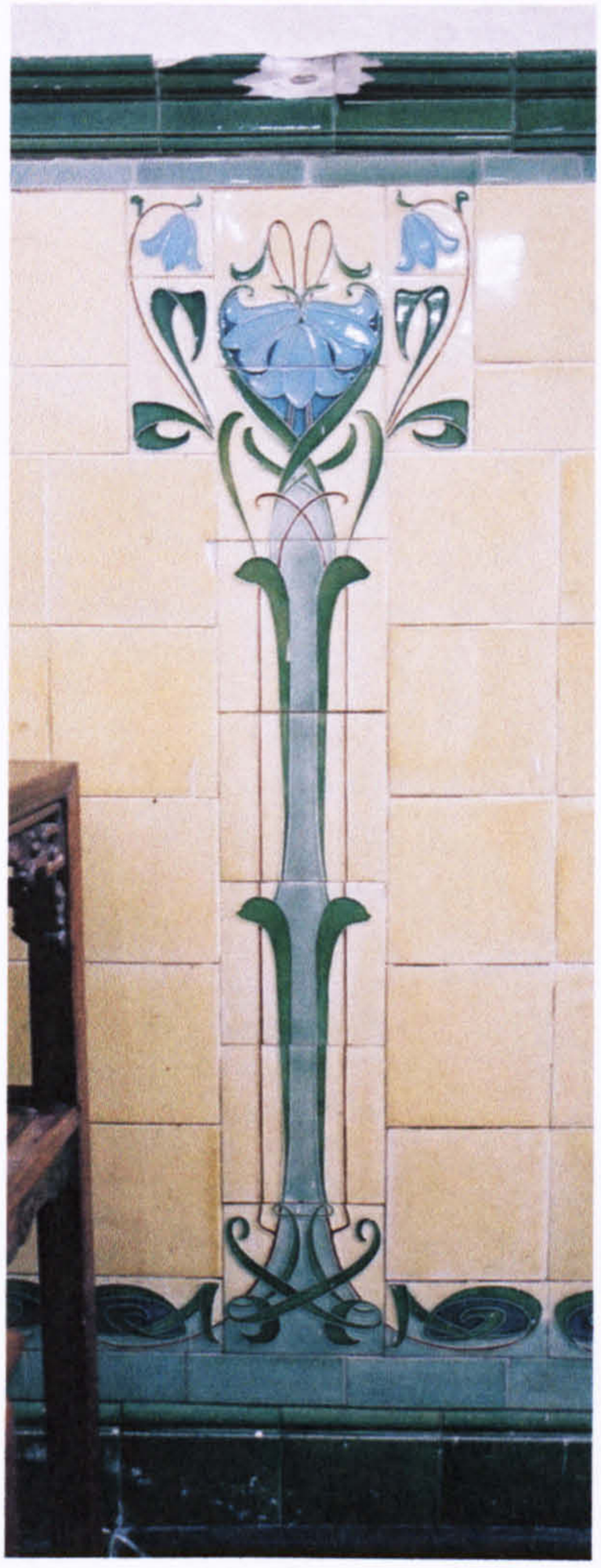
d. (below) Semi-detached, Malay style, suburban housing. The original roof would have been unglazed ridge and furrow tiles





e. Terraced Malay style suburban housing, panel and infill construction on masonry or re-inforced concrete posts

Fig. 2-25 Architectural legacy, **Malay Style** bungalows





a. Art Nouveau gates, Western Road, showing the typical tendril motif of the style

b. (left) Art Nouveau dado tiles of the Ng See Kah Meow clan association, King Street





c. The coffee shop chair came from Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Austria

d (left) The typical tendril Art Nouveau motif on the chair seat



e. Art Nouveau ceramic dado tile, Stewart Lane



f. The 'Thonet' trade mark





g. Cubist influence to the Hindu endowment housing on Sri Bahari Road

h. (left) view of the cantilevered cubist canopy of the Hindu endowment housing

Fig **2**-26 Architectural legacy, **Art Nouveau** and **Cubist Styles**





a A two storey Art Deco façade emphasising height sits well in the existing streetscape, Campbell Street



b The Rex cinema demonstrates the Art Deco style though has had many additions, including the glass canopy, in the 1950s

c. (left) A detail from the Lim Leang Teng Mansion, garage and car showroom



d. A row of Art Deco, purpose built shophouses on Church Street



e. (left) Shanghai Art Deco, 1938 C.E. Boutcher for the Kwantung and Tengchow Association

Fig. 2-27 Architectural legacy - **Art Deco Style**



a. Boustead, tin refiners and exporters, built their offices and *godowns* on Weld Quay in 1893, using a classical style

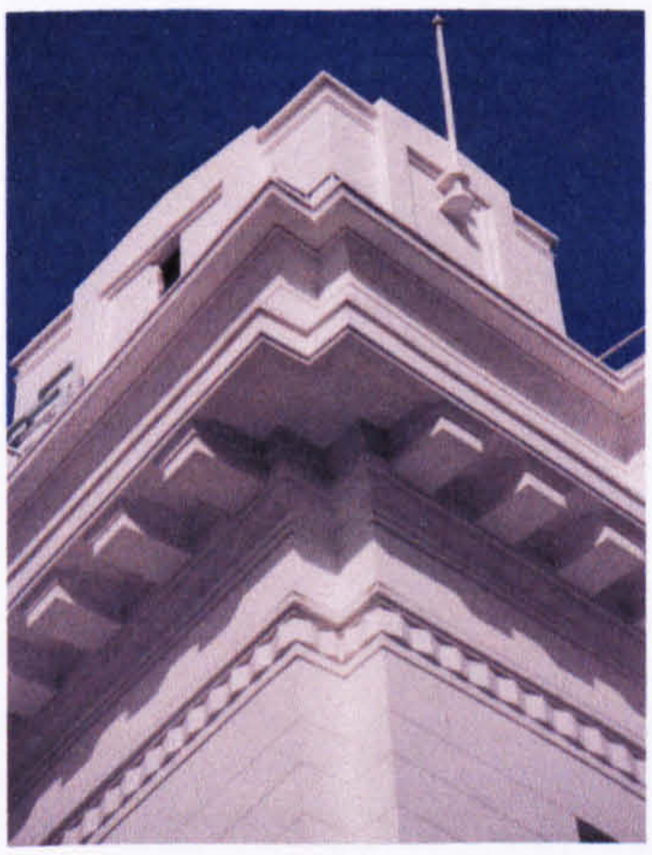


b. ABN AMRO bank, formerly the Netherlands Trading Company, architects Wilson and Neubronner ,1905. Banking Hall with separate chambers above



c. (left) Standard Chartered Bank, Beach Street, architects Stark and McNiel, 1930, used Macfarlane's of Glasgow cast iron rainwater goods as well as both solid granite and textured plaster work to resemble granite

d. (below) Ban Hin Lee (BHL) Bank founded in 1935. Architects, Stark and McNiel, 1936 (Khoo 1993:46) Banking on the ground floor with chambers above



e. Art Deco corner detail of BHL bank



Fig. **2**-28 Architectural legacy, 1900s **commercial architecture**



a. Lim Leong Teng Mansions of Farquhar Street boast of an early Otis Lift (not in working order). Built in the Art Deco style it comprises apartments of variable sizes and commercial space on the ground floor, including garaging



b. American Arts and Crafts style for these apartments built in 1934 as Muslim, Mesjid Kapitan Kling *waqf* accommodation, note the chimneys



c. (right) A detail showing the pre-cast concrete air vent on the vertical stair well



d. (left) The second *waqf* block, designed by Charles Miller, in the late 1930s. The original flat roof was built on in the 1980s



e *Kampong Kolam* housing block with open veranda walkways and ventilation, this was the model for the government housing (left)



f. (left) With many personalised additions, this housing form can be seen through out the country as an efficient form of government employees' housing

Fig. 2-29 Architectural legacy, **residential apartments**



a. The former Pathe Hotel, Light Street, an example of the typical eclectic union between both Art deco, seen in the vertical elements and International Style's linear emphasis



b. The first floor of this corner restaurant is cantilevered over the five-foot-way. The glass wraps unhindered by columns



c. The former car showroom plays with cantilever planes and Art Deco Motifs



d. The New Asia Hotel, built around a courtyard of shops called the Eastern Bazaar, continues with the traditional colonnaded five-foot-way, but emphasises the horizontal through linear mouldings and air vents

Fig. 2-30 Architectural legacy, **International Style**

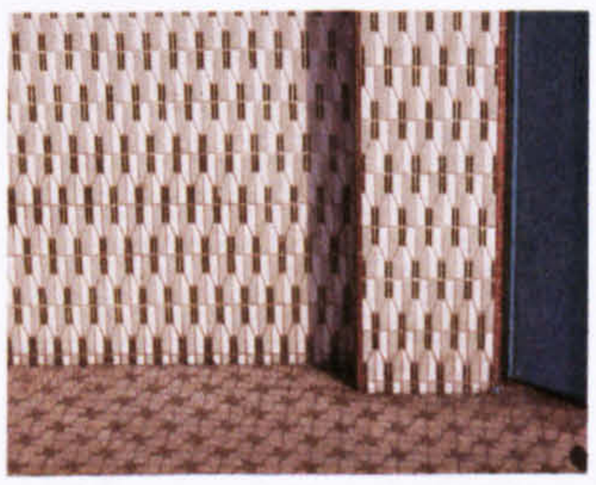


a. Built in 1955 as the Lam Wah Ee hospital, in Muntri Street, this modernist building is now offices, a tyre warehouse and government clinic



b. Dowood Restaurant introduced vertical an horizontal sun shading, typical of this era





c.(left) Mosaic tiles for five-foot-ways, and dado panels, became a great feature of this period

d. (left) The general Produce Agency Sdn. Bhd. Uses ceramic mosaic as the façade finish, and incorporates vents and vertical sun shading into the design



e. *Bangunan Tunku Syed Putra*, the new State government building on Downing street, 1962



f. (right) The Ismalia Bakery on Transfer Road, built 1964 continued in the Federal Style simplicity

Fig. 2-31 Architectural legacy, 1950s & 1960s **Federal Style**



a. (right) The Penang Branch of Bank Negara, designed by Malayan Architects Co-partnership (MAC), Chen Voon Fee. 1963. The Neo-Classical Supreme Court can be seen to the right



b. The Boston City Hall was an acknowledged influence on the design of Bank Negara



c. (right) Bank Negara building retains the rhythm of the shophouse street, though the building's function demands a greater height





d. Dewan Sri Pinang, a Public Works Department design, appears as a modest two storey building from the front, though a mezzanine floor is set back from the façade. Again the vertical divisions follow the rhythm of the shophouse streets, and the louvers are reminiscent of Late Traditional façades

e (above right) the openess of the ground floor allows cross ventilation and takes away the imposition of a solid mass

f (right) The light and shade created by the voids and solid elements, create and inviting and articulated building



Fig **2**-32 Architectural legacy, **Modernism** of the 1960s



b. The twelve-storey hotel appeared on Penang Road in the early 1970s and began to disturb the streetscape and vista of the two storey environment



a. Pride in the twelve storey Hotel Oriental was expressed in this postcard published in the 1970s



c. The juxtaposition of the modernist hotel against the two storey shophouses of Leith Street



d The Merchant Hotel, also twelve storeys appeared at the same time, developing a hotel district



e (right) Smaller developments in the late 1970s show a confusion of form, function and identity

Fig. **2**- 33 Architectural legacy, **Modernism** of the 1970s

3

NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT: POLICIES AND PRACTICE 1957 – 1999

Introduction

Chapter Three presents the background to national social and physical development policies, legislation, and practice in order to place Penang's development, discussed in Chapter Four, within the national development context. However, to develop an objective understanding of the growth of a nation would require, in the words of Dr. Shad Saleem Faruqi, 'a historian's perspective, a lawyer's acumen, a politician's insight and an executive's experience' (cited in Shad, 2000: 25).

A review of government polices and practices, in particular those related to development, culture and tourism promotion, which have taken place since 1957, provides a broader understanding of the influences on cultural identity perceptions of both individuals and ethnic groups. As Lee Hock Guan observes, 'In post-independent Malaysia the site of cultural contentions was centred over the status and place of the different ethnic groups' cultures in the public space' (Lee H.G., 2000:3). He suggests, however, that since the 1990s the earlier tensions brought about by the policies of the 1970s and 1980s have lessened to a period of 'markedly calm' relations between communities. Nagata goes on to argue that whilst policies have led to economic success, for both the nation and 'segments of the population', it could be argued that this 'was achieved partly at the expense of rights and freedoms of many of them' [members of the population] (2001:179).

Clearly, therefore the policies and practices put forward in the name of nation-building have, to varying degrees, influenced ethnic perceptions of their position within Malaysian society. As Lee notes such policies emphasised the differences between ethnic groups, encouraging 'the personal sense of deprivation into an ethnic

collective sense of relative deprivation.' He goes on to explain that this creates a '... sense that one is receiving less than what one desires and deserves' (Lee, 2000:15). Although Lee suggests that due to the policies of *bumiputerism*, this sense is more acute amongst the Malays, it is arguable that it is relevant to all groups, in varying degrees.

This chapter, therefore, examines the national policies and practices since independence which have shaped these perceptions, and the influences which have led to reconstructions of cultural identities. This helps us to understand George Town's heritage, its architecture and communities, in the context of the reconstruction of ethnic identities and of nation-building.

The road to independence

Prior to British administration, the economy of the Malayan Peninsula was principally oriented to agricultural subsistence and the population governed by feudal Malay sultans and territorial chiefs (Gomez, 1999: 170). The British maintained a policy of 'divide and rule' amongst the indigenous Malay and Indian and Chinese immigrant populations, mainly for convenience and administrative purposes. Other than the privileged upper classes, who were often British-educated, the labouring communities had little more than primary education in their own languages, which served to maintain communal division and the association of ethnic groups with specific occupations. For example, the rural Indian labourers remained in the rubber estates, their urban countrymen as merchants, traders, and moneylenders, and the Chinese as labourers in tin mining and as middlemen, merchants, and shopkeepers and commercial farmers. The Malays were mainly in agriculture, food production and later in government administration –an area still dominated by *bumiputeras* (Andaya and Andaya, 1982: 263). The British had recognised the indigenous status of the Malays and offered them various forms of protection from the more competitive, immigrant-survival-mentality of the Chinese and Indian populations (Milne and Mauzy, 1999: 10).

The first attempt by the British to create a pathway for democratic rule was the *Malayan Union*. This was withdrawn following protest from the Malays who feared a downgrading of their rulers' powers, the infiltration of non-Malays into previously reserved jobs, and citizenship for non-Malays. Instead, a new *Federation of Malaya Agreement* became law in 1948, having resolved many of the Malays' concerns (ibid.: 11). Independence and democratic elections, however, were seen as a means for all ethnic groups to jockey for greater power.

Since independence, in 1957, the Malayan and after 1963 Malaysian government's preoccupation has been in maintaining ethnic stability, whilst forging the path to economic and social development. However, in May 1969, race riots followed the celebrations of the opposition parties' election victories. The Federal government then put into place a series of interventionist policies designed to break

down ethnic divisions associated with economic function by 'positive' discrimination in favour of the less fortunate communities. Twenty years on, an all-unifying vision of development, *Wawasan 2020* (Vision 2020) focused on the creation of a modern, fully industrialised Malaysia and Malaysian citizens with loyalty focused on nation rather than ethnic group.

With independence came the call for

- Freedom of Speech and Expression
- Freedom of the Press
- Freedom of Peaceable Assembly
- Freedom of Association
- Freedom from Detention without Trial
- Freedom from Discrimination
- Freedom from Poverty

This chapter considers to what extent such noble intentions have been achieved in the years since independence, and the policies and practices used in the process of creating a modern democratic nation, in order to comprehend current identity reconstructions taking place that challenge or support multi-ethnic cultural heritage.

Electoral democracy and communal politics

At the time of the 1999 elections Malaysia was divided into 180 parliamentary constituencies whose elected representatives form the Dewan Rakyat (Lower House) or House of Representatives. The Dewan Negara (Upper House) or Senate is made up of 70 members. Forty are appointed by the King (Yang di Pertuan Agong). The remaining 30 members of the Senate are elected by State Legislatures, for a three-year term unaffected by the dissolution of Parliament (Berita, 1993: 364).

Malaya had barely experienced the European culture of democracy before it achieved independence in 1957, having held the first Municipal election in 1952 followed by a Federal election in 1955. Transplanting democracy onto cultures with alternative social and political systems inevitably creates challenges for the society as a whole (Mahububani, 1998: 47). Fundamental to Malaysia's democratic character are the ethnic-based parties, and the communal political representation of ethnic identity (Muhammad Ikmal Said, 1992: 258). In the elections of 1952, the United Malays National Organisation (UMNO) joined the Malayan Chinese Association (MCA), creating a coalition called 'The Alliance'. The smaller Malayan Indian Congress (MIC) joined the Alliance in the 1955 Federal elections (Andaya and Andaya, 1982: 266). Parliament was formed by the successful Alliance and the first Prime Minister, Tunku

Abdul Rahman, proportionally allocated the cabinet positions from each of the coalition's communal parties.

New parties have emerged, survived, or faded away, even re-emerging. The former opposition party, Gerakan, for example, joined the Alliance in 1972, which later became Barisan National (BN; The National Front), and continues to form the government of today.

Opposition parties exist, including amongst the Malay community, Parti Islam Se-Malaysia (PAS) which is one of the oldest and has followers mainly in the north-eastern Peninsular Malaysian states. In addition to PAS, Parti Rakyat Malaysia (PRM) and the non-communal Democratic Action Party (DAP) differ substantially in their ethnic composition, and policies, particularly over Islam. As a result, they have failed to form a successful opposition coalition. Semangat 46, formed following a split from UMNO in 1987, unsuccessfully concluded alliances with PAS and DAP, and rejoined UMNO en masse in 1996 (Milne and Mauzy, 1999: 46). Prior to the elections of 1999 a new opposition party, Parti KeADILan Nasional (PKN) was formed by the former Deputy Prime Minister following his arrest and imprisonment. KeADILan, PAS, PRM, and DAP created the Barisan Alternative (BA) coalition, in an attempt to weaken BN's two-thirds majority. Following electoral defeat, internal disagreements brought about BA's disintegration.

Monetary or contractual enticements for political support are sometimes offered from both corporate to street level, particularly during election campaigns, although they are openly criticised. Long-neglected items, such as road resurfacing, are rectified and election-wise voters request new civic projects to be undertaken. Thus, as the population becomes better educated the election campaigns become tactical. However, fear of reduced development funds to opposition states directs votes in favour of the BN. For many, the possibility of changing the representatives of a governing body by voting is in contradiction to their cultural, religious and social traditions and such personal decision-making may even be unthinkable. Taoists, for example, make decisions by throwing *seang poh* (a pair of hand-size red, kidney-shaped pieces of wood). The three variable landing positions, that determine the answer, 'yes', 'no' 'laughing' (try again) are guided by the temple deities.

National development: cultural and economic policies

From 1957 the Alliance government, dominated by UMNO, argued for the importance of the unification of the multi-ethnic population through a national language. English, formerly the language of parliament, the courts, and education, was thought to both disadvantage the Malays and to continue to tie Malaysia to its colonial history. Whilst

non-Malay groups argued for a recognition of the multi-ethnic composition of the population, the Alliance believed that through the adoption of a Malayan heritage, (language and culture), the new Malaysian citizen would emerge. *The Constitution,* therefore, provided for the introduction of Malay and in 1967, a *National Language Bill* was passed (Andaya and Andaya, 1982: 277).

Lack of mutual trust in equitable governance and the fear of loss of cultural identity, caused frustration amongst the non-Malays. Equally, the 'pattern of economic development' between 1957 and 1969, 'exacerbated already existing social inequalities', and led to discontent with the Alliance (Gomez, 1999:179). This culminated in the destabilising swing in favour of the opposition in the 10 May 1969 elections. As the opposition celebrated, 'racial' riots broke out between the opposition and Alliance supporters which lasted four days. A state of emergency was declared and communal unrest was experienced for many months. The memory of such violence occasionally resurfaces to dampen anti-government enthusiasm in times of opposition popularity or elections. Before the riots, internal and external threats had unified the ethnic groups, such as the communist insurgency prior to independence, and Indonesian Confrontation. By 1969, as these threats were brought under control concern moved to the role each ethnic group would play in the new Malaysia, particularly in Penang where the opposition Gerakan Party took over the state government.

Mahathir, who lost his seat in 1969, wrote to the Prime Minister, demanding his resignation as leader of UMNO, for being out of touch with the Malays who were frustrated by the government's lack of control of the Chinese and Indians. Thus, he positioned himself as a Malay nationalist (Milne and Mauzy, 1999: 22). In 1970, a Department of National Unity was created and a new ideology presented in an attempt to forge social unity. In the following year the National Consultative Council (NCC) was formed, composed of government representatives as well as those from the trade unions and press, in an attempt to include all members of society (Andaya and Andaya, 1982: 281).

Several policies were then put into place, which emphasised economic and social restructuring and the attempt to eliminate economic imbalances, notably for the economically disadvantaged, mainly rural Malays. The 'encouragement' of a new Malay middle class and a strengthening of the already politicised 'Islamic focus' became paramount.

In 1971, and after heated disputes between UMNO, the Chinese and Indian educationalists, and the Chinese commercial elite, over the language of instruction in Chinese and Tamil primary schools, Malay was ruled to be the official language in government primary schools, and for government examinations in all secondary schools. Malay also became the language of the courts, although courts proceed in English with the judge's permission, and that of the civil service. Official forms and

Acts of Parliament are written both in Malay and English and often meetings begin with the official address in Malay but continue in a mixture of Malay and English. In the 1990s the introduction of satellite television and information technology through the Internet, has once again put many Malays in a disadvantaged position. As a result, a policy change in January 2003 has re-introduced the teaching of science and mathematics using English as the medium of instruction. The promotion of Malay as the national language was an attempt to unite Malaysians, control the more enterprising minorities, and reinforce the position of the 'indigenous' Malays. However in a globalising world, such ideologies are being reconsidered.

Defining a 'Malaysian' culture

In 1971, with the intention of creating 'a national and common culture for the purpose of national unity', the National Cultural Congress was held by the Ministry of Culture, Youth, and Sports, (Kementerian Kebudayaan, Belia dan Sukan [KKBS]). The basic principles produced by the Congress and adopted were as follows:

> 1 - the natural culture of Malaysia must be based on the cultures of the people indigenous to the region;
> 2 - elements from the other cultures which are suitable and reasonable may be incorporated into the national culture; and
> 3 - Islam will be an important element in the national culture.
> (cited in Tan Sooi Beng, 1992: 283)

From this a *National Cultural Policy* (NCP) was formulated and the National Art Gallery and the National Museum, responsible for the gazetting of historic buildings under the Antiquities Act 1976, were placed under the directorship of the KKBS (ibid.: 283).

'Selected' Malay 'traditional' arts such as *bangsawan, boria, joget* and Islam's *nasyid* poetry and song recitals were promoted alongside a western orchestra. Performing arts were often reduced to pastiche 'cultural shows' for hospitality entertainment. Confusion remains regarding the suitability of supporting pre-Islamic 'Malay' performances. In contrast, the widespread introduction of commercial television in competition with Radio Televisyen Malaysia (RTM) and the rise of independent 'fringe' arts groups, mainly in the capital, have created a visible counter reflection of the government's *National Cultural Policy* (ibid.: 283).

In order to provide examples of developed countries whose morals and ethics aligned with the Malaysian government's aspirations, the 'Look East' policy was introduced in 1981. Its essence was cultural rather than economic and provided examples of Japanese and South Korean qualities such as 'diligence, discipline, loyalty,

the promotion of group rather than individual interest, high quality and good management systems in business' (Milne and Mauzy, 1999: 55). The differences culturally and economically between Malaysia and the countries it aspired to emulate made the purpose of the policy difficult to comprehend. It is interesting to note that the examples of 'economically successful' countries were chosen from Asia rather than the West.

Malaysia's own rich diversity of multicultural ethnic communities became recognised as an asset for tourism, thus national identity in 1991. However, it was not until 2000, when the value of this cultural diversity was understood as a 'one stop' Asian tourist destination, and was promoted as 'Malaysia Truly Asia'. Little mention was made of physical assets such as historic enclaves, monuments, or architecture reflecting this diversity, until more recently.

Social and economic restructuring

In 1956, in preparation for independence, the new government drafted the *First Malaya Plan*, the first of a series of five-year economic plans designed to restructure society (Andaya and Andaya, 1982: 282). However, perhaps the greatest engineered change to the social, political and economic structure of the country was the introduction of the *New Economic Policy* (NEP) initiated in 1971. The policy had two 'prongs'; the first was the eventual elimination of poverty of all Malaysians, the second was to eradicate the association of ethnic divisions with economic functions through social restructuring, with the specific support for the Malays and other *bumiputeras*. This was intended to create a greater economic balance between ethnic groups (Jomo, 1990: 12).

Under the *First Outline Perspective Plan*, 1971-1990 (OPP1) four *Malaysia Plans* were implemented within the NEP framework. The Second OPP2 (1991-2000), however, contained the *New Development Policy* (NDP), the successor to the NEP, with a 10-year timeframe. The focus was to accelerate the eradication of hard-core poverty (a government survey identified 143,100 poor households, [Berita, 1993: 342]), and to continue to reduce relative poverty. It recognised that urbanisation and industrialisation put pressure on housing, income-earning opportunities, social amenities and physical facilities that would be felt by existing and new urban communities alike. The private sector was 'persuaded' to build much-needed low and medium-cost housing, though in reality the targets were seldom met creating a shortage of housing for the lower income groups and an oversupply of condominiums for the high income sector.

A 20-year period and appropriate policies were thought sufficient to redress the economic imbalances. The Malays and other *bumiputeras* were encouraged to take up entrepreneurial activities, thus leapfrogging from their traditional rural roles into modern and unfamiliar sectors of an urban-based economy (Milne and Mauzy, 1999:

52). To ensure the possibility of some success, economic advantages in the form of 'discounts', for example on new listings share options, quotas in certain fields, and statutory inclusion in others, were orchestrated. Inevitably, these positive discrimination policies created resentment from the non-Malays towards the *bumiputeras*.

Jomo raises the issue of which *bumiputeras* would truly benefit: the already politically and financially strong elite, the Malay directors of Chinese companies known as 'Ali Babas' or the mass of *bumiputeras*, rice-farmers, and clerks? For the Malays to increase their corporate ownership to 30% by 1991, from their starting point of 1.9%, in 1971, was a momentous task (Radzuan Halim, 2000: 24; Jomo, 1990:9). In order for them to achieve these ambitions, and secure senior management positions, extensive training, advice and financial help programmes were set up, including increasing the Malay entry into University through a quota system (Milne and Mauzy, 1999: 52); this was relaxed in 2002. Further encouragement of *bumiputera* entrepreneurship came from the Bumiputera Commerce and Industrial Community, with training in management and business ethics. Failed businesses, however, are common and in the economic recession of 1985, 'the rise in bankruptcies was shocking' (ibid.: 45).

By 1988, the NEP had effected a dramatic change amongst the Malay population; the *bumiputera* representation in the professions had risen from just 6% in 1970 to 25% in 1988 (Jomo, 1990: 8), with the majority of the work force once heavily involved in agriculture dropping from 62.3 % to 41.3%. By 1995, their share in the administrative and managerial category had increased from 28.7% to 36.1% creating a new Malay middle class (Mahathir, 1996: 21-24).

The NEP goal of 30% *bumiputera* ownership, control and management of equity capital in the corporate sector continued, introducing a requirement to allocate portions of the equity to *bumiputeras* in privatised projects. Small *bumiputera* investors were encouraged through the National Trust Fund, *Amanah Saham Nasional* (ASN), with high tax-free returns and a ceiling on individual ownership. Thus, *bumiputera* share capital rose from 1.5 % in 1969 to 19.4% in 1988 (Jomo, 1990:9), measured through Kuala Lumpur Stock Exchange data on the share capital of limited companies (Radzuan Halim, 2000). Jomo suggests, however, that the wealth distribution and restructuring strategy of the NEP has gained more interest amongst politicians and policy-makers than poverty eradication.

Defining positions of power

From 1981 until the 1990s, the government, under Prime Minister Dr. Mahathir, set about defining positions of power. The first contest was against the powers of the

Agong (King). In 1983, the election of the *Agong*, from the nine Sultanates, for a new five-year term, was between the states of Johore and Perak. These two rulers were known for their unconstitutional interference in state politics. Well orchestrated campaigns supporting changes in their constitutional powers, and exposure of the rulers' extravagant lifestyles and questionable morals, abolished their once sacrosanct positions. The resulting Constitution (Amendment) Act 1984 clarified only certain powers of the *Agong;* others remained simply as verbal understandings. As Milne and Mauzy suggest '[I]t is curious that a dispute that had occurred in order to clarify understandings was resolved, apparently quite happily, by leaving some of them in a state of imprecision' (1999: 35).

The *Agong* episode was generally considered by non-Malays to be a 'Malay' crisis similar to the split in UMNO, which divided into two teams during the contest for party leadership that was won by Mahathir. The losing team formed 'Semangat 46' in opposition in 1987. The further contest, between the Prime Minister and the judiciary, had far greater implications for the population as a whole and greatly affected the confidence of many Malaysians.

The judiciary

The late renowned Tun Mohd. Suffian Hashim, former Lord President, speaking at the Bar Auditorium on 10th March 2000 observed

> While there are judges whose integrity and impartiality have never wavered, the public perception is that the judiciary as a whole can no longer be trusted to honour its oath of office. When I am asked what I thought, my usual reply is that I wouldn't like to be tried by today's judges, especially if I am innocent (cited in Ramakrishnan 2000: 4).

Since 1985, the Supreme Court has been the final court of appeal, taking appeal cases from the High Courts that deal with criminal and civil jurisdiction, and appeals from lesser courts. The Sessions Courts, Magistrates' Courts, Juvenile Courts, and the infrequently used Penghulu's Courts all have specific duties. In other than a few existing court cases, no jury is employed; as a lawyer explained, it was better to have an educated judge than an often ill-educated jury. The principal law officer, the Attorney General, is advisor to the Crown, Cabinet, and Ministers of Parliament (Berita 1993: 522). In addition to these Courts, Syariah Courts have jurisdiction over offences committed by Muslims against the precepts of Islam (ibid.: 359).

The Constitution ensures that judges 'should not be subject to control or direction by either the Legislator or the Executive' (ibid.: 353). The majority of the judiciary and senior officers were drawn from the UMNO-supporting, conservative, Malay elite and

have delivered judgements against the government of the day (Crouch, 1992: 25). However, several such rulings in the late 1980s resulted in the undermining of judicial independence.

In 1986, the attempt to expel an international journalist was disallowed by the courts. In 1987, an injunction, temporarily preventing United Engineering Malaysia, of which UMNO was the majority owner, from signing a government contract, was issued. UMNO was later judged an illegal organisation during a split within the party (Milne and Mauzy, 1999: 47) and in 1987 the Home Affairs Minister's refusal to allow *Aliran Monthly* to publish in Malay, was ruled as erroneous. By 1988, following *Operasi Lalang* -the mass internment of 118 (mainly opposition) politicians, social activists and academics, held under the *Internal Security Act* (ISA)- a DAP leader was released. The courts once again went against the government declaring that the detention order was 'made without proper care, caution and proper sense of responsibility' (*Asian Wall Street Journal*, 18 .3.1998, cited in Crouch, 1992: 26).

These rulings frustrated the government and in 1988 and 1994 Parliament passed Constitutional amendments, conferring the powers of the judiciary through statutes rather than remaining embedded in *The Constitution*. The removal of judges formally recommended by the *Agong*, could only take place following consultation with the Prime Minister (Milne and Mauzy, 1999: 47-49). In May 1988, charges of 'gross misbehaviour and misconduct' were laid against the Lord President (Chief Justice) who was later dismissed (ibid, 1999: 48; Crouch, 1922: 26). Similar cases were made against five more Supreme Court judges, two of whom were also dismissed. One went on to become consultant to a leading Penang law firm, but committed suicide in 1996, a disillusioned man.

As Milne and Mauzy comment, the Malaysian judiciary has become subdued under the power of the Executive. If such positions of power such as the *Agong*, former top leaders of UMNO and the judiciary can be brought under executive control, the likelihood for restrictions on personal liberties is great. The following section, therefore, examines the current legislation that affects freedom of expression and restricts the scope of public debate in order to identify the environment in which those outside positions of power live and those with positions of power operate.

Legislation shaping public debate

The need to maintain a semblance of unity and peace in a developing pluralist society has led to a series of policies which appear to restrict 'freedom of expression' as known in the west. The most powerful and most feared is the *Internal Security Act* (ISA), introduced in 1960. Under the Act a person considered likely to act 'in any manner prejudicial to the security of Malaysia' (Crouch, 1992: 23) may be detained without trial by the Minister of Home Affairs. Over 3,000 people were detained in the first 21 years

of the Act's existence. In October 1987, six months after UMNO had settled its internal battles, and following a rise in racial tension, the ISA was used to detain 118 people during *Operasi Lalang*, including an opposition leader and 13 other DAP Members of Parliament. Most were released over the following 18 months (Chandra Muzaffar, 1997: 5).

'Interest groups' or non-government organisations (NGOs) are confined in their activities and are considered as 'intruders' between the government and the electorate (Milne and Mauzy, 199: 111). Associations with more than seven members are required, under *The Societies Act* of 1948, to register with the Registrar of Societies in an attempt to discourage 'political' organisations. Permits are required, under *The Police Act* of 1967, for all public meetings. Thus, rallies and protests rarely take to the streets. Permits and licences are also required for all performances, and withheld according to censorship requirements. This allows curtailment of activities thought to be against the nation's interest, particularly those seen as 'un-Islamic' or 'violent in nature'.

Education

It is often bemoaned that the current education system is geared to teaching by rote. With multi-ethnic classes and varying degrees of proficiency in the Malay language, many teachers prefer to 'spoon-feed' their students and support the focus on examination results (Tan and Mageswary, 1997). As early as 1928, P.E. Naverednam, in his address to the Teacher's Annual Conference, noted this emphasis. 'Examinations have their use, but we in Malaysia must arrive at a true perspective, and put first things first, and the chief aim of education....is the building of character' (Khoo K.K., 1997). Government and editorials in local papers favoured his comments. However, particularly for non-Malays, parents measure success through examinations and often tuition takes the place of creative play. Top grades are required, for non-Malays, to achieve places on university quotas or overseas scholarships, and competition is intense.

Children begin their formal education at the age of seven and complete tertiary education by 23. First-year University students, having followed thirteen years of rote learning, are often reluctant to participate verbally in front of their lecturers; it is also considered to be a sign of disrespect to raise questions.

Universities, usually known to be the 'hot bed' of intellectual debate and protest, are controlled in Malaysia by the *University and University Colleges Act 1971*. This Act prohibits students in all government tertiary education institutions from protesting or demonstrating on or off campus. Public lectures are sanctioned by the university and ideas vetted. Lecturers are no longer autonomous but have become government servants subject to the terms of the civil service. Fear of 'slow advancement' or even total loss of employment keeps potential creative thinkers silent (Tan and Mageswary,

1997). These Universities, therefore, are no longer powerhouses of intellectual thinking as they once were in the 1960s and early 1970s.

Media

According to Tan and Mageswary 'Malaysian's are sadly lacking in the habit of keeping up with current affairs and in the ability to discern and formulate ideas' (1997:5). Legislation, intended to avoid conflict and maintain harmony in a multi-ethnic society, may well have created this environment. For example, *The Printing Presses and Publications Act*, 1984 amended in 1988, prohibits the publication of 'malicious news' and it increased the government's control of the media (Milne and Mauzy, 1999: 114). As a result of a continual stream of tailored information, rumours run riot as it is assumed that there is more to the published information than is printed.

The Sedition Act, 1971, which inhibits public debate, suggests that discussion has a 'tendency ... to promote ill-will and hostility between different races or classes of the population of Malaysia' (Crouch, 1992: 24). The daily newspapers, therefore, are almost self-censoring. They are also owned by party-affiliated companies, for example the English language newspaper the *New Straits Times* is owned by UMNO's investment arm Fleet Holdings, as are the Malay language newspapers; *Harian, Utusan Malaysia* and *Utusan Melayu* and one Chinese paper. Mandarin and Tamil language newspapers also have pro-government affiliations. The MCA controls the ownership of the English language *Star* newspaper. However, previously critical articles challenging the government resulted in its licence being suspended for several months. The *Sun*, an English language national paper, has had an equally chequered history. Following what appeared to be a ban on sales and distribution, in 2002 it was removed from news-vendors' stalls, but was available free through subscription or advertised outlets such as government office reception areas. Chinese and Tamil language newspapers appear to suffer less censorship.

Delay in distribution occurs when international publications offend through 'unfavourable' reportage which also effects alternative, Malaysian publications. *Aliran Monthly* regularly suffers delays due to harassment of printers, although it has the necessary permits and licences. Availability through the internet now defeats these delays and new sites such as *Malaysiakini.com*, created in order to follow the 1999 elections, has given Malaysian journalists and readers alike, an independent public forum unknown for the last two decades.

Out of four television channels, the government controls Radio Televisyen Malaysia's TV One and TV Two. All Malaysian radio and television programmes are screened by censors, to avoid damage to the unity of the nation and the encouragement of 'social ills'. By the mid-1990s, programmes and even channels became tailored to suit the various ethnic groups, encouraging ethnic polarisation. The

satellite channel Astro has exposed the viewing population to a wider platform of information, debate, and entertainment. However, mainstream television's self-restraint caused Akbar Ali in his article *Filling the Intellectual Vacuum* to note that

> [e]ven the level of discourse on our TV talk shows is mild. There are rarely any probing questions about anything and the discussions are rarely to the point (Akbar Ali, 1997).

However, two years after the disturbance created by the rise of the *reformasi* movement, following the sacking of the Deputy Prime Minister, and the call for transparency, debate, and open discussion, one television channel aired a programme called *Global*. Chaired by an articulate and informed young Malay it has encouraged discussion on such topics as society's ills, although currently in English. The World Trade Centre attack on 9 September 2001 encouraged a televised discussion in Malay and a further programme saw the Prime Minister discussing current affairs with heads of industry and the media. The introduction of such programmes, however structured, indicates a cautious willingness to appear open and transparent on issues relating to the well-being of the country.

Radio stations are equally as cautious, broadcasting non-controversial 'musak', phone-ins, and polite chat about healthy living, fashion, and food. Complaints are restricted to traffic flows and litterbugs; no controversial discussions are held. A bizarre form of informative 'gossip bulletins' replace news reports on stations unlicensed to broadcast news.

Although I write of the control of information, it must be noted that my research has come from articles in popular newspapers. This openness oscillates depending on economic, political, and social stability. It is encouraging, however, that constructive and informative criticism on the results of government policies is published. What is unknown is how much remains in the editor's rubbish bin.

Development planning, control, and conservation

Vision 2020

In 1991 when the government embarked upon the NDP, it foresaw a longer-term objective in creating a united, developed, and industrialised Malaysia by the year 2020. As a result the development vision *'Wawasan 2020' (Vision 2020)* was launched with the intention of galvanising Malaysians behind a clear common goal, set aside from interventionist policies. Until the economic crisis of 1997, *Vision 2020* was seen as producing a miracle change to Malaysia's economy. It was to be 'copied by many who

wished to move their nations, to unite their peoples behind a common destiny and to solidify their efforts behind a shared purpose...' (Mahathir, 1997: 21).

Mahathir's speech during a *Vision 2020 Congress*, in April 1997, gave a hint of the emotional baggage of a decolonised nation through the use of simple comparative imagery, describing a developed country as 'independent and rich', in comparison with Malaysia's suffering 'certain indignities' during its early years of independence. Thus, *Vision 2020's* goal 'to promote dignity and honour as a nation and as a people' became the unifying cry throughout the economic boom of the 1990s and a mobilisation for national pride.

The *Vision's* nine strategic objectives were aimed at creating a sense of unity within Malaysian society and confidence in its achievements. It focused on the pursuit of excellence and encouraged the capacity to develop a mature democratic society, with high ethical standards, demonstrating tolerance of religious and cultural practices within one nation. Malaysian society was to become both a consumer and contributor to the scientific and technological future, putting society before self and enjoying fair and equitable distribution of wealth within a robust, dynamic and resilient society. It looked forward to a future free from memories of former 'indignities' and focused on a people set to rise into a unified, dignified and developed modern nation 'in our own mould'.

This 'mould' is defined by monumental, world challenging, architectural symbols, such as the Petronas Twin Towers, Sepang Formula One Race Circuit and the Kuala Lumpur International Airport (KLIA) [Fig. 3-1]. Perhaps the most ambitious project, is the Multimedia Super Corridor (MSC), a Silicon Valley measuring 15 km by 50 km, intended to attract multimedia companies with global communications infrastructure, and a new high-tech city, Cyberjaya [Fig. 3-2]. The Prime Minister's office has relocated to the new administrative capital, Putrajaya, encouraging Penang to consider creating a 'mini Putrajaya', moving state, and Municipal government offices away from George Town.

Whilst conservation of the nation's built heritage, particularly of colonial monuments, does not appear to sit comfortably within this vision of modernity, it was not directly under threat of demolition. Its glorification through conservation or even maintenance, however, was never openly promoted. However, the pressure for new building land often put heritage buildings under threat. The effort to include conservation in the general perception of development is discussed in the following chapters.

Land ownership and development

With government support for modern development land became a highly prized commodity. Under the *National Land Code* 1965 (NLC), all previous legislation which

dealt with the transactions pertaining to tenancy, land alienation, application and transfer of title deeds was brought together. The National Land Council and the Land and Co-operative Development Ministry formulate policies at Federal Level. Whilst states hold executive authority over the land and resources within their boundaries, *The National Land Code (Penang and Malacca Titles) Act* 1963 refers to their specific code. This provides for an interim register of all holdings in the states and a system of replacements of pre-existing grants, indentures or titles issued by the Dutch Authorities, in the case of Malacca, or the East India Company, in the case of Penang, by a grant (first grade) (par 40:1)

Historically, as buildings were re-fashioned they extended over their legal boundary. The sale of such properties today involves lengthy land negotiations, encouraging demolition and rebuilding within the boundary. Until the Macdonald administration in Penang, (1795-1799) land rights were 'ownership through occupation', and only a cursory attempt was made at formalising the acquisition. Land became an exploited, commercial commodity as interests in the tin mines and agriculture grew. Rural indigenous groups regarded land as

> ... belonging to the community. The individual merely had rights to use the land, in accordance with custom... Furthermore, land had spiritual and social significance to the community, which cannot be divorced from its economic utility. [New rules introduced rights to land through registration and] by a stroke of the colonial pen, our people were dispossessed of rights over land that they had enjoyed from time immemorial (Mohammed Idris, cited in Murugasu, 1997).

Shortly after independence, the *Land Acquisition Act*, 1960, was put into place, allowing the State to acquire land for public services such as public libraries, schools, hospitals, roads, and power lines. The amendment, in 1991, permitted acquisition for

> any purpose which in the opinion of the state authority is beneficial to the economic development of Malaysia or part thereof or to the public generally or any class of the public (part II, section 3, par.1).

States began to acquire land and as a result, golf courses, shopping malls, and theme parks became part of 'economic development' (Murugasu, 1997). The 1998 amendment froze such liberties and promised to make land deals more transparent. Although the term 'economic development' is still included, land acquisition by the state for purposes other than public utilities has to be presented to two screening bodies: The State Economic Planning Unit (EPU) and a Special Committee for Land

Acquisition. These bodies may make recommendations but they are not enforceable. It is also possible to acquire for one purpose and then change without liabilities on the part of the state or developer (ibid.,1997).

Legal instruments of control and conservation

Development companies are controlled by the *Housing Developers (Control and Licensing) Act 1966 (Act 118)*. This Act requires a developer to obtain a licence from the Housing Controller for each development project, with conditions that may be waived at the discretion of the Ministry of Housing (Act 118, sec. 6). Housing projects are financed, in the main, by the sale of units before building commencement, and after licences have been issued. Purchasers' payments follow the staged certification by the architect upon which finance is released by the purchasers' finance companies, often subsidiary companies of the developer. Audited accounts are issued to the Controller and a Housing Development Account set up in which to deposit monies from the sale of the development units.

The built environment is also controlled by Acts of Parliament, tailored towards new townships or estates rather than existing environments. Currently this obstacle requires further reviews of legislation in order to include renovation work to existing heritage premises. Thus, a new addition of a toilet in a renovation scheme of a heritage shophouse requires the road in front of the shophouse to be resurfaced. The inhibitive cost of this deters owners from applying for building permits, and illegal renovations are a regular occurrence.

The Street, Drainage and Building Act 1974 (Act 133) places the responsibility for the maintenance and improvement of public streets, drains, and back lanes, and enforcement of the Act on the Local Authority. The Authority then has the power to enforce either repair or demolition of buildings in a 'ruinous and dangerous state' (section 83 par.1). Failure of an owner to comply allows the Authority to carry out the repairs and charge the owner, under the *Local Government Act* (section 77). The physical evidence suggests that this is rarely carried out, and in Penang, when this issue was raised with the then President of Council, he commented that it would be unfair to owners to enforce repairs.

Environment planning control was brought in under the *Town and Country Planning Act 1976* (TCPA). Penang State did not adopt the Act until 1985, according to its provision (part 1, section 1.2), stating lack of trained personnel and enforcement officers as its reason. The TCPA sets out a planning system that highlighted procedures required to attain a comprehensive planning policy. The Act provided for the formation of the State Planning Committee and, for a two-tiered planning system: a *Draft Structure Plan* followed by the *Draft Local Plans* for more detailed planning of state divisions. The Local Government can highlight an area within a *Local Plan*

boundary, known as an 'action area', which may be selected for specific, comprehensive treatment.

The September 1996 amendment required a 'development proposal report' to accompany the application for 'planning permission' and requested consideration to the neighbouring built environment.

> Where the development is in respect of a building with special architecture or historical interest, particulars to identify the building including its use and condition, and its special character, appearance, make and feature and measures for its protection, preservation, and enhancement [are required]. (section 21b1).
>
> Where the development involves a building operation, particulars of the character, and appearance of buildings located in the surrounding area, [are required] (section 21c1).

The Approving Officer has to ensure '...compatibility with the architecture, character or appearance depicted in the buildings located in the surrounding area' for new building approval (section 22:5), but applies only to those 'which the local planning authority intends to protect, preserve or enhance'. Thus, the 'evaluation criteria' and interpretation of 'architectural character' is dependant on the officers of the Municipal Council under the directives of appointed Councillors. Existing incompatible juxtapositions suggest either, a strong, pro-development, anti-conservation lobby or value criteria that differ from those of the heritage lobby.

Lapsed planning permission, granted under any of the previous laws, can be revoked or modified in compliance with the most recent amendments (section 25:1). Physical evidence of incongruous buildings adjacent to those of fine architectural character suggests previously issued approvals are rarely challenged. Planning permission is required for demolition, with a fine of RM 100,000, a minor addition to development costs, for illegal work.

The more conservation-sensitive TCPA amendment of 1996 has no provision for the control of advertising signboards, although it is a component part of the British TCPA on which the Malaysian Act is based. The existing control for advertising is a licence fee charged according to the size of signboard. This is often determined by either the most auspicious size relating to *feng shui* or cost restrictions. Thus, new and old buildings disappear behind huge signboards showing no respect for the architecture beneath.

Public participation in the planning process is limited, requiring only owners of adjacent land to be notified of a planning application, if no *Local Plan* exists. Objection

must be within 21 days of the notification (section 21:6) and a hearing within 30 days after the expiry date of the objection. For projects within a Local Plan area, no public notification is deemed necessary. The public therefore, is always unaware of the shape, size, style, or type of developments being approved until after approval, when the glossy signboards appear on the building sites.

Design and construction are controlled by the *Uniform Building By-laws* (UBBL) 1984, created under the *Streets Drainage and Building Act (Act 133)*. These by-laws deal with the standardisation of details such as widths of stairs, means of escape, roof construction, permitted room heights, space allocations, and provision for disabled users and fire safety standards. Contravening these by-laws, results in the refusal of the *Certificate of Fitness* (CF) or *Occupation Certificate* (OC). These by-laws are written for modern concrete and steel construction methods. To date they do not provide for restoration of pre-war buildings, which are predominantly of timber and masonry construction, nor division within such buildings for mixed or commercial use, which would require further fire safety standards.

The administration and administrative powers of the local governments of West Malaysia, including powers to impose rates and valuation, and enact and enforce by-laws fall under *The Local Government Act (171)* 1976, (LGA). Under this Act, for example, a one thousand Ringgit Malaysia fine can be imposed on owners who allow uncontrolled vegetation to cause a nuisance (section 74) and to occupiers whom the Health Officer deems, on inspection, to live in unsanitary conditions and who fail to carry out the request to colour-wash the walls internally and externally (section 75). Overgrown derelict sites and shabby near-derelict properties show that enforcement does not take place.

One of the reasons perhaps behind the lack of enforcement in Penang has been sympathy for landlords restricted by the *Control of Rent Act 1966 (Act 363)*. The Act set out a fair rent for the tenants of properties built before 1948, in an attempt to avoid landlords profiteering from the situation. A decontrol tribunal heard cases when landlords wished to recover their properties but the large sums of money expected by the tenants as compensation to move, proved prohibitive. Furthermore, decontrol and compensation payment did not guarantee an empty property and often bewildered subtenants were evicted without compensation whilst the chief tenant fled. A RM 200,000 shophouse would easily cost the same in 'removal' charges. Over the years, social law took precedence over civil law and legal tenants took in subtenants, in many cases collecting higher rents than they were paying to the landlords. Aggrieved, many landlords failed to maintain their properties. The general understanding too was that the older buildings of the inner cities would one day be developed, in line with the government's visions.

The final piece of legislation to be examined is the *Antiquities Act, 1976,* which applies to any 'ancient monument...which is or is reasonably believed to be at least 100 years old' (part 1, section 2). Section 15 provides for, the identification and recommendation of individual monuments or buildings for gazetting following the concurrence of the State Authority through the Director-General (DG) with the Minister of Culture, Youth and Sport's approval (later the Ministry of Culture, Arts and Tourism [MoCAT]). In practice, it is the responsibility of each State Museum to recommend monuments for declaration following which the DG may 'make arrangements with the owner or occupier for its preservation.... and for such purposes make a contribution towards the cost'. In order to receive the contribution the work must follow the DG's direction (section 17 b). With the acute shortage of technical conservation expertise in the country, the directions could potentially destroy rather than conserve.

The Antiquities Act refers to the acquisition of ancient monuments, 'in accordance with the provisions of any written law relating to the acquisition of land for a public purpose for the time being in force', referring to the *Land Acquisition Act* 1960, which allows for compensation to the owner. This, therefore complies with Article 13, 'Rights to Property', of the constitution which reads

> 13(1) No person shall be deprived of property save in accordance with law.
>
> 13(2) No law shall provide for the compulsory acquisition or use of property without adequate compensation.

In the early years of the *National Cultural Policy* it must have been challenging to identify ancient monuments for classification for the national focus was on the promotion of Malay culture. Other than religious buildings constructed of durable materials, ancient monuments consisted of those from the former colonial administration or Chinese vernacular architecture. Due to the impermanent materials of Malay vernacular architecture, namely timber, those that remained were often less than one hundred years old and did not come under the protection of the Antiquities Act. Selection for 'identification' fluctuated as the nation grew in self-confidence and funds were given to non-Malay conservation projects. Misunderstandings and fears over the selection process, compensation, and its perceived consequences by property owners, meant that few privately-owned properties were identified.

Development strategies and realities

Although the various Acts of Parliament are available from bookstores written in both Malay and English (not in Mandarin), knowledge of the written law is weak. Enforcement too is ineffective, from simple matters such as littering to large-scale

abuse by developers, and is openly commented on. It is also seen by some as a means to enhance low incomes. Restaurants, for example, regularly begin operations whilst waiting for their licenses. Fines are paid, usually in cash with no receipt, suggesting that the delay in the approval may well be orchestrated.

Abandoned projects following the 1997 economic downturn, visibly poor quality construction work and a neglected pedestrian environment, including Putrajaya which is considered 'autocentric', are just a few examples that have left a public wary of developers, contractors and authorities alike. Whilst there is genuine public support for the concept of a developed nation, the realities have created many frustrations.

The NGOs with a social voice

Those who feel a sincere concern for the problems raised by rapid development find an outlet for their concerns within non-government organisations (NGOs). School children, as part of their school co-curricular activities, must participate in one uniform activity such as the Scout movement, one society, for example the Astronomy Society, and one games group. Therefore, association in non-ethnic organisations is encouraged from schooldays. However, due to the government's voiced dislike of NGOs, many adults fear to join. Whilst not outrightly banning socially-minded, non-communal organisations such as Sahabat Alam Malaysia (SAM) [Friends of the Earth], the government is frustrated with their existence, particularly if they are believed to have international support and funding.

One of the most firmly established and respected NGOs with a social voice is the Consumer Association, Penang (CAP). For almost 30 years, S. M. Mohd. Idris, who is the president of SAM, has been the voice behind CAP, raising issues as far-reaching as Barbie dolls to the drop in men's sperm count, and the downside of rapid urban development. He is editor of CAP's voice *Utusan Konsumer* that is published in Tamil, Mandarin, Malay, and English. More recently, CAP has been involved in the *AKS Repeal* issue throughout Malaysia.

Another national NGO concerned with the natural environment is the Malaysian Nature Society which fought, with unprecedented public support, against the Penang state government's proposed development of Penang Hill. Those NGOs concerned with the built and cultural environment issues are Badan Warisan Malaysia, and more locally the Penang Heritage Trust (PHT) which is the secretariat for the Asian and West Pacific Network for Urban Conservation, a regional NGO. Their composition however is often expatriate and regularly upper middle class, leaving the members of localised communities few outlets for their frustrations on the downside of the development process.

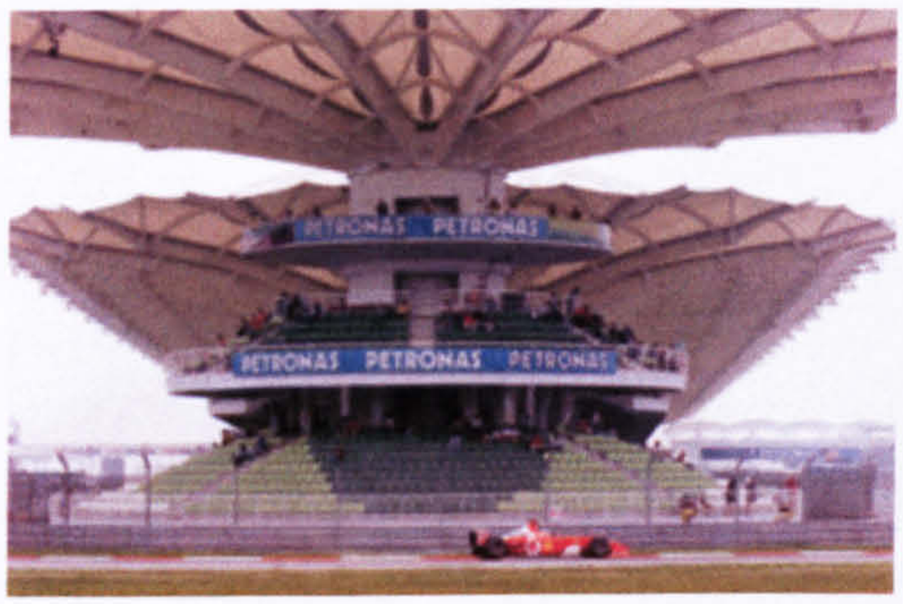
Conclusion

Chapter Three has identified national policies and the development process since independence, which were intended to eradicate poverty and the ethnic divisions associated with economic function, through, amongst other things, positive discrimination. From this review it is possible to conclude that interventionist and development policies play and have played a major role in restructuring Malaysian society as a whole and in some policies, such as language use, polarising the ethnic groups rather than unifying them. Just how the cultural identity and heritage of both Malays and non-Malays are supported or threatened during the development process, is explored further in Chapters Five and Six.

Chapter Four goes on to examine how these policies affect the governance of Penang State and George Town in particular, with respect to social and physical development; the environment of new urban centres, conservation of the historic inner city and changing cultural practices.



a. Promotion brochure fore Sepang International Circuit



b. Sepang International Circuit , Formula One Race track, completed in 1999. The design for the spectator stand was inspired by the national flower, the hibiscus (/www.sportsvenue-technology.com/projects/sepang_mrc/)



c. Petronas Twin Towers, 'Acknowledged by the Council on Tall Buildings and Urban Habitat as the tallest buildings in the world' (www.klcc.com.my). 452 meters above sea level, 88 storeys. Designed by Cesar Pelli & Associates, US, in association with KLCC architects completed 1997

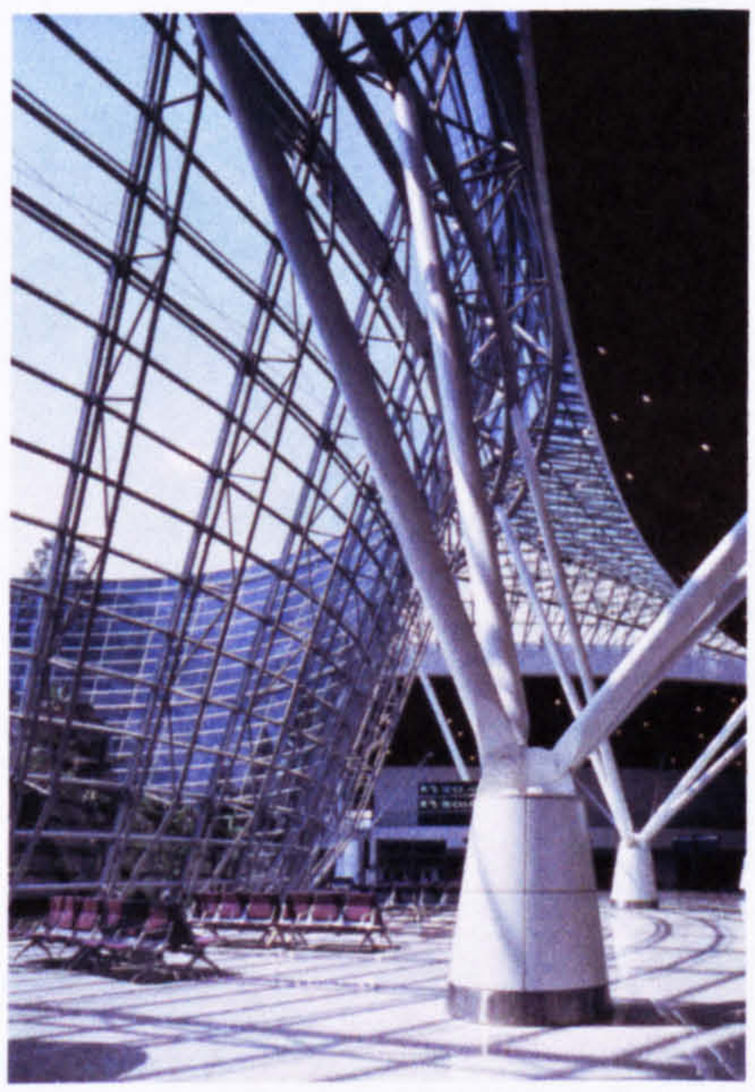
Photo by Tomio Ohashi

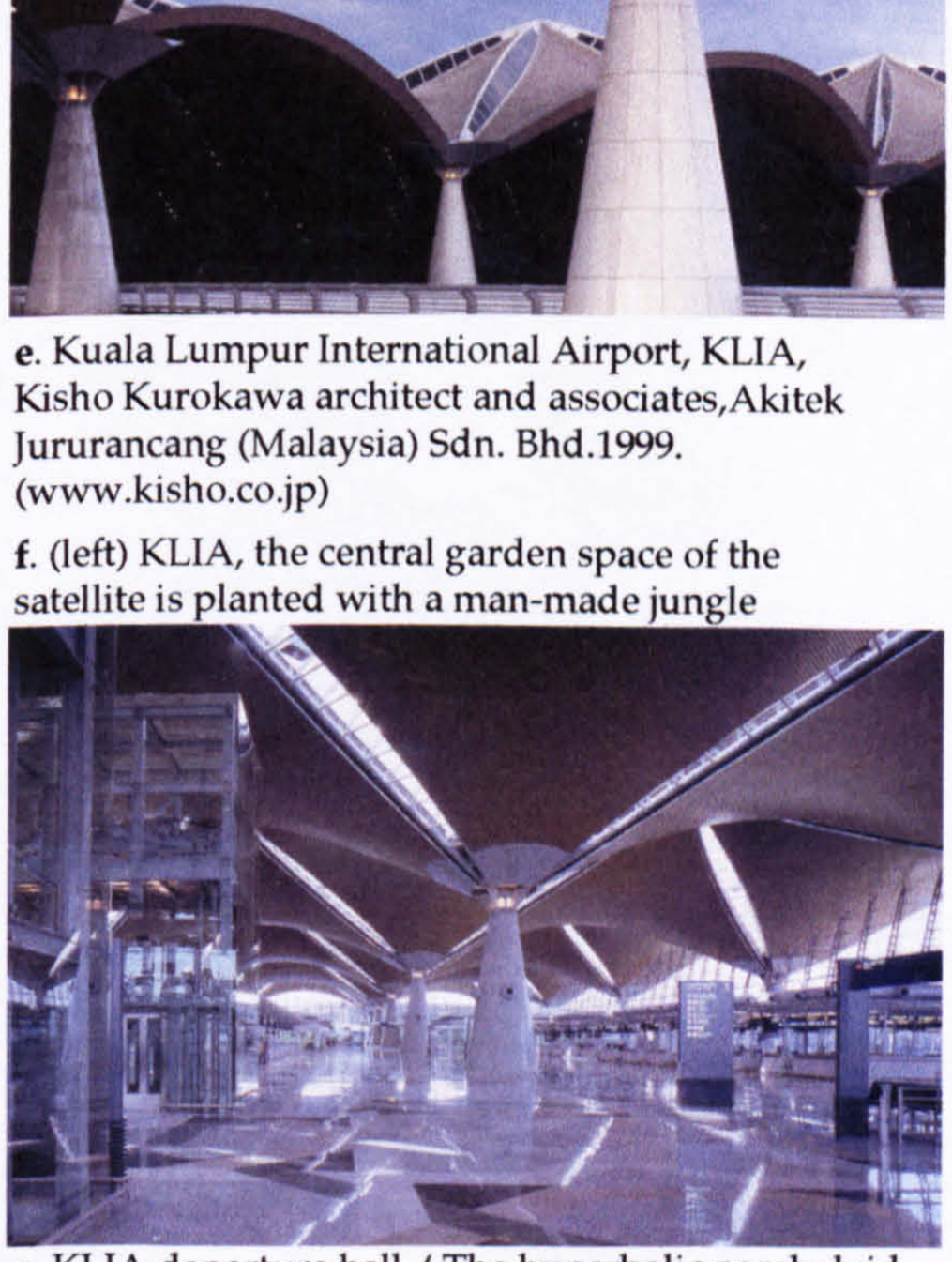


e. Kuala Lumpur International Airport, KLIA, Kisho Kurokawa architect and associates,Akitek Jururancang (Malaysia) Sdn. Bhd.1999. (www.kisho.co.jp)

f. (left) KLIA, the central garden space of the satellite is planted with a man-made jungle

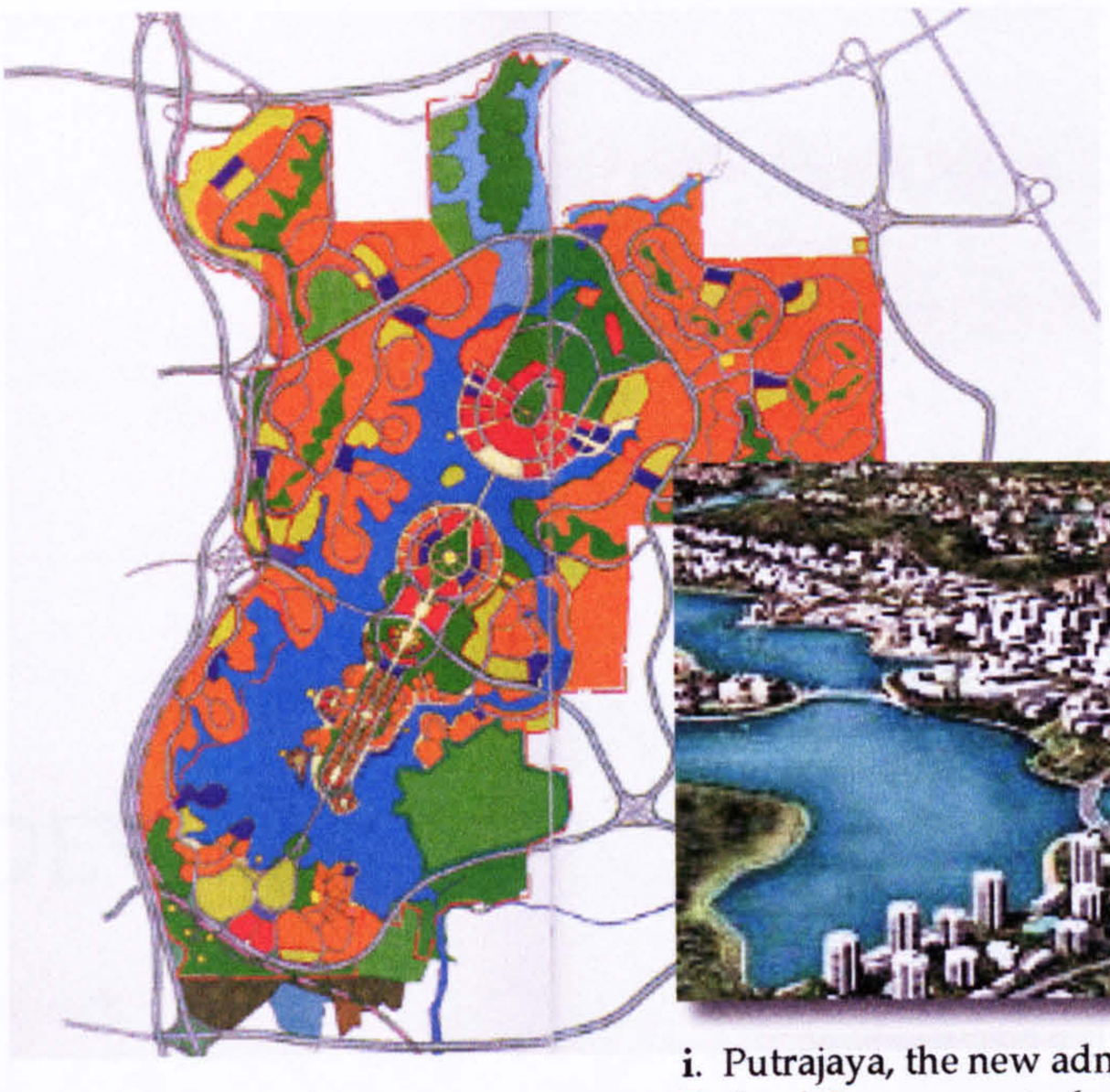
Photo by Tomio Ohashi





g. KLIA departure hall. ' The hyperbolic paraboloid shell is reminiscent of traditional Islamic domes'

Fig. **3**-1 Vision 2020, national development and identity



h. (left) Putrajaya master plan, a 4,581 hectare site, 25km south of Kuala Lumpur, 20km north of KLIA (www.kiat.net/putra)

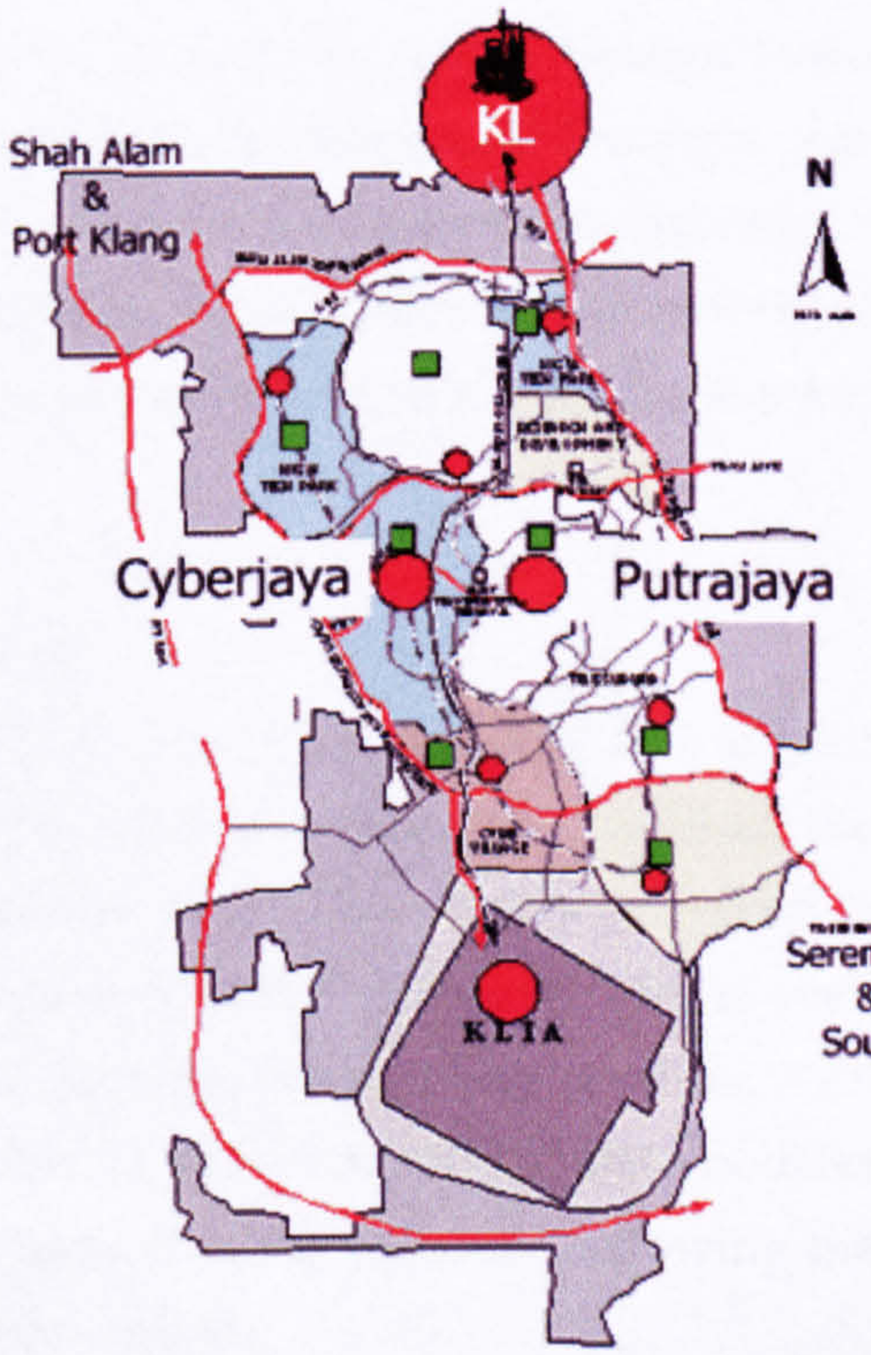


i. Putrajaya, the new administrative capital of the Malaysian Federal Government, along the South Growth Corridor of the Multimedia Super Corridor (www.kiat.net/putra)



j. Perdana Putra , the Prime Minister's Department, Arkitek Kumpulan Serieka





k. (right) Plan of MSC which stretches from Kuala Lumpur City Centre (KLCC) to KLIA - 750sq k. An ambitious project to transform rubber and palm-oil plantations into Southeast Asia's Silicon Valley bound by a fiber-optics network. The site for two intelligent cities, Putrajaya and Cyber jaya (www.kiat.net/msc)

Fig. 3-2 Vision 2020, Putrajaya and the Multimedia Super Corridor

4

PENANG STATE: DEVELOPMENT AND CONSERVATION 1957-1990

Introduction

Chapter Four explores the political framework and function of both the Penang State Government and the Municipal Council (MPPP), and examines the state's policies towards development following Federal policies and visions. The move by both the state and MPPP towards modern development and conservation is investigated through their policies and plans from 1957, the comprehensive development areas of the 1970s, the first conservation guidelines of 1987, and the creation of five heritage zones, until the change of state government in 1990. During this period, George Town was introduced to a glimpse of its future through the introduction of *Penang's New Urban Centre* and urban renewal policies, and the birth of a conservation movement. This chapter analyses their effect on the perception of conservation in the context of development. Although certain events outside these dates are referred to, the focus is on the period from 1957 to 1990.

The population

As just about every taxi driver on the island will tell you if you ask why they do not use their meters "Penang Islan difren la!" In a population of almost 1.2 million, the majority of which are Chinese, legislation and policies created by what is perceived to be a Malay-dominated government are not always considered 'relevant'. This is even more so in the north-eastern district of the island, George Town, where until the *AKS Repeal*, 68% of the population were Chinese (Table 1). New townships, state policies encouraging a population shift to the mainland, as well as the evictions following the *AKS Repeal*, in 2000, have reduced the inner city population.

Ethnic Group	1991 Census	1997 estimate
Malays	405,448	441,829
Other Bumiputera	1,146	1,249
Chinese	523,211	570,300
Indians	112,830	122,985
Others	5,00	6,289
Non M Citizens	15,861	17,288
Total	1,064,196	1,159,941

Table 1 - Penang State Population Census, *'by ethnic group'* 2001 (PDC, 2001:www)

Federal and state elections, Penang

The delineation of the constituencies is the responsibility of the Elections Commission. Table 2 below identifies the number of seats won in each election by the Alliance/BN against the total number of state seats. These have increased over the Years, from 27 to 33.

1974	1978	1982	1986	1990	1995	1999
23/27	20/27/	25/27	23/23	19/33	32/33	30/33

Table 2 - BN electoral seats / total electoral seats for Penang State (Berita:1993 and 1999).

The selection of the BN parties representing the government in each of the constituencies is engineered by the President of the BN for the state, usually the Chief Minister, and is based on a cultural-political mapping of the constituencies.

In Federal elections, the eleven constituencies in Penang state have been strongly contested by the opposition parties, although other than in the 1990 elections, few opposition candidates have won. In state elections, however, it is considered detrimental to government support of development projects not to follow the ruling coalition. The results for Penang's Federal constituencies in the 1990, 1995 and 1999 Federal elections are shown in Table 3.

Pulau Pinang, 1990 (Berita 1993)

Party	*Seats*	*Won*
BN	*11*	*5*
S46	*1*	*0*
PAS	*2*	*0*
DAP	*7*	*6*
PRM	*1*	*0*

Pulau Pinang 1995 (Berita1996)

Party	*Seats*	*Won*
BN	*11*	*8*
S46	*2*	*0*
PAS	*2*	*0*
DAP	*8*	*3*
PBS	*3*	*0*

Pulau Pinang 1999 (Live)

Party	*Seats*	*Won*
BN	*11*	*7*
BA	*11*	*4*
Indepe	*1*	*0*

Table 3- Parliamentary Election- results of 1990, 1995, and 1999

In 1990 six of the 11 Federal election seats were won by members of the non-communal party, DAP, based in Penang. Much interest therefore was paid to the 1995 elections, which despite the swing in favour of the BN, proved that Penangites were active in political debate. Malay journalist and social commentator Karim Raslan, in his study of the 1995 election campaign, observed the difference.

> After staying in Penang for four days on the road, my precious peace of mind was shattered. The previous two stops in Kuching and Johor Bahru had reaffirmed what I thought to be the country's essential contentment with the BN Government.... in Penang, I discovered the voters had a choice and a choice they were seriously contemplating..... I discovered I was afraid of that choice - afraid of the leap into the unknown... I was afraid of the possibility of change. It was as simple as that.
> (1996: 156)

Failure of the Malayan Chinese Association to represent the Mandarin-speaking-Chinese-educated members began to cause dissatisfaction within the party, shortly after independence. However, the western-educated Chinese representation created a good working relationship with the western-educated UMNO leaders. In 1958, Penang-based Dr. Lim Chong Eu was voted MCA President, signally a more socialist swing within the leadership. However, the relationship between the UMNO and MCA leaders soured as Lim demanded MCA be allocated one third of the parliamentary seats. Threats from UMNO to remove itself from the Alliance were withdrawn following Lim's resignation (Andaya and Andaya, 1982:268). In April 1968, in response to the MCA's inability to preserve Chinese interests, particularly over language, education, and culture, those who 'feared total submersion by the Malays' responded to the new party, Gerakan Rakyat Malaysia (Malaysian People's Movement), formed by Lim Chong Eu (ibid.: 279). Posing as a multiracial, liberal and reformist party, its publications were written in four languages. Ironically, in 2003, the perceptions have been reversed. MCA is the party of the Mandarin-speaking business community, Gerakan the party of the overseas-educated Chinese elite.

Gerakan originally directed its appeal to the growing discontent with the Alliance government felt amongst the educated middle class Malays (Hua, 1983: 169). In the 1969 election it is estimated that half the Malays and two thirds of the non-Malays voted against the Alliance (Jomo, 1990: 5). For the first time both Kelantan and Penang became opposition states, with both the Alliance and the MCA in particular, suffering defeats. Analysis of the events focused on ethnic divisions, and as Jomo highlights, the ethnic divide had a class texture to its origins (1990:5). Hua Wu Yin adds that, 'the encouragement of communalism serves to divide the races at the same

time creating dichotomies between the ruling classes, who exist within both class and communal terms of reference' (1983: 144).

Even following Gerakan's move to join the BN in 1972, petty rivalries and age-old sores between MCA and Gerakan thwart the smooth administration of Penang's state government policies as does the underlying disquiet with a Chinese Chief Minister from the 'Malays' (ibid.:169). The dichotomies of identity politics continue today reflected by urban development issues particularly within the heritage conservation debate.

Penang State and Municipal authorities

Local government in Malaysia follows a two-tiered system, a state government, elected every five years, and in the case of Penang State, two Local Authorities or Municipal Councils, the Majlis Perbandaran Pulau Pinang (MPPP) for the island and the Majlis Perbandaran Seberang Prai (MPSP) for the mainland.

Penang is not a sultanate, therefore the Muslim community is headed by a Governor, *Yang di Pertua Negri* (Berita, 1993:371), appointed by the *Agong* on the advice of the Prime Minister (ibid.: 309). The Penang State Islamic Religious Council, Majlis Agama Islam Pulau Pinang (MAIPP), under the Islamic Affairs Division (ibid.: 79), within the Prime Minister's Department, is trustee to Islamic endowment land, and maintains such policies as the NEP and NDP. Its Chairman is the Malay Deputy Chief Minister.

State legislature

The successful election candidates of both BN and the opposition, form the State Legislative Assembly, a wholly elected body of which the Governor is the Legislative Authority. The Governor, advised by the Prime Minister, appoints the Chief Minister as state head, *Yang di Ketua Mentri*, who is usually a party President. Also selected from the Assembly is the State Executive Council (State Exco). The State Councillors are allocated specific portfolios. Three non-elected 'Experts in attendance' have right of audience but no vote. They are the State Secretary, the State Legal Advisor, and the State Financial Officer.

The state receives its funding from the Federal government, in consultation with the National Finance Council (NFC). Other grants for specific purposes may be provided, with conditions set by the Federal Government, following a *Supply Bill* to effect such a grant being moved by a Minister. The Federal Government, with the NFC's consent, may make unspecified special grants, which are paid into the State Reserve Fund.

The state's revenue can be raised from taxation or other sources, particularly for development or infrastructure projects. Costly land reclamation and highway building is permitted on state-owned or acquired land, with the issuance of a 90-year or 60-year leasehold agreement, between state and developer, in exchange for rights to build residential and commercial developments. In theory, this seems an inventive way of achieving development without draining the state's funds. In practice, fear of discouraging investment has resulted in inadequate quality control in both design and implementation such as the poor co-ordination of service and utility subcontracts.

The Municipal Council (MPPP)

Although MPPP councillors came from both Alliance and non-Alliance parties it was dominated by a socialist opposition for many years. A series of events challenged the state government's policies; refusal to decorate the streets for the 1963 Malaysia Day celebrations, and the installation of piped water to a Chinese clan jetty village designated by the state for demolition, created frustration with the Council (Tennant, 1972: 79). Allegations of corrupt practices in 1963 led to the suspension of elections and eventually the suspension of Council following an enquiry which found 'an absence of principles and procedures adequate to prevent corruption' (ibid, 1972: 82).

The subsequent suspension of all councils was considered a strategy to thwart opposition challenges (Rüland, 1990: 464). Senior civil servants, however, enjoyed a new liberty answerable only to the Chief Minister, responsible for approvals, policy-making, and implementation, as opposed to the former laborious councillor-committee system and were reluctant for the suspension to be lifted (Tennant, 1972: 84). In 1976 the *Local Government Act 171* (LGA), provided for the third layer of government. The Mayor or President and councillors are appointed positions from the BN parties. Their term of office, often an award for party loyalty, is for three years unless they are reappointed (section10, 3). The MPPP is made up of 24 councillors, whose composition is ethnically and socio-economically mixed.

Council meetings are accessible to the public and press, although most matters are 'referred for further discussion', away from the public forum (section 23). Minutes are accessible to ratepayers for inspection. The MPPP is financed through taxes, rates (assessment charges), licence fees, dues, and other charges (section 39) called the Local Authority Fund.

Section 101 of the Local Government Act empowers the Authorities to

> maintain or contribute to the maintenance of historical buildings or sites and acquire land with or without buildings, for the purpose of or in connection with the establishment of such public parks, gardens...

> community centres..... for the purpose of or in connection with the maintenance of historic buildings or sites (section 101: c iv).

Over the years, there has been a tentative move in this direction due mainly to pressure from the heritage lobby.

Penang Development Corporation (PDC)

At the time of Dr. Lim Chong Eu's appointment as Chief Minister in 1969, Penang was in need of a new direction; the gradual erosion of the free port status had left the state in a position of stagnation and economic despondency. Unemployment was high at 15.6%, overcrowding commonplace, and racial tension was evidenced by the 13 May riots. In an attempt to bring order to the chaos, the Penang Development Corporation came into being on 17 November 1969 (PDC, 1989).

Penang Master Plan

In March 1970 the Federal government appointed US consulting economists, Robert R. Nathan Associates Inc., to develop the Penang Master Plan to provide a framework for future growth in the state to be implemented by the Penang Development Corporation. The Plan identified the manufacturing and general service sector as the main vehicle for growth as the State had plentiful cheap labour, and a sound infrastructure on which to rebuild; 'an airport; deep water wharf; English speaking population; young work force' (Poon, 21.9.1997).

The PDC began by building industrial estates and a Free Trade Zone (FTZ) on the south-eastern side of the Island, which attracted foreign factories, in particular the electronics industry. Further FTZ's were set up following this initial success which promoted more labour-intensive garment and textile industries. Within nine years, the unemployment level was reduced to 4%. However, as cheap Malaysian labour diminished, factories began to employ immigrant labour, from such countries as Bangladesh and Indonesia. With the labour problems and benefits of a Free Trade Zone only for the initial five years, international companies then began to relocate to such places as China, Vietnam and Thailand (ibid., 1997). One of Penang's oldest indigenous industries, Eastern Smelting, relocated to Phuket in Thailand in 1999.

Urban development

In 1974 an article in the *Far Eastern Economic Review* described Penang's brave new world

.. by the end of this decade a traveller will be able to ...speed across the 4-mile bridge to Penang Island, there linking up with a north-south expressway running along the east coast, mainly on reclaimed land. This means the traveller will have a quick access to either the new Penang International Airport, the new Bayan Lepas Township to the south, or to a new focal point of the city - visible for miles because of its 45-storey rounded skyscraper centre piece (Stockwin, 1974).

However, mass overcrowding required the PDC's attention and a housing programme to build small townships closer to Free Trade Zones was devised. The building form was essentially European-multi-storey blocks of repetitive units of large incongruous slabs. This was a marked step away from the irregular, clustered *kampong* settlements or the low-rise shophouses of existing urban environments. They were quick and inexpensive to build and needing little skill, in that sense ideal for the modernising Malaysia.

Within George Town itself, four sites were designated as *Comprehensive Development Areas* (CDA) in the context of an urban renewal programme [Fig. 4-1].

1. The Kompleks Tun Abdul Razak (KOMTAR) - the *Penang New Urban Centre* - an office tower and podium shopping mall on acquired land.

2. Macullum Street Ghaut - Penang's high-rise low-cost housing solution partly necessitated by the displacement of people from the KOMTAR designated areas - reclaimed land adjacent to the city dump.

3. Kedah Road flats - high-rise, low-cost housing development on acquired land in an early suburb of George Town cleared of Chinese shophouses and Malay *kampong* houses.

4. Chow Thye Road - government workers' houses planned as low-cost high-rise. Restored and now a row of bijou antique shops and fusion restaurants and cafes, opened in 1999.

The Penang New Urban Centre - KOMTAR

In 1970, George Town City Council appointed Architects Team Three, Jurubena Bertiga, as consultants to the *Penang New Urban Centre Project*, (Lim H.S.1974: 2) headed by the Chief Minister's architect brother. The Central Area Planning Unit (CAPU) was formed, whose brief included the *Penang New Urban Centre*. This was seen

as a check against sporadic speculative development, rising traffic congestion and land prices, new highway construction and land reclamation on the eastern shoreline as well as 'restoration and reuse of historic parts of the city' (ibid.: 2). In 1973, CAPU provided a *Conservation Plan for George Town* as support material for the *Interim Zoning Plans 1/73*.

A year earlier, in October 1972, following political approval, the PDC began the implementation of the RM 20 million *Penang New Urban Centre* [Fig. 4-2]. On 1 January 1974, the Prime Minister Tun Abdul Razak drove in the first pile. In his speech, he expressed the political feeling of his day when he said 'This Project would change the face of the city, discarding the colonial heritage image in favour of one which reflects the identity of Malaysia and its multi-ethnic culture' (PDC, 1989: 29).

Eleven hectares in the heart of George Town were identified as the site where four main arterial roads converged, making it a centre for public and private transport needs. A large portion of this land was owned by both the Municipal Council and the state, and was in Lim Cheong Eu's own constituency (Stockwin, 23.8.1974). The remaining area was acquired from landlords from the old moneyed elite, mainly Straits Chinese families, which were the second-or-third-generations of early settlers. These once dominant families recognised a shift in their social standing in the city following the acquisition of their inheritance. Displaced business and resident tenants, who were mainly Chinese, were relocated at Macullum Street Ghaut, Kedah Road, Free School Road, and Bayan Baru new township.

The four-storey podium proposal boasted shops and showrooms with landscaped courtyards and sidewalks on the ground floor. Multi-storey car parks and a *Bus Transportation Centre* provided for private and public transport needs. Further civic enjoyment was to be gained from the rooftop garden with a 'reflective pool' adjacent to the Buckminster Fuller Geodesic dome concert and exhibition hall. A socially constructed residential community was to be housed in three, seventeen-storey, ethnic and income-mix residential flats, with nearby cafe, clubhouse, pool, and library. Partial recovery of the project costs was to come from the rental income from large private corporations housed in the 65-storey tower (PDC, 1974). What KOMTAR hoped to provide was a leap in annual assessment revenue from RM 37,000 to RM 1.1 million from phase one which would pay for maintenance and the upkeep of the civic amenities.

The four-storey podium and the 65-storey tower and geodesic dome, phase one and two, are all that were completed in 1996, at an escalated cost of RM 300 million. The tower stood empty until finally occupied by the state government and MPPP offices. The cafe, clubhouse, and library failed to materialise, and the three housing blocks were replaced by one five-star hotel.

Far from being a check against sporadic speculative development what followed was an erosion of the initial comprehensive development areas and the termination of the original design after Phase Two. The state later sold off the leases for the remaining three phases to private developers at many times the acquisition price, much to the chagrin of the original landowners who had acquiesced on the moral grounds of providing the public with much needed civic facilities.

CAPU was dissolved with the replacement of state leaders in 1990. The *Penang New Urban Centre* in the year 2002 remains incomplete. Displaced small trades and businesses and the community of 3,175 people was re-housed away from the once familiar city centre, into alien environments. The cost in terms of dislocation and dispersal of these communities changed the balance of the city.

Changing patterns of inner city trade

The loss of the port together with free trade status severely affected the city's commercial health. Before the 1970s, the main business and banking centre of George Town was Beach Street, close to the former port activities. Shipping and plantation companies had their godowns, international and local banks their main branches, hardware wholesalers supplied the ship repair yards, and old land-owning families placed their offices there. For the wealthy elite, European and Singaporean department stores lined Bishop and Penang Street, whilst car showrooms clustered around the luxury Eastern and Oriental Hotel. The working-class residential communities were supplied by many fruit, vegetable, meat and fish markets dotted around the town which brought with them other reciprocal trades, the basket-weavers, the clog-makers and the hardware stores for cooking pots and pans. Around the town the hawkers' cries, bells, and clangs sought attention as they moved from street to street touting for custom. Individual family-run businesses operated from smaller shophouses, their workers or families sleeping on the upper floors, earning barely more than their keep in order to amass profits for the business owner. Streets or parts of streets were known not only for the communities living there or temples, mosques and churches but also for particular kinds of trade.

'It was believed that traditional centres of old style Chinese shopping, such as Campbell Street would be preserved for posterity' (Stockwin, 1974). Campbell Street was then the Chinese 'high street' selling traditional medicines, preserved fruits, herbs and fabric, shoes, shirts, crockery, and pots and pans. These patterns of supply and demand balanced trades with residential and religious functions and had evolved over decades creating a sustainable city. It seemed an elegant city, physically in balance and well managed by a diligent team of council officers and workers.

The relocation of the port caused the initial decline of the inner-city trade after the war. However, the building of KOMTAR as a Western model of a shopping mall

for which there was a speculative demand, changed George Town not only physically but also culturally, providing a new commercial business pattern to the city. It related more to the expanding middle classes of the suburbs than the city in which it was placed.

Conservation activity, public and private

Penang state's town planning history began with zoning plans, town or draft plans originating from the *Town Planning Enactment* of 1923 for the Federated Malay States, which were incorporated into the *Town Planning* section (Part IX) of the *Town Boards Enactment*, 1955. These were simple plans which carried no supporting documentation and divided land use as residential, commercial, industrial, agricultural, religious and 'other' with no legal obligation (Lee L.M., 2000:1).

There was little focus on urban conservation as part of urban revitalisation until the KOMTAR housing scheme was shelved. The pressing need to solve the housing situation and poor living conditions brought together a professional discussion group in 1984 which concluded that heritage conservation rather than conventional urban renewal was the instrument for urban revitalisation and was the inspiration behind an international conference in 1986 (Koenig, 1998).

Ironically it was KOMTAR's architect who spearheaded conservation, by founding the Penang Heritage Trust (PHT) in 1986. The Trust's objectives were

> to promote the conservation and permanent preservation for the benefit and education of the people of Penang, all those buildings, trees, books, manuscripts, writings, scrolls, documents, antiques, paintings, reproduction or other artistic objects or other similar objects which because of their historical association, architectural features, aesthetic value or for other reasons are considered by the Council of the Society to form part of the heritage of Penang ... (Penang Heritage Trust, 1992).

Its early membership was predominantly upper-middle class and mainly Chinese. Many were from the old landed elite, reflecting the ethnicity and economic position of its President. The professional architect's body Pertubuhan Akitek Malaysia (PAM) Northern Chapter and the MPPP Planning Department, together with the professional discussion group, were encouraged by the Trust's formation and organised the *International Conference on Urban Conservation and Planning* in June 1986. The intention was to promote public consciousness in conservation (Loh L., 1986). It opened the debate on the merits and demerits of conservation within the political economy of Malaysia. To quote from the opening paper the intention was to question the 'socioeconomic priorities in the urbanisation process of the Third World cities [and

to address the issues of whether or not] conservation has a role to play within these priorities' (Goh, Lim and Loh L., 1986).

In 1985 *Majallah Akitek*, a Malaysian architectural magazine, published an article by a young German, former lecturer at Universiti Sains Malaysia, on urban conservation in Malaysia. He highlighted Europe's shame in destroying more of their heritage after World War II than they did during the war, and emphasised 'our blind relationship with modern development.' The conference, encouraged by this piece, went further and asked its professional and educated audience to debate Penang's 'uniqueness', asking 'What makes Penang, Penang?' In Kuala Lumpur later that year, the *Conference on Strategy for Conservation* presented a paper on *Conservation in the Legal Context*, by the MPPP's secretary.

Much encouraged, the Penang state government adopted the TCP Act 1976, in 1986, and created the State Planning Committee and a Municipal Planning Department (MPPP, 1987a). The Committee together with CAPU and Team Three formed the Structure Plan Unit (SPU), which was commissioned to prepare the *Report of Survey* for a *Draft Structure Plan* for the island. The report highlighted the 'lack of a comprehensive or effective policy to protect heritage buildings from disrepair or development'. It went on to comment, with respect to tourism development, that the historic areas would be prone to further erosion and recognised that 'The conservation of places and buildings of historical and architectural importance is a major issue confronting the future of our urban environment'. The Report listed the four buildings protected under the Antiquities Act at that time -the Town and City Hall, St George's Anglican Church and Fort Cornwallis, - and identified a further 81, *Buildings and Places of Architectural and Historic Importance.*

In 1987, prior to the gazetting of the *Draft Structure Plan*, the MPPP presented the *Draft Design Guidelines for Conservation Areas in the Inner City Area of George Town,* which outlined five *Conservation Zones* and categorised buildings of heritage value (MPPP, 1987c) [Fig. 4-3]. The *Draft Structure Plan* proposed the preparation of 'a historical and cultural enclave in the city' and encouraged the MPPP to recommend buildings and areas to be gazetted under the Antiquities Act. It also promoted, for discussion, such issues as offering incentives, including the transfer of development rights, and internal reuse and exterior conservation of heritage building. All this was to 'ensure that the unique and attractive features of Penang Island will be preserved in the process of economic growth' (MPPP, 1987b).

In response, the MPPP applied to the Malaysian Prime Minister's Department to arrange for assistance from the German Technical Co-operation (GTZ) Scheme proposed by Dr. Enders during the 1986 *International Conference.* Following a two-week training tour and presentation in Germany by the MPPP's Planning Director, the German government proposed to assist a new urban renewal project, and a support

fund of RM 100,000,000 (Koenig, 1998). In February 1988, Dr. Enders arrived in Penang for a study tour as the MPPP, together with the SPU, set up a heritage buildings inventory for the island. Ender's study was of Jalan Sultan Ahmad Shah, or millionaires' row, where majestic detached villas stood in large grounds. Many were unoccupied due to inheritance squabbles or personal preference. Muntri Street, once dominated by Eurasian family residences and later occupied by *AKS* tenants and printing companies, was included. By March 1989 the inventory covered 31 streets and 1226 buildings (MPPP 1989). The German advisory team returned in March 1989 to develop a *Conservation Pilot Study* and a methodology for future studies to be carried out as part of an *Urban Conservation Programme* (MPPP, 1989).

By November 1989 development pressure on Jalan Sultan Ahmad Shah caused the secretary of the MPPP to voice concern (Koh, 1989). The Planning Department drew up an axonometric plan showing 14 development application proposals, demonstrating an incongruous mixture of mansions and high-rise towers. The *Structure Plan* had listed the mansions as 'buildings under provisional conservation', and adaptive reuse had been recommended. But no measures were taken for their preservation. The road today looks very like the projected image of 1989, suggesting that developers were not the only party that failed to comprehend the value of conservation. Other areas earmarked for conservation were also challenged.

The conservation pilot study area, chosen by GTZ in 1989, lay between Acheen Street, Beach Street, *Kampong Kolam* and Armenian Street, within Zone Five. It embraced the Muslim communities of the *Mesjid Melayu Lebuh Acheh* (the Acheen Street Mosque), the Chinese clan temples, and *kongsis* as well as the Indian Hindu Chettiar community (see Chapter Seven). This pilot study identified the value of retaining present residents and trades in order to continue traditional activities within authentic surroundings. Much welcomed by the Chairman of PAM Northern Chapter, the study also proposed controlled development in vacant sites, allowing for modern architectural expression within a heritage context. It laid out clear principles based on German town-planning experience and recommended the appointment of a conservation planning 'expert' within the MPPP.

By the end of 1989 it appeared that private and government bodies were poised to commit themselves to the revitalisation and conservation of the historic city (Loh L., 1990). The German ambassador offered funding for the Syed Alatas Mansion for its use as the Malaysian German Society office. The MPPP began to apply favourable buildings and planning laws and a group of private individuals bought a large Hakka courtyard mansion, the Cheong Fatt Tze, for the purpose of restoration as an international tourist attraction.

In contrast to the apparent move towards conserving the historic architecture and enclaves of the island, a development concept was proposed for the Penang Hill.

The hills are in regular use by hill-climbers, nature enthusiasts, school parties, worshippers, and those who holiday in the few government and private historic bungalows. Proposed was an 'entertainment township' to be built on top of the main water-catchment area of the island. Hotels, a shopping mall, multiplex cinema, golf course, and cable car had drawn approval from the State Executive Councillor for Tourism, Arts, and Culture. There was a public outcry, steered by the Friends of Penang Hill (FPH) and 3,000 independent letters of complaint to the Department of the Environment (FPH, 1993), suggested the state government was out of touch with its electorate.

In the following 1990 elections BN lost its two-thirds majority and both the incumbent Penang Chief Minister and his Deputy lost their seats. On the advice of the Prime Minister the former political secretary was selected as Chief Minister which bypassed the experienced Gerakan party member. This overstepping has brought continual infighting within Gerakan and split the party's northern branch into two major camps.

The change in state leadership coincided with the replacement of the pro-conservation Building Director and an end to the economic recession. With the introduction of the NDP in 1991 together with *Vision 2020,* development pressure grew. The newly appointed state and MPPP officers seemed unaware of the conservation efforts of the previous state government, MPPP and NGOs. The wave of enthusiasm was halted in its tracks. This dramatic swing away from conservation is examined further in Chapter Five.

Conclusion

This chapter concludes in 1990 with Penang at one of its many crossroads: a major reclamation and highway development proposal announced in the *Far Eastern Economic Review;* KOMTAR's 65 storeys dominating a townscape of small shophouses, and the undermining of the once dominant, wealthy land-owning families whilst urban communities were dispersed into alien, western, high-rise environments.

However, despite the intrusion of these forms of modernity, the adoption of the *Town and Country Planning Act* in 1986 and subsequently the preparation of the *Report of Survey,* the *Draft Structure Plan* and the *Conservation Guidelines* indicated the inclusion of conservation within the development process. The 1986 *International Conference,* the formation of the Penang Heritage Trust, the employment of the German 'expert' to work within MPPP and efforts to gain GTZ assistance for urban revitalisation, confirmed the collaboration between government and NGOs.

However, the seemingly invincible duo of the Chief Minister and his architect brother who reshaped Penang Island, following the loss of the port and free trade

status, miscalculated the public reaction to the *Penang Hill Proposal*. Consequently they retired from political and public life.

Chapter Five examines the changing landscape of the next decade and the role of conservation under the state government's new leadership. It considers national development visions, the fluctuating economy of Penang, as well as the expansion of the middle classes, the emergence of new identities, and the thrust in the state towards tourism development.



a. CDA 1-The Penang New Urban Centre with the 65 storey KOMTAR tower



b. CDA 2 -Macullum Street Ghaut, low cost housing built on reclaimed land, adjacent to the municipal dump



c. CDA 3 - Kedah Road, housing block, disturbed the *kampong* and shophouse environments in which it stands



d. Once toilets and clothes drying took place in the backyard, now they face the city, causing Dr. Mahathir to comment on the ugliness



e. (right) CDA 4 -Chow Tye Road, former government employee housing now offices, shops and restaurants

Fig. **4-**1 Penang State, Comprehensive Development Areas (CDA)



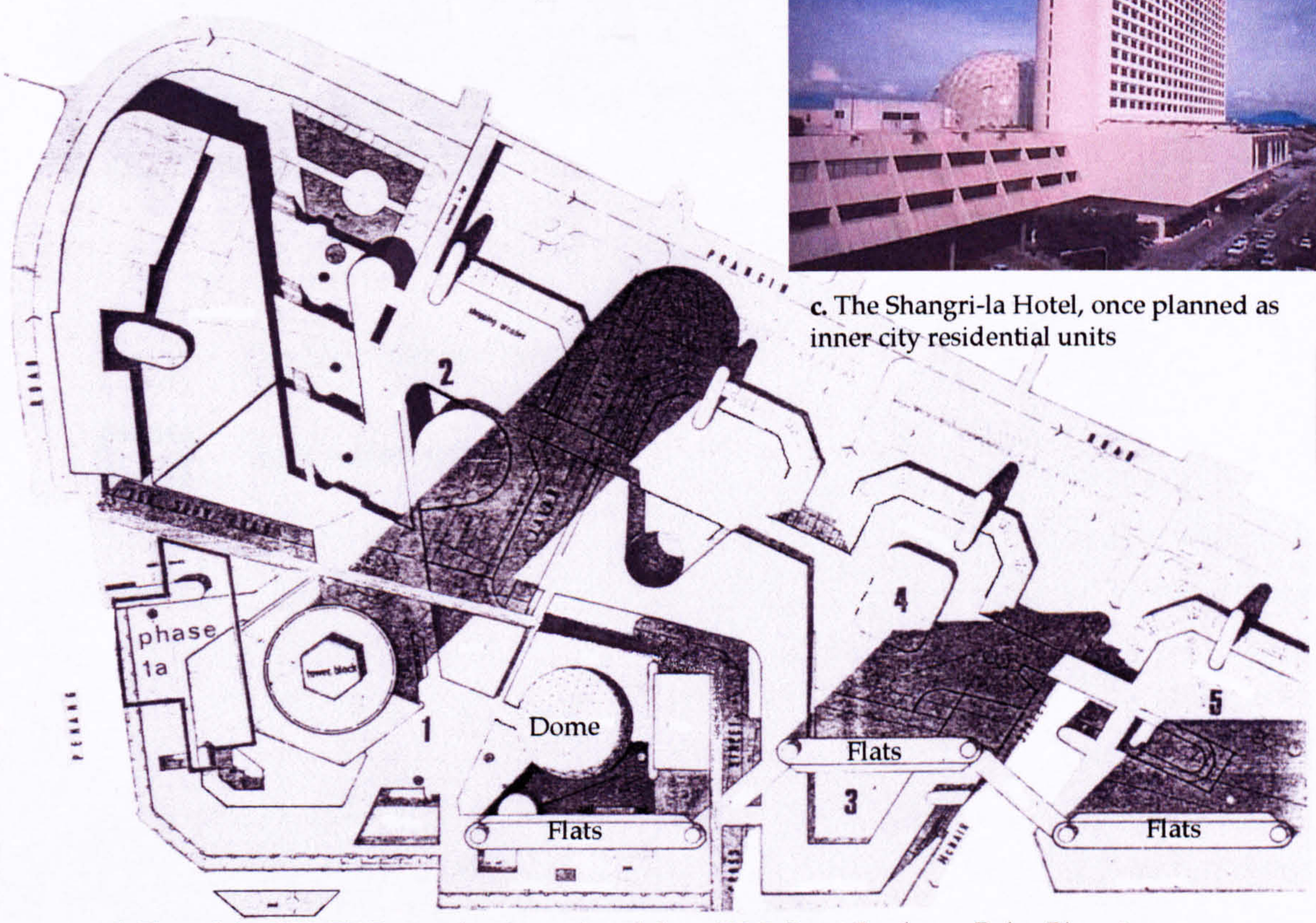


a. (right) A model of the *Penang New Urban Centre* showing two of the three housing blocks, podium, dome and tower

b. (above) The KOMTAR tower dominates the two storey shophouse streets of the city

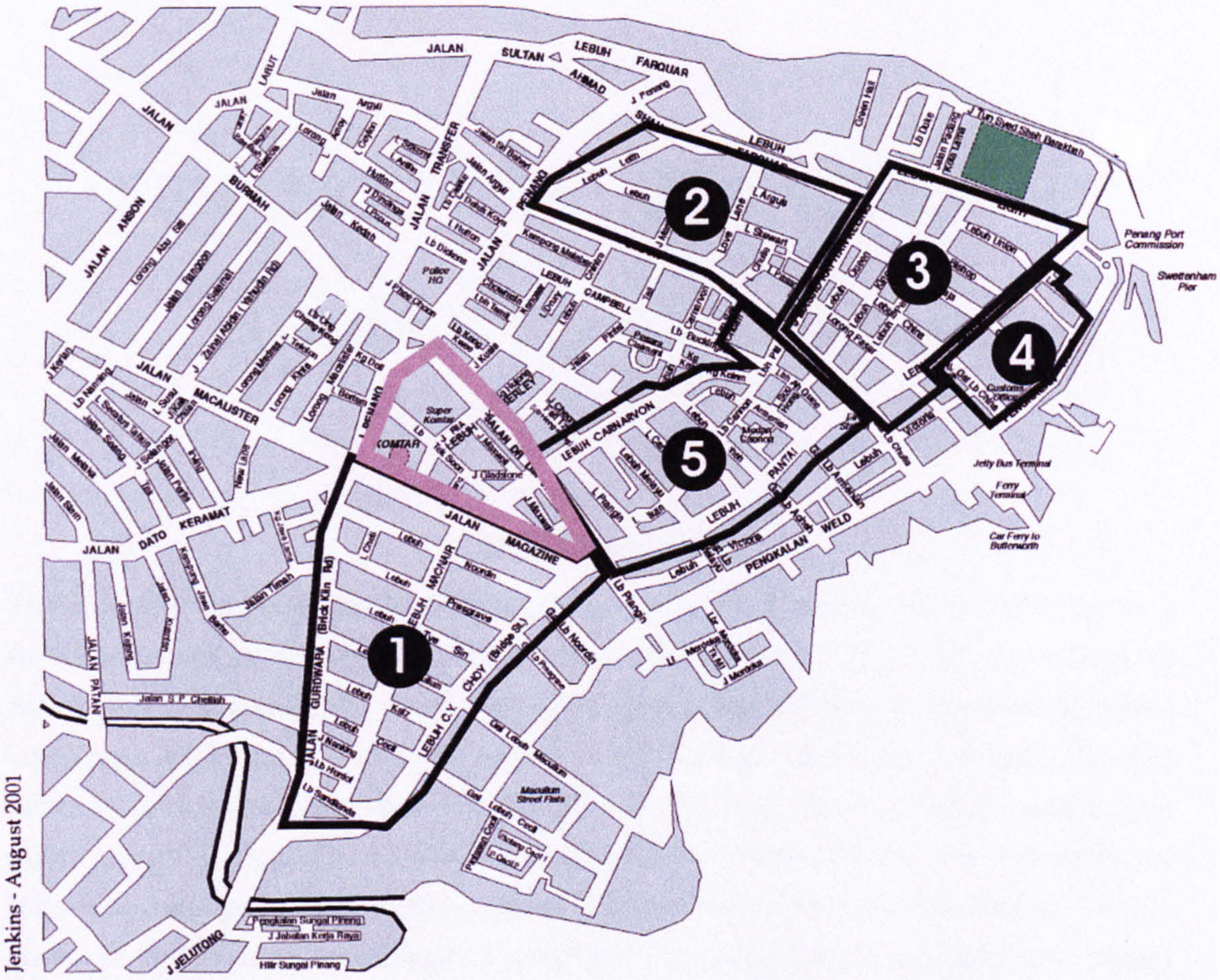


c. The Shangri-la Hotel, once planned as inner city residential units



d. Plan of the KOMTAR complex (reproduced from PDC, *Pusat Bandaraya Pulau Pinang*)

Fig. **4**-2 Penang State, Penang New Urban Centre, KOMTAR



The New Urban Centre - KOMTAR.

The Conservation Zones.

Fig. 4- 3 Design Guidelines for Conservation Areas, 1987

5

PENANG'S URBAN LANDSCAPE, 1990 - 2001: a UNESCO World Heritage Site?

Introduction

The economic boom of the ASEAN region, prior to the financial crisis of 1997, led to a rapid increase in Malaysian construction activity and supported the vision of developed nation status by 2020. This development has challenged the historic urban landscape of Penang. However, there were further challenges, which affected development issues other than the pursuit of a national vision. As Howe and Logan note 'a city's position in the new global hierarchy affects the intensity of redevelopment pressures on the historic fabric' (2002: 254). This was true of George Town. In 1999 two reports brought the city to both ASEAN and world attention. World Monuments Watch listed George Town in 50th position of the *World's Hundred Most Endangered Sites* whilst *Asiaweek's* 'quality of life index' identified George Town as 'the seventh most liveable city' in Asia. By the turn of the century, a third global agency was observing George Town as preparations for the application for UNESCO World Heritage Site Listing progressed.

The World Monuments Watch, which was launched in 1995, is a product of active collaboration between the World Monuments Fund and founding sponsor, American Express Company. It 'aims to call public attention to critically imperilled cultural heritage sites'. Nomination of sites comes from governments, conservation NGOs and individuals. The Penang Heritage Trust put forward the nomination for George Town.

Asiaweek's 'quality of life index' is an annual survey of Asian cities organised by *Asiaweek* magazine. Originally based on such 'rice-bowl factors' as income and hospital beds per 1,000 people, it later added available green space and leisure facilities and

now includes indicative criteria for the modern life - use of mobile phones and the internet. A drop in position for George Town, from sixth to ninth position, between 1998 and 2000, caused great concern to the state government, which was concerned with the affect on Asian tourist arrivals.

The third global agency, UNESCO, adopted the *World Heritage Convention* in 1972 from which it inaugurated the *World Heritage List*. Its aim is to encourage countries to sign the *Convention* as 'state parties', and nominate their cultural and natural properties for inclusion on the list. As sites of 'outstanding and universal value' this 'lofty standard' offers 'a stamp of approval that brings prestige, tourist income, public awareness and a commitment to save the irreplaceable' (O'Neill, 2002: 60). Once they are listed sites may be re-categorised as 'Heritage in Danger' should this commitment be seen to be lacking. State parties must nominate a national site within ten years of signing the convention. Malaysia had signed in 1988 but by 1998 no site had successfully been accepted for nomination.

This chapter traces the development of Penang's urban landscape from 1990 to 2001. Penang's urban and social growth, however, must be viewed within the context of Malaysia's national policies, outlined in Chapter Three. What must also be remembered is the ethnic composition of the island in comparison to that of the national population, and the political dichotomies and identity reconstructions that ensue. These are played out in the translation of the Malaysian *Vision 2020* into development plans, the encouragement of entrepreneurial growth, the emergence of a conservation movement and conservation initiatives by the state.

Finally this chapter explores the preparations for Penang's application to the UNESCO *World Heritage List*. As Katherine Adams concludes, following her observations of an Indonesian village's nomination as a UNESCO World Heritage Site, the emergence of heritage sites is not a 'natural' process, but rather a political process that can be fraught with calculation and collusion, conflict and collaboration and co-optation (2003: 93). But first this chapter examines the image makers -the architectural profession, their understanding of the value of Malaysia's architectural heritage and their search for an architectural identity befitting a developing nation.

The changing urban landscape

Architects and architectural identity

Recently much has been written of the concept of the 'disappearing 'Asian' city' or rather loss of perceived Asianness or 'otherness', by non-Asian observers (Crowell, 2000; Logan, 2002). This suggests that distinctive traits of Asianness, especially in

architecture, are perceived through the perspectives of 'traditional' rather than 'modern' architecture (Logan, 2002: xiii). Whilst 'traditional Asia' is being replaced by a visibly 'modern Asia', the 'otherness' still exists, but in less tangible ways. In his book *Asian New Urbanism,* William Lim, former partner of Malayan Architects Co-partnership, attempts to identify critical challenges affecting Asian urban centres today. He notes such problems as unregulated physical expansion, the destruction of historic environments and poor infrastructure but, other than speculative greed, he does not identify why the challenges have emerged. He explains, however, that the East 'creates an order from the complexity of apparent randomness through intuitive wisdom and a holistic approach'. Thus, although the Asian cityscape may be somewhat chaotic, it has its own sense of order, though this is not always discernible to the western-educated senses. In contrast, his visionary ideal for an Asian new urbanism is expressed through his western education, which 'traditionally creates the dynamics of change and exploration within the intellectual context of rationalism and analytical thinking' (Lim S.W., 1998: 25).

George Town's urban growth had, until the construction of the *Penang New Urban Centre,* provided space for each ethnic community to create an architectural expression peculiar to its own. The result was a strangely homogeneous landscape of culturally and functionally identifiable forms, and as suggested in Chapter Two truly global in content, as a result of the variety of external influences. Prior to the turn of the twentieth century the architectural identity of Penang's and indeed the Malayan Peninsula's buildings reflected climatic conditions, the sources of materials available, the means of transport to deliver them and the variety of eclectic tastes and cultures of the inhabitants. Whichever style or potpourri of styles were adopted or explored, the sense of scale and place within the environment created '...an order from the complexity of apparent randomness...'.

The twentieth century introduced 'architects' educated in foreign institutions, as opposed to the earlier 'artisans' (master masons and carpenters), supported by guilds and associations who sustained their skills through the system of apprenticeships, and crafted their art forms through a combination of memory, tradition, fusion and invention. The first European-and-Western-trained Penang architects attempted to fuse east and west, creating a new eclecticism, particularly in the designs of the bungalows of the nouveaux riches. Expressions of modernity were demonstrated in the experimentation with new building forms and technologies. The mansion block that introduced the lift, and the gossamer steel trusses spanning the car showrooms are both examples of this change.

Following the architectural transition period after the Second World War, where old and new styles searched for a direction, the 'race riots' of 1969 served as a symbolic

cleansing of 'anything left over by the British administration' (Lim C.S., 1994: 204), and contributed to the search for a national architecture and icons of nationhood. This quest brought the western language of modernism firmly into the nation.

Fed on a diet of such architectural theorists and practitioners as Walter Gropius, Mies van der Rohe and Le Corbusier, all proponents of the Modernist movement in both Europe and America, young western-trained Malaysian graduates of the 1950s and 1960s returned to Malaysia. They were eager to impose the theories learnt from the west onto a landscape already fashioned through a fusion of global influences, both Asian and non-Asian. These young architects were themselves cultural hybrids. KOMTAR's architect, for example, is ethnically Chinese, *Baba-Nonya* in culture, Malaysian in nationality, British in secondary education, European in architectural education and American in architectural expression. Functional modernism therefore depended on intellectual rather than cultural expression and acted as a unifier in a complex multicultural, multi-educated world.

Kuala Lumpur's architectural landscape became the domain of corporate signature buildings in the 1980s and early 1990s. The traditional landscape was replaced by technologically challenging architecture reflective of out-of-scale condiment containers, some adorned with Islamic arches and scripts and other gestures to ethnic identification [Fig5-1]. The continued importation of architectural theory, technology and forms produced a 'neo-colonialism' in architecture. Logan, however, points out that although these borrowed architectural and planning styles were conceived in the west, the practitioners of such styles are more often Asian (2002, xiii).

Did these high-rise modernist buildings reflect Malaysia's new identity? Or was it better expressed in low-rise forms. As Keng Yeang, one of Malaysia's leading modernist architect, notes:

> Every once in a while, that old tossed-about syndrome of a Malaysian identity in architecture rears its head. Although there have been innumerable efforts to bring the subject to the fore it has never really been properly resolved (1979: 15).

Malaysian architects, he claimed, in 1979, could be categorised in terms of four 'metaphors'. The 'modern traditionals' who thought modern architecture should be a rural to urban translation, sporting contemporised versions of traditional Minangkabau roofs and local 'arty crafts' applied to brick walls [Fig.5-2]. The 'vernacularist', who preferred the hacienda neo-Hispanic look topped with a 'Pizza

Hut' Mansard roof; the 'design-with-climate primitives', more intelligently responding to the local climate and vegetation, and seeking the orientation of the buildings for the maximum balance of the elements; and finally the 'post-internationalists' who believed that 'anything designed by a Malaysian for a Malaysian is by definition Malaysian' (Yeang, 1979). Yeang questioned if national architectural identity existed in any country.

Dean Sherwin, a former lecturer at Universiti Sains Malaysia, goes on to conclude that most attempts at architectural identity have produced merely symbolic images from the past imposed on modernist structures, for example, a pagoda roof on a multi-storey building (1979). The Modernist Chinese Town Hall and the Shanghai Art Deco, Kwantung Tengchew Association buildings in George Town, are two examples of attempts to incorporate symbolic Chinese forms onto western building styles in George Town [Fig. 5-3]. The latter is infinitely less disturbing to the urban landscape than the former, for several reasons. The Association building was created for a known function; thus, the architect was able to distil the semiotics of the Chinese Association, represented by various traditional and religious functions, artefacts and spatial needs, and fuse them within a western-style which was adapted successfully through a comprehension of the philosophy of its origins. Thus, the green-tiled pagoda roofs seem an integral part of the whole. Its placement within and respect for the existing urbanscape is also clearly understood as part of the well-being of the Association and those it protects.

Several generations of architectural education later the Chinese Town Hall attempted the same. It was built to house the Chinese Chamber of Commerce, to provide a Mandarin library, a large community hall for meetings, weddings and performances and speculative office space for Chinese businesses. The function had no architectural precedent in the city. Whilst a modernist building form was used, the Chinese identity was achieved by including a list of known Chinese building items; a raised plinth; four red columns and two lions at its base; Chinese green-glazed balustrades on its balconies as well as a curved Chinese form as its roof. As Yeang explains, such features were the language of temples, associations and vernacular forms. Thus they appeared inconclusive as expressions of cultural development. The Kwantung and Tengchew Association building demonstrates the spiritual, intellectual and cultural understanding of Chinese geomancy which fuses with its environment, whist the Chinese Town Hall appears as a western building with 'stuck on' Chinese symbols.

The twelve-storey Chinese Town Hall is located between St. George's Church and the Hokkien architecture of the Kuan Yin Temple, both built in the early 1800s.

These two historic buildings are unlikely to be demolished due to their importance to their respective communities. The Hall's imposing height, therefore, shows little comprehension of its impact on the streetscape by either the planners who approved its form, the client who desired it, the architect who created it and the councillors who approved the project.

Penang's architectural practices today employ young architects trained all over the world as well as in Malaysian universities. The diversity of their architectural education ranges from the egalitarian creativity and intellectual debate, based on the European approach to 'world' (meaning western) architecture, with emphasis on process, to concern over the visual presentation of an end-product. These young graduates, particularly those trained overseas, have experienced comparably different approaches to the acceptance of critical thought. On return to 'provincial' Penang they are often expected to conform to the culture they left behind, if not at home more likely at work, in order not to arouse the discontent of their colleagues or employers who have not been so exposed to these influences. Many of Penang's older Chinese businesses are run as an uneasy combination of traditional family firms and professional corporations. Kuala Lumpur is very different. The competition with foreign-based architectural companies has created a highly professional corporate environment attracting new graduates into the city.

Whilst Malaysian University students have been exposed to elements of inherited architecture, measuring and recording existing buildings for example, their schools do not offer electives on Malaysian architectural history. The emphasis is on modern and post-modern 'world' architecture supported by national icons, for example the Petronas Twin Towers and the Kuala Lumpur International Airport (KLIA) designed by American architect Caesar Pelli and Japan's Kisho Kurokawa respectively, with whom the new generation of architects can identify.

Without a comprehensive grounding in Malaysia's rich and diverse architectural history attempts at either conservation, infill development within an historic streetscape or even the reinvention of heritage imagery for an emerging middle-class market, can result in a poor pastiche of the original, of which there are many examples.

In contrast, the Japanese architectural landscape, which has to a large degree maintained its traditional building forms in many urban centres, has the respect to restore whole areas of historic buildings and enclaves and by so doing provide its young architects with a rich environment from which to learn, distil and create new contemporary works uniquely Japanese in style and spirit. Malaysia is unable to do the same. Its young architects, particularly in a provincial urban centre such as Penang, are

faced with a modern building language in total contrast to the traditional environment in both form and semiotics. They are mostly presented with western importations distilled through developers rather than the original architectural intelligence that created them.

The conflict of western modernism in an Asian environment

The first 'wholesale' importation of western architecture to Penang came in the form of nine, multi-storey slab-housing blocks on the suburban Rifle Range estate. These were commissioned and built in 1965 by the state government to solve the housing need. As a German prefabricated import, designed for a temperate climate, the physical needs of an equatorial region were overlooked. Designed with internal communal corridors and small glazed windows suitable for keeping out cold weather in a temperate winter, these units were clearly incompatible with Malaysian living [Fig 5-4].

The Chinese rituals for prayer by burning offerings outside their front doors was made impossible as the doors were entered from internal communal corridors. Thus the smoke from the *joss* placed on the altar or burning paper money, symbolic of luck and good fortune, could not reach into the heavens. Although the families have determinedly found their own solutions, the problem indicated a lack of recognition that western imported architecture was not always suitable for either the users or the climate in Penang.

The placement of the buildings within the environment is equally important, particularly to the Chinese inhabitants, but again was overlooked by the project architect. Thus the buildings were sited adjacent to a Chinese cemetery (Abel, 1997:164). This caused great discomfort amongst the Chinese inhabitants who avoid proximity to such sites. To alleviate this, the outer units closest to the cemetery were offered to Indian Hindu families whilst the Chinese were placed further into the development.

Cost was the criterion which inhibited further purchase of these units and a local solution had to be found. Thus, the low-cost and low-medium-cost housing blocks for the Comprehensive Development Areas are socially and culturally more acceptable. These returned to the methods devised by Ivor Shipley, an expatriate architect with the Public Works Department. The external open passageway returned in the design. Thus, by putting the street into the air there was more social and spiritual interaction. Open communal corridors, where doors to private spaces were never shut, allowed communication with neighbours and passers-by to continue as if along a street of shophouses. It also gave the housing units front access to the open air, critical for the daily prayers, rituals and external altars. Rifle Range estate was clearly an unsuccessful

experiment in imported buildings. Fortunately local examples of building form which had successfully evolved, as in Shipley's flats, were reviewed and used as a model for further low-cost housing.

KOMTAR's 65-storey tower and the geodesic dome, designed and supervised by Buckminster Fuller, had no local paradigm, either in form or use. Both business and residential space was previously combined in the traditional mixed-use shophouses. In KOMTAR commercial retail space was separated from residential, was smaller, more expensive, with neither storage space nor, in the case of the Chinese traders, the traditional exterior altar for the daily morning prayer for prosperity. By separating the commercial and residential activities into two premises, the structure of the family began to change, particularly for the working class Chinese. The women and elderly would have traditionally been part of the shop activity whilst keeping an eye on the children; but they could no longer be accommodated in the smaller commercial units. The impact was felt not only in its imposition on traditional life and on the city, but also in the further creation of a new suburban form - the high-rise, low-cost residential blocks needed to re-house a large population of displaced tenants of the KOMTAR site, cheaply and within a small land area.

The *Penang New Urban Centre* in general, and the KOMTAR development in particular, irreversibly altered the social, commercial, religious and cultural patterns of the working class multi-ethnic communities and their relationship with the built form and interstitial space. It also altered local ambitions; designed and built by a local team, it opened the doors to the development of Penang's urban skyscape, and in doing so challenged George Town's architecture and fired the ambitions of the development industry.

In the Penang of 1984, however, the less exposed developers began to search for their own cheaper, speculative building style [Fig.5-4]. A Malaysian form of postmodernism in architecture began to develop. Identifiable neo-colonial-classicism appeared briefly sporting deep cornices and encrusted pediments above twelve floors of Corinthian columns followed by blue-glazed terracotta-tiled roofs and mock Tudor gables. The low-cost and low-medium-cost housing remained monolithic slabs often built adjacent to more expensive, embellished apartment blocks.

Many of these developments, if designed and built by Chinese, regularly incorporated *feng shui* elements in their design. As Goh discovered in her research, this was both considered as attractive to buyers and in the case of one developer to encourage prosperity for his own company (1997: 269). As *feng shui* is calculated from the time of birth of the 'master' of the building in order to create a conducive

environment for the head of the house or business, it is hard to see how this can be calculated for unknown users of a speculative building.

In the early 1990s resort architecture in the region led by an Australian architect based in Singapore, began to attract the attention of the nouveaux riches whose private housing followed Balinese details in both Malaysia and Singapore. Diluted versions of these designs were used in Penang's new developments such as the more upmarket shopping complex Belisa Row, which replaced *Kampong Serani*. This was a break-away from the usual post-modern 'world' architecture education route and produced a growing confidence in the contemporising of regional architectural forms.

'Heritage' too became a saleable concept for more upmarket projects in line with the growing heritage nostalgia of the urban middle-class and was added to development descriptions and project and building names. The 'heritage' elements in the design were often obscure, perhaps only identifiable as a terracotta-tiled roof or timber shutters or for the louvers, more exclusive 'cluster' developments with multiple roofs. But whilst heritage was being included in modern development, few were interested in conserving the original architecture

> The fact of the matter is that few in our country would wish to be involved in this venture when there are no megabucks to make nor is there enlightened foresight from the legal custodians of our towns. Yet we feel threatened by the loss of old buildings that were part of our childhood and we label it as destruction of our culture (Hin Tan 2000).

As a result of such sentiment, the identity of Penang as an elegant city rich in architectural heritage in harmony with its natural landscape of verdant hills and white-sand-beaches was redefined by buildings which bore no relationship to their historic surroundings, although the perception of 'heritage' as a marketing tool was used. Hin Tan's comments come from his interview with Penang's architect, Laurence Loh, Deputy President of Badan Warisan Malaysia, the Malaysian National Trust, and now the leading, award-winning, conservation architect in Malaysia. Loh's reflections on George Town, the city by which he was once inspired, suggest an environment in crisis.

> This was fertile ground for the growth of a desire to emulate good design and to nurture freedom of imagination against a subtle cultural backdrop of the town's architectural legacies - steady- steadfast and always there for

you..... to look at the state of architecture and the art of building and place making in Penang today is to feel despair.
(2000: 10).

Blurred vision

Vision for the city

Having fragmented the vision for the Penang New Urban Centre of the former Chief Minister, Lim Cheong Eu, no new vision for the city was put forward to replace it. Under his leadership, the city had a clear, though controversial direction. The results of the Penang state elections in 1990, however, placed Penang's government with the uncertainty of new leadership for whom the visions for George Town's historic inner city proved more of a challenge than for their predecessor. The new state and local governments focused on strengthening the already successful Free Trade Zones, and promoting *Vision 2020* - of new high-rise housing, shopping malls, and infrastructure projects over the island and mainland. The inner city development was held in abeyance through the *AKS*, apart from the areas cleared in the 1980s for the remaining development phases of the *Penang New Urban Centre*.

Federal support for development

In the 1970s, the government provided the essential services - water, electricity telecommunications, health care, education, public transport - allowing those with low incomes to enjoy a high quality of living. Multinational companies had also begun to invest, and slowly Malaysian corporations emerged. Following the recession of the 1980s, the Malaysian government began to deregulate the economy in favour of privatisation.

With the *National Development Plan* for 1991 until 2000 privatisation became the dominant theme in line with *Vision 2020*, beginning with the privatisation of established government companies like Malaysian Airline System (MAS), moving on to the utilities sector with the National Electricity Board and Telecom, and more recently the 'mega-projects' such as the Kuala Lumpur International Airport, and the new capital of Putrajaya (Loh F.,1997:11).

The construction industry was encouraged by *Vision 2020* and the *Malaysian Promotion of Investment Act* 1986, under which the hotel business and tourist industry became eligible for consideration for pioneer status and investment tax allowance. For projects of 'national importance' 100% exemption from payment of income tax, for a period of five years, is awarded. Investment Tax Allowance, a five-year period of

allowances in respect of permitted capital expenditure incurred, offset against the 'statutory' income of an assessment year, is also a tourism industry incentive (Kee,1997).

With the construction sector targeted to achieve 10.2% per annum growth and large infrastructure projects undertaken together with residential and commercial development, a *National Environment Policy* was formulated to help avoid abusive developments, though whether it was more than lip-service to a growing concern by the NGOs, is yet to be seen.

Penang into the 21st Century

Seen as the heart of the Indonesia-Malaysia-Thailand, (IMT) Growth Triangle, Penang State has attracted multiple infrastructure investment opportunities particularly in the construction and development industry. Whilst development in the north-east historic centre was fraught with indecision and challenges to policy-making, the rest of the island was deluged with ambitious development.

An example of such a project is the newly opened *Jelutong Expressway*, one of three sections of *Penang Outer Ring Road* (PORR); the overall costs are expected to be RM 560 million including construction, land reclamation, acquisition costs and squatter compensation. The term squatter refers to *kampong*-type settlements rather than shanty towns, and residents are legal occupiers of the land, having been issued *Temporary Occupation Licenses* (TOLs). They are often cleared to make way for new development projects. In return for their investment, the developers have development rights to 324.9 acres of land, mostly reclaimed, along Penang's Eastern foreshore. Such large infrastructure projects were hotly contested by the development industry giants.

Other developers settled for 'lifestyle living' resorts, modern dreams of prosperity, business success and leisure, such as the 80-acre Bayan Bay Marina and Leisure Resort. The developer was also interested in a joint venture with PDC to develop the former penal colony island, Pulau Jerejak, opposite its present site, into an eco-tourism island similar to 'Sentosa', Singapore's themed island resort. This 'lifestyle living ' development is an example of the self-contained townships planned and designed for the high-end market of the expanding leisured class who prefer the long weekend holiday to those taken overseas. Travel overseas is usually for business purposes rather than holidays, much like membership of golf clubs is more to do with business opportunities than enjoying the sport. The low land prices, new road systems and proximity to the Penang Bridge and to the mainland and airport, all contributed to the shift of commercial development from George Town to the south-east of the island (Choong and Shahriah, 1997). Over the last ten years an estimated population of

309,000 middle to high income groups had moved, attracted by the job opportunities in the free industrial zones and the promise of new lifestyle accommodation.

The developer of the first high-rise residential and commercial centre built after KOMTAR, and his equally ambitious brother, formed various companies and joint venture packages, investing in mixed development projects. They provided the island with its first indoor ice rink in Bukit Jambul and ski slope at 'Snowland' in MegaMall Pinang on the mainland. Both have since ceased to operate. Despite other development teams, the brothers became responsible for large shopping malls and hotel and commercial developments close to the inner city. The speed, location and quantity of projects and ability to obtain necessary approvals quickly as well as their ability to silence a highly vociferous opponent, caused local gossip and jealous admiration of their rags-to-riches success. By early 1998 their over-borrowing and inexhaustible ambitions were caught in the recession. Prangin Mall in the inner city, Gurney Plaza and The Gurney Hotel construction sites stalled almost overnight, leaving local contractors and building suppliers, who had eagerly fuelled their ambitions with excessive credit, to bear the brunt of the economic downturn. Refinancing allowed for completion of the projects by 2001. As William Lim noted:

> Land and property speculation have turned into an obsession. Together with the stock markets, they have become legalised casinos where many fortunes have been made all too easily. Greed has become respectable and has often been given public recognition.
> (1998: 18).

In September 1997, as the Asian economic crisis began to be felt, the total new retail built-up area in George Town city boundary was quoted as 3.5.million square feet and a further 6.5 million was planned for 1998. The local government clearly supported the construction industry and in so doing encouraged development of the state. Fear of discouragement of the industry created decisions which would later be felt. One such example was reported in the December 1992 Penang State Assembly debate, when the Deputy Chief Minister was pressed to explain why a developer was allowed to abandon a low-cost housing project in favour of a golf course. His reply was reported as follows

> The developer had switched to building a golf course as he was facing financial difficulties in constructing 4,500 low cost units.... the land does not belong to the state, it was better to allow the developer to convert the

land from residential to recreational instead of letting him go bankrupt (*Utusan Konsumer*, 1995).

The short-term problem of the developer had been solved but in 1999 when the housing shortage became acute, following the *AKS Repeal*, these 4,500 units were needed.

Development realities

The management of Penang's development has not been a simple task. Federal projects can be instigated without consultation with the state Planning Department. An example is the second link proposal to the mainland, which was once destined to land on the north-east tip of the island. Penang has also attracted a highly active population of ambitious developers - local, national, and foreign, - supported by political friends who may wish to sway councillors' decisions away from the professional advice of the Council Planning officers, often to the detriment of the environment. Contractors' building practices have been known to cause major damage to adjoining premises, from uncontrolled rock blasting, to major flooding or changes to groundwater levels, which create underground disturbance to surrounding properties. When the projects are built they very often do not meet the regulations required for *Certificates of Occupation* but public and political pressure result in the certificates being issued. The period prior to the 1997 Asian economic crisis saw the most frenetic development taking place, with many ill-considered and poor quality projects now littering Penang's once two-storied skyline [Fig. 5-5].

Whilst the architects were regulated by a professional body and later an official board, Lembaga Akitek Malaysia (LAM), the buildings they constructed were governed by a disparity of regulations which varied from state to state (Yeang,1992: 223). Although begun in the 1950s it was not until 1984 that the *Uniform Building By-Laws* (UBBL) were gazetted. The relatively recent introduction of the UBBL, coupled with its long struggle to emerge, suggests a reticence to either comprehend the need for, or to use such laws, and perhaps goes part way to explain the reluctance shown today to either abide by or enforce them.

With the development of such large-scale infrastructure projects on the island during the mid-1990s building boom, malpractice and manipulation of the laws and by-laws, and the flexible approach to these by the Local Authority became very evident. Site safety as well as protection of the environment surrounding the sites were governed by laws and contracts. However, the desire for completion and profit overlooked such hindrances. For example, forty-five builders were brought to court with 37 stop-work orders issued in 1997 as the number of dengue cases tripled from 286 to 747 cases. Attacks of asthma from cement batching plants in populated areas

were common until public outcry caused them to be relocated. Buildings themselves have collapsed during construction as at Bandar Penas with thirteen people injured in March 1997 and Beach Street in 2000. Drains blocked with building debris regularly cause flooding of neighbouring property, and in the case of *Kampong Kebun Sayur*, the livelihoods of neighbouring vegetable farmers were literally washed away.

The first well publicised case was in June 1980 when the Municipal Council ordered the demolition of Northam Court, Penang's first high-rise luxury apartments which had cracked, sunk and tilted off vertical (*Star*, 26.2.1997). Other development projects have shifted underground water causing old drains to collapse sending a 10-ton lorry, a factory bus, and the bus I was travelling on (August 1999), into newly occurring sink holes (*Star*, 5.3.1997; *Star*, 10.3.1997).

What the local authorities and state population either did not acknowledge or had not the experience to foresee, was the period between the vision of development and the reality of its implementation. The chaos and disruption that these mega-projects would cause was never anticipated nor were the reinterpretation of codes of practice and restraining laws, the disregard for safety or quality, and the lack of market planning compounded by minimal risk assessment by financial institutions (Gunalan 1999). Nor was cognisance taken of the possibility of an economic recession, which has left many ambitious projects incomplete. The pressures on existing infrastructure, facilities and communities seemed to come as a complete surprise.

Lack of a sizeable skilled national workforce meant that with the building of the Kuala Lumpur national icons, quality subcontractors deserted Penang for the more lucrative mega-projects. Cheap unskilled Indonesian and Bangladeshi labourers were employed to fill the void, boosting profits but lowering the quality of work. Compounding the problems, it has been the practice for developers to employ unqualified architects who offer basic creativity for their mega-projects. Penang's established architects are only brought into the development process to sign the required legal documentation. Many of Penang's high-rise towers of the late 1990s have been built under this method. Coupled with a building boom which overwhelmed the Building and Planning Departments of the Local Authority, which have few qualified employees with professional training in either architecture or planning, the result has produced a chaotic urban landscape littered with monuments to this practice.

Development opportunism and lax law enforcement began to create an unstable environment throughout the nation. The courts however, were much less flexible than the local governments and between 1994 and 1999 a total of 748 developers nation-wide were charged for various offences connected with their projects. The Housing

and Local Government Minister also reported that even so 'there were still developers who did not abide by the regulations and laws' (*Sun*, 11.4.1999).

Little or no legal action was taken by local governments against the developers who failed to meet the required low-cost housing allocations. By the end of 1998 only 39% of the target for such housing had been achieved (Gunalan, 1999). In wishing to encourage investment in joint venture projects with property developers it had left the state government impotent to prosecute on such issues. Later permission was given to build low-cost units on the cheaper mainland. However, lack of population and job opportunities meant that many properties remained empty until such investment was encouraged. Such was the apparent favouritism, that the Consumer Association Penang called for significant changes in the *Land Acquisition Act.*

Complacency towards Federal law became all too frequent and was even perpetuated by government bodies themselves. When the Penang Development Corporation organised the demolition of seven heritage buildings adjacent to the 'E & O Hotel', prior to receiving planning approval on its joint-venture site on the George Town beach front, there was professional and public outcry. The Municipal Council was reminded to be more strict with the PDC, though no prosecution took place (Lim A.L., 1998). Conversely the Council has, in the past, been taken to court by a developer over 'development charges'. These are charges imposed when the development is in excess of the permitted density, as a contribution towards infrastructure. On 24 January 1997, the Appeals Board ruled that the guidelines allowing the Council to collect the charges were never gazetted (made law through publication in the gazette), rendering the collection illegal (Malathi, 1998). What is not clear, however, is why excesses of up to 100% are permitted. As was claimed by a Municipal Councillor, almost all developers have entered into this arrangement with the Council and 'If such flexibility to build double the permissible density was withdrawn, developers would not get maximum profits...' (Choong and Shahariah, 1997a). It would appear that concern over the quantity of the developers' profits far exceeds that of the effect of overdevelopment on the environment and quality of life.

Such considerable political support for the pro-development and pro-high profit development lobby explains the difficulty experienced in producing restrictive Local Plans and updating *Conservation Guidelines*. So strong was the support for certain developers that when opportunities arose for planning application renewal to be refused on the grounds of new legislation, the Councillors would rarely agree. Either social law, social pressure (saving face), corruption or a belief in urban renewal through modernisation, or a combination of all of these prevent the authorities from refusing renewal. The results within the historic streetscapes are brutal as five-storey

brown-tinted, glass-curtain-walling fragment the harmony of the shuttered and lime-washed two-storey façades

Unscrupulous developers and contractors are not the only groups avoiding 'unnecessary' hindrances to their profit. There are examples through all walks of life from the lucrative market of pirated CD's and computer software, to the inner city Penang taxi-drivers consistently defying a 1998 ruling to use meters, and to the liberal installation of phone booths of which 90 per cent did not have approval or phones. In such a climate is it any wonder, therefore, that there has evolved a tolerance to 'minor' legal indiscretions unless there is a complaint?

The immediate past-president of the Penang Heritage Trust complained to the press that due to the delay in approval for change of use, his company headquarters and fusion restaurant, established in a restored Italianate villa, were being 'held to ransom' by regular fines. Political friends had to be sought, not to speed up the approval but to avoid his eviction by the MPPP. Following the law is no protection either, as the owner of a legal kiosk found out when it was demolished by MPPP enforcement officers. These and many other such incidents suggest a Local Authority unable to enforce its own regulations and both councillors and officers with their own agendas.

Inner city realities

In such a climate, had it not been for the enforcement of the *AKS* little of the historic city, with its vast land potential would exist today. However, even before the *AKS Repeal*, developments had already taken place along the designated heritage city boundary, particularly in the commercial district along Weld Quay, Beach Street, Farquhar Street and Penang Road and the replacement of millionaires' mansions with expensive office and condominium towers along the north shore. The remaining commercial and residential developments have so far been outside the six conservation zones of the inner city. This growth, seen from KOMTAR's 58th floor viewing gallery, is staggering and emphasises the pressure on what remains of the old heritage city [Fig. 5-6/7/8].

What are of great concern, however, are the ambitious transport infrastructure planning projects designed in the 1970s and 1980s, long before the restrictions of the *Town and Country Planning Act*. These are only now taking shape, and in September 2001 were questioned, by the Consumer Association Penang, for their appropriateness to the planning of the city, as the population and commercial focus of the island has shifted to the south and the mainland. The dispersal of traffic from the *Penang Outer Ring Road* (PORR), for example, was once planned to tunnel under the historic

landing site of the East India Company. In May 2003, a reported outcry over the appointment of a new councillor with interests in the PORR project, was swept aside. The spokesman for the developers of the PORR is one of the ambitious brothers whose projects halted in the Asian economic crisis of 1997, proving that their entrepreneurial spirit is resilient and that Penang remains a profitable environment in which to operate.

Lack of funds and technical ability, however, have reduced the ambitious plans to build a tunnel, and currently six lanes of traffic are planned to pour into two existing roads around the historic administrative district and early settlement area, the seventh conservation zone announced by the State Planning Director, during the meeting to discuss the application to UNESCO listing in 1998 (Jamil, 1998).

A more immediate threat to the heritage environment was the use of hammer piling on infill or peripheral developments. As the historic city was built on swampy, beach-like ground, vibrations from hammer piling were easily transferred through the ground to the brick buildings, built on mangrove piles. Two examples which were reported were the cracking of the Bengali Mosque on Leith Street and the Cheong Fatt Tze Mansion, after RM 7 million had been privately invested in its award-winning conservation [Fig. 5-9].

The delay in the remaining phases of the *Penang New Urban Centre* left the city with a large area of cleared housing and a row of dilapidated, yet inhabited, shophouses due for demolition under Phase Five, which have stood without repairs since their compulsory purchase in the 1970s. As a result, the tenants have lived in fear of building collapse which Phase Four piling works have exacerbated. These residents were to be offered the opportunity to purchase housing in low-medium-cost units within the city boundary, but as low paid artisans, for example a clog-maker and temple lantern-maker, they were both unable to afford the housing and were unfamiliar with the process of application. According to the lantern-maker, they also felt, incorrectly, that the government housing was only for Muslims, and as Chinese they would have to find other accommodation.

The construction works of KOMTAR Phase Four were to produce the worst case of damage to the historic city in September 1996. Shortly after the piling works had begun cracks started to appear in over 300 pre-war heritage properties in the streets surrounding the Prangin Mall site. Formerly Chinese junks had traded up a river which later became known as Prangin Ditch. Following gradual reclamation of the river, by the time of the land clearance for the *Penang New Urban Centre,* it was no more than a drainage canal. In full knowledge of the condition, the houses in the area were built on *bakau* rafts suitable for swampy ground, and retained their strength as

long as the area remained wet (Khoo Salma, 1997a). The Phases One and Two of KOMTAR were designed and constructed in full knowledge of the site's geological history, as a result there was little physical disturbance to the surrounding area.

The original design for Phase Four, a four-storey development, also took cognisance of the site conditions. However, the new project developers changed the plans from those approved, which according to the original architect of the *Penang New Urban Centre*, Datuk Lim Cheong Keat, would 'impose additional loading to soil and traffic conditions' (*Star*, 21.2.1997). The developers claimed, however, that further car parking bays were requested by the Council and that they had obliged, adding more than the required bays with a further two floors, as a 'gesture of goodwill'. Thus, this was presented as an act of generosity rather than an ill-judged decision. Excavation work, which altered the water-table of the area, was blamed for the cracks, not the ignorance of the developer, engineer or approving authority. Local rumours, however, explained that during excavations, gold was found encouraging the contractors to dig deeper (*Star*, 21.2.1997). However, many Chinese shrines were removed to facilitate the project and inappropriate prayer or refusal by the spirits to leave their sites, may have also been thought to have caused the problems faced by the developer.

By 31 January 1997 a stop-work order was issued for Prangin Mall. The Municipal Council engaged the Institute Kerja Raya Malaysia (IKRAM), the Public Works Department Research and Training Institute, to carry out further geological studies, which confirmed the local knowledge of the area. An adjacent road to the site is called Jalan Sungai Ujong, Ujong River Road, named after a small tributary to the original Prangin River; and the Hokkien name *lam cha na* meaning 'soft, weak ground', is still used locally to identify the area. Following IKRAM's investigation recharging wells were installed to pump water back into the surrounding ground.

By 20 February 1997 over 300 reports of buildings cracked from the development work were lodged with the police. The tenants mobilised themselves into two ad hoc committees related to their neighbourhoods but were at first reluctant to use the Council's information centre to lodge complaints (*Star*, 22.2.1997; *Star*, 20.2.1997) [Fig. 5-9]. There were intimidating warnings, however, to residents making false reports on old cracks. I visited some of the houses where it was possible to shake hands with the neighbour through the cracks in the walls; other tenants were pointing out old cracks already filled with years of old paint. Five families were relocated and damage to badly affected properties was repaired. The Council called for building plans to be submitted to the Building Department for the repairs. As this would expose alterations previously carried out illegally by tenants, landlords and owners, an amnesty was agreed as long as plans were submitted for repair and renovation work. The repairs

stripped the shophouses of all recognisable features, and inserted air conditioning. Brown-tinted glass replaced carved timber shutters. What could have been an opportunity to renovate and restore was simply an unsupervised patch-up exercise by the developer.

Although the developers of Prangin Mall were ordered to pay for temporary accommodation and relocation costs for affected tenants, the latter were afraid to move out of their premises for repairs in case the owners took back their houses, then under the *AKS*. Showing mistrust of the developers' intentions they petitioned the Chief Minister to ensure only recommended repairs were carried out. The tenants' fears were well founded and when work began in November 1997 it proved to be shoddy and failed to follow the requirements. Repairs were delayed and work on one of the most seriously affected houses with RM 160,000 worth of damage only began after the family threatened a hunger strike in June 1998 (Yong, 1998). To put this in perspective I restored a derelict 100 ft shophouse for RM 160,000. The damage to this cracked house, therefore, must have been severe to cost so much. A further stop-work order was issued to the same developer when, in April 1997, a sheet pile fell from a crane onto a minibus injuring three people. The developers were ordered to improve safety conditions on the site.

Work finally resumed in June 1997 only to be halted as one of the first projects to be affected by the economic recession. It stood neglected and incomplete for almost two years before a reduced building design was resumed. When it finally opened in 2001 gone were the themed floors, the Eiffel Tower, Dutch windmills and Wild West gimmicks which were to be planted incongruously into the heart of a predominantly Chinese city. The building now presents large expanses of battleship grey-plastered walls which the abandoned mirror-glass-walling would have concealed. More for the sake of those who had purchased the long delayed units, the *Occupation Certificate* was issued, despite leaking toilets, incomplete malls, illegal fire escapes and lack of the required disabled access.

Towards conservation strategies

Shifting Sands

The development blight, which has taken place since the early 1990s, seems out of context with the amount of conservation awareness activities, workshops and seminars, which took place from 1986 to 1993. The Municipal Council, jointly with the Penang Heritage Trust, and such global bodies as the *United Nations Development Programme* (UNDP), actively supported these activities. In 1990 the former GTZ

consultant was employed, on a six year contract, as MPPP Conservation Consultant under the *German Integrated Experts Programme*. His appointment appeared to be a clear signal that conservation was at the forefront of development planning issues (Koenig and Khoo, 2001). However, the current distorted landscape demonstrates a more powerful lobby, spurred on by the national *Vision 2020*, which coincided with the changes in leadership within the local governments.

As noted in Chapter Four, the first 'official' cognisance of the term 'conservation' appeared in the written *Conservation Plan*, which provided the support material for the *1973 Interim Zoning Plan*. It was twelve years before the term was brought to the forefront again, encouraged by the adoption of the *Town and Country Planning Act*, 1986. In the same year the *International Conference on Urban Conservation and Planning*, introduced the concept of 'foreign experts' in conservation. These 'foreign experts' were invited to familiarise Penang's professionals, government officers and civil servants with their experience in conservation practice. Their inclusion was to legitimise the concept of conservation and urban renewal and give support to their hosts, a small group of mainly western-educated individuals who were concerned about the dilapidated state of Penang's historic architecture. It was intended to endorse conservation through a global ('western') value system.

The years 1987 to 1989 saw a frenzy of invited foreign experts, pilot studies, inventories and an early proposal for a *Heritage Enactment* by the Penang Heritage Trust. *The Draft Design Guidelines for the Conservation Areas* were produced and the *Report of Survey* followed by the *Structure Plan* of 1989 promoted the inclusion of conservation as a part of the development process.

In August 1990, just prior to the state election, the Penang Municipal Council Secretary visited Germany to view urban conservation projects. Later that year, the appointment of the MPPP Conservation Consultant was to signal the third phase of GTZ co-operation. The Consultant was placed within the Building Department in order to accomplish the heritage building inventory and offer advice on building submissions relating to heritage issues, although his main reason for employment was to train a local Conservator (ibid., 2001). This placement challenged the effectiveness of his work, for due to the development approval process, planning approval (which includes demolition) is granted by the Planning Department before the drawings are submitted to the Building Department for comment. By this time demolitions or new constructions have already been approved.

In 1991 the United Nations Centre for Regional Development (UNCRD), together with the MPPP, held a seminar in Penang on Urban Conservation and Public Participation. It was then that the case study of *Lebuh Acheh, Lebuh Armenian Enclave*

(*LALA*) was presented by the MPPP Planning Department (Tan Thean Siew et al, 1991); and the Asia and West Pacific network for Urban Conservation (AWPNUC) was established as a network for technical and cultural information exchange.

In the first year of the Conservation Consultant's employment, urban conservation principle and strategies were formulated and proposed to the relevant authorities, workshops and seminars were conducted, and the first volume of the *Inventory of Heritage Buildings* was finalised (Koenig and Khoo, 2001). The appointment of the Conservation Consultant, the relationship with the GTZ and the cooperation between MPPP and PHT had all begun under the previous leaders -the Chief Minister, City Secretary and Building Department Director. However, it was felt that the eagerness for conservation had waned with the subsequent change in leadership and department heads within the MPPP. The Conservation Consultant's relationship with the new Building Department Director, who was less sympathetic towards conservation than his predecessor, did not improve when the officer became involved in conservation NGO activity. This was contrary to his contract and to the 'Asian way' of behaving and made support from his superiors difficult.

Eventually relationships soured and the Council showed little interest in securing the MPPP/GTZ financial and technical co-operation, and the frustrated former GTZ officer resigned (Koenig,1998). No replacement was negotiated for the remaining three years of his programme which left a confused and disillusioned workforce within the Planning and Building Departments. The Federal government's vision, which coincided with a new economic boom, opened the doors for frenzied property development and infrastructure projects in the suburbs of the island, making the argument for conservation-directed development harder to fight.

Support, however, had come from the State Executive Councillor for Tourism, Youth, Sports and Women's Affairs and, in December 1992, the Penang Development Corporation prepared a report on the *Preservation and Restoration of Historical Places and Artefacts*. This was in preparation for the *State Tourism Product Planning and Development Action Plan* which evaluated the historic urban fabric in terms of 'tourism products'. Many of its researchers are still active in the conservation field today, including the Honorary Secretary for the Penang Heritage Trust. It recommended a ten-year plan to prioritise the implementation of these products and the need to appoint consultants and specialists. Penang's tourism industry in 1992 could only offer a few poorly kept monuments such as Fort Cornwallis and, therefore, the Plan proposed more historic sites to be open to visitors such as the Museum restored and revitalised and the conversion of historic buildings into heritage hotels to meet the shortage of medium to high budget hotels in the city. It also recommended the

introduction of 'interpretation centres', to hold small exhibitions explaining the historic areas in which they were placed, for example the story of spices in Little India, as well as gift shops, cafes, and heritage tours to specific sites.

The granting of decontrol to *AKS* property-owners participating in tourism venues, was suggested as an incentive. However, the report was merely a 'wish list' of western concepts; the logistics and implementation in an Asian environment were barely touched upon. The 1992 report officially placed heritage conservation and tourism together for the first time, in contrast to the professional international conference of 1986, which had seen conservation as a form of urban renewal, a balanced mixture of concepts, which was not just for tourism. In 1992, what is now considered as perhaps the most valuable asset to tourism - the ethnic communities, or living cultural heritage - was deemed more of an encumbrance to 'gentrification' and it was not until the *Penang Tourism Action Plan* of 1997, prepared by the Penang Development Corporation's consultancy arm, DCT Consultancy, that the well-being of the communities as the 'life blood' of the city was once again considered.

The Chief Minister, who was in office during this period of shifting sands, is the same Chief Minister who is in office today (2003). But the composition of his senior officers and those of the Council are very different. The early to mid-1990s saw the appointment of a pro-development President of Council whose position became more powerful following the 'early retirement' of the City Secretary under suspicion of corrupt practice. It was this City Secretary who had requested a review of the fourteen planning approvals for development along Jalan Sultan Ahmad Shah, following the first GTZ study in 1989, noted in Chapter Four. The tenure of the new President of Council was a period of high activity in the construction sector, when architecture was at its poorest state. Many insensitive and poorly considered projects that litter George Town's suburbs come from the period of his tenure. Unfortunately due to the unwillingness to request design amendments in planning approval renewals many developments, approved during his period of tenure, are still under construction today.

The catalyst for change

The new President of Council became inextricably linked to a project which became the catalyst for a more active and vocal pro-conservation movement. On Christmas Day 1993, one developer, with whom the President was once associated, demolished the historic Metropole Hotel without planning approval. It was this act which awoke the heritage conservation lobby from its comfortable position of coin-collecting, lectures, and workshops. An earlier protest against the increasing loss of Penang's

historic buildings, following the demolition of the College General Catholic Seminary in the early 1980s, was little more than a signature campaign with a few protesting letters, which served to confuse a Council unused to public expression of opinions. Following the successful public outrage at the *Penang Hill Development Proposal* in 1990, the heritage conservation lobby's public response was far more vocal and widely reported in the press.

The Metropole developer was initially fined RM 10,000 which later increased to RM 50,000 following the MPPP's appeal, both small additions to the overall cost of a potential project. However, having approved a 39-storey Pan Pacific Hotel on the site, the MPPP requested that the front façade of the Metropole should be rebuilt as the new hotel's entrance hall with the tower of the hotel behind, although the Town and Country Planning Act requires the 'land to be restored to its original condition'.

Whilst fining the developer for illegal demolition, permission was then granted for the hotel to continue. The demolition could have led to the rejection of the overall project had the Council been more conservation-oriented. Having given the approval, the developer was permitted to build a 'Disney-style' replica of the original building's façade at the base of the new tower. Although there was an unwillingness to utilise the legislation which could have required the total reconstruction of the original building, what was unclear was where the directive came from. Was it the professional advice from the Building and Planning Department or was it an overriding decision by a majority of the appointed councillors lobbied by the project's supporters? The MPPP's attempt to offer a compromise to both conservationists and developers failed to satisfy either party. The project was abandoned during the 1997 economic crisis. Work began in early 2003 changing the concept into 'service apartments', the tourism industry having proved volatile to economic fluctuations.

Evidence of the MPPP's perpetual struggle with the concept of 'a balance of conservation and development' can be seen throughout the city [Fig5-10]. Following the much publicised permitted façadism of the Metropole, other examples of confused policies took shape. The once fine Khoo Sian Ewe mansion of No. 1 Penang Road was reduced to a three metre-deep façade entrance to a multi-storey car park. Hardwicke, once an elegant mansion, became the entrance hall to a towering purple creation attached to its backside. The Gurney Tower condominium has been more respectful with the Art Deco Mansion in its grounds, now used as the clubhouse with landscaped gardens and pool. The developers and planners, realising that total demolition was no longer acceptable and that 'heritage' had a market value, tested out various configurations to see what they could create before the public protested. The fact that these façades, and more recently entire historic buildings are being incorporated in

development plans, even though in an abused form, demonstrates the change in attitude towards heritage building. What is not clear is whether the concept of 'cultural heritage' is gaining some popularity or if once again this is an era of shifting sands.

Lebuh Acheh, Lebuh Armenian Heritage Development Project

The demolition of the Metropole seemed to be in sharp contrast with work already in progress for the *Lebuh Acheh, Lebuh Armenian Heritage Development Project* for conservation and urban renewal. By 1993, the same year as the Metropole demolition, a report was presented to the State Economic Planning Unit (EPU), following the 1989 selection of the area as a pilot site, for approval and funding (Koenig, 1996: 5) [Fig. 5-11]. It became known as the *Lebuh Acheh, Lebuh Armenian Heritage Development Project, (LALA)*, to be designated as an 'action area' under the *Sixth Malaysia Plan;* it also highlighted the Syed Alatas Mansion for demonstrative conservation, on which the few remaining local craftsmen could share their skills. It seemed that the inner city, or at least one small section of it, was being considered for conservation. It was hoped that the revitalisation of this enclave would gain wider support from the Malay and Muslim sections of society and, in turn, from the Federal government, for a general appreciation of the value of conservation for cultural identity.

The report identified that, of 293 existing shophouses, half were residential, although mostly with multiple occupancy. It was proposed that 13 shophouses remain fully residential, 'a further 6% were to be encouraged to convert to specific tourist shops such as tea houses, souvenir shops, galleries and antique shops, with the remainder permitted to be used for other commercial activities and with a limited amount of new development infill. The Syed Alatas Mansion, the *Mesjid Melayu Lebuh Acheh* and compound, and the Khoo Kongsi were all identified as 'Heritage Buildings' and are discussed further in Chapter Seven (Khoo and Jenkins, 2002 :214).

The Syed Alatas Mansion became the inaugural project for the area and during the conservation works received a symbolic visit to the site by the Prime Minister. As architect of Malaysia's *Vision 2020* this gave both political and ethnic approval for conservation as part of development. His endorsement encouraged the local Penang Malay communities to support the project, even though at that time, other than those in the conservation field, many did not necessarily comprehend the concept of modern development inclusive of conservation. It also encouraged political endorsement from the State Executive Counsellor for Tourism, Youth, Sports and Women's Affairs who declared:

> It means that the state now recognises heritage development as an important strategy of development which will contribute to the conservation of our cultural resources, the growth of our tourism industry and overall image and quality of life in Penang (Kee, 1993).

Confidence in the concept of conservation was growing amongst a widening population and when American Express reinforced the identity of the 'heritage area' with a sponsored 'heritage trail' through the enclave, offering information panels at each historically and culturally significant location, it exposed the local communities to tourism interest.

The first private restoration project in the area was undertaken by the Honorary Secretary for the Penang Heritage Trust, who restored her grandfather's home on Armenian Street, once used as the 1910 Penang base of Dr. Sun Yat Sen. In the same year she published *The Streets of George Town*, which, for the first time, documented the architecture and communities of the inner city. As the *LALA* project received government approval for funding in its five year development plan, three other Trust Council members bought properties in the area, (though none of them live there) reassured of the government's support for conservation.

Typical of landownership patterns in George Town, the properties in the area were mainly tenanted, owned or administered by different trusts. These varied from those established for Chinese clan name trusts, district and trade associations, others were held under patriarchal family estates, or religious trusts or endowment boards. These few trustee-landowners owned approximately 60% of the pre-war *AKS* housing of the inner city (Khoo and Jenkins, 2002: 217). However, 40% of the buildings belonged to owners who held only one or two properties and 17% of all properties were owner-occupied. Fewer in number than the smaller landlords, though owning the greater number of properties, the trustee-landowners were regarded as the main 'stakeholders' and were the focus of any government inner-city plans.

Not all property owners responded to conservation with the same enthusiasm. In April 1994, the first volume of an *Inventory of Heritage Buildings of Penang Island* for the area which lay within the north-east cape of George Town, prepared by the MPPP Conservation Consultant and his team, was completed by a visiting western architect on behalf of MPPP. The potential of the inventory was never explained in a local context and gave rise to suspicion amongst the landowners of the city, some of whom were also developers eager to realise the potential of their *AKS* properties. The landowners' perception of their rights over their properties and land were very different from the realities of the *Town and Country Planning Act*. It seemed incredible

to them that they could be told what to do with something they owned, although those were the realities of the *AKS*. There was, therefore, great fear of properties being 'listed' in the inventory, as this suggested possible acquisition or at the very least further restrictions to their potential.

There was clearly a divide in the support for conservation. The pro-conservation lobby assumed Federal government approval and considered that if the concept was to succeed a definitive authority would assure its success. The validity of the western concept of conservation was never questioned for its potential inappropriateness in an Asian city, and encouraged the pro-heritage lobby to press for stronger action by the MPPP.

The emergence of the State Heritage Committee

In April 1994, the Municipal Council formed the Heritage Advisory Committee (HAC) comprising the PHT, the Housing Developers Association (HDA), Pertubuhan Arkitek Malaysia (PAM, the architects' professional body), the Rate Payers Association and other bodies, all with fiercely opposing ideas against each other on the issue of heritage conservation (PHT, 12.1995). The Chief Minister and the State Executive Councillor for Tourism, Youth and Sports, had already voiced their support for conservation. 'We are developing fast enough,' the Chief Minister was quoted as saying; 'We do not have to push it any faster at the expense of history, heritage and the human condition' (PHT, 6.1995). After 15 months the HAC drafted a report which advised the appointment of a professional team, answerable to a Conservation Committee, to identify buildings worthy of heritage conservation, propose enforcement and design guidelines, educate owners and developers and prepare an appeals procedure (Choong S.P., 1996).

Two reports were tabled by the Heritage Advisory Committee in 1994 and 1995, one on the *Identification and Listing of Heritage Buildings*, the second on *Planning Guidelines and Incentives for Heritage Development*. Incentives for heritage conservation were also proposed, including waiving the requirement to set back new developments from the street edge, a waiver of car-parking requirements, and reduced annual assessment. *Transfer of Development Rights* (TDR) were also proposed; these usually apply to one or two listed heritage properties within a development area, whereby the owners can transfer the rights to develop (quantified in terms of plot ration), to another unrestricted site elsewhere within the same city, either selling or developing these rights themselves. TDR is used in cities were major development has already taken place, not in an inner city like George Town, where development was mainly in the suburban areas. Its inclusion in the discussions demonstrates the HDA members' concerns over losing their perceived 'right' to develop.

The Penang Heritage Trust raised the question that having passed on its responsibility of preparing such reports to the Heritage Advisory Committee 'will MPPP now find some pretext for rejecting them?' and suggested state government examples of 'a few well planned projects...to demonstrate to the private sector that there is money in heritage development' (PHT, 11.1995). The MPPP was offended by the Trust's comments which inferred that it was 'less than well informed, sympathetic and far-sighted'.

The MPPP then procrastinated, claiming that the *Structure Plan* and the 1987 *Draft Design Guidelines for Conservation* were sufficient heritage protection. In response the Trust, no longer confident of MPPP's approach, held a press conference urging the Heritage Advisory Committee's reports to be acted upon (PHT, 12.1995).

Following the PHT's perceived insult and in an attempt to strengthen the commitment to conservation, a confusing series of new committees and strategies were announced by the state. Finally in 1996, in preparation for the much-publicised Federal Heritage Enactment which was to be implemented in the interim period before the *AKS Repeal*, the Penang Heritage Steering Committee was formed, chaired by the Chief Minister (*New Straits Times*, 25.3.1996). The Penang Heritage Steering Committee established a government-based sub-committee including directors of state and council Planning and Building Departments, EPU, planning consultants and the PDC's newly formed heritage subsidiary, to draft a proposal for a *State Conservation Strategy* (Sahibullah, 1996). This stated that 'balancing conservation with development' was one of its objectives (Sira Habibu, 1996).

A further confirmation of the state's apparent commitment to conservation was the adoption of the *Town and Country Planning Act* amendments of 1996, which were more favourable towards heritage conservation and planning aesthetics, as noted in Chapter Three. In addition a sixth conservation zone was added to the 1987 *Draft Design Guidelines for Conservation* [Fig 5-12]. It appeared evident from both Federal, state and NGO efforts, that conservation was to be included in the development process, although the MPPP seemed less committed. However, essential to its success were two questions which have to a large extent remained unanswered. These were how and what was to be included for conservation? It was from this point that conservation of cultural heritage became overtly part of the identity reconstruction debate, related to local interpretations of, or reactions to national policies, and global conservation expertise supported by and supporting the tourism industry.

Within the NGOs, the issue was pursued by a small core of people and from their 'perceived' political affiliation conservation was seen, by its opponents, to be a Gerakan issue. The Malaysian Chinese Association (MCA), supported by the Chinese

business elite, was more concerned with sustaining its members' pro-development business interests. Thus, the movement in favour of conservation, exposed the traditional antagonism between Gerakan and MCA.

The position of Penang's old landowning oligarchies, who owned most of the pre-war heritage buildings of George Town, was being challenged by a new landowning class. Developers and contractors from Malaysia and overseas as well as rising Chinese businessmen, from later migrations, who owned land outside the inner city, were fast becoming the new elite. This caused some of the old families to lobby harder against the 'perceived' unfairness of the *AKS* restrictions imposed on the inner city as well as the 1987 conservation zones and later height restrictions. By this time the island and city, up to the perimeter of the conservation zones, was becoming one large building site.

In January 1997, in the midst of angry newspaper articles protesting against height restrictions, the State Heritage Committee (or Unit), finally came into being. Chaired by the Chief Minister, it is a 35-member committee of government officers or appointees and includes the Penang Heritage Trust as well as a private real estate valuer, and the planning consultant of the *Local Plan*. Much to their chagrin, and unlike their earlier involvement in the Heritage Advisory Committee, the State Heritage Committee did not include the private sector-property developers, commercial chambers of commerce and members of the Surveyors, Planners, Engineers, Architects, Developers, (SPEAD) committee. Those selected to be in the State Heritage Committee have to balance political affiliation with ethnic representation as well as showing an interest in conservation. The effect is a strange politicised ethnic ballet. *Bumiputera* representation is also a sensitive issue, which may explain why Majlis Agama Islam Pulau Pinang (MAIPP) has been included in the core committee, but none of the other trustees or landowners.

The Majlis embarked upon a survey of the Muslim endowment properties (*waqf*), in its trust, with proposals for new development projects for their entrusted inner city land. It has shown a preference for handling its projects in its own manner, possibly due to the clear emphasis shown towards *bumiputera* development in the NEP and NDP. It therefore assumes UMNO, and therefore Federal support for its decisions. With the Deputy Chief Minister as its Chairman, MAIPP may also assume state approval, without following due process required of a landlord. This may explain their regular absence from the State Heritage Committee meetings and the acquiescence of the state government to many of their proposals. The *waqf* property in their trust accounts for one of the largest land areas in the inner city. Thus their absence from

overall policy-making with regard to heritage conservation, challenges an inclusive urban vision.

The State Heritage Committee aimed to examine such incentives as a rolling fund to purchase conserve and resell properties, tax incentives and seeding projects, a grant system for up to 25% of the cost of conservation works and such egalitarian proposals as the sourcing and funding of artisans and artists as well as a design advisory service. However, after six years in operation the State Heritage Committee has implemented few of its proposals, although its existence and composition has attempted to create an inclusive platform from which a conservation and heritage strategy can be formed.

In 1996, however, the state initiated a heritage training centre and a heritage project management company. It also held seminars and workshops with foreign conservation experts and once again established a heritage consultancy, this time outside the MPPP, in order to provide both example projects and advice to encourage a more positive view of conservation.

State initiatives in heritage conservation

Penang Heritage Centre

The Penang Heritage Centre, initiated in 1996, was housed in the restored Syed Alatas Mansion, and was intended as a training centre for traditional skills as well as public awareness programmes in order to encourage appreciation of the historic fabric of George Town. Its objectives proposed conservation as an alternative to demolition and suggested new uses such as cyber cafes, galleries, or restaurants - importing suburban commercial activities - at that time alien concepts in the more traditional inner city.

Established during a building boom, and before the *AKS Repeal* was announced, it did little to convince the landowners to conserve their properties. The skills training programmes, was undertaken by the French restoration team who restored the Syed Alatas Mansion (Kwok, 1996). They failed, however, to reach those for whom the courses were intended. Stretched to capacity to find skilled labour in Penang, the building industry was reluctant to release an employee for a month-long course in specialist lime-plastering techniques. At the time few could recognise the need for the skill. Nor would a labourer be likely to invest the equivalent of two month's wages on a skills course for an unknown skills market. Thus, places on the courses were mainly filled with civil servants and interested tourists. Its underutilisation, locked library - opened only after official requests were made - and succession of government retiree managers led the Penang Heritage Trust to raise questions as to the Centre's viability.

In hindsight its performance indicated several dichotomies within the industry of Penang. When the Centre was established in 1996, the majority of contractors on Penang Island were Chinese; even *bumiputera* contractors, who won the majority of the government projects, used Chinese subcontractors as these provided most of the skilled labour. The remaining few local skilled craftsmen, who were familiar with the construction techniques of the old brick and timber shophouses, were also predominantly Chinese; they were mostly elderly and often only spoke their own specific dialect so that their possible involvement as the Centre's skills trainers would have been difficult. Culturally too the Chinese craftsmen do not wish to divulge 'trade secrets' for by educating someone other than a son, they may themselves become unemployed. Skills are acquired on-the-job, and although not officially an apprenticeship scheme as there is no bond system, the learning environment is the same. Finally the Centre's essentially Malay, government-servant management's experiences of the building industry practices was limited, as was their knowledge of conservation techniques. The Centre therefore relied heavily on visiting and costly foreign expertise which meant courses depended on the diary of the expert rather than the needs of the industry. The response may well have been different had the courses been more accessible and even free of charge.

Due to the population demographics in George Town, the greater number of students may well have been Chinese. The Centre, as a government organisation, would have been sensitive to the potential criticism of this from non-Chinese: councillors, Chambers of Commerce and other Associations, unless there was evident support of *bumiputera* students. Finally, the Centre was not registered with the Ministry of Education. Therefore, any courses it ran were of a temporary nature rather than offering a complete range of vocational skills needed to support the fledgling conservation industry.

After a few attempts the building skills training efforts waned. The Centre is still in operation, although its venue has moved, and is now used by architectural students and school children, a less controversial group, whose projects are connected to both the physical heritage of George Town as well as social and cultural heritage.

State conservation examples

In order to compliment the Centre's performance in encouraging conservation, PDC AR&T Total Project Management Sdn. Bhd. was established, (originally a subsidiary of the Penang Development Corporation, the initials AR&T have no translation). It became involved in three state projects, examples of the commercial potential of heritage properties. The project converted former government quarters into a 'heritage

hotel', Hotel 1926 [Fig 5-13]. This project was later accorded the Most Excellent Project by Badan Warisan Malaysia's *Heritage Awards 2000* in the category *Conservation with Adaptive Reuse.* A further row of terraced quarters was also converted into restored commercial units. This latter project was formerly designated as *Comprehensive Development Area Four,* and destined to be an 18-storey low-cost housing development. Penang Heritage Trust celebrated this reversal. However, it was not until 2000 that it became evident that the 18-storey housing had merely been relocated to another site of government quarters, closer to the inner city and was under Federal funding.

The Director of AR&T argued that conversion of existing premises was cheaper than new development (*Star,* 23.12.1997). The property developers and landowners, however, remained unconvinced. Firstly, all of these heritage conservation demonstration projects were simple, 1920s terraced houses sited outside the *Conservation Zones.* The building technologies and overall size of units allowed for easier conversions. Secondly, as government quarters the tenants left without objection, possibly being re-housed, and local authority approvals for planning and building works were not an obstacle. Finally, government project costs are considered unreliable, as contractors tender unrealistically high budgets to counter slow payments. Thus, the cost per unit was never considered as a true guide to the actual cost. In addition Hotel 1926 was listed for government patronage and therefore achieved high occupancy rates from its opening, adding more to the scepticism of its 'success'. This gap between reality and representation acted more as a deterrent than a catalyst for future conservation projects in the tourism and leisure sector

Although Hotel 1926, which opened in August 1999, was well received by the press and patronised by the curious, its RM 7 million conservation cost failed to inspire local investment in similar ventures. In 1999 the building industry was still feeling the effects of the economic downturn and the *AKS* was still in place. It was not surprising therefore that only one landlord, a Singaporean, together with a Penang developer entered into a similar commercial venture called '8 Row'; no local landowner with controlled properties showed interest.

Up until 2003 there were still no examples of the conversion and adaptive-reuse of a typical 100 ft long Traditional Chinese shophouse in Penang. Once built for large extended families, from technologies suitable for swampy ground and in balance with the climatic conditions and *feng shui* beliefs, adaptation for modern living requires much imagination if the overall appearance is to be maintained. Like the tube houses of Hanoi which extend from 100 ft to almost triple that length, suiting the social and cultural conditions of their construction, concepts for conversion and modern reuse prove challenging. Although George Town's larger shophouses are on average 100 ft

long, imaginative concepts for conversion are lacking. These shophouses were usually constructed as a block of six or more for one owner. Therefore the land lots are large enough to accommodate modern high-rise developments. To most owners and architects this was a simpler solution, which followed the national vision, rather than restoration and adaptive reuse for an unknown market.

The Historic Enclave Action Plan 1997

As few professionals in the building industry showed any interest in the historic urban centre, both the Penang Heritage Trust and the Penang Heritage Centre looked for advice and support from overseas. PHT's connections through the Asian and West Pacific Network for Urban Conservation (AWPNUC) had already brought in Australian conservation experts in 1993, for a report on the physical dilapidation and structural condition of Suffolk House. The relationship with Penang continued and in July 1995, AusHeritage together with the South Australian Heritage Consultants and Contractors Group held a *Building Conservation Seminar* in Penang. They returned in May 1996 to conduct a survey on the structural condition and dilapidation of the Kapitan Kling Mosque (Tunku Shahariah, 1996). The survey cost of RM 50,000 was partly funded by the Australian government and the Mosque Committee. Other than Suffolk House no other property in Penang had undergone a dilapidation survey. The fee for the Mosque survey, therefore, had no precedent and its value was not fully understood, adding to the fears of local landowners that conservation was prohibitively expensive.

Professionals too complained when Penang Heritage Centre's Chairperson urged Penang's architects to take advantage of foreign experts. 'We do not require foreign experts to tell us about our heritage. Heritage work should be undertaken by local people and resources' remarked Datuk Lim Cheong Keat (*Star*, 18.1.1996) But few of the young professionals who joined Pertubuhan Akitek Malaysia's (PAM) short-lived Heritage Standing Committee, to which Datuk Lim was an invited advisor, have shown little interest in getting involved in conservation projects.

In February 1997, the Penang Heritage Centre continued the relationship with Australia and commissioned the team to conduct a further study of the *Lebuh Acheh, Lebuh Armenian Heritage Development Project* (*LALA*). This new study also included the Kapitan Kling Mosque enclave and extended to Little India. These sites were collectively known as the *Historic Enclave Action Plan* {Fig. 5-14]. The project was funded by the Ministry of Culture, Arts and Tourism and RM 400,000 was allocated for the study. This publicised fee was to cause resentment amongst government officers and professionals.

Typical of the composition of government bodies, the Penang team of professionals assembled to advise the Australian team were, in the main, Malay. (Khan's focus on the Malay content of the conservation of the *Lebuh Acheh, Lebuh Armenian* enclave, reflects this composition). Working with the local team introduced the Australians to the enclave's main landowners and stake-holders whose opinions, ambitions and goals for their properties were sought in order to prepare a sustainable concept for better living standards and cultural tourism (Cheah, 1997). Although the consultants were given little direct contact with the communities in the enclaves, they attempted to dilute the State Executive Councillor for Tourism's enthusiasm for commercial 'implants,' and instead recognised that a balance of maintaining communities together with heritage conservation and modernisation was required to create a sustainable residential and commercial environment. Their findings and proposals were exhibited after a day-long public presentation *Investing in the Past for the Future,* and issued as a report that remained within the MPPP but, for an unknown reason, did not reach the State Heritage Committee. The 1997 Asian economic crisis curtailed any further consultation.

During the period of the economic downturn, the landlords and property developers were invited to attend a series of seminars and conferences organised to give a more global perspective to the value of conservation as a new development strategy, particularly in terms of tourism potential. The *AKS Repeal* had already begun its transition phase prior to its final Repeal on 31 December 1999, and it was thought, therefore, an ideal opportunity to present global examples of new commercial opportunities to the landlords and developers.

Heritage 1997

The *State Conservation Policy* noted the need to preserve certain cultural activities and areas in order to position Penang as a heritage destination for tourism. The commercial and financial benefits of the tourism industry were repeatedly emphasised as the 'carrot' to tempt the landowners to take the 'stick' of renovation costs and conservation. This relationship between the conservation policy and tourism was illustrated with the *Heritage 1997* seminar organised to bring together landowners, developers and government officials with British conservation and leisure industry consultants (*Star,* 16.6.1996). Heralded as 'experts' these merchants came to sell their craft with little understanding of the complexities of the cultures, or the political milieu of the audience before them. The landowners, happy for free opinions, 'milked' the visitors for their ideas, teased them with potential projects and sent them home empty-handed.

The state was clearly promoting the economic benefits of conservation for the commercial potential of tourism, in an attempt to reverse the perception that the land was more valuable without the buildings. Typically the attending landowners were those of the large landowning families and trusts, for whom conversion of their properties to commercial uses seemed a more economically viable option. Indeed, all incentives and proposals put forward were geared towards a commercialisation of the city, with no support for the 17% owner-occupiers who remained in residence. Having suffered low rental incomes for 50 years few of the large landlords considered the buildings as valuable, nor had they any experience in managing tourism venues or tourists. Both conservation and tourism were unexplored and alien fields.

'Living with Heritage' - International Symposium, 1998

Further attempts to promote the concept of conservation were targeted to a wider audience, of government officers, professionals in the development and conservation industry as well as landowners and developers. The state government invited Darmstadt University together with the newly formed Socio-Economic Research Institute (SERI), the state government's development research, and monitoring body, to organise the *Living with Heritage, International Symposium* in April 1998. It offered a more academic and technical interpretation of the urban renewal process with examples of foreign conservation environments in foreign cultures. These were of interest but of little direct relevance other than to those involved in urban planning.

The heritage consultancy

Running concurrently with the work of PDC AR&T Total Project Management was its subsidiary, PDC AR&T Heritage Consultancy Sdn. Bhd., whose members were participants in many of the seminars and workshops. This company was to provide the 'team of experts' proposed by the Heritage Advisory Committee. Its Director, a former planner within the Central Area Planning Unit (CAPU) and head of the MPPP's former Conservation Section, was persuaded to return to Penang from a lecturing post in Brunei. His appointment, or rather his rumoured salary, made many of his former CAPU colleagues who had remained within local government, aggrieved, and did not help initially in encouraging good communication between the MPPP and their consultant. The consultancy's brief was to expand on the original 1987 *Draft Design Guidelines for Conservation Areas...* and continue the inventory of buildings of historic importance, initiated in 1987.

The various inner city stake-holders; landowners, developers and commercial Chambers of Commerce, were regularly consulted over these new guidelines. In response the Penang Chinese Chamber of Commerce held a dialogue session in

November 1998. Concerned that the 426 acres of the inner city site, which had a potential land value of RM 3 billion, would be further restricted, it prompted the President to 'strongly protest to these meaningless guidelines'. The outpouring was highly charged, suggesting the state should buy and conserve the properties itself. The accusations became personal and inflammatory when the President of the Chamber accused the President of the Penang Heritage Trust, who was the husband of the State Exco Councillor for Tourism and Chairman of the Penang branch of Gerakan, of having a hidden agenda in his support of the conservation guidelines.

The International Chamber of Commerce's Tourism Committee attempted to defuse the situation by suggesting that the members of the Chinese Chamber give the 'whole subject very serious consideration before withholding support...'. This inflamed the argument as in response the Chinese Chamber claimed development projects should not be restricted simply for foreign tourists who preferred to gaze upon 'old-world charm'. Regional and Malaysian tourists, it seemed, were more interested in new developments which offered novelty-packaged entertainment in the form of water theme parks and fantasy villages.

Nineteen meetings were held with these stake-holders in order to include their opinions in the planning decisions of the zones. The result was a new set of *Draft Design Guidelines...* less favourable towards conservation and more in favour of infill development than the 1987 original. The developers remained unhappy, although many of them did not own land within the zones. By this time, however, the recovery from the 1997 Asian economic downturn was curtailed by the effects of the American economic slowdown in 2001 and few major private building projects were started. Nevertheless, a slow increase in the number of conservation projects which were commercially promising, was evident in spite of the Chinese Chamber's argument.

In 2000 the *Draft Design Guidelines...* were presented to the MPPP and, like the new *Draft Structure Plan Review*, and three long-promised *Local Plans* for George Town before them, their completion and approval remains out of reach. The *Revised Draft Structure Plan*, exhibited to the public in 1999 has not been approved by the State Authority nor gazetted to date. The three *Local Plans* for the inner city of George Town have yet to be completed and exhibited, though they were promised in 1997.

There are several possible reasons for the delay. First it is feasible that the approving body, the Structure Plan Committee, which includes nineteen government officials, including only two planners, the State and MPPP Directors, has too few professionals capable of comprehending such planning issues (Lee H.G., 2000). Secondly, in the case of the *Local Plan*, approved by the Local Planning Authority within the MPPP, the heads of Departments may have feared that the application of

such plans would be rendered inoperable with current staff and training levels. It must be noted that the *Town and Country Planning Act* of 1976 was only adopted by Penang in 1986, due mainly to inadequate staffing and the requirement of a qualified planner. Indeed this situation is not new in a developing country.

Thirdly, the response to the reviewed *Draft Design Guidelines for Conservation* had proved so contentious, even after many consultations with stake- holders, that it was possibly thought too controversial to issue the *Local Plans*. There was much political lobbying from those eager to develop the vast potential of the inner city, seen in terms of land size rather than an historic urban centre.

The inner city property market

By the end of 1998 real estate agents found themselves in an unprecedented position. The Asian Economic Crisis had begun to deepen and stalled property development projects, either before they began construction or even midway through; this caused many bankruptcies throughout the development industry, with little for the agents to sell or manage. With the impending *AKS Repeal*, a few absentee landlords put their soon-to-be-decontrolled properties on the open market; prior to 1997 agents' signboards were never seen on inner city buildings as sales were privately organised. In a bid to refinance a failing development company, which had bought a large site comprising a cinema and three streets of early 1990s shophouses in Conservation Zone Six, complete with *AKS* tenants, the properties were released onto the open market. Family estate properties also came onto the market, and again would include a variety of properties, tied together on large lots of land, suitably sized for new commercial development if permitted. Very few properties were for sale as single lots. The whole focus, therefore, was to merchandise the city for a commercial development takeover; individual purchase and renovation of heritage properties, particularly for residential use, was a western concept.

Repeal of Rent Control - the Aftermath, 1999

Most estate agents and valuers were at a loss as to how to promote such properties and to whom. One more vocally pro-heritage real estate valuer, who in 2001 became a council member of the Penang Heritage Trust, organised a seminar entitled *the Repeal of Rent Control - the Aftermath,* (8 February 1999). PHT put up an exhibition and in the hope of encouraging the landowning and estate valuer audience, it was titled *Investing in Our Heritage*. It was essentially an exhibition of the few gentrification projects from PDC's conversions of government quarters to private revitalisation of historic buildings for investment in commercial and educational establishments. The few

residential restorations were also shown. The valuers' own exhibition of properties for sale was interesting for its marketing approach. Crudely stuck, with teeth-torn blue electrical tape, onto a bright yellow plastic sheet (the agents colours) were overexposed or discoloured photographs of properties too small to define. Although one-line property advertisements appear in the newspapers, enticingly worded descriptions and carefully angled photographs of properties are neither printed nor displayed in estate agent windows. Each agent merely retains a list of properties for viewing at their discretion. Currently, on the sale of existing heritage properties, the vendor and the potential purchaser have little way of comparing value. Only since the *AKS Repeal* has there been any quantity of single heritage properties for sale, and even then, the land is valued, not the building. Thus, the property market and perceptions of value are markedly different from the experiences of western conservation experts.

The seminar, therefore, was intended to promote ideas for the reuse of properties demonstrated through existing samples shown in the exhibition and to some degree encourage the owners to continue with viable tenancies and to negotiate new rents. Instead it served to demonstrate the landowners' and developers' frustration at the lack of political 'vision' for the inner city. They claimed they would prefer to have a definitive Local Plan and gazetted policies and incentives for conservation projects which would enable them to strategise, rather than to have local government implementing and rescinding policies as pressure was applied from a variety of opponents. Just as the indecision for the location of transport terminals and routes for the Jubilee Line and the Channel Tunnel Link, in the late 1980s caused stagnation in property prices in the areas for the alternative sites in London, the indecisiveness of the local government of Penang was causing the same problem.

A great effort was made to bring new ideas to Penang in order to effect an informed and enlightened change. There had been a variety of approaches from academic to highly commercial, but the diversity of approaches seemed only to confuse. Furthermore, all were conducted in English by western-influenced if not western-educated 'foreign experts' able to communicate to those who had commissioned them, but not necessarily to those they were intended to enlighten. The final decision-makers of the MPPP's policies and projects, the councillors, rarely ever attended these presentations.

The emergence of a UNESCO World Heritage Site?

As the state government became more committed to the concept of conservation it invited UNESCO's Regional Advisor, Richard Engelhardt, for a study trip of George Town in February 1998. Following continuous enthusiasm from NGOs, the decision to

nominate the *Historic Island Port Settlement of George Town* for UNESCO World Heritage inscription was made by the Penang State Government's Executive Council Meeting on 7 May 1998. In July the same year a seminar was held on the *Nomination of Cultural and Natural Heritage of Malaysia* to the UNESCO *World Heritage List*. It was organised by the Malaysian National Commission for UNESCO together with the Ministry of Science, Technology and Environment, the Ministry of Culture Arts and Tourism, the Ministry of Education, the Department of Museums and Antiquities and other interested parties. Presented by the Director for State Planning, the Penang state nomination identified a further zone to add to the six zones designated in 1987 [Fig. 15]. This seventh zone was originally the British administrative quarter and includes Fort Cornwallis and the seats of power of the colonial government -the Town and City Halls, the old European and Eurasian district around St George's Anglican Church, and stretches beyond the Eastern and Oriental Hotel as far as the Northam Road Christian Cemetery.

What the Penang presentation neglected was the identification and influence of Malay and Muslim architecture in the history of the urban form. The lack of focus on Malay history in the presentation was potentially damaging to the application and was criticised by a Malay assessor during the presentation. Written in English, the presentation was careless not only in the exclusion of a fundamental part of Penang's cultural history but also in what it depicted. Maps and descriptions did not match, in one instance a restored mansion on Light Street was described but the image of a hotel/brothel on Leith Street was shown. Such 'errors' were a regular feature of the State Planning Department's public presentations. However, the overall message was that inclusion on the *UNESCO List* would help Malaysia achieve 'an intelligent and well informed society' in line with *Vision 2020* and would be a 'formidable force' to control unsympathetic development (Jamil, 1998).

Melaka was also put forward for application to the list. Although the historic enclave of Melaka is smaller than that of George Town, Melaka's state government was more advanced in protective legislation. It had put in place the *Conservation and Preservation of Cultural Heritage Enactment* in 1988 to compliment the *Antiquities Act*, 'fill in its legislative gaps' and offer greater incentives and penalties. The state government also gazetted 'Old Melaka', the historic centre, as a *Grade One Conservation Zone* within the *Structure Plan* and Melaka was declared an *Historic City* by the Federal government in 1998. Currently each state has its own grading system and until a Federal *Heritage Act* formalises and standardises the system, one cannot be judged against the other.

Ninety percent of the buildings within Melaka's zone are government properties allowing for a conservation programme to be effectively administered, although lacking the vibrancy of living cultural heritage. For the ten percent privately-owned

properties, the Melaka Museums Corporation offered incentives of free consultation for change of use, manufacturers' and material discounts, a qualified craftsmen search and detailed drawings for reference. Management and administrative powers were conferred to the Corporation and the Municipal Council, with the Preservation and Conservation Committee, headed by the Chief Minister as advisor (Rosli, 1998). Interpretation of the legislation, however, contrasted with UNESCO's concept of heritage conservation.

Following this nomination proposal seminar, the regional advisor suggested that Penang and Melaka enter a joint nomination for heritage listing citing two reasons. Firstly, George Town has a large area of both cultural and built heritage but lacked the legislative and political commitment, whereas Melaka demonstrated its conservation infrastructure but its *Heritage Zone* was considered too small for listing as an independent site. It was suggested, therefore, that in the preparation of the application for nomination, both cities could benefit from each other's experience and through this achieve heritage status. An undercurrent of historic rivalry between the two states may have been recognised by the regional advisor, but it is not yet clear whether this will benefit or hamper the application.

> Malacca is where the history of Malaysia unfolds; the birth of the Malay Sultanate, the coming of the first colonial powers, the Portuguese and the Dutch to the Malay Peninsula and in later years, the town where the independence of our fair nation was first announced (Koh, J., 1999).

Melaka's heritage is rooted in a Malay past and as such has reinforced the National Culture Policy's emphasis that 'the national culture of Malaysia must be based on the cultures of the people indigenous to the region'(KKBS 1973: vii, cited in Tan Sooi Beng., 1992: 283). Secondly, the Malay Sultanate is depicted as having been the centre of commercial trade routes between China and Siam prior to colonial invasion, and a respected Muslim power in the region, which is seen to reinforce the role of Islam and encourage a greater Malay loyalty. Thirdly, independence from British colonialism was announced from Melaka thus making it the heart of Modern Malaysia.

Penang on the other hand, whose East India administration destroyed much of Dutch Malacca in 1824, has a predominantly Chinese population whose dominant entrepreneurial spirits are controlled through government policies in order to encourage the less aggressive Malays and other indigenous populations to take an active part in the development of the nation. Perhaps embarrassingly for Melaka the

state government has attempted to apply for UNESCO Heritage Listing on two previous occasions. Both times it was rejected by the International Council of Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) assessor, advisor to UNESCO. The same ICOMOS advisor has been consulted by Penang's state government for its application, creating a tension between the two states.

Melaka's first application was made in the late 1980s and failed due to the considerable destruction of the original city which had taken place, particularly the water front. The second attempt in the 1990s failed due to the neglect of the resident community's contribution to the city, in particular the Chinese (Worden, 2003: 39). The regional advisor for UNESCO has openly eulogised over the abundance and fine examples of George Town's architectural and cultural heritage, perhaps adding to Melaka's discomfort following UNESCO's earlier rejections. Politically and ethnically, therefore, the inscription to World Heritage Status was potentially global endorsement of Malayness within the Malaysian Nation. The inclusion of the Malay story in George Town's history is therefore essential for Federal approval as well as historical accuracy.

As application to UNESCO has to come from the Federal government, though preparation comes from the states involved, support for an independent application for Penang may not receive support from a government aware of Malay sensitivities. The irony is that George Town has a considerable amount of Malay and Muslim architecture, including one of the oldest brick mosques in the country. However, although the mosques are maintained, much of the identifiably Malay and Malay-influenced secular buildings are in poor condition.

The joint application between Penang and Melaka, therefore, would prove both politically and ethnically challenging. However, this union was publicly formalised in May 1999 when *The Economics of Heritage, A UNESCO Conference and Workshop on the Adaptive Reuse of Historic Properties* was held in both Penang and Melaka. This was the third UNESCO annual conference, which examined issues relating to heritage preservation within the context of sustainable urban development. Sponsored primarily by UNESCO and the state governments of Penang and Melaka, its intention was to bring together government bodies, landowners, professionals and interested members of the public. Regional and world experts were assembled to examine

> how and under what circumstances the rehabilitation and adaptive reuse of the architectural heritage of our towns and cities can make good sense. Good economic sense, good political sense and therefore effective social policy (Engelhardt, 1998).

Engelhardt's opening speech focused on the vernacular architecture, commenting that to lose it would give the next generation little of the cultural identity of the past to build upon.

> Can we put a price tag on heritage ?..... identify the value of the invaluable.... Who is to judge what is a slum and what is a heritage building in disrepair? (Engelhardt, 1998).

The latter is a question which is often heard and one which would later challenge the conservation lobby. The theme of the opening speech by Engelhardt was clearly to motivate the need for social incentives for preservation, offering an alternative to restoration for guest houses, hotels and museums, and highlighting the fact that the social and cultural character of the communities is viewed as equal in value to the physical environments in which they live.

Preparation for the UNESCO World Heritage Site dossier

The French conservation architect, Didier Repellin, ICOMOS representative and advisor to UNESCO, who had earlier been involved in the restoration of the Syed Alatas Mansion (see Chapter Seven), was appointed to advise the Penang state government in the preparation of the UNESCO dossier. AR&T Heritage Consultancy, appointed by the Municipal Council, was responsible for the organisation and collation of the material. After nine months and close to the deadline for submission, many of the papers had failed to materialise. Thus a second group of authors was brought into the picture. The Penang Heritage Trust and the conservation architect of the Cheong Fatt Tze Mansion, as well as the Nanyang Folk Culture Society architect and myself, began to complete the work, in particular the description of the site, which became a history of George Town's architecture.

The inclusion of the 'Malay' influence in architectural styles and the material wealth of the early Malay settlers were easily portrayed. There was no need to overemphasise this for political politeness. The evidence of the Malay architectural influence on the urban landscape was and still is clear. Tragically, however, much of this architecture is now in a deplorable condition, due to years of neglect and recently the dislocation of tenants, which has left the properties vulnerable to fire and abuse. Unless this trend is reversed the historical evidence of the Malay influence on the urban landscape will have gone and the state presentation of a colonial city, in 1998, will appear correct.

The writing of this section of the dossier was in itself an informative exercise. Having written the body of the text and descriptions of architectural styles from my

knowledge and research, the work was then edited by team members. The copies would be returned with extra paragraphs emphasising a particular element according to the ethnicity and or cultural background of each editor, confirming my hypothesis that it is often only possible to respond to one's own imbued cultural heritage or a heritage of which one is totally unfamiliar.

Although Repellin suggested that the examination of the growth of the conservation movement should include its successes and failures, instead the dossier depicted a chronological sequence of 'feel-good' events, policies and projects. 'Negative' events were edited out. Thus the Penang Heritage Trust's exposure to the Director-General of the Museum Negara of the MPPP's ignorance of the Town Hall's protection under the *Antiquities Act* was not included (Choong S.P., 2000). In 1999, the MPPP began refurbishment work. However, all works of a gazetted site must be approved by the Museum Negara. If viewed in a positive light, following the Trust's exposure, the MPPP learnt from their error and has subsequently complied, but it is still sensitive to the Trust's criticism.

By 2000, the Federal government was visibly more active in its support of conservation in George Town as both the Kapitan Kling Mosque and Fort Cornwallis received funding. At the same time the state funded the first phase of the restoration of Suffolk House and a further multimillion Ringgit Malaysia fund was rumoured to be included in the Eighth Malaysia plan for the remaining conservation work. It appeared that government support was assured.

New challenges - Federal lands within the inner city

During the preparation of the dossier for UNESCO, however, Federal lands, acquired from the former British administration complete with their heritage buildings, were earmarked for development projects over which the state and the MPPP have no authority. One such proposal, Penang's High Court, was for a seven-storey building to be sited in the court's garden in the heart of an area surrounded by such edifices as St George's Church, the first Governor's House, and the State Museum. None of these is more than two storeys high. A public outcry in the press encouraged the state to provide a counter-proposal by offering state land opposite the courthouse, with plans showing the feasibility to house all the required court accommodation within the new scheme. The Federal government reassessed their original proposal and reduced the building to three storeys but instead of relocating it to the state land, proposed to build on both sites, using the state land for a further seven-storey building. No counter offer came from the state government and a year later a small column in an English daily newspaper announced the Federal project would soon begin.

Such proposals do not necessarily originate from ministerial level but from architects or property developers looking for project opportunities, political friends and Federal funding to support them. Should this be the case, the proposer would be reluctant for the project to be reduced as this would be reflected in a reduced profit. The purpose of such a project reflects more the ambitions of the instigators rather than the needs of the end-user, and therefore there is a strong incentive to use vigorous tactics to lobby in favour of the proposal.

Although the High Court project is likely to go ahead, the state's consultation with Repellin allowed the planning of the inner-city to be seen from a conservation perspective. Although his arguments had been voiced by many local conservation enthusiasts, as an individual third party, his arguments could be seen for their content, without the encumbrance of family connections, political affiliations, ethnic preferences, commercial interests and other issues which tainted such discussions from a local perspective. Thus, immediately following consultation with Repellin, the *Second Bridge Link* was re-routed away from the heritage site, the northern portion of the *Penang Outer Ring Road* was deleted from the plan and the *Jelutong Expressway* was to be restudied to avoid feeding into the historic urban site. Thus, the major infrastructure projects described by Stockwin in 1974 (see Chapter Three) were reconsidered in the light of heritage conservation. Recent newspaper articles, however, suggest such radical rethinking is not easy to maintain and the original proposals are slowing creeping back into the city.

A further Federal project, for low-cost rental housing, was also challenged shortly after 80 percent of the existing two-storey government quarters had been demolished. Repellin's reinforcement of the inappropriateness of the Federal project appeared to have had an effect. The demolition of the remaining row of government quarters along Burmah Road was halted and has remained so, following Repellin's discussions with the state government. However, the tower blocks appear to be progressing behind what will be conserved former government quarters. This indicates a willingness on behalf of the state to challenge an imposed development plan in an attempt to balance housing needs within an historic environment.

Do You Know? Penang Road to World Heritage

Possibly the most important consideration focused on the boundaries of the historic site itself. The earlier proposal for the core and buffer areas of the UNESCO *Heritage Site* sacrificed the 1987 *Conservation Zone One*. As late as 2001 Repellin suggested a reconsideration of the areas and in doing so included the sea around the Cape. This

inclusion was to avoid reclamation or coastal highway projects, which would change the historic shoreline. The core area was also extended inland, and incorporated the early *Jawi Peranakan* and Malay areas. Zone One was reinstated but within the buffer zone due to its isolation from the other six zones, split off by the KOMTAR development. The buffer extended a finger along the north shore encompassing the few shoreline mansions that remained along Jalan Sultan Ahmad Shah. More importantly, it encompassed the Federal land of the national armed forces and the site where Stamford Raffles was said to have lived during his brief time in Penang. It was too late, however, to halt the Employers Provident Fund's speculative tower block, which affected the *feng shui* of the Kuan Yin Temple in the inner city core.

The new boundaries for the UNESCO Heritage Site were published by Penang Heritage Centre in a pamphlet entitled *Do You Know? Penang Road to World Heritage,* which remained on the reception desks of government departments [Fig. 5-16]. Publicity came in fragmented articles within the daily papers, announcing the change to the infrastructure developments, but there was no presentation to gain public support. Finally, there seemed to be a vision for the city, although unassumingly presented to the public, which restricted development projects detrimental to the historic environment and therefore to the nomination application to UNESCO. However, aggressive pro-development lobbying from project initiators, including for Federal funded projects, failed to appreciate the vision or appear to have been unaware of it.

Penang Heritage Trust, perhaps tired of confrontations, continued with its efforts to inculcate heritage and cultural awareness amongst Penang's interested population. Initiated by UNESCO, the Penang Story project organised a series of four colloquia representing the Malay, Chinese, Indian and Minorities groups and was successful in attracting local speakers and enthusiastic delegates. Its efforts culminated in an *International Conference* which held little attraction for local speakers whose numbers were small. Perhaps confident in their own cultural rediscoveries they had become more wary of 'foreign experts', which would suggest that the Trust was a victim of its own success in promoting local awareness.

Whilst the PHT was initiating conferences, Badan Warisan Malaysia (BWM), developed a proposal for a *Conservation Act*, under supervision of their President, Tan Sri Dato' Seri (Dr) Ahmad Sarji bin Abdul Hamid, a much respected retired senior civil servant (BWM, 1996). This process, started by the PHT in 1989, was presented in a report to the Federal Government in 1992 (Grant, 1992). Professor Malcolm Grant, specialist in Planning Law, with particular regard to conservation, from Cambridge University, returned to Malaysia in April 2001 to ease the congestion between the

Ministry of Housing and Local Government and the Ministry of Culture, Arts and Tourism. Both were preparing their own *Heritage* or *Culture Bills*. Professor Grant was also invited to explain the proposal for the *Conservation Act*, publicly in Penang on 16 April 2001. In June 2003 the local press announced that a Heritage Bill was to be presented to Parliament in July. In fact it was no longer a separate bill but more usefully had become an amendment to the existing *Town and Country Planning Act* which would strengthen the existing provisions for heritage included in the 1996 amendment. As always, however, the future of the heritage architecture depended entirely on the translation and administration of the amendments by those of contrasting cultures, educational levels and experiences to the Act's authors.

> Is there a future for our past? That depends on how we view our city. There are two ways to look at our buildings. We can choose to see them as underused land we might develop.... or as symbols of the cultural achievements of an earlier generation we might conserve as we have done with the Cheong Fatt Tze Mansion on Leith Street.
> And of course, the way we choose will give us the Penang we deserve.
> (Tan Teong Kui 1996)

Conclusion

The change in Penang's state leadership came at a time when privatisation became the dominant theme of the Federal government, supported by the national *Vision 2020* which aimed to unify the multi-ethnic population behind a common goal of development. National architectural icons and mega-development projects fed the building industry with ambitions to provide the new middle classes with images of urban development such as shopping malls, leisure centres, condominiums, and highways. Following the success of the NEP the once economically disadvantaged Malays had become the new urban middle-class, the *Melayu Baru* (New Malay). Thus, *Vision 2020* moved the focus of development to *Bangsa Malaysia* (Malaysian Race), a fully industrialised, developed Malaysian nation, encouraged by the cry *Malaysia Boleh* (Malaysia Can [achieve]).

To the majority of policy-makers and enforcers the support for conservation seemed to contradict this vision. Conserving the old emphasised two things, colonial history and the identifiable ethnic forms of architecture. Modernist and post-modernist buildings were less identifiable ethnically and therefore supported the 'Bangsa Malaysia' image. There was also more knowledge in modern construction and more profit to be made. In this, the different ethnic groups involved in construction, were

united. In Penang, a predominantly Chinese city, retention of the heritage architecture was perceived to emphasise the disparity between the urban Chinese and the old urban Malay communities.

Penang's proposal for the revitalisation of the *Lebuh Acheh, Lebuh Armenian Heritage Development Project*, endorsed by a five-year *Malaysia Plan*, was intelligent in its choice. It would have created a conservation area where all the major ethnic groups lived, worked and worshipped. The later inclusion of the Kapitan Kling Mosque and Little India brought the architecture of the Indian population, both Muslim and Hindu, as well as their commercial activities, into this holistic environment.

Despite local government and Prime Ministerial support, local sensitivities began to eroded the vision of unification through conservation, not just of this site but of the six inner city conservation zones. The property development lobby perceived a loss in development potential. The heritage conservation lobby perceived a loss of conservation and gentrification potential, and the Malay commercial and political lobby was concerned that retaining the old meant the retention of underdevelopment for the Malays. The majority of landowners, restricted by the *AKS*, loyally attended seminars, conferences and invitations to government meetings, which served to confuse rather than enthuse them; they then sat back and did nothing.

The Local authorities struggled to comprehend the apparent dichotomies between British-based laws and planning structures, their own educational background and culture, shortage of trained staff and the realities of developers and their associates with political ambitions. The newly built environment suffered from poor modern architecture for many of the same reasons. Proponents of unaccountable Federal development projects, local Chambers of Commerce, Associations and political parties as well as the construction industry, all clambered for a slice of the development cake - *ada gula ada semut* (if you have sugar you have ants). When the economy collapsed, conservation found a voice.

It is, therefore, interesting that in such a pro-development environment the state government approached UNESCO to discuss the listing process. It was possible that as the Asian economic crisis began to bite, particularly in the electronics industry on which Penang depended, and as international tourism temporarily increased, although mainly due to the falling Malaysian currency, heritage tourism was seen as an industry to be explored. The state had already recognised that heritage tourism was a growing global trend and had tried to encourage landowners to create tourism products in their heritage properties. Landlords listened patiently to the enthusiastic presentation, their enclaves described as potential commercial theme-parks, whilst academics displayed examples of mainly western heritage conservation projects.

Potentially, therefore the global influence of UNESCO provided the vision to encourage such issues, and the authority that the state lacked.

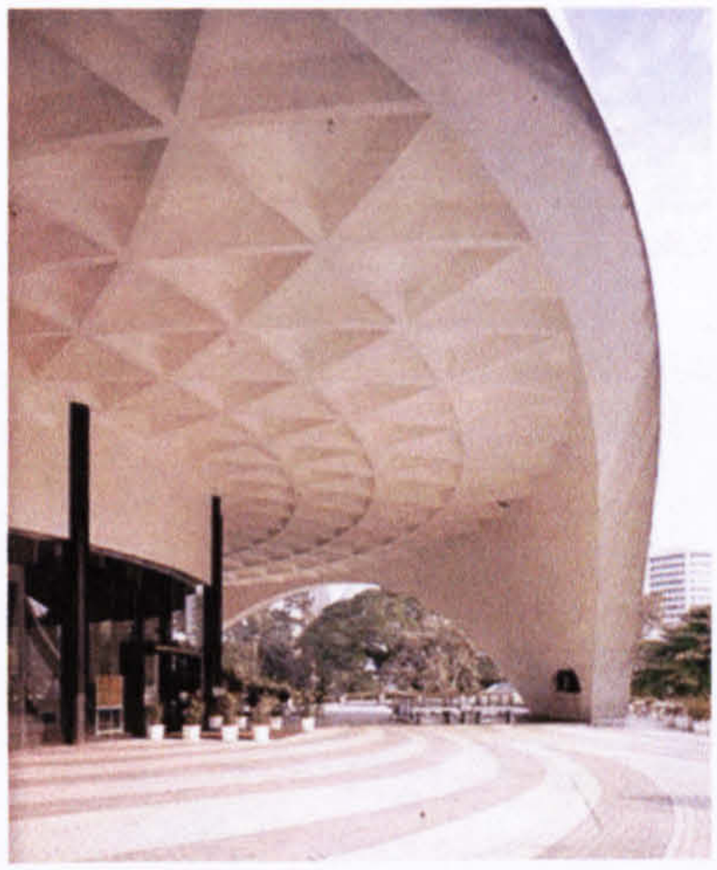
The preparation of the UNESCO dossier, however, emphasised the fissures in Penang's state and local government, the delicate position Penang held in the context of Malaysia's history and its age-old competition with the 'historic city' of Melaka. But perhaps the major problem is that both the process and the list itself are two western concepts which come from a culture that 'traditionally creates the dynamics of change and exploration within the intellectual context of rationalism and analytical thinking' (Lim S.W., 1994: 25).

The historic cityscape of 'outstanding and universal value' was created without planning laws, by an ethnically diverse population with their own architectural forms or eclectic interpretations of architectural influences. These latter sat comfortably within the landscape and in contrast to the culture of UNESCO's proponents, 'create(d) an order from the complexity of apparent randomness through intuitive wisdom and a holistic approach' (ibid.: 25).

In George Town it was the continuing inhabitation by descendants of those who created George Town who have sustained a city of 'outstanding and universal value'. Chapter Six continues to examine George Town's cultural heritage by exploring these inner city communities, and more importantly their response to the heritage environment in which they live. As Cody notes, the term heritage does not always translate; for some, it refers to the intangible, not the tangible (Cody, 2002: 193). Chapter Six explores this notion in an attempt to comprehend the value which the inner city communities place on their heritage. It also examines their response to interest from outside parties, in particular the state and local government, in their promotion of UNESCO heritage listing and their efforts to encourage cultural tourism.



a. Pilgrim Management Fund, building, Tanbang Haji building, architect Hijjas Kasturi, (www.hijjaskasturi.com)



b. Detail of the underside to the main floor of Tambang Haji building, Hijjas Kasturi, (www.hijjaskasturi.com)



c. Menara Maybank, 1998, Hijjas Kasturi, (www.glasssteelandstone/Menara Maybank)



d. Kompleks Dayabumi,1984 rises behind colonial Kuala Lumpur, both translations of Islamic architecture



e. Detail of the Citypoint building entrance, the sunshade screens use Islamic motifs in contemporary materials

Fig. 5-1 Architectural identity, Kuala Lumpur's signature architecture



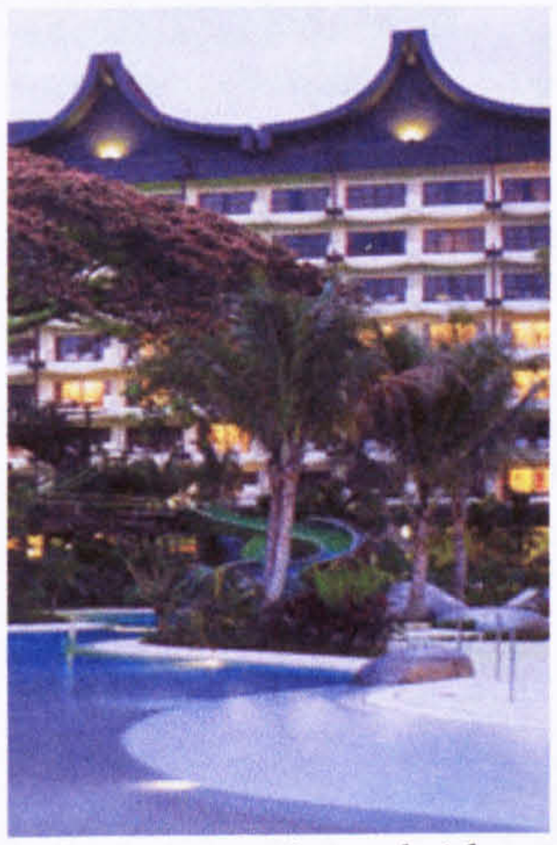
a. Penang's international airport, built in the 1970s shows an early search for architectural identity



b. The Rasa Sayang Hotel, Batu Ferringhi, seven storeys with saddle style roof



e. Holiday Inn, Batu Ferringhi, Penang - stylized Minangkabau roof with half timbered gable, attached to a tower block



c. Rasa sayang's pool side



d. The Rasa Sayang's bus stop continues the style



f. (right) Eden Seafood Restaurant, Batu Ferringhi, using the distinctive Minangkabau gable shape, attached to a shed roof

Fig. 5-2 Architectural identity , 'modern traditionals', Minangkabau roofs



a. Kwantung Tengchew Association incorporates Chinese symbolic forms within a western building form



b. Chinese elements are integral to the design



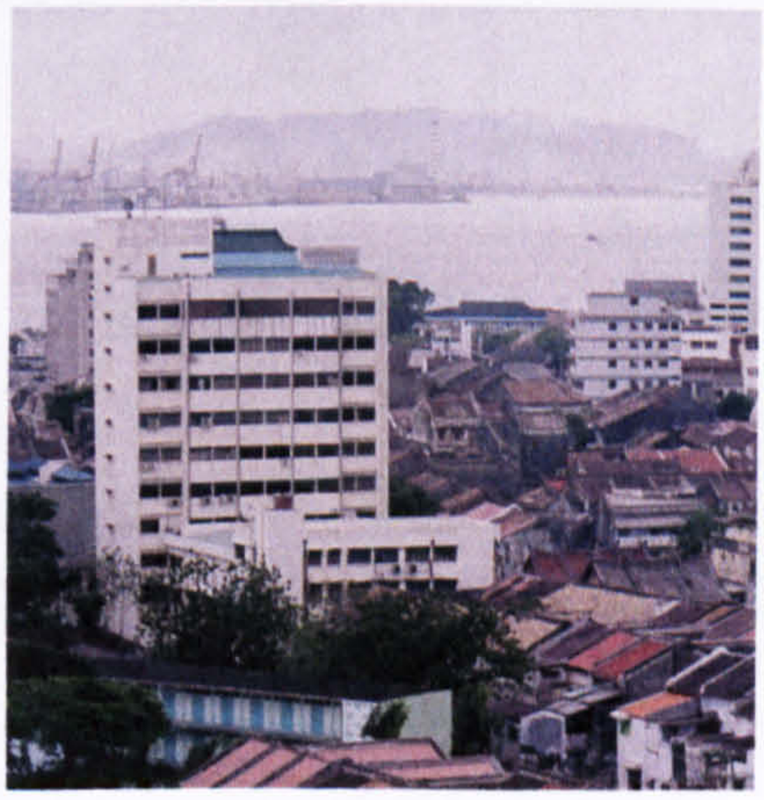
c. Articulates the corner enhancing the streetscape



d. The Chinese Town Hall, a façade with two dragons, four red columns, green tiled roof= Chinese



e. Green Chinese roof tiles, stuck on to a box, towers above the terra cotta roofs



e. (right) An anonymous box of glass and concrete, from the rear, has no sense of identity

Fig. 5-3 Architectural identity, distillation or pastiche



a. Rifle Range flats a prefabricated German,neo-colonial import, built in 1965



b. (right) 1980s anonymous condominium tower adorned with triangular pediment

c. (right-middle) Neo-composite capitals to fluted columns





d. (above) The Datai Hotel - Kerry Hill Architects, 1993, Winner of the Aga Kahn Award 2001. Langkawi, Kedah. (www.archidose.org). Inspired the articulation of form through shadow and light, solids and voids



e. (right) Belisa Row, 1996 an up-market commercial and residential development, Pulau Tikus. Marks a return to the articulated facades and roof lines of Penang's prewar architecture - a reinvention of tradition

Fig. 5-4 Architectural identity, neo-colonialism or reinvention of tradition



a. The view looking south from the 58th floor of KOMTAR in 1999. Overall 120 new high-rise buildings had been built since my arrival in June 1995. The central four tower blocks are a mixture of residential (low-cost, medium-cost) and commercial (retail and light industrial)



b. The view looking south west from the 58th floor of KOMTAR. Even the Penang Hills are being eroded at their base, with property development projects

Fig. 5-5 Development realities,
view south from KOMTAR's 58th floor,1999



a. One of the more challenging pieces of post-modernist architecture, Hamzah Yeang Associates' MBF Tower condominiums



b. The view of the North Shore from KOMTARr's 58th Floor shows a dramatic change in scale of the two-to-three-storey mansions on the beach front, hidden in the trees, and the high-rise growth inland





c. Northam Tower, Hotel and commercial complex, developer driven project

d. (left) The North Shore commercial district along, Jalan Sultan Ahmad Shah replaced fine mansions, although some remain, dwarfed by the development

Fig. 5-6 Development realities, the new business district



e. A typically distorted street-scape of the suburbs of the early 1900s. The modern infill building was required to set back from the street edge in anticipation of future road widening





f. Early modernism was kept low, although still intruded into the suburban landscape

g. (left) 1990s developments, rise high above their neighbours



h. Incongruous juxtaposition



i. The last remnants of an Eurasian *kampong*, in Pulau Tikus. How long can it remain?

Fig. 5-7 Development realities, suburban distortions



a. Penang Road hotel developments(left) in the 1970s have been joined by the MWE tower and large extensions to its neighbouring buildings, along the edge of Conservation Zone Two



b. Chulia Streets shophouse skyline is broken by the ASAS Dunia building



c. Former Government offices are towered over by the new development



d. The two modern buildings have been empty since built

e. (left) Such little notice is paid to the existing environment that not even the five-foot-ways align

Fig. 5-8 Development realities, encroachment and juxtapositions



a. Tenants' protest banner in front of the Prangin Mall development



b. Cracked buildings were propped up until the land settled and maintenance could begin



c. Damage from neighbouring hammer piling, the Cheong Fatt Tze Mansion suffered severe cracking



d. Twelve shophouses belonging to one owner burnt down in 2001. What style will MPPP require for the new development? The brown glass building, 2001, already contravenes the TCP amendment 1996

Fig. 5-9 Inner city realities, malpractice





a. (left) The design for the Pan pacific hotel showing the intention to recreate the demolished Metropole Hotel as its entrance lobby

b. (above) The project stalled in 1997 and has only recently, 2003, started again but as a much reduced scheme

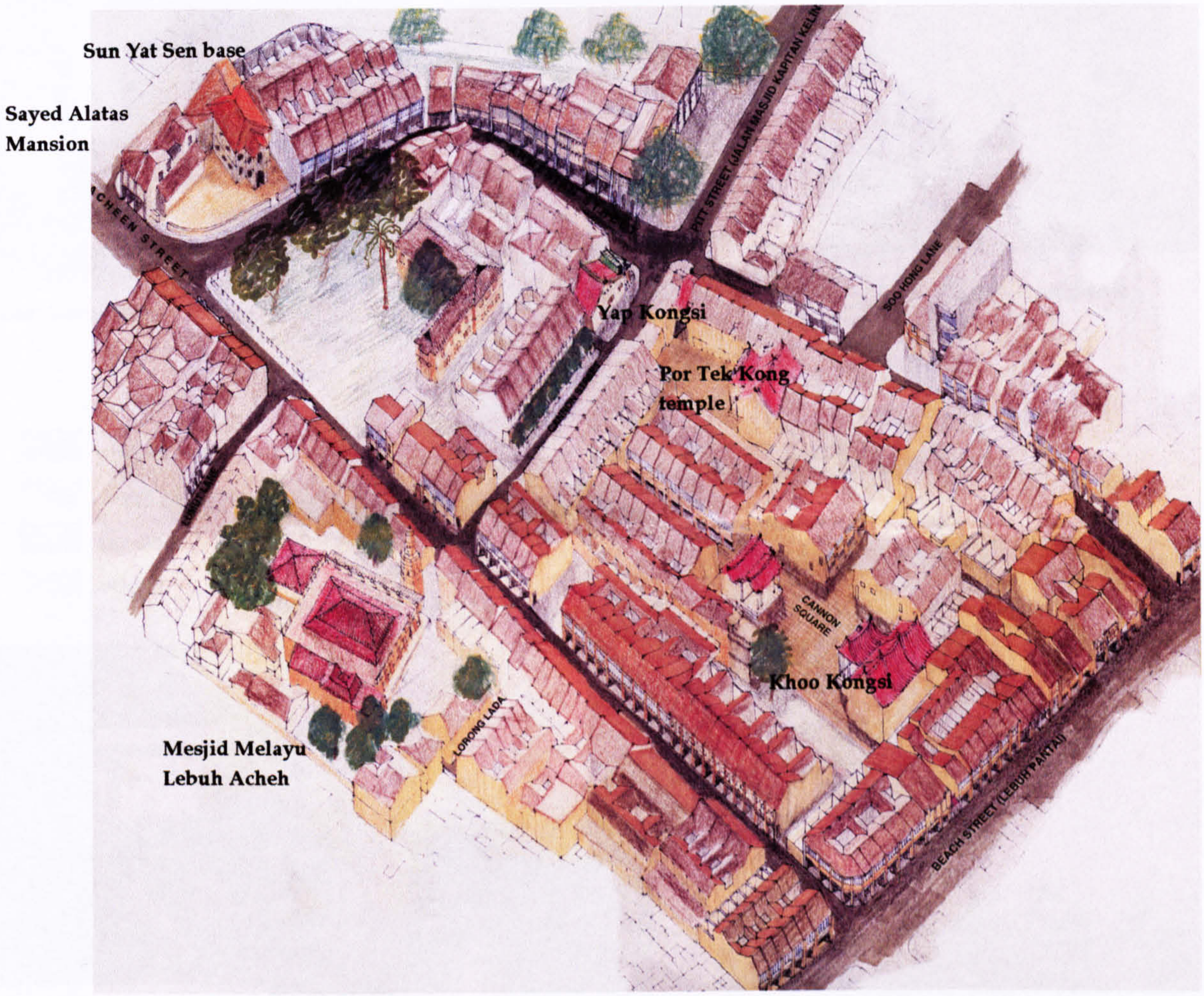




c. (left) What was once the city residence of millionaire Khoo Sian Ewe, No1 Penang Road, is now the five foot way of a tower block

d. (above) Hardwicke demolition at least is no longer the first option, but compatible incorporation has yet to be understood

Fig. **5**-10 Catalyst for change,
the struggle to include conservation with development



a. An axonometric projection of the *Lebuh Acheh, Lebuh Armenian Heritage Development Project* (reproduced from the 1992, Technical Committee for the Conservation and Development of the Acheen Street, Armenian Street brochure - MPPP & PHT)

Fig. 5-11 Conservation initiatives,
Lebuh Acheh, Lebuh Armenian Heritage Development Project



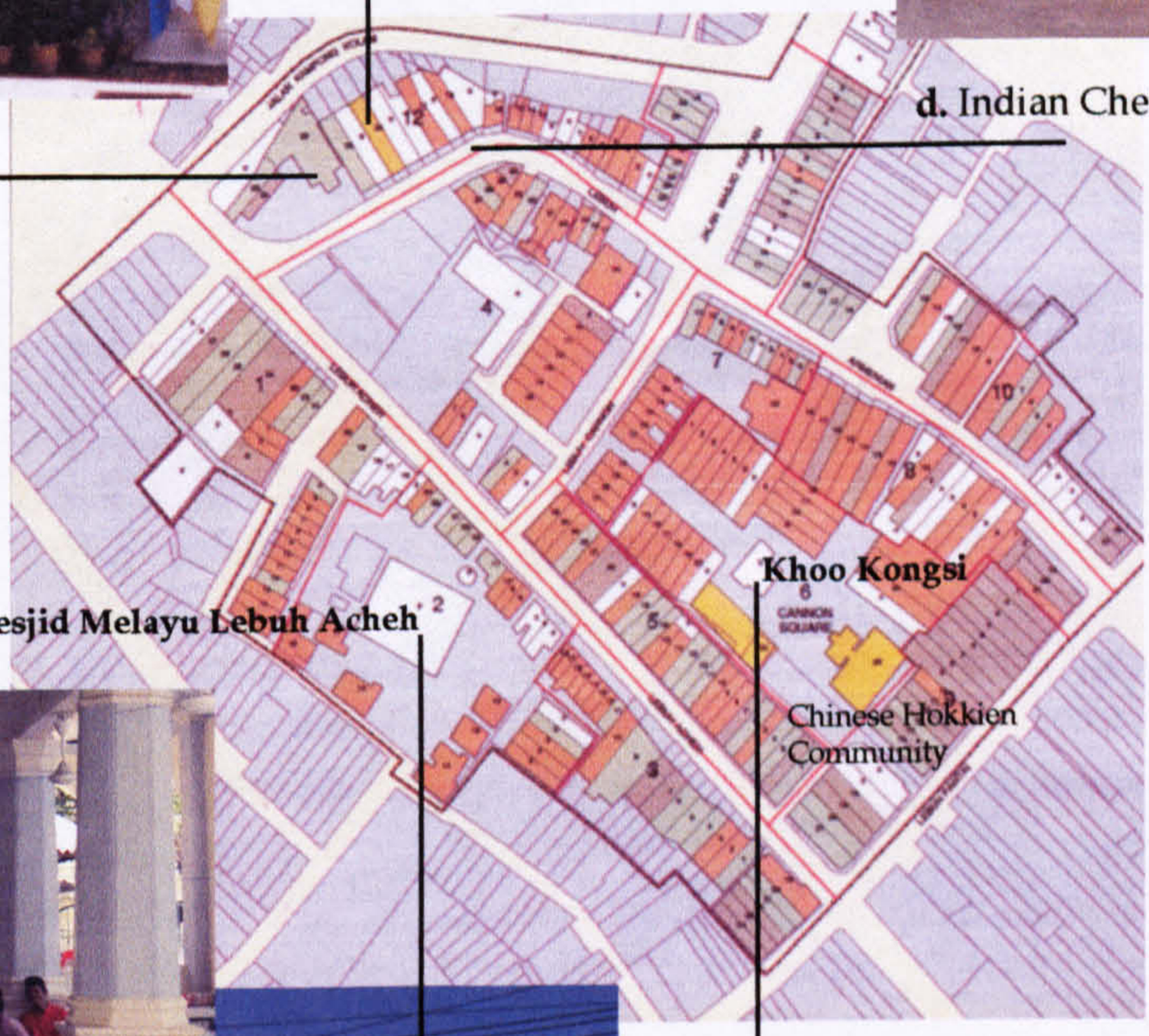
b. Syed Alatas Mansion



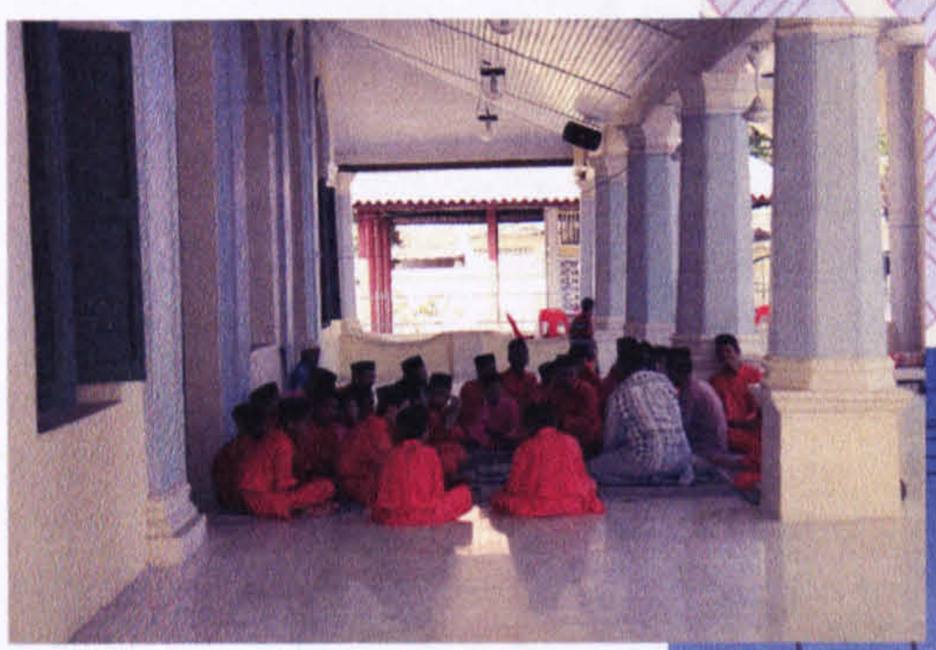
c. 120 Armenian Street
Sun Yat Sen's Penang base



d. Indian Chettiar community



h. Map of the Heritage Development Area , reproduced from the Heritage Centre Brochure



e. Arab and Malay Muslim community



f. (right) *Mesjid Melayu Lebuh Acheh*



g. The Khoo Kongsi, Chinese Clan Association Temple

Fig. 5-11 Conservation initiatives,
Lebuh Acheh, Lebuh Armenian Heritage Development Project



The New Urban Centre - KOMTAR.

The Conservation Zones 1987.

Conservation Zone 6 - China Town 1996

Fig. 5-12 Conservation initiatives,
Design Guidelines for Conservation Areas, 1996, **Zone 6**





a. Home of the Penang Heritage Centre in 1996 - 2002, in the Syed Alatas Mansion

b. (left) The Penang Heritage Centre organizes talks and conservation workshops, here Susanne Thieme presents her paper



c. Burmah Road, former government residential quarters restored by AR&T Total Project Management, and converted into commercial units

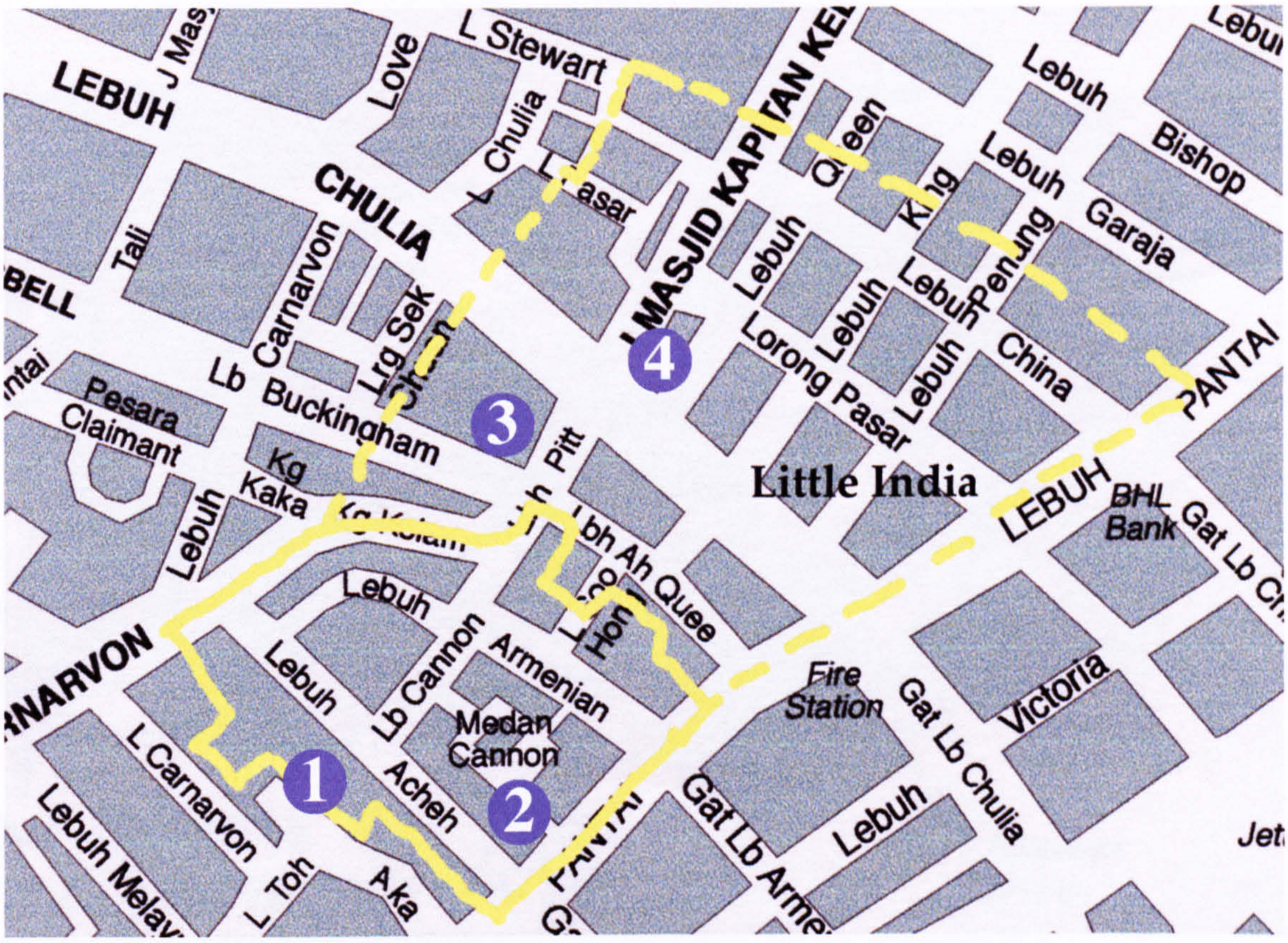




d. Hotel 1926, former government quarters, restored by PDC AR&T Total Project Management. This project was accorded the *Most Excellent Project* by Badan Warisan Malaysia's Heritage Awards 2000 in the category *Conservation with Adaptive Reuse*

e. (left) A detail of the Hotel 1926, showing the new terrace extension

Fig. 5-13 Conservation initiatives, state initiatives in heritage conservation



1 Mesjid Melayu, Lebuh Acheh

2 Khoo Kongsi, Chinese Clan Temple

3 Mesjid Kapitan Kling

4 Sri Mahamariamman Indian Hindu Temple

a. In 1997 the *Lebuh Armenian, Lebuh Acheh Heritage Development Project* was extended to include the *Mesjid Kapitan Kling* and Little India

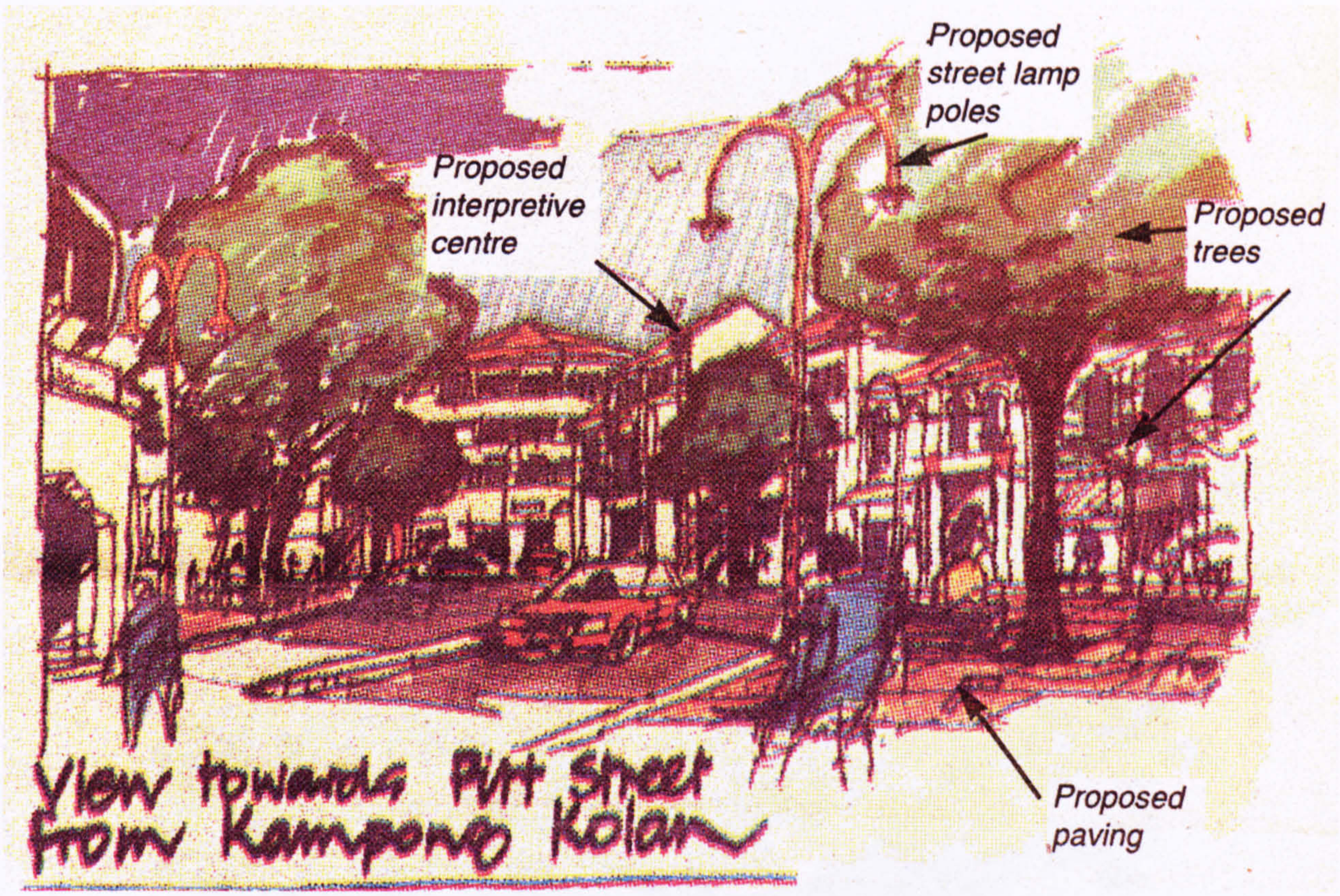


b. *Mesjid Kapitan Kling*, Kapitan Kling Mosque, before the extensive renovations. This mosque occupies the site granted to the Indian Tamil Muslim Sepoys of the East India Company in 1801

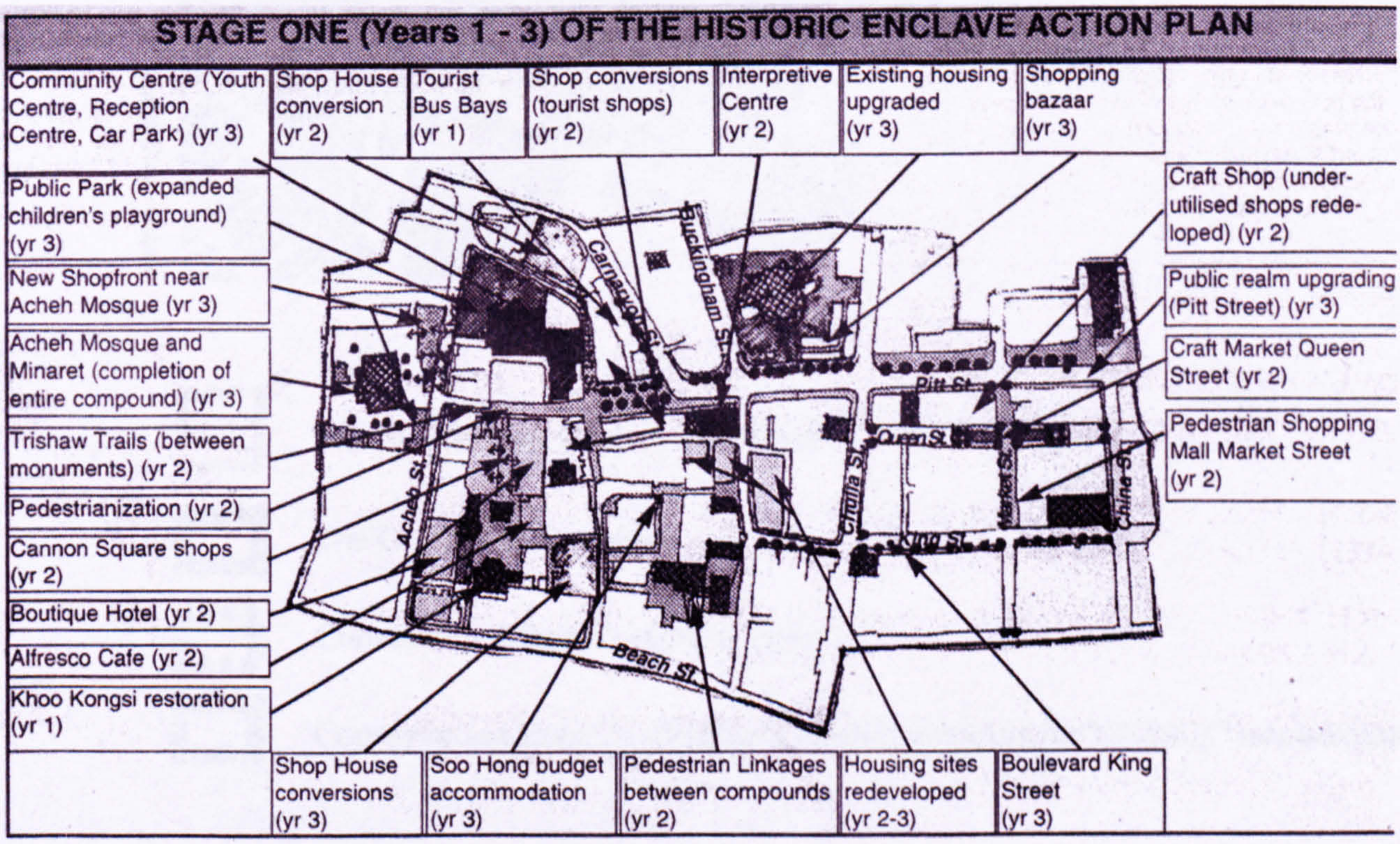


c. The Sri Mahamriamman Indian Hindu Temple during the *Chitrapourinami* festival

Fig. 5-14 Conservation initiatives, the Historic Enclave Action Plan, 1997

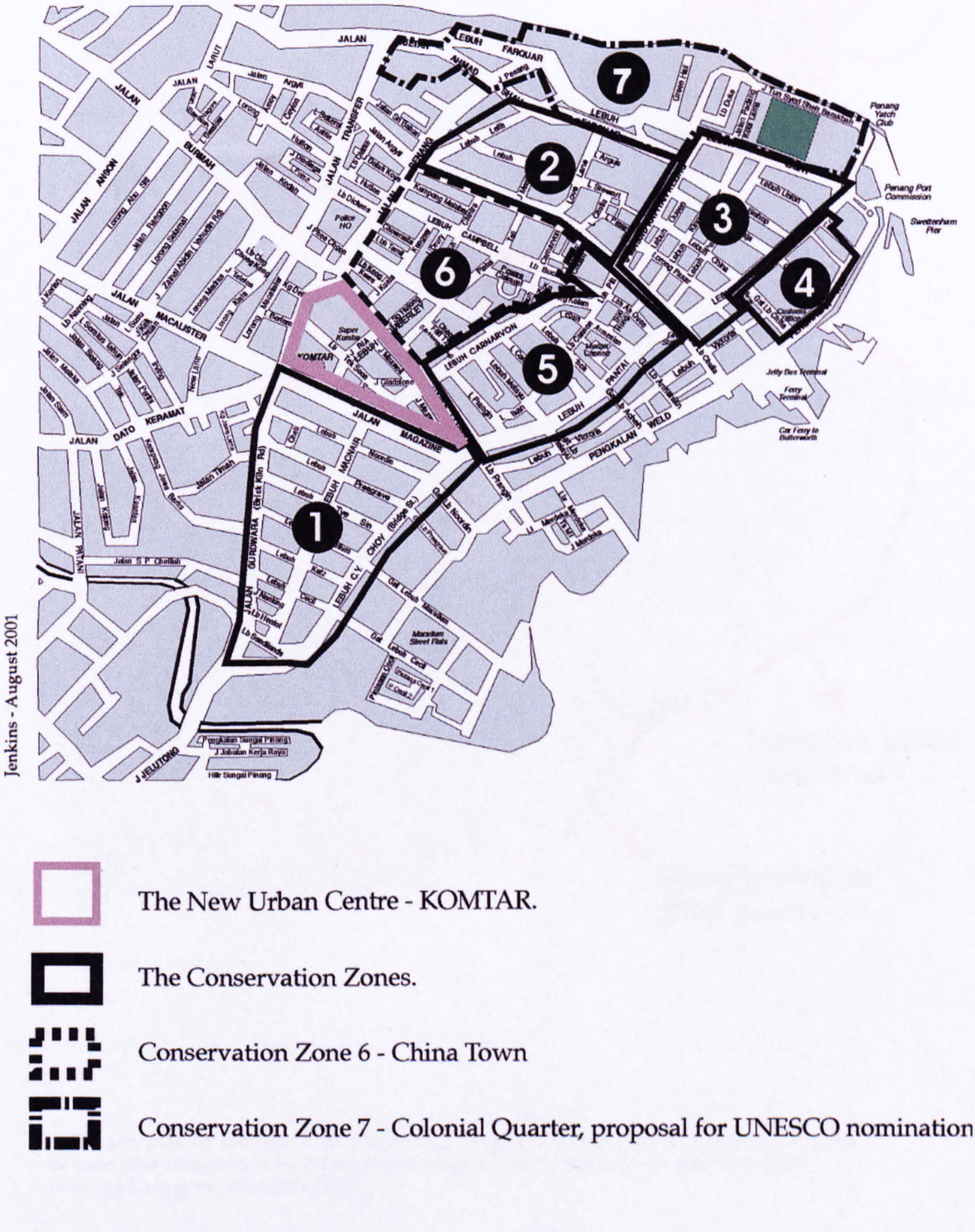


d. A sketch perspective of the *Heritage Enclave Action Plan* proposal from the commissioned architects, (reproduced from the Cheah, 28.11.97)



e. Reported by the Star as a 'case study for a living heritage theme park presented to over 200 landowners, developers other professionals' (reproduced form the reported by Cheah, 28.11.97)

Fig. **5**-14 Conservation initiatives, the Historic Enclave Action Plan, **1997**



Jenkins - August 2001

The New Urban Centre - KOMTAR.

The Conservation Zones.

Conservation Zone 6 - China Town

Conservation Zone 7 - Colonial Quarter, proposal for UNESCO nomination

Fig. 5-15 The emergence of a UNESCO World Heritage Site?
Design Guidelines for Conservation Areas, 1996, **Zone 7**



a. The new plan for the Core Area, Buffer Zone for Conservation and development planning, devised after consultation with the conservation architect advising the state on UNESCO Heritage Listing requirements (2002)

Fig. **5**-16 The emergence of a UNESCO World Heritage Site? Do You Know? Penang Road to Heritage Conservation

6

CULTURE, HERITAGE AND TOURISM: CULTURAL IDENTITY AND CONSUMPTION OF THE INNER CITY

Introduction

UNESCO's Regional Advisor, Richard Engelhardt, arrived in George Town on 8 February 1998 for a five-day visit which coincided with a series of religious and cultural festivals, the Chinese *Tua Pek Kong* procession, the *Chneah Hoay* fire-watching ceremony to predict the year's fortunes, the Straits-Chinese *Dondang Sayang* singers who toured the town during *Chap Go Mei*, the Valentine festival held along the Esplanade, and the three-day Hindu festival of *Thaipusam* [Fig.6-1]. Other than the *Chap Goh Mei* festival, a state-organised-tourist product, the other festivals were religious, community-organised and-perpetuated, supported by regional tourism and pilgrimages. The result was a vision of an inner city vibrant with activities related to the living cultural heritage of the communities and the historic enclaves in which they lived.

Engelhardt's mission was to advise on the potential for World Heritage Listing, as Malaysia was a 'blank spot on the world heritage map' (Emmanuel, 1998). He was to investigate the 'Penang Story', evidence of political will from the state government and management mechanisms of the Penang Heritage Centre and AR&T Heritage Consultancy. Aware that 'heritage conservation' was being understood in its tangible physical context, promoted by the World Heritage Listing mechanism, Engelhardt proposed UNESCO's more recent focus which encouraged the bond between people and their environment, stating that 'although there is a large bank of exceptional and beautiful buildings... this architecture was only the frame for human cultural activity' (*Star*, 10.2.1998).

The colourful events witnessed by Engelhardt suggested an abundance of material for tourists interested in cultural tourism generated by the communities themselves. However, the dilapidated environment suggested a lack of identity with

the heritage environment, and Engelhardt proposed a UNESCO *LEAP* project to encourage awareness. *LEAP*, which stands for *Local Effort and Preservation*, is a UNESCO regional initiative intended to foster local stewardship of the project participants over their cultural heritage. By the end of the *Penang Story International Conference* in 2002, however, it was clear the concept of cultural heritage tourism was little understood by the government bodies and to some extent the NGOs as well as the landowners, to the detriment of the communities and the potential of cultural heritage tourism. In a press interview at the end of all the diplomatic speeches and dinners, Engelhardt finally expressed his frustration.

> Heritage conservation has nothing to do with tourism. If you preserve it only to sell it, you will be better advised to develop an amusement park from scratch out of concrete. The worst thing you can do is take the people out and let them tinker with handicrafts for the entertainment of tourists (cited in Ong, 2002).

This chapter examines the realities that led to these comments. It looks at how the inner city is viewed from afar by the national-and state-driven tourism industry, the tourists, the NGOs related to cultural and heritage conservation and the suburban communities. It also views the inner city communities from within, as well as supporting associations and landlords, and investigates how they express their cultural identity, respond to their environments, and view the state tourism industry and tourists. Finally, this chapter examines the effect of the *AKS Repeal* and recent attempts by the Federal, state and local government of Penang to reverse the inner city's decline through 'beautification' projects.

It must also be appreciated that 'In one sense Malaysian society is still fragile: the choice between a bureaucratic approach to national integration (through cultural engineering efforts), and a more liberal concept of multiculturalism is still unresolved' (Kadir,Din, 1997: 109). This chapter, therefore, examines the role that tourism plays in the overall process of social change in order to avoid assessing 'the impact of tourism in terms of external intrusion' (Meethan, 2001: 169).

The View from afar: tourism, NGOs, and suburban communities

The tourism industry

Seen as an industry that could revitalise the state's flagging economy following the decline in the port in 1969, tourism became vital to Penang's economic health, generating substantial growth and employment. For the international tourist of the early 1980s the island had much to offer - sandy beaches, the Penang Hill range with

its fine villas set amidst tropical jungle, and a historic inner city, vibrant with multicultural community life, with festivals and celebrations set in an accumulation of architectural styles reflecting the growth of the city since the late 1780s.

Encouraged by various tax allowances and government incentives, the industry began to destroy what it at first set out to promote. New hotels typically created an international tourist enclave along the coastline of the northern beaches of Batu Ferringhi, once the scene of coconut palms and picturesque kampongs [Fig.6-2]. Then resorts, golf clubs and service apartments mushroomed but with little infrastructure management, causing one travel writer to note:

> The economic boom of Penang has strained its resources - the result, pollution in its ocean, clogged-up streets (and drains), badly maintained tourist facilities and an airport that can hardly cope with one planeload of tourist arrival[s] (Yeoh, 1996).

The Consumer Association Penang's critical analysis, *See the Third World while it lasts*, recognised that far from benefiting a local population tourism can bring inflation, skyrocketing land prices, and pollution of the cultural environment (Hong, 1985: 35). However, perhaps it is not tourism itself that threatens, but instead the process of modernity of which tourism plays a part (Meethan, 2001: 91). As Graburn states, 'tourism was first promoted as a major avenue to development' (1997: 197). It may, therefore, be conveniently blamed for the ills of development and modernity, particularly as the culpability can be placed on foreigners (Kadir Din, 1997: 104-117). Thus, as its tourism enclaves became overdeveloped, on Penang Island, the industry turned towards the historic inner city, and the potential of developing 'heritage tourism' as a form of urban renewal.

To the State Exco Councillor for Tourism the historic inner city, just 6% of the overall area of the island, was a small area for developers to sacrifice to conservation as a route to heritage tourism. In support of her argument and in spite of the degeneration of the beaches, Penang's tourist arrivals grew from 1.8 million in 1990 to almost 3.78 million in 2000, of which over 38% were domestic tourists accommodated by the Penang International Hoteliers Association (www.seri.net.my). In that year, hotels recorded an average occupancy rate of 57% -66.7% for beach hotels, and 50.8% for city hotels. Tourism together with related services is second only to the manufacturing sector in terms of GDP and growth (PDC, 2001: www).

The tourists

The profiles of the tourists who visit Penang Island are as varied as the inhabitants themselves. The Penang state tourism industry originally catered for the mass tourism

market and built 500-room hotels. More recently, it has expressed an interest in attracting tourists to sites rich in heritage architecture and cultural heritage tourists seeking alternative cultures within their 'natural environments'. Whichever type of tourist experience and wherever they are from, there is a preference to stay within a-home-from-home environment within the 'exotic' setting. There are those who travel for status reasons to show off to the people back home, or for an opportunity to patronise the poor 'local' who knows nothing beyond Penang and lacks the sophistication of Kuala Lumpur, Singapore or Gravesend. Such tourist behaviour is considered a form of neo-colonialism (Boniface and Fowler, 1993: 19; O'Rourke, 1997:39). As MaCannell notes, these tourists seem 'incapable of a conscious detachment from their values....' and often repress or deny the 'myth of modernity' (cited in O'Rourke 1997: 38).

In contrast to the impact of tourism on the once-isolated *kampongs* of Batu Ferringhi, the influx of new faces, and strange languages and cultures is nothing new to the core communities of the historic inner city. Their numbers were regularly swollen by the influx of labourers migrating to George Town, who often returned home after a few years. The earlier form of hotels of inner city George Town accommodated pilgrims (for such festivals as *St. Anne's, Thaipusam* or the *Muslim Haj*), sailors and salesmen from the region, and there were brothels for those who could not afford private homes or concubines. The small corner-site hotels which sprang up in the boom periods of the 1930s and 1940s as well as the early 12-storey hotels of the 1970s remain. They attracted a reciprocal hawker business, now almost vanished, selling everything for the unexpected stay in town -pyjamas, socks, towels, soap, and condoms.

When international travel for leisure became more fashionable and affordable for European-based cultures in the 1950s, city beach hotels such as the Paramount and the Eastern and Oriental - once patronised by planters, writers and early industrialists - grew in popularity. By the 1960s the 'hippy trail' western tourist began to arrive (Kadir Din 1997: 117). They stayed within the inner city and to some degree merging with the established transient population due to their preference for local rather than international hotels. Today the main area for backpacker accommodation is Chulia Street. Many new hostels have sprung up, especially since the *AKS Repeal*. The principal users of the street, day and night, are still the local population (unlike Thamel in Kathmandu or Kuta Beach in Bali which are colonised backpacker ghettos). This is indicated by the business profile of the area - ironmongers, glaziers, framers, rattan weavers, bamboo *chick* (blinds) makers, furniture shops, Chinese medical halls, brothels, coffee shops, hawker stalls and a daily wet market. Thus, for the inner city communities tourism is just another business and has not been considered, at least until recently, as its raison d'etre.

The origins of the international tourists began to change when in 1997, for a brief time, the Ringgit Malaysia fell from an exchange rate of RM 3.8 to RM 8 to the £1, and Malaysia came in reach of those searching for exotic but 'safe' long-haul holidays. Eastern European and Russian package tours also began to arrive. By this time the established package tourists from Japan, Korea and China were joined by Arab Muslims as Malaysia marketed itself to Middle Eastern countries to attract the more affluent young Muslim middle-classes [Fig.6-2]. These are rarely seen in the historic city and are concentrated around the beach hotels and shopping malls, visiting Penang as part of a 'Malaysia Package'. Since the liberation of South Africa and the lifting of prohibitions, South Africans have also begun to visit, but often only in the backpacker areas of George Town. The concept that 'international tourists' are western Europeans, Australians, Americans or Canadians, therefore, is clearly a misconception. They make up only a small percentage of the overall number of 'international tourists' as 70 % of international tourism is interregional with 37% within ASEAN itself (Graburn, 1997:194).

Domestic tourism for leisure, a relatively new industry in Malaysia, was also boosted briefly with the devaluation of the ringgit, the prohibition on foreign travel and the introduction of two Saturday holidays per month for civil servants. But as the economy stabilised, the prohibition lifted, the holidays remained and new novelty tourist products, such as Sunway Lagoon in Kuala Lumpur and Colmar Tropicale, a French Town theme park at Bukit Tinggi, resulted in a drop in the number of domestic tourists visiting Penang, from 47% in 1997 to 37.9% in 2000. There is no local 'two-week annual holiday' culture yet; the majority of Malaysians use their annual leave to return to their families over periods of religious or cultural festivals. The domestic tourism and leisure industry, however, has been encouraged by the socio-economic improvements and expansion of the middle-class with greater disposable incomes and more easily available credit.

International tourism to long-haul destinations is also vulnerable to tourist insecurities of 'others', brought about by such events as the recent SARS epidemic, the 9-11 terrorist attack and the Bali bombings. Unofficial figures suggest that many local hotels have found it difficult to maintain even 30% occupancy since 9-11. Economic recession in tourists' home countries also affects international travel.

Tourism products and promotion

With the ever-changing profile of tourists and their interests - often affected by the Ministry of Tourism's promotion focus -Penang's State Exco Councillor for Tourism struggled to supply new packages, programmes, festivals and events. New sources of tourism are regularly sought, with such recent ideas as 'dental' and 'medical tourism'

which encourages the patients to bring their families for an operation-recuperation-cum-holiday package.

The responsibility for promotion of tourism in Penang comes under the portfolio of the Penang Development Corporation (PDC). Its role is 'to organise events which include major cultural and arts festivals, sports carnivals and community events' (PDC www). These staged events are encouraged to follow the National Culture Policy and take place all over the island and mainland, though new venues such as Penang International Sports Arena have taken events away from George Town. The Dewan Sri Pinang remains the main venue for such programmes as the month-long Penang Arts Festival sponsored by the YTL company (Yeoh Teong Lay). The Padang Kota (town field), between Fort Cornwallis and the Town and City Halls is used for state PDC events such as the Chinese Lantern Festival. Whilst there are many events that are repeated annually such as the Penang Bridge Run and the International Dragon Boat Race there are those that were too ambitious such as the Penang Mozart Festival, the Penang Grand Prix and the International Southeast Asian Film Festival of 1997, which are no longer staged.

The main festivals, which punctuate the daily lives in the city, are those that are observed by ethnic or religious communities. At one time festivals such as the month-long Chinese Hungry Ghost (*Por Thor Kong*) diminished in the number of sites. However, in the 1970s, government policies enlarged the presence of Malay culture, which was followed by a resurgence of Islamic identity in the 1980s (Lee H.G., 2000:5). In response, Chinese festivals such as the *Por Thor Kong*, began a revival. Occasionally the Penang Development Corporation has relegated such cultural festivals to the status of a tourism 'product' or 'attraction', for example the Deepavali Open House in Little India, held within the historic city setting. The PDC brought coach-loads of international hotel guests from the beaches into the inner city. They were offered international hotel-cooked hawker-style food, contemporised traditional music, and dance performances, all superficial in their cultural content. By the time the event began, the Indian community had closed their shops and drawn down their shutters, uninterested in taking part.

Since the mid-1990s, George Town has been promoted as the *City of Living Culture* following a series of *Destination Improvements Workshops*, held by the Penang Development Corporation (Yeoh, 1996). By 1997, the *Penang Tourism Action Plan* proposed the provision of incentives to help those affected by the *AKS Repeal*. It stated that

> In all the six conservation zones, it is the manner and the customs of the people who have lived and worked in those places that have lent them their particular richness.

The Chief Minister went on to claim that

> With this, [the action plan], we can promote an existing living 'heritage theme park' instead of creating an artificial theme park like Disneyland (James, 1997).

He was referring to the historic enclaves of, for example, Little India or the *Historic Melting Pot* of the *Lebuh Acheh, Lebuh Armenian Heritage Development Project*. From 1995 the state had already begun to promote 'heritage theme parks' and had privately proposed the concept to a major landowner, considering the built heritage as of tourism value, endorsed by the *Heritage 1997* seminar.

In contrast, the *Investing in the Past for the Future* workshop which presented the Australian team's *Historic Enclave Action Area* plan examined the impact of the *AKS Repeal* and the displacement of tenants and stressed its negative affect on tourism. It identified small traders in particular as 'necessary to sell the area as a cultural hub' (*Sun*, 7.11.1997). The plan also estimated that after the *AKS Repeal* only 50% of the traders would be able to afford their increased 'market' rents, noting the pivotal position of the communities as a tourism product. In support of the Australian argument, and in an attempt to correct the growing misconceptions of the state tourism industry, UNESCO reasoned that investment in cultural heritage tourism would provide a commercial focus and support heritage enclaves and communities as an alternative to dislocation, demolition, and development. As Engelhardt stressed

> ... with the loss of its traditional caretakers, a site becomes an increased burden on the state or is left at the mercy of land speculators who have no long-term commitment to the site and therefore no interest in preserving the site for sustainable development (1998: 5).

UNESCO had recognised that its bias towards tangible built heritage was based on principles of western aesthetics which emphasised the museum definition of 'authenticity' and it was attempting to move away from this limited vision towards one which embraced intangible cultural heritage as well (Meethan, 2201:102).

In 1998 during a presentation of UNESCO's findings these were considered alien concepts to the more vocal of Engelhardt's audience who still pressed for development with the retention of a few monuments for the 'tourist gaze'. It was argued that as regional tourism had yet to focus on cultural heritage, Penang was merely pandering to the needs of the European international tourists, who not only craved the historic

sites but also liked a few 'natives' thrown in for authenticity. Even pro-heritage enthusiasts felt that tourism was a double-edged sword

> ... the faster our tourism industry grows the faster our heritage may disappear. How can those who are responsible for organising and planning what is called cultural-tourism avoid being responsible also for the destruction of their own culture? (Tan Teong Kui, 1998)'

However, towards the end of the decade, as domestic and international interest in Penang began to wane, comparisons were made with tourism destinations that had maintained the tourists' interest. Bali was highlighted as successful partly because it had maintained a strong cultural identity which ranged from picturesque subsistence farming to traditional handicrafts and from active religious festivals to identifiable 'cultural shows'. Was it possible, therefore, for Penang to offer something similar by rethinking its approach and promoting its living cultural heritage? (Sigrist, 2001). The answer lies, perhaps, in the socio-economic development and identity reconstructions of the city as a whole, and the relationship between the hosts, guests, officials, and entrepreneurs.

Identity politics and the response of NGOs

The inner city creates many contrasting perceptions, particularly from those who no longer live, work and only occasionally use the area, but for whom the heritage city holds an attachment. One particular NGO, which was formed in the late 1990s by a group of young design professionals, just prior to the *AKS Repeal*, who saw the city as a valuable resource, was the Nanyang Folk Culture Society. It is a Mandarin-speaking society concerned with heritage and the arts, and has created an expanding following of young volunteers from different backgrounds. The style and attitude of the organisation relates to the young, post-NEP-educated generation.

As young professionals from Penang who trained and practised in Taiwan, the Nanyang organisers originally rented a suburban Art-Deco house and created an office and 'alternative' art gallery called '50 Humanist Space'. They hold activities related to the arts as well as providing a venue for debates on *AKS* and other issues related to citizens' awareness. Their approach is reasoned, confident, consistent, and focused. They reach out to the Chinese community, young and old, and provide them with an alternative to their pre-packaged culture imported from China, Taiwan, or Hong Kong.

From 1998 until 2002 the Nanyang Society had organised an annual street party called the *Wonders of Chinese New Year* as a sensitive response to the state's promotion of cultural heritage tourism. Their mission was to promote an awareness of the diverse cultural heritage of the inner-city Chinese communities and their surroundings.

Chinese New Year is a family-based celebration with activities related to the temples, particularly the Goddess of Mercy, Kuan Yin, and the well-being of the home. Symbolic decorations adorn the outside of the houses in the form of new red lanterns and red cloth banners over front doors as well as red paper origami cranes and fish decorating the pot plants on the five-foot-ways. It lasts a full month, though many only follow the celebrations from the first to the fifteenth day taking only a two-day government holiday. Hokkien and Cantonese New Years are celebrated separately and fire crackers and lion dances offer prosperity on the second day. For the non-Chinese locals and visitors this jumble of events offers a colourful spectacle.

Each year the Nanyang Society chose a street with both temple and school for its street-party in order to achieve the greatest community participation, varying the location in order to influence and involve more communities. Traditional, contemporary and avante-guard entertainment mingled with local food stalls, cooking, painting and carving demonstrations, photographic and art competitions and heritage-awareness exhibitions and quizzes [Fig.6-3]. The Nanyang *Wonders of Chinese New Year* festival, therefore, embraces the intangible elements of Chinese traditional and contemporary culture within the tangible Chinese built heritage environment, thus producing a Chinese community-led cultural heritage tourism product for local community consumption.

In 2001, the Nanyang Society was offered a Hakka shophouse to renovate by the Cheng Hoe Seah Temple [Fig.6-4]. This became their alternative space for 'arts and cultural happenings' in the heart of the working-class inner city. Ching Lotus Humanist Space on China Street, the main artery to the Kuan Yin Temple, has drawn interest from many who walk past, through its unusual full height glass shop front. Even though the *Wonders of Chinese New Year* festival has temporarily ceased, the presence of Nanyang in the Ching Lotus Humanist Space has retained a connection between the modernising world of design and its source of inspiration, the George Town street.

In contrast to the focused cultural identity and methodology of the Nanyang Folk Culture Society is the Penang Heritage Trust regularly confused, by the press, with the government funded Penang Heritage Centre. The Trust's initial objectives were based more on European ideas of 'high culture' in order to 'promote the conservation of buildings and trees, books, manuscripts, paintings, antiques...' (see Chapter Four). Articles in early newsletters were concerned with a fund-raising garden party for Suffolk House, protest at the placement of a Kentucky Fried Chicken sign on a converted Straits-Eclectic mansion and the organisation of a *Peranakan Heritage Week,* 'to enable our younger generation to experience some of the rich traditions and culture of the *Babas*' (PHT, 1988: 2).

Made up initially of members of Penang's English-educated elite, and expatriates with whom there was a nostalgic affinity, the Trust's membership remained small. Its newsletter was regularly augmented by reminiscences of expatriate childhood on the once-idyllic island, suggesting that the formation of the Trust was perhaps the last attempt of a formerly dominant elite to consolidate the memories of their heyday in a rapidly changing environment over which they no longer had control.

The move to a permanent location in a city shophouse in 1998 coincided with the Trust's Honorary Secretary becoming active in community-based projects supported by UNESCO [Fig.6-5]. This was also when the division of interests, first highlighted by the secretary's controversial support of the *Kampong Serani* community, began to magnify a fragmentation within the Trust's committee. Long-standing committee members continued to lobby for the restoration of Suffolk House and attempted the conservation of the Loo Pun Hong Temple (see Chapter Seven), organising a fund-raising street party, antique collectors' fair, and more recently a ball at the newly reinvented Eastern and Oriental Hotel (PHT, 2001). In 2000 the Trust developed a monthly tour of historic places of interest for its members; as well as the income-generating Heritage Tours such as the *Little India Spice Trail*. It was this section of the committee that had succeeded in the first phase restoration of the cemetery in which Francis Light is buried, undertaken by English-speaking middle-class enthusiasts including expatriates, whose understanding of 'conservation' was similar to that of the committee.

Perceived locally as a club for 'petite bourgeois housewives' the Honorary Secretary's work on community heritage has done much to change if not confuse this image. The committee members' mixed response to the *AKS Repeal* emphasised their discordant identity with the issue. Even though 'PHT has consistently declared its guardianship of Penang's traditional trades and communities.... and the maintenance of its cultural and economic diversity' (PHT brochure) one committee member vehemently voiced that these same tenants had been 'living off the landlords for years' and therefore were 'rightfully evicted'.

The Honorary Secretary, Khoo Salma Nasution, nee Khoo Su Nin, through her former editorship of *Pulau Pinang Magazine*, and her authorship of *Streets of George Town*, became synonymous with the Trust, both internationally and nationally. She has gained international funding, represented the Trust on state committees, was project manager for the Syed Alatas mansion restoration, challenged the Municipal Council over heritage building issues on numerous occasions, and headed the organisation of the Trust's involvement in international conferences, symposiums and workshops related to built and cultural heritage. She has also co-managed the UNESCO *LEAP* project, which is examined later in this chapter and the Canadian-funded *Women in Urban Governance* project, which focused on the empowerment of women, including

the disabled, in heritage environments. This activity created a division within the Trust's committee, and presented a confused identity and focus to the literate public. Equally the Trust's preference for international communities, academics, professionals, and middle-class English-speaking societies in Malaysia, has left it lacking an understanding not only of the issues and dichotomies affecting the physical and social fabric of the city but also of the changing perceptions of the rising educated middle-classes of Penang.

Equally, the international heritage conservation community has developed a dependence on the Penang Heritage Trust as a resource, which represents a limited comprehension flavoured by its own identity politics. Nagata for example, in her paper *Heritage as a Site of Resistance* emphasises that the future for the historic communities of George Town is promising (2001: 179-201). However, her references are those presented mainly through the optimistic views of the Trust's Honorary Secretary.

The diverse approaches to George Town's cultural and built heritage evidenced by the Nanyang Folk Culture Society and the Penang Heritage Trust's fragmentation should be viewed, however, within the context of George Town's evolving multi-ethnic society and socio-economic development. Nanyang represents a small but growing number of culturally confident, young professional Malaysians who connect with the city as a resource, recognising and enhancing that value and in so doing creating contemporary cultural heritage. In contrast, the Trust, as self-declared guardian of Penang's traditional trades and communities, connects with the city on a superficial level requiring global approval and funding from international bodies and tourism in order to confirm the Trust's and George Town's value.

Recognising these identity struggles, both cultural and social, is key to understanding the challenges to the communities and the direction of the conservation movement, which to some extent, has become the nucleus of a complex articulation of the status and identity of the participants.

New urban communities

Whilst the inner city remained under the *AKS* and tenants evolved their traditional ways of life, it was the suburbs and new townships which took on the challenge of westernisation through modern development, attracting a new wave of members of the multi-ethnic middle classes. With it came a change in society's behaviour; increasing 'self-centredness at the expense of concerns for others and social issues' and the creation of the insatiable consumer society. As Francis Loh points out approximately two million credit card-holders, in a population of just over 20 million, spent RM 4.2 billion in 1995 –1996. This consumerism has developed a self-centred hedonistic *kiasu* (me first) attitude and *tidak-apathy* (doesn't matter) towards

community welfare, social issues and to a large degree politics. Privatisation brought with it strong competition and the 1990s saw mass consumerism encouraged through persuasive, lifestyle advertising (1997: 11-15).

Whilst the population has slowly migrated from the inner city for the 'better life' in Penang's suburbs, others leave the suburbs for a better life in Kuala Lumpur. Every public holiday, however, they return en masse to honour their families during the various religious and traditional festivals. They bring with them stories of sophistication; the Kuala Lumpur City Centre shopping, Bintang Walk, Bangsa cafe culture, the concept of 'life style living' with furniture giant IKEA and TESCO's supermarket. All this is far removed from the cries of *'kopi O'* in the Penang's coffee shops, the drums and cymbals of the lion dance at Chinese New Year and the noise and smells of hawkers preparing Penang's famous variety of foods. However, provincial Penang rose to the challenge of modernisation, although cheaper and less sophisticated versions of 'lifestyle-living' began to appear.

Whilst the built environment paraded images of a postmodernist future, the political and economic environment of the late 1990s was filled with uncertainties, threatening the consumer comforts of the new middle-classes. In response, the advertising industry reintroduced traditional values through TV commercials, such as *One Little Indian*, 1995, and *Two Boys go to the Olympics*, by Yasmin Ahmad of Leo Burnet, and *Unsung Heroes* by Spencer Azizul Advertising, with reinterpreted images of 'the good old days', as 'feel-good' material. These often played on cross-culturalism and were neither didactic nor mythological capturing the wit, humour, and spirit of the multi-ethnic population (Lee, A., 2000). In contrast, Filem Negara's didactic promotions of nationhood depicted the *bunga raya* (hibiscus, the national flower), the Malaysian flag, and images of parliament, modern architectural icons and stylisation of the races as smiling images of costumes and dance.

The *balik kampong*, back to the village, tradition of an urban family returning to their parent's village home has become a regular feature of feel-good advertising. This became a globalised image of Malaysian village life when the cartoonist, Lat, developed his cartoon character of *Kampong Boy* into a television animated film. Thus as the new urban living detached the new urban middle classes from their cultural roots, cartoon imagery and festival celebration advertising and later architectural styles for middle class housing, recreated links to their cultural heritage.

The view from within: cultural identity, heritage, and tourism

This section examines the inner city urban communities and explores their relationship with the historic urban environment, the threats to their sustainability from

development policies and the perceptions of underdevelopment, identity politics and heritage tourism.

Traditional inner city communities

Traces of the ethnic villages formed by early migrations can still be identified within the inner city. For example, the descendants of the Arab Muslims still live along Acheen Street and the Hindu and Muslim Indians within Market Street's 'Little India' area. New influxes of Cantonese Chinese, who settled in what were early suburbs, are now a part of the inner city zones. Of the Eurasian community of Stewart Lane, only a few families remain, the majority having moved to modern housing in the suburbs; their Cathedral, although demoted to a Church in July 2003 as a consequence of this population shift, remains highly active.

During World War II, many of the middle class families moved out from the historic centre into the suburbs to escape intimidation by the Japanese. The inner city became the preserve of the multi-ethnic working classes, living above or close by their employment and trade. Few of the original occupiers returned and the inner city's working class population established their own patterns and traditions supporting a network of reciprocal commercial activities. A USM survey in 1993 which identified tenants affected by the *AKS*, noted that the overwhelming majority of the residential population were Chinese (79%), with 10.3% 'Malays' (Muslims), 9.4% Indians (Hindus) and 1.4% 'Others' (for example Eurasian)(Toh, 1999).

These residents had kept alive many of the celebrations and festivals of their communities within the city streets. Their rotational festivals provide the markers in community yearly cycles and they use the streets in different ways. The Muslim community use the environment beyond the mosque boundaries for vibrant street markets, erected for the annual fasting month of *Ramadan*. The daily calls for prayer and the Friday movement of peoples towards their mosques also create an audible and visual rhythm. More recently, a procession was held through the streets celebrating a religious holiday [Fig. 6-6]. Other than for their temple-based activities, the Chinese use the street space for such festivals as *Por Thor Kong* when temporary temples are erected, for three days of festivities, although overall the festival lasts one month [Fig. 6-7]. Many of the Hindu festivals are processional, for example *Thaipusam*, which links the dispersed Indian communities between the inner city and the hillside temples [Fig. 6-8].

These streets are also vibrant with hawker trade [Fig.6-9] and with those commercial activities which operate on their five-foot-ways or in shophouses open to the street [Fig. 6-10]. Within the historic inner city, the establishment of reciprocal dependencies between the ethnic groups, has created an environment of trust, tolerance, and respect. For example, the Chinese *joss* stick-maker imports his

sandalwood through an Indian Muslim trader; a Chinese seamstress sews the clothes for her neighbours to celebrate the Muslim festival of *Hari Raya Adilfitri;* a Chinese stone mason carves the gravestones for both the Muslims and Chinese; and Muslim hawkers sell food in the Chinese vegetable market.

Whilst middle-class and elite suburbs are also mixed in ethnic composition, the lower working class housing estates have become segregated. The Housing Department has taken care to create multi-ethnic environments, but letting or subletting has changed the balance. Even the habitual use of public spaces has discernible ethnic patterns. The Esplanade for example is the domain of the Muslim hawkers and visiting families in the late evening, though the early evening will see Chinese joggers and families flying kites on the nearby Padang Kota. In Gurney Drive, once lined with palatial mansions, many now replaced by condominiums, hotels, and exclusive shopping experiences, the beachfront and hawker area is the evening playground of the Chinese.

McTaggart's survey of 1964 suggests a population drift from the central districts of George Town, confirmed in a 1990 MPPP report. After the eviction of people due to the KOMTAR development and a migration to new suburban housing areas the population had decreased by 22% since the 1980 census (Tan, 1990: 45). But the remaining population, in 1980, still made it the most densely populated area in Malaysia.

Pressure for a perceived need for commercial space in the inner city increased, and prior to the building booms of the 1980s and 1990s, some chief tenants took advantage of their protected low rentals, charging 'market values' to commercial subtenants. Others simply 'transferred' their controlled rentals through 'social contracts' charging 'coffee money' for the privilege, often equal to the cost of a house in the suburbs (Khoo B.T., 2000). Even one year before the *AKS Repeal*, 'coffee money' of RM 60,000 (equal to my annual salary) changed hands between an unworldly subtenant and a chief tenant. The subtenant had either never read the publicity about the Repeal or simply did not comprehend the meaning of Federal legislation as against traditional social contracts.

Even religious endowment property tenancies, which aimed to help the poor of their communities, suffered abuse over the years by tenants whose economic situation had improved which allowed them to move away from their low-rent housing. It became an acknowledged practice by the outgoing tenants, to charge 'tea money' to new tenants, for the privilege of cheap rentals. Research also revealed that a small commission was often required in exchange for change of name on the tenancy. These low rentals were thought by tenants to be in perpetuity.

According to local contractors involved in the maintenance of estate properties, most were kept in reasonable repair until the 1990s when contracts with local building

contractors ceased. Tenants often shared the cost with landlords, though major 'modernisation' was more often borne by the tenants themselves, with their landlords' approval. This became a contentious issue during the eviction period as tenants requested compensation for their financial investment in the upkeep of the buildings. Whilst the *AKS Repeal Bill* was being read, announcements were made by the Local Government and Housing Minister that tenants would be entitled to two years' rent as compensation (*NST* 6.12.1996). When it came to passing the *Bill* in Parliament the Minister commented that 'compensation was inappropriate' (*NST* 2.5.1997).

For many low-income tenants the low rental made living in the inner city close to their places of work and education their only option. For these tenants, some living with the help of welfare benefits, this was a hand-to-mouth existence with no disposable income for repairs. With often-absentee landlords, the houses have reached dangerous states of collapse, inviting drug addicts to seek shelter in derelict and uninhabited rooms.

The tenants lived in a variety of conditions. Almost half the current tenants had migrated to live in the controlled rental premises after the 1966 *AKS* came into being. As subtenants of protected tenants, they moved into the city either within or adjacent to the active commercial areas for employment and education. Spaces (often just a corridor or under the stairs) and rooms are occupied per family; a shophouse, therefore, would be home to many different families but usually of the same language group or clan name (Jenkins, 1999). The extended family concept whereby each room would be allocated per male child, spouse and children in Chinese society, was seen as more of a middle class than working class ideal (McTaggart, 1964: 15; Jenkins, 1999). The extended family arrangement can still be found amongst the owner-occupiers of the pre-war shophouses and is mostly a middle class pattern. McTaggart's observations of 1964 were found to be true of living arrangements studied from the 1997 survey and from my work designing for Chinese clients, who often build apartments for their adult children within the compound of their own home. Low-income Muslim and Indian families continued to support the extended family concept until size of accommodation, the need to relocate for work, and a general social trend began to create change.

In the inner city, the percentage of properties of mixed commercial and residential use appears higher than suburban areas as many small businesses are conducted from the place of residence in the interests of security and economy, particularly for the Chinese. The shop space is often the family living space with a TV perched amongst the merchandise and children completing their homework on small tables amongst the paraphernalia of their family business. The perpetual use of this space ensures both security and a continuation of trade even whilst the family is otherwise occupied. The remaining rooms are storerooms or sleeping accommodation.

In Little India the Hindu and Muslim communities use their historically much older and smaller shophouse properties either for purely residential or commercial use with living accommodation for employees on the upper floors. Owners or chief tenants often live away from the business although still close by. Residential and commercial space is kept separate and, if within the same building, with a separate enclosed staircase facing the street, though minor commercial activities do take place at home. The ethnicity of tenant and landlord did not always correspond. Many of the Hindus of Little India are tenants of Chinese landowners, for example, and Indian Hindu Chettiars own much of the property occupied by Chinese, Indian Muslims, and Hindus in Chulia Street. Indian ownership can prove problematic, as it is often absentee with agents left in George Town to administer as they see fit.

Other than in Little India, Muslim communities in the inner city live in a variety of building forms, mostly the *waqf* endowment properties overseen by the Majlis Agama Islam Pulau Pinang (MAIPP). Located around the mosques, some large detached properties house a regularly changing number of family members who come and go as work or education brings them into the city. Spaces are subdivided, partitioned, or added to the buildings as the family needs require. Muslim families also live in Chinese shophouses, created with Chinese *feng shui* and spatial divisions more relevant to Chinese cultural traditions. Many of the *waqf* properties, however, are either small early shophouses, Indo-Malay bungalows or purpose built early twentieth century apartment blocks. Few Muslims live above the shop. Goods may be prepared in the dwelling place, but business is conducted elsewhere.

Like other *AKS* properties the *waqf* properties have fallen into disrepair, though they are still occupied. Many of the commercial shophouse properties were rented to Chinese businesses. The type of business changed over the years and by the time of the *AKS Repeal* many trades were not conducive to Islam, for example the pork and wine trade as well as brothels. However, these tenants paid high rents and brought a much-needed income to the MAIPP.

The impending *AKS Repeal* and pressures from national development visions and local ambitions as well as the states' promotion of cultural heritage tourism was to affect many of these long-established communities of the inner city. Below are examples of the challenges of these developments relating to the inner city and the realities faced by the communities.

Heritage and community identity

The Khoo Kongsi tenants

In the heart of the *Lebuh Acheh, Lebuh Armenian Heritage Development Project* area is the Leong San Tong Khoo Kongsi, a traditional Hokkien clan temple and dedicated opera

stage built in the late nineteenth century and set in a secluded courtyard of 24 terraced shophouses known as Cannon Square. It was built on the plans traditionally used for defending clan villages. Thus, the impression of seclusion from the outside world prevails.

In the mid-1990s, in support of the *Lebuh Acheh, Lebuh Armenian Heritage Development Project* (LALA), the state government discussed the potential of participation as flagship investors in a 'heritage tourism' product, with the trustees of the Khoo Kongsi. Hiring the use of Cannon Square, the Penang Development Corporation organised the *Chinatown Experience*, bussing in tourists, to demonstrate tourism interest and revenue potential. Private tour operators followed with *Emperor's Night*, and eventually the trustees held their own event as host for the annual *Baba Nonya* (Straits Chinese) convention.

The tenants of the 24 shophouses tolerated these intrusions but finally registered disquiet when they were unable to use the newly restored temple stage for their own traditional Hungry Ghost opera performances. They were informed that the cost of fire insurance was too high and that it was reserved for government shows. The conservation of the stage had therefore prohibited the performance of the cultural heritage traditions of the community and instead spawned the reinvention of cultural heritage traditions for the upper middle-class Straits Chinese and supported the manufactured 'cultural' products that accompany heritage tourism.

In 1995, concerned that if the trustees of the Kongsi did not wake up to the modernising world they would lose the commercial potential, the State Executive Councillor for Tourism enthused over the creation of a tourism product in Cannon Square. She proposed converting the shophouses into either a boutique hotel or fun and entertainment products such as the American leisure and entertainment centre 'Rippley's believe it or not'. The concept of a heritage theme park was taken up by one of the younger Khoo trustees who began negotiations with a local developer. It was not until the developer requested to include the temple, that the older trustees finally voiced their disquiet over the whole idea. A less controversial concept was then put forward to convert the houses into tourist shops, restaurants, and a hotel, returning to the original concept in the 1993 Economic Planning Unit's development proposal.

This concept was presented during the UNESCO *Economics of Heritage Conference* workshop in May 1998. By then, the existing *AKS* tenant community was to be evicted in favour of new commercial tenants. Had it not been for the combination of the 1997 Asian financial crisis and the *AKS Repeal* which reduced the vibrancy and interest of the city, the project would have gone ahead in 1998.

In 1999 three events were organised for the square - the State Chinese New Year street party, the Nanyang Folk Culture Society's *Wonders of Chinese New Year* and 20th Century Fox's filming of Anna and the King with a Cantonese film star, Chow Yong

Fatt, who drew more local attention than the star, Jodi Foster. Prior to these events the diverse Chinese language groups of inner-city communities rarely ventured into areas inhabited by different language groups. These public events overcame the usual reluctance to wander into others' territory and exposed the Chinese to each other's heritage environments.

The 24 shophouses in Cannon Square, or rather the land on which they stand, was originally given to members of the Khoo Kongsi trust in order to build their homes. The original trust deed describing this agreement was written in old Mandarin and was translated to the current trustees, whose English education had not included Mandarin. Many had left the square during the Japanese brutalities, and few returned after the war, preferring instead their new suburban retreats. The poorer relatives continued in residence. By the time of the *AKS Repeal*, only four shophouses were occupied by male Khoos as heads of households. The rest were inherited through the female Khoo line, or comprised members of other clans.

The current trustees, descended from the Khoo Kongsi's nineteenth-century founders, have not lived there for at least the past two generations and comprise elderly, aristocratic, English-educated, Straits Chinese gentlemen. They appear aloof and out-of-touch and differ greatly from their predecessors, who, according to the tenants, were more in touch with their young members' and tenants' interests and less involved in the profitable development of other Kongsi land.

When the *Rent Control Ordinance* became an Act in 1966, the tenants believed they would live in these shophouses in perpetuity and as their standard of living improved, invested in internal modernisation and repairs. In the 1990s when the night soil bucket system was replaced with the MPPP's sewers, the tenants and landlords divided the costs for connection. Maintenance from the landlords ceased when the *AKS Repeal* was announced and when development proposals for the square were tabled.

The realisation that as tenants they were neither included in the development proposals nor due for compensation should they leave, became evident only when notices to quit by 31 December 1999 were served on 22 March 1999 [Fig. 6-11]. Twenty to 90 years of continual occupancy by some of the residents did not protect them from the Repeal. Galvanised into action, they sought support from other groups of distressed *AKS* tenants, refusing to leave until they were offered a 'proper and reasonable arrangement' (Khoo and Jenkins, 2002: 221). The trustees, unprepared for the press exposure that followed, claimed 'the courtyard area has been designated by the government as a heritage area and we are just conforming to the government's plan for heritage restoration'(Choong, K.K., 1999). Both parties, inexperienced in such a public issue, handled the situation clumsily. The tenants, after the initial polite

requests for discussion finally took a confrontational approach. Fired by other ugly evictions in the city, they put up banners written in simulated blood, whilst the Kongsi called in real-estate valuers to conduct intimate social surveys of the tenant's circumstances (Khoo and Jenkins, 2002: 221).

A suggestion that the tenants run the commercial establishments desired for tourism, whilst living above the shop, came as a compromise solution from the State chairman of the *AKS Repeal* Committee. The tenants proposed 'soft renovations' and a reasonable increase in rent with security of tenure, whilst offering to play their 'roles' as 'guides and narrators' of the oral history of the Kongsi. Thus, they became actors in a play about their forefathers' lives, instead of living out their culture within its existing environment. In other words, the living culture was to be replaced by cultural heritage tourism. Their only alternative and a chance to retain their cultural dignity was to ask for compensation or first refusal on new leases after renovations. Or, as a last resort, they asked to be relocated in other Kongsi-owned houses in the area.

The economic downturn and possible embarrassment over the unpopular publicity, plus delays in obtaining building approval, won the tenants a year's reprieve, whilst they battled for compensation. The spirit of the square, however, changed. The older tenants were resigned to the inevitable and hung on, although many claimed they had already 'moved out', meaning the ancestral altars and other religious artefacts are now squeezed into low-cost housing units of 500 square feet, designed without space for family altars (ibid.: 220).

By February 2001 a few of the houses were still occupied, whilst the remaining properties fell into stages of disrepair. Ironically the community would have remained had the trustees followed their own instincts. During the 1999 UNESCO *Conference, Economics of Heritage* open workshop, they were asked what they would have done if they had not been encouraged to develop a flagship tourism product; they immediately replied 'Simply raise the rent'.

Had the state provided the incentives recommended in the 1997 *Penang Tourism Action Plan,* the Khoo Kongsi trustees and tenants may have spent the final year of the *AKS* transition period working together rather than against each other. And such tenants as Khoo Chye Huat could have spent her last years greeting other dignitaries to those she had already seen; the late *Agong*, the Malaysian Prime Minister, China's Vice President Hu Jintao, and Chow Yung Fat.

Khoo Chye Huat was 94 when she received a letter from the lawyers of the Leong San Tong Khoo Kongsi trustees, evicting her and her family from the house she had lived in since the age of five [Fig.6-12]. Told by the Kongsi that, as a government initiative, they could not go against the development proposal, Khoo had to leave her

home by 3 July 2002 or pay double rent. After years of unpleasant wrangling which caused a community split, and perhaps in recognition that the inner city was becoming unattractively devoid of inhabitants, the family were offered alternative accommodation, owned by the Kongsi, in Acheen Street. A small sum of RM 5,000 was also offered to cover removal costs (Ong, 2002). Like many others who have lived under the *AKS*, the low rents gave Khoo's son the opportunity to use their savings to improve their rented home, upgrading a cooking area and rewiring for example, and to buy a low-cost unit in the suburbs as well as educate Khoo's grandson at a private college. These controlled rents, therefore, were crucial to the advancement of Malaysia's poorer urban society.

Khoo's emotional attachment to her home has been passed on to her grandson who challenged the trustees from the first letter of eviction in March 1999. As the fear and the frustration grew, his family were advised to avoid any form of demonstration, particularly during the Prime Minister's visit for the *National Chinese New Year Festival* in 2001. In respect of his family, he obediently ceased his activities. Instead he expressed his cultural identity with the city by becoming active in the *Inner City Drama Festival for Children* which produced four street plays, a previously unseen street activity, based on research of the inner-city communities conducted by the students of local schools. He created a character called 'Mr. Love Lane' who zoomed around the city on a Vesper borrowed from a worshipper at the *Mesjid Kapitan Kling*, taking photographs of abuses to heritage buildings whilst comically voicing his outrage.

The plays, which moved around from Cannon Square to Armenian Street, enraptured the audience which grew to 250-strong. Even the old Indian *sangam* occupants whose home was next to one performance area became critics and advisors during the rehearsals, and stood each night to watch the players perform. Most of the young performers were surprised at the richness, interest, and community spirit of the inner city, unknown in their suburban neighbourhoods.

By 3 July 2002 the last of the Cannon Square tenants moved out, many to alternative accommodation in the suburbs; a few, like Khoo and her grandson, moved into other Kongsi houses. Khoo Chye Huat 'passed away' in an alien home a few months later. Her grandson, 'Mr. Love Lane', moved to China.

UNESCO LEAP project

During his first visit to George Town in 1998, Engelhardt had encouraged the Penang Heritage Trust to apply, as UNESCO *LEAP* site managers, in order to organise a community awareness project with the Kapitan Kling Mosque youth group. The young people were vocally aware of their Tamil Muslim identity and their built heritage, but were frustrated by the decision-making of their elders on the Mosque committee. This committee had previously approved the demolition of part of the Muslim enclave in

favour of a modern building, on land leased for a nominal monthly rent of RM 1,000. This was the same committee, which had received funding to repair the roof of the mosque, and instead replaced the carpet.

In some instances 'better educated' than their elders in modern issues such as 'marketing', the youth wanted a 'needs analysis' to investigate the revenue potential of the *Kapitan Kling Mosque waqf* land in order to project how the community could best be served with this fund. This was their comprehension of the true nature of *waqf* endowment. The analysis, they hoped, would aid the committee to make appropriate decisions. The all-male committee members, however, were indebted to the Majlis Agama Islam Pulau Pinang (MAIPP) for their positions. Whilst the *Mesjid Kapitan Kling* community were predominantly Tamil Muslims, the MAIPP employed mainly Malay Muslims from Penang and other states. Thus, it was felt that the community's needs were either not understood or as 'migrant Muslims', their needs were not a priority. Even though they may have been in Malaysia for several generations the common feeling voiced, particularly by the women, was that they were still migrant families with relatives in India.

The *Community Participation in Waqf Revitalisation* was coordinated by the *Mesjid Kapitan Kling* Qariah Committee and PHT, as a *LEAP* project [Fig.6-13]. Workshops were organised for youth, women, and the elderly for example in order to learn from the community and they from each other. A dilapidated timber Indo-Malay house within the Acheen Street Mosque compound was repainted, an abandoned Muslim cemetery was cleaned up and a 'Heritage Youth Club' for the Lebuh Acheh community was formed, all as cultural identity awareness projects. The importance of maintaining the strength of the community was hoped to be a means by which to create a pro-heritage conservation groundswell to persuade politicians and civil servants, and in this case the Religious Council, to participate in the nomination of the site for World Heritage Listing.

The groundswell, however, proved unsustainable, although it had allowed the community to consider collectively their identity without the guidance of their 'community associations representatives'. Instead, they had transferred their need for guidance to the Trust or rather the Honorary Secretary. Those who participated, particularly the youth and women, created discomfort amongst the older male-dominated Mosque committees and Community Associations. Thus, the women continued their meetings with caution, and the official youth group was reconstructed by the MAIPP with invited UMNO members. As the first phase of the *LEAP* project drew to a close the cemetery quickly returned to the state of a rubbish dump and the 'Heritage Youth Club' concentrated more on national flatland bike competitions until it eventually disbanded.

Three events took place within the *Historic Enclave Action Plan* area, challenging the Muslim identity and communities of the area. Firstly, towards the end of 1999 Muslim families in the former *AKS* properties began to move to their new accommodation following rental increases by MAIPP. The effect was to reduce the size of the community *qariah* (male congregation) to below that required for a mosque to exist. This was not due to eviction notices but because security of tenure was unpredictable and the dilapidated properties and high rentals were no longer desirable. Secondly, by the year 2000, RM 5 million was awarded from the Seventh Malaysia Plan for the restoration of the (Indian Tamil) Kapitan Kling Mosque, by which time a Muslim architectural practice had become interested in conservation work and was appointed to the project. Finally the women of the area, supported by the Penang Heritage Trust, re-established a highly visible 'Malay' tradition, that of a mass *Bersunat* (circumcision ceremony).

The Bersunat Ceremony - reclaiming a cultural identity

In May 2001, the traditional rural, *bersunat* ceremony, was introduced into the urban *kampong* context of the *Lebuh Acheh, Lebuh Armenian* area. The Trust facilitated the event through two retired Muslim male teachers, one of whom was a descendant of a former *waqf* benefactor in the area. Indian, Arab, Sumatran, and Malay Muslim families from the nearby police flats were invited to participate. Women from the area prepared the event under the direction of the two retired teachers. On the celebration day itself, the boys selected for the ceremony were bathed, blessed, and dressed in their finery at the *Mesjid Melayu Lebuh Acheh* [Fig.6-14]. They were then paraded on the shoulders of their fathers along Lebuh Acheh and Lebuh Armenian, led by pallbearers carrying symbolic baskets of decorated eggs, and arrived at a colourful marquee where speeches were made, and extracts from the Koran recited. The boys were then fed sticky yellow rice, more an Indian tradition. Finally, they were borne shoulder-high to the coach waiting to take them to hospital. The event brought together the families of the different Muslim communities, introduced to many of them a piece of rural, ethnic Malay cultural heritage and openly expressed it to their multi-ethnic neighbours by proudly parading it through the streets.

Officiated by the wife of the Deputy Chief Minister, the ceremony was viewed as a success. It had to some extent by-passed the cumbersome all-male Mosque Committee, but did not exclude them as many of the members' sons or grandsons took part. It also brought together different Muslim communities often separated through language and ethnic and cultural traditions. During the procession, it laid temporary claim to an area of George Town, openly expressing the Malay culture in an otherwise predominantly Chinese setting, which was important in the reaffirmation of the cultural identity of the Muslim population.

Waqf land -contesting identities

This reclamation of Malay identity in the *Lebuh Acheh, Lebuh Armenian Heritage Development Project* area was to be augmented by those with commercial and political interests. Whilst the Muslim women of the area were re-establishing a Malay tradition, the UMNO Tanjung, Majlis Agama Islam Pulau Pinang, and the Malay Chambers of Commerce expressed concern about the dwindling numbers of 'Malays' in the area and voiced the desire to bring more Muslims back into the inner city.

Earlier proposals within the scope of the *Lebuh Acheh, Lebuh Armenian Heritage Development Project* was the conversion of shophouses along Lebuh Acheh fronting the mosque, into a gallery, a Haj museum, souvenir shops, a Quranic School and a cultural centre (Faezah, 1996). The Economic Planning Unit's proposal had also talked of a 'living museum' and a 'heritage hotel' in the *waqf* properties but made no recommendation for the re-housing of the mosque congregation to be displaced, which became a concern.

In February 1998, the inhabitants of the former Haj ticket office on Acheen Street and occupants of one of the compound houses were informed by the Majlis Agama Islam Pulau Pinang, trustees of the *waqf* properties, that their buildings were required for a museum. Age-old ethnic sensitivities added to their limited understanding of the situation for some felt that they were being moved out as they were Indian and Arab Muslim's rather than Malay Muslims. They were offered housing in a partially completed tower block, away from the inner city, their mosque, place of work and education. The MAIPP promised to return to the area to conduct a survey. They did not return until two years later.

The majority of the *waqf* properties in MAIPP's trust were built before 1948 and therefore came under the *Control of Rent Act.* In October 1998, the MAIPP decided to raise their rents and informed their tenants in a meeting. The MAIPP chose not to follow the *AKS Repeal Act's* rent increase formula as required of landlords but to follow a different time schedule and methodology.

In 2000, the LALA Sub-committee under the Malay chairperson of the government Penang Heritage Centre successfully encouraged all landowners in Lebuh Acheh to repaint their shophouses. The MAIPP was at first in agreement with the proposal and then later backed out of the scheme preferring to initiate their own project. Whilst the majority of the Chinese-owned building's façades along the street were painted and repaired, the Muslim-occupied housing remained dilapidated, encouraging the image of an underdeveloped and marginalised ethnic group. It was possible that retaining this shabby appearance was considered in order to gain sympathy, approval, and substantial government funding for later development plans.

By the end of the year 2001 the new President of the MAIPP, the Deputy Chief Minister, announced that the conservation of *waqf* heritage properties was to take place with RM 40,000,000 funding from the Federal government. However, by the time the fund was announced for the *waqf* area between *Mesjid Melayu Lebuh Acheh* and *Mesjid Kapitan Kling* only 15 Muslim families remained in Lebuh Acheh, once a community of about 45 families. Tired of the poor living conditions, some had gone to stay with relatives; others had alternative accommodation, and the area became much depleted.

In May 2002 the remaining residents of Lebuh Acheh, including those in the mosque compound, were presented with a new development scheme for the *waqf* properties of the *Mesjid Melayu Lebuh Acheh*, before it was presented to either Muzium Negara or the State Heritage Committee. The *mufti* required the MAIPP to develop the *waqf* according to the original bequests. Each *waqf* had to be understood as either general or specific, and if the latter then the rights remained in perpetuity. In simple terms if the *waqf* was a residential property, only residential use could replace it. The land size could not be reduced, and therefore it could not be surrendered to the government for road-widening, for example (although this point has never been put to the test). The *mufti* were consulted at each new design proposal and a council of religious advisors assembled regularly to discuss the design proposals. None of these requirements came to the surface during the Australian proposal for the area. *Waqf* land had not always been observed with such dedication, the Kapitan Kling *waqf*, for example, was originally 18 acres, but by 2001 it had reduced significantly in size.

The small houses previously accommodated many families attending the mosque. However, as a result of socio-economic developments, families now prefer independent living units rather than a room in a house with shared facilities. Therefore, to attract the Muslim community back into the inner-city, MAIPP would need to provide a five-storey apartment block on the land where one property, housing five families, stands today. This requirement was the essence of the redevelopment scheme, which intended to demolish the Indo-Malay compound houses, seen as being of no historic value, and rebuild with modern apartments (*bangsarpuri*). The need to retain and enlarge the population of the *qariah* put new development projects before the conservation of dilapidated buildings.

The *Mesjid Melayu Lebuh Acheh* enclave is a unique example of mid-nineteenth century, Indo-Malay architecture within an urban mosque compound. Careful renovation is possible and sympathetic renovations of the shophouses along Lebuh Acheh could provide more space-efficient housing units to bring in new Muslim residents to the inner city. But currently, these brick and timber properties are perceived, by the Malay Chamber, UMNO Tanjung and MAIPP as a symbol of

underdevelopment; their restoration would be unlikely to change the perception. The experience of conserving the mosque (see Chapter Seven) indicated that such projects depended on foreign expertise and Muzium Negara, whilst to demolish and build new would allow for unhindered opportunities in contracts and consultancies.

In anticipation of a protest from the conservation lobby the Tanjung UMNO Division Chief accused the state of wanting 'to drive Malays away from the town so that non-Malays can take over' (Selva, 2001). Such an unprecedented and emotional outburst was possibly to put pressure on the state to approve the development plans as the Tanjung UMNO's target is to increase the 5,000 Malay population to 20,000 within the next five years (ibid., 2001). The Division Chief had already complained that 'the heritage act' -[none exists]- 'hampers plans on *waqf* land for the benefit of the Muslims who are in desperate need of homes'(Sangeetha, 2001). Often such reported statements are contradictory. It was MAIPP who evicted its tenants along Lebuh Acheh, and MAIPP who neglected the maintenance of *waqf* properties, causing others to move out. As evidence other *waqf* properties along Buckingham Street, occupied by Chinese businesses before the *AKS Repeal*, have remained empty for three years. Local Malay residents who have tried to rent such properties have been turned down. Thus, the perception of the needs of the Muslims, voiced by the Divisional Chief, reflects the reality created by the MAIPP itself.

Evictions in preparation for demolition of the existing buildings around the *Mesjid Melayu Lebuh Acheh*, began in July 2002, but the residents resisted and letters for assistance were received by the Penang Heritage Trust Honorary Secretary as co-facilitator of a further UNESCO *LEAP* project, *Warisan Kita di Tanjung* (Our Cape Heritage). The Trust organised heritage awareness workshops encouraging the community to gain their own sense of place, research their histories and develop their own argument against the development plans. Unused to outspoken protest against the plans of the Muslim political leaders and the Religious Council, the UNESCO's support was used as a political shield whilst the state was in the process of application for Heritage Listing. It also gave reassurance, focus and discipline to the community and their claim of ethnic identity through the physical environment.

As a gazetted site protected under the Antiquities Act, the Muzium Negara should have been included in issues relating to the development of the site from their inception. The reason behind their initial exclusion was that, as discussed by the *mufti*, laws governing the use of *waqf* were above Federal law, suggesting that the Muzium Negara had been incorrect in gazetting the site. The inclusion by UMNO Tanjung, of the Deputy Chief Minister and later the Deputy Prime Minister served to politicise and confuse the issue. In order to find a suitable compromise the Muzium Negara, however, working alongside Badan Warisan Malaysia, has proposed works along

Lebuh Acheh to be permitted within the gazetted heritage site of the mosque. As a result, the compound community is still in residence but the Lebuh Acheh residents have finally been evicted. Meanwhile there has been a call by UMNO Tanjung to investigate the degazetting of the site, to allow the redevelopment to take place, without the embarrassment of conflicting Federal and religious laws.

If the conservation debate relates only to the conservation of tangible built heritage then the events related to the *Mesjid Lebuh Acheh waqf* contradict Kahn's argument that it is the new middle-class Malays, who are supporting the heritage conservation movement. The development proposals for the *waqf* land were put forward by middle-class professional Malays. However, this poses the question, whether conservation of the *waqf* heritage architecture is more significant than the conservation of its intended use, and the *qariah* it supports? If the latter is more culturally meaningful to the Muslim community, then the development project is conserving their 'intangible' cultural heritage, in other words the cultural meaning of their heritage. In that instance the conservation of tangible or physical *waqf* architecture would be in conflict with the intangible cultural tradition.

In terms of Malaysia's architectural history, to remove the Indo-Malay buildings from the urban landscape would be to wipe out the record of Malay influence in George Town's architecture. Clearly, UMNO Tanjung, the Malay Chamber of Commerce, the MAIPP and the development architect do not identify their culture with these buildings, although they are looking for a built identity. Perhaps more importantly land value, the need to provide modern homes as symbols of development, contemporary living arrangements as well as the need to retain a *qariah* for the mosque and respect the *waqf* use are seen as more pressing concerns than the retention of a few dilapidated buildings.

The suggestion by the PHT that other, less historically and architecturally significant, *waqf* sites be developed in favour of the *Mesjid Melayu Lebuh Acheh* compound, demonstrated a greater awareness by the Trust. However, it would appear that MAIPP has already planned modern development on these sites confirming that the greater goal is to increase the Muslim population (Selva, 2001). This in all probability would require the realignment of electoral boundaries in order to offer UMNO representation to the enlarged Muslim population.

The *AKS Repeal* and urban revival

The effect of the AKS Repeal

The established patterns of inner city life saw irreversible changes as the transition period for the *AKS Repeal* began in September 1997. A prescribed government formula,

used over a 27-month period, incrementally increased rents until 31 December 1999 when the final increment should have reach a near-market value.

The 1993 USM survey, of rent-controlled premises of George Town, identified that of the 8,284 pre-war houses under the *AKS* within George Town, 17% comprised owner-occupiers, 26% rent-free tenants, and 56% sole, chief or subtenants. Of property use 51% was residential, 17% commercial and 30% mixed use (Toh, 1999). In the inner city 65% of properties were residential, and yet since the 1973, *Interim Zoning Plans*, the same area had been designated for commercial development. The *AKS* provided a form of security-of-tenure and social housing for the working classes creating a legal contract between property-owners and chief tenants, and a 'social' contract between chief tenants and subtenants. The chief tenants would often provide the service of administrator and property manager, for the less educated and single language-speaking subtenants. In these cases, the landlords tolerated the subtenancies as an acceptable social service. A further social facility, still in existence, are the letter writers who sit under shady trees in the street; they offer their services to those unable to write in either their own or the official language.

Muntri Street and Love Lane Social and Physical Surveys

The Penang Heritage Trust, as part of the state's Control of Rent Repeal Subcommittee, was requested to study in-depth two streets, in order to assess the impact the Repeal would have on the residential and commercial activities. As a volunteer for the Trust at that time I was asked to undertake the study. Muntri Street and Love Lane were chosen, and the foundation data were taken from the 1997 *AKS* tenant registration exercise, issued by the Penang Geographical Information Service. Further data were collated from the local assemblyman's office whose knowledge of his constituents was well grounded.

The study discovered a vibrant community of mainly Chinese tenants of all ages with tenancies stretching back into the 1920s. Almost one quarter of the population were of school age or younger, another quarter of retirement age with 53% of employment age. Only one extended family group existed whilst the majority were two-to-four-member households. 55% were employed within walking distance of their shelter with 22% within the same street, often the same shophouse as their dwelling space. 80% of the properties within the two streets were rent controlled. Almost one-third were registered as owner-occupied out of 164 premises, higher than the state average of 17%, although the large number of associations within these streets could have accounted for this number. More disturbing was the number of premises under one ownership, which grouped together, offered large developable plots of land [Fig. 6-15].

The business use in 1999 reflected the last remnants of former traditional trade areas; laundries close to the hotels, the carpenters close to the Carpenters Guild and the tailors and seamstresses near their association buildings and the retirement lodges of former 'black and white' *amah* (nannies). However, more modern trades had entered the area - the printing presses, warehouses, electrical and car workshops dependant on a local market. Since the Repeal, and following the dislocation of local communities, these have changed again and a new group of commercial activities has developed; backpackers' hostels and pubs, and Internet cafes, based on an unknown and unsustainable demand. One new use that serves a local need is the breeding of swiftlets for their edible nests, which is ideally suited to dark, damp abandoned buildings; at least eight such sites can be found within these two streets [Fig.6-16].

What was also reflected in the 1997 registered valuation assessment use when examined adjacent to the actual use was that they did not compare. Either planning and building laws were ignored, or not enforced or they were simply not known or understood. This demonstrated three possible areas of contestation in conservation planning. Firstly, any future legislation related to conservation planning was likely to receive the same treatment as existing laws. Secondly, in order to encourage such laws to be effective an amnesty would be required for past misdemeanours (as had happened with the Prangin Mall for repairs to cracked houses submissions to Council). Thirdly, incentives for enforcement as well as co-operation by landlords and owners would need to be considered. The changes in the inner-city tenancies gave an opportunity for this to happen.

In 1999, 51% of the properties were used by a variety of businesses, but only 14% of the surveyed total may remain. Supporting business would either vanish completely or relocate away from the existing environment, along with the self-employed tenants. A recent Chulia street survey suggested only 8% as owner-occupiers were certain they would remain (Mead, Wundersitz and Sidhu, 1999). This decanting of the tenant population to other parts of Penang state would leave some properties empty and deprive existing and remaining businesses of customers and employees. It was feared that, with the relocation of the tenants, the inner city reciprocal connections would collapse.

The AKS Repeal and aftermath

When the *AKS Repeal* finally came into effect on 1 January 2000, the city's physical and social fabric was exposed and vulnerable. Development controls were not in place - neither the *Heritage Enactment*, the *Draft Structure Plan Review*, nor any of the three *Local Plans* for the affected conservation areas. *The Draft Conservation Guidelines*, updated in 2000, had not been gazetted, the *State Conservation Policy* (Strategy) was not publicised, and the application for joint listing with Melaka for inscription to the

UNESCO *World Heritage List*, had not been submitted. Of even greater concern was the lack of a new *Tenancy Act* to protect the tenants and guide the landlords. When at one time all had seemed in the tenants' favour, the tables were turned with the Repeal affecting more than 16,000 households.

In mid-1999 as 'rental hikes' and evictions began to reach the notice of the press, the assemblymen, responsible for the 1997 *AKS Register* of tenants for housing, provided a mediation service between landlords and tenants, with limited success. A service centre was also set up by the State Housing Department in the old Town Hall for the same purpose. This did not materialise until two months after the *AKS Repeal* came into place, augmenting the confusion and stress of the tenants. Social housing was to be offered for the hardcore poor in the form of newly completed rental flats, close to the inner city and funded by the Federal government. However, applications and allocations of these flats became a highly politicised issue.

The state government attempted to revitalise private low-cost and low-medium cost housing projects which had stalled during the 1997 economic crisis. Units are progressively financed by the purchasers as the project develops. Thus, purchasers service loans for housing units that they cannot yet use whilst paying rent for their accommodation elsewhere. For many, the controlled low rents of the inner city had given them the chance to purchase units. However, as rents rose and housing projects remained unfinished, this left the purchasers to both service loans and pay 'market rents', creating financial hardships following the Repeal. Some were not even offered the chance to pay market rents for their former *AKS* propreties and were left with neither their old home nor a new one.

Social housing and urban revitalisation

In September 1999, the Chairman of the *AKS Repeal* Sub-committee once again approached the Penang Heritage Trust, in this instance to investigate the possibilities of social housing within the inner city fabric. The Trust chose a row of seven shophouses, known to be for sale and in a poor position for a commercial enterprise. Thus, state acquisition was less likely to be politicised. The design provided units of the size offered in government rental housing - 500 square feet, suitable for small families, and a communal house for the elderly [Fig. 6-17]. One unit was proposed as a management centre for the estate, based on the Peabody Trust arrangements in London. The Peabody Trust was chosen as a model as it worked with multicultural communities, evidenced by their information printed, for example, in Mandarin, Arabic, Urdu, and Gujerati.

Costs were prepared which indicated a philanthropic exercise as both purchase and conversion cost could not be recovered from the social housing rentals. However, the state would have increased its housing stock. The proposal also recognised the

need for a non-profit-making Housing Association to be established in order to determine the tenants suitable for the scheme and to manage the rental and maintenance issues. This concept proved difficult to envisage. However, the state did form the link between urban renewal, social housing, and conservation. As a result, the Chief Minister applied for a RM 80 million (Ringgit Malaysia) low interest loan from the Federal government for urban revitalisation and conservation. The State then matched this with another RM 20 million grant, RM 14 million from MPPP and six million from the state, to include social housing incentives in the scheme. Coincidentally this occurred during the build-up to the Federal and state elections of November 1999, when the Chief Minister had promised to resolve the issue during his campaign.

Landlords' response to the release from controlled rents

The reaction of the landlords to their tenants varied considerably. One of the major established Chinese families which held approximately 80 properties in the city, followed the incremental formula laid down by the government and then negotiated a 90% increase in rents at the Repeal. The new tenancy agreements were for six years negotiable with a 10% increase each year. The increases were still well below the perceived market rentals and affordable by the tenants. The landlord's comment was that property owners would be 'mad' to get rid of their tenants; a far better solution was to slowly increase rents and in so doing keep the city alive. He was the first landlord to offer five properties to the state government for the social housing renewal scheme. Others raised their rents many hundred times their *AKS* rents as a form of legal eviction, and some raised their rents minimally but only offered security of tenure for a year.

The Majlis Agama Pulau Pinang (MAIPP) on the other hand, property owner and trustees to 137 properties, presented eviction notices to the non-Muslim tenants on its properties, at first giving them the 1 January 2000 deadline, then a further six months to a year (Amirrudin, 2000). The Chinese shopkeepers moved as soon as they had found new accommodation and the *waqf* properties of Buckingham Street emptied. Considerable income from the rents was lost, as they remain empty whilst the MAIPP plans its next course of action. In contrast, in Little India, the majority of the tenants agreed to pay the new rents as many had invested in their shop refurbishment and were able to sustain their customer base in a thriving area. Thus, the life of the inner city was thrown out of balance; Little India remained highly active, whilst the Muslim and Chinese areas struggled to survive.

The community realities

The information gathered on tenants and landlords following the *AKS Repeal* came from a survey I carried out for the first four months of 2000, on behalf of the PHT. Noticing my neighbourhood depleting, furniture strewn across the streets and an increase in the numbers of people sleeping on the five-foot-ways, I began to work with my local assemblyman and later the state government in order to map, street by street, the tenants and communities who were in negotiation with their landlords. In four months, over 1,600 cases were recorded and monitored. Large sections of communities of particular ethnic groups were under threat of dislocation if their negotiations were unsuccessful [Fig.6-18]. Rather than be faced with housing insecurity, those who could afford to do so, moved out to alternative housing on the periphery of the city. Though some have resettled happily, the *feng shui* belief in the benefits of a location meant the mental upheaval of moving was enormous.

On 11 January 2000, after an ugly eviction and demolition of pre-war houses in Noordin Street within *Conservation Zone One*, the affected tenants formed an action group called Save Our Selves (SOS). Led by a local character known for his outspoken 'alternative' views, the group became active, with posters, meetings and planned strategies to bring the plight of the tenants to the attention of the government through 'collective, creative and lawful-action' (Choong, K.K., 2000a). SOS gave the tenants a voice and highlighted their value to the inner city. The most visible part of their campaign was the sticking of SOS posters on houses affected by the changes.

The Chairman of the *AKS Repeal* Sub-committee welcomed the opportunity for tenants collectively to voice their needs and suggested that a 'soft' government loan could be used to encourage landlords to renovate their properties and keep their tenants. Although nothing had been publicised, this was evidently the State government's solution for urban renewal following their unsuccessful attempts to revitalise failed housing projects.

For the tenants, the uncertainty of shelter, business, and employment opportunities created a potentially explosive situation which to some extent the activities of SOS helped defuse. The group succeeded in calling widespread local and international attention to the tenants' plight, but their crusade was increasingly politicised. An earlier tenants' group had formed over eviction notices from properties owned by one family trust, but an opposition party had begun to use the meetings for their own election campaign. The tenants disbanded and some later joined SOS.

Although the loan had been talked about since October 1999, nothing had materialised by the three-month eviction deadline of 31 March 2000, and as it drew near the tenants were showing signs of desperation and requested the opportunity to meet the Chief Minister. However, as the state became patronising rather than helpful, SOS contacted the Minister of Housing and Local Government for Federal

intervention. As the Minister is also the Vice-President of the Malaysian Chinese Association, contact by SOS was considered as a slight against Gerakan's state leadership, rather than a cry for help from soon-to-be-homeless tenants. SOS requested amendments to the *AKS Repeal Act* that would dictate the legally permitted increases in rent and prepare a compensation formula.

A mass rally was organised by SOS, but the emotionally charged audience of tenants 'requested' the invited political representatives to sign a prepared resolution to amend the Repeal. The DAP and the MCA representatives signed, the two Gerakan politicians declined, regretting the way they had been 'cornered'. The SOS leader's response was 'they better get used to it because we elect them and we are the boss' (Choong,K.K., 2000 b). This open confrontation was alien to the way government expected their electorate to behave, even when government policies had threatened the security of their homes, occupations and families.

A disclosure in Parliament that 'Penang State Government had not reported to the Federal government on problems faced by tenants following the repeal...' caused the tenants to stage a further protest at KOMTAR to coincide with closed-door meetings between the local government and a major family trust (*Sun*, 4.3.2000). The Chief Minister was requested to explain the lack of a report to Parliament but failed to comment. In response the SOS secretary announced a 'harassment trail' until a meeting was organised with the Chief Minister and their questions answered. 'The government is elected to serve the people and not to ignore their urgent problems' claimed one of the protest letters.

It came as no surprise, therefore that when the SOS secretary and a member walked towards the Chief Minister's moving car, covering the windscreen with a protest banner, their action led to their later remand in custody and claims of unlawful assembly. The Chief Minister had been officiating at the opening ceremony of a row of 16 former residential shophouses converted into gentrified commercial units, just as tenants were losing their homes. The papers responded to the drama with headlines such as 'Demonstrators go overboard on rental issue', 'Desperate Act' and 'Irate tenants block CM's car '(William, 2000; *Sun* 18.3.2000; Choong K. K., 2000c).

With their leader in jail, the SOS members held a press conference explaining their contact with the Ministry of Housing and their distress at hearing that the Penang State government had not reported their plight (*Star*, 20.3.2000). Speaking to the press is a resort used by those who are frustrated with the government's attempts to sideline issues. A backlash occurred, however, and a smear campaign was initiated, questioning the SOS's position as a legal society. But the situation for the tenants was so dire that tactics such as these did not deflect them from their goal nor their support

for their leaders for whom they held candlelight vigils until their release after several nights in custody; they were released when secret bail was raised.

Meanwhile the 'community arm' of Penang Heritage Trust, in support of SOS, had been in communication with the Ministry of Housing and Local Government, and sent a paper together with evidence of the tenant-landlord negotiations, urging the State Heritage Committee and the Repeal of Rent Control Committee to be combined in order to solve the heritage and housing problems in a holistic manner.

It would appear that the local government was unprepared for the tenants' and NGOs' response to the mounting housing crisis, the dislocation of communities and the threat to the heritage environment. SOS's protests and persistence coupled with the Trust's and the Consumer Association Penang's (CAP) stand brought the severity of the situation to a head. Shortly after the remand order the Chief Minister called a meeting with his heads of departments, myself (as author of the landlord-tenant data) and the CAP to assess the tenant realities. The SOS members were released the same day (22 March).

The final issue of the report recorded in April 2000 itemised 1,681 cases, not the 16,000 families that the 1993 Universiti Sains Malaysia survey had predicted. Thus it was deemed that the situation was not as dramatic as SOS claimed. These figures, however, came from the tenants who had known how to seek help. There were many others, particularly ignorant and poorly educated subtenants, who had no knowledge of the Repeal, or if they did, of how to seek help. Each day SOS was discovering many new cases as they interviewed tenants in the city.

The meeting achieved little, though it highlighted the state government's preference for statistical rather than empirical data. The statistical data showed that the number of housing units available for purchase was greater than the need for housing. The housing, however, had been built on the mainland, away from bus routes, families, community and employment. The relocation to the mainland would have created great hardship for the new owners. The alternative solution to re-house in outlying suburban tower blocks had failed to materialise. Had they been built, the relocation of tenants would have drained the historic city of its residents.

The RM 100 million loan / grant scheme.

The soft loan proposed became a *RM 100 million-loan/grant scheme* thought as a possible solution to keep tenants where they wanted to be, help landlords begin conservation work and provide the tourism industry with a living product. The Penang Heritage Trust, together with some developers and landowners, who had been invited to 19 meetings over the *Draft Design Guidelines for Conservation*, joined the group and initially

discussed the *AKS* tenant realities. The new group proposed incentive schemes, part-grant and part-loan, which would be offered to landlords to refurbish their properties. In return, their properties would be leased to former or new tenants for three to five years. The Trust proposed a *Unit Warisan* - Heritage Unit, to fast track the legal processes for council requirements, in order to encourage landowners to participate [Fig.6-19]. Willing landlords were sought in order to test out the scheme. Thus, a pilot project for a row of 12 houses was proposed as well as several single units.

On 31 March 2000, the final day of the eviction period, SOS held a 'Homeless Night' on the eve. It was supported by the two MCA assemblymen whose constituencies were greatly affected, the police, the curious, and a CNN news team.

Finally, the Chief Minister agreed to a meeting with the SOS secretary and two other members on 1 April; the date was considered insensitive. The next few weeks saw the two meeting groups running in parallel. The first group involved the tenants, NGOs, and local government and the second group involved the landlords, NGOs, local government, and developers. The first was formed to ascertain the tenants' problems, the second to find a method of utilising the revitalisation loan. SOS requested to join the landlords' meeting but it was considered more expedient that the tenants and landlords remained separate in order to avoid conflict.

SOS regularly breached protocol at these meetings when one person's invitation to attend would be accompanied by 12 or more tenants causing security delays. But the state and members of the meetings were tolerant. At the conclusion of each meeting, the press interviewed the Chief Minister who then left in order for SOS to present a statement, considered an unprecedented show of transparency and openness from local government. These opportunities were used as 'legitimate' exposure by SOS to continue to put pressure on the state and MPPP governments.

SOS brought tenants to tell their own stories. There were those so impoverished, elderly or poorly educated that they would be unlikely to rise above their current economic status and needed welfare support and housing. One group had spent their own money on renovations, often with the landlords' permission and wanted compensation to move. A further group's building projects had defaulted leaving them with no alternative home. There were also those who were able to afford a higher rental, but there was nothing of a decent standard to rent for the price they could afford.

With stalled housing schemes and a dilapidated inner city, the only potentially available housing at that time were former Forces units in the Rifle Range blocks, reserved for the Forces, or newly completed Federal rented housing. Some tenants already owned alternative housing, as in the case of Khoo Chye Huat's family who had let their modern accommodation whilst living in dilapidated pre-war housing, using the extra income to further their children's education. In addition, some were not

given the opportunity to pay higher rents for their existing premises. Thus, they had no option but to move. The need for housing therefore was urgent and varied.

After much deliberation it was agreed to test out the conservation for social housing *RM 100 million loan/grant scheme*. It was launched during a press conference for the State Assembly in July 2000, with little ceremony and a confusing pamphlet depicting a modern housing estate [Fig.6-19]. Poor marketing, and lack of logistical planning for the administrative machinery, required to make it a success, meant it had not attracted any qualified applicants, as was relayed during a further State Assembly press conference in November 2000. It had failed on several counts. First, the grant could only be issued after a loan had been used to cover part of the renovation costs. The majority of the major landowners did not need the loans even at the nominal 4.5%. Secondly, appointed Councillors were required to vet and approve the applications in order for the loans and grants to be issued. Perhaps conscious of the desire for 'racial equality' or attempting to avoid political favouritism, none of the prospective pilot projects was approved, although they were well screened and vetted before their presentation to the Council.

A third hurdle was the landlords' preference for the state Housing Department to rent the properties as chief tenant, and manage the subtenancies. However, the state and the MPPP Housing Department were unable to manage or maintain the perpetual increase in new government rented housing and were reluctant to take on more, particularly old ones. An independent housing agency was proposed but lack of qualified personnel curtailed the idea.

Tales of cheating tenants were told by landlords, landlords' agents, and tenants alike. Thus, the vetting procedure for the new Federal rented housing became rife with rumour, jealousies, and misinformation. One example was that car ownership was an automatic disqualification for government rented housing as it assumed a high-income level. However, choked roads around the new housing scheme suggested many cars were not declared on application for housing.

Setting the possibility of corruption aside, the housing issue at government level appears to have been fraught with logistical problems for many years. Until mid-1999, the Department had relied on Penang Geographical Information Service (PEGIS) and the Computer Centre to process the 1997 housing application data. Returned to the Housing Department was a list of the heads of household and their incomes. The households' eligibility for different government housing was based on this information. When the PEGIS full printouts for *Love Lane and Muntri Street Social and Physical Survey* were reconfigured in a more easily readable format and presented to the Housing Department to be checked, the collective incomes of family units were clearly visible and many families were no longer eligible for housing. Their names were then removed from the list correcting the Department's records, but the tenants

were not informed and believed they would receive government housing following the *AKS Repeal*. This indicated a potential vulnerability of the housing allocation system and could have given rise to the accusation of corruption.

As part of the Chief Minister's continued willingness to be transparent on this issue, the NGOs were invited to enumerate the tenancy applications and accompanied the housing and welfare officers to interview tenants, and to participate in the assessment committee to discuss those enumerated. Many anomalies began to surface. Tenants were refused housing if they were not Malaysian citizens. Even if they were married to a Malaysian and had Malaysian children, they were excluded. Second wives and families of Muslim men were not given the opportunity for housing even though the marriages were legal. In addition, those who appeared in the Department's computers as having purchased low cost housing, but defaulted on the loans due to low incomes or inexperience in financial planning, were rejected. The final approval of tenants took place behind closed doors, though both the enumerators and tenants could appeal against the decision and in many cases did so successfully. All this added to the delay in providing decent housing and added to the stress on the inner city.

Meanwhile the inner city housing deteriorated rapidly. In February 2002, a pre-war building collapsed and killed a young Indian Muslim boy. His family had, with the help of their assemblyman's office, applied and appealed against a housing application rejection. The final rejection took place five months before the collapse, but neither the tenants nor the assemblyman's office were informed despite repeated requests to the Department. Thus, the State Secretary's comment in the press that the family had five months to find new accommodation was made without knowledge of this miscommunication. Even if they had known of their rejection, there is no affordable housing in decent repair for rent in the inner city [Fig. 6-20].

Thus, when the state government finally began the preparation of the dossier for UNESCO World Heritage Listing, many of the historic tenant communities had suffered fragmentation and dislocation and much of the built fabric had deteriorated to unsafe conditions. The loan that was to avoid such change was deemed unworkable by various government bodies, leaving the landlords curious as to just how the money would be spent.

Beautification projects

As the inner city was fast becoming an unattractive venue either to visit or to live in, the State Exco Councillor for Tourism had suggested covering up derelict properties, using the hoarding to paint pretty scenes. Following the death of the Muslim boy, the MPPP carried out a hoarding programme. Nevertheless, there needed to be another solution to avoid the total collapse of the historic city and loss of a potentially rich tourist product. Thus, commercial, local government, state, and Federal government bodies considered numerous beautification schemes. Such was the bandwagon effect

of the first project, Little India, that by July 2003 most areas of the historic core were in the process of beautification.

Little India

Frustrated by the slow response of the Khoo Kongsi trustees and the embarrassment caused by public outcry over evictions, the State Executive Councillor for Culture, Arts and Tourism turned her enthusiastic support to the promotion of 'Little India' as a new cultural-tourism product promoted by a commercial retail consultancy and supported by the Indian Chamber of Commerce. In order to maintain the vitality and to sustain growth after the *AKS Repeal*, it was argued that Little India should be managed in a manner similar to a shopping mall. It would need to encourage crowd-pulling 'anchor tenants' who attract large customer loyalty to the area, and subsidise small, less profitable businesses to keep the interest and variety for public enjoyment. What the state, the retail consultancy, and the Chamber of Commerce seemed unable to see is that their proposal reflects what already exists.

Whilst the Indian Muslim and Hindu population is spread throughout the city and state, Little India still retains both a commercial and residential community dating back to the days of the original settlement and serves as the commercial centre for Indians from all over Penang and the northern states of Malaysia. Set within the original grid laid out by Francis Light, the area remains vibrant with activities, even after the *AKS Repeal*.

The area's interest comes not from its architecture - simple and unimposing early shophouses - but from the vitality of the community. King Street's Tamil name *Padavukara Tharuva* - The Street of Boatmen, identifies the connection between the community and the port (Khoo Su Nin, 2001: 100). From Swettenham Pier to the original quayside market was known as *Kitengi Teru*, or street of company godowns. This was where indentured Tamil coolies worked along the waterfront in port-related trades (Meerah, 1989: 13).

Along Queen Street are some of the earliest remaining two storied shophouses with simple wooden shutters on the first floor and 'Indian' terracotta tiled roofs; they are still housing Indian families. The junction with Market Street and Queen Street is the location of the colourful, annual Ramadan market and further towards Chulia Street is the Mahamariamman Temple, built in 1833 on land granted by the East India Company to a Chettiar. The annual *Navarathri* festival commences at this temple, when the Goddess Mariamman begins her tour of the Hindu Tamil community of Little Madras, the former name for Little India (Khoo Su Nin, 2001: 154) [Fig.6-21].

Alive with activity from morning until late into the night, people come on foot by bicycle, *becak* (trishaw), motorbike, car, and van to shop, eat, photograph or simply to chat with old friends. Perhaps the one single element that keeps the streets of George Town 'alive' are the *ottu kedai* or lean-to, stuck-on stalls which flank the sides of cool limewash walls. The location of these appears at first glance to be random. Closer inspection demonstrates how they have used the environment to their best purpose without hindrance to the shophouse activities and are sited along a side wall of a building that offers the shade that their time of business requires. Often open from five in the morning until midnight, these provide a life and vitality and a safety aspect to the streets whilst the more 'up market' shops, roller-shuttered-closed, appear sterile and cold.

Early morning in Little India is for the residents and early workers who walk or cycle the empty streets. Newspaper, *roti* and sundry stalls are already serving customers alongside the long-established green grocery shops and *tosai* coffee shops. The jewellery, video, CD and supermarkets raise and lower their shutters from 9.30 a.m. to 8 or nine at night. The old barbers' shops join the *ottu kedai* and provide a social space where friends meet and sit out in the shade. The *ottu kedai* and hawker operators rent out their businesses temporarily whilst they return to India, taking back the business on their return.

By 6 p.m. hawkers cycle their stalls into the area and cluster around the corner sites catching customers who approach from four different directions. The *roti* hawker, and *putu mayam*, the deep fried Indian delicacy stalls join the papaya and banana stalls that have already opened for the lunchtime trade. By 8 or 9 pm, as the roller shutter shops begin to close, new hawkers appear setting up tables along the roads regenerating the life in the area after a long day. Their sites are chosen where people gather, outside the temple or close by the still-open *ottu kedai*.

Equally an integral part of the organisation of Little India, are the various dormitories for male labourers. Following the *AKS Repeal* many of these dormitories have closed; more recently some have been condemned as they are in a dilapidated state, although the need for such accommodation still exists. These dormitories offer simple, cheap shelter for Indian labourers who come to Malaysia to improve the incomes for their families back home. Many eventually stay here earning pitifully small incomes and are dependant on each other for social support. As residents within the area, they also help to keep the streetscapes full of life and safer.

The eastern end of Market Street is the most auspicious according to the ancient Indian Hindu art of geomancy, *Vaashtu Shastra*, and is predominantly populated by

Hindu businesses. The further end particularly the Market Street-Queen Street junction is predominantly Indian Muslim. Across Jalan Mesjid Kapitan Kling in Market Lane and Chulia Lane the population of Indian Muslim families and businesses continues, whilst the Hindu Lord Ganesha faces east on the corner of Stewart Lane and Jalan Mesjid Kapitan Kling, close by the Chinese Kuan Yin temple. Thus, although the greater concentration of Indian and Hindu communities takes place along Market Street, its populations are spread throughout the surrounding areas.

Early morning, the evidence of the daily cleansing and blessing rituals of the Hindu occupants can be seen outside the shophouses. The roads are swept and washed directly outside the front entrances and a mixture of turmeric and sandalwood is splashed on the pathway between street and building. Camphor is also burnt as part of the morning preparation. The female residents of the area can still be seen creating the rice powder *kolam* outside the front entrance to their homes and businesses. *Kolam* refers to decorative artwork drawn on the floor in front of houses. It is a cultural tradition of south Indian families. Originally made of finely ground rice flour these patterns, handed down from mother to daughter, were formed from one continuous line. The rice flour provided nourishment for small birds and ants. Today the *kolam* is often painted and colourful, but the significance of its placement remains.

At the close of a day's business a further ritual takes place with the smashing of a coconut and the burning of camphor. For some this is performed daily. For others, the more holy days Tuesdays and Fridays, are chosen. The older granite steps, of the traditional street edge, are resilient to the turmeric stains and impact of the coconut and hot camphor flames.

The daily rhythm of these streets is broken only by the requirements of religious festivals. The *Pasar Ramadan* (Ramadan Market), for the Muslim fasting month, brings new stalls into the area outside the Sri Mahamariamman Hindu Temple, inviting an array of colourful festival goods and a temporary population of consumers. Whilst the Pasar Ramadan takes place within one enclave, the Hindu festivals of *Thaipusam, Chitraparuvam* and *Navarathri* are processional in nature. The different chariots used in each festival are pulled through the streets connecting temples and populations. All the streets of Little India are used for the processions attracting huge crowds. Temporary stalls decorated in colourful Indian imagery line the seven-mile processional route that the *Thaipusam* chariot takes to the Waterfall Temple several miles away towards Penang's Hills. The road surface is decorated with colourful *kolam* paintings and piles of de-husked coconuts are smashed before the chariot. The coconut water is used to cleanse the road for the bullocks pulling the chariot to pass over. The street itself becomes a river of devotees, following the chariot as it winds through George Town alive with the colour, smells and sounds of India.

On the periphery of Little India are Chinese temples which also require the street space in front of the temples for rituals, according to their calendar. The burning of twenty or thirty, ten-foot-tall *joss* sticks, hell's money or candles takes place throughout the year, filling the streets with ash and *joss* smoke. Chinese funerals also require the temporary occupation of the street in front of the premises in which the wake of the deceased is held. Thus the street edge, most particularly in Little India and surrounding streets is in perpetual change. It is here, more markedly than any other part of George Town and even the suburbs, that Tamil Muslims and Hindus work together interspersed with Hokkien and Cantonese Chinese neighbours, to sustain a communal and reciprocal way of life.

Whilst talk of the management plan appeared to have died down, Federal government funding for the upgrading of infrastructure and beautification of Little India has taken over. Dialogues had taken place between the Council and the Indian Chamber of Commerce as well as other ethnically based commercial bodies. Images of the scheme were introduced to the public, for the first time (early 2002) through the local newspapers, and from the community's reaction it was evident that it had been misrepresented by people who seldom used the area and who had not consulted those who did [Fig. 6-22].

Such was the undercurrent of ill feeling that the Municipal Council requested a *Cultural Impact Assessment Report*. As I live one street away from Little India and have many contacts there through my daily living patterns I was given the task of compiling the data and writing the report. This demonstrated willingness by the Planning and Building Departments to review their design. The research highlighted a dichotomy between the design proposal's need for visual order and the true order and organisation created by the multi-ethnic community which reflected William Lim's comment that the East 'creates an order from the complexity of apparent randomness through intuitive wisdom and a holistic approach' (Lim S.W. 1998: 25). The MPPP design proposal demonstrated a desire for the visible neatness and precision of a Western form of order created 'within the intellectual context of rationalism'. Car parking lots, pavements running parallel to the five-foot-ways, trishaw lanes, palm trees, and decorative street furniture were all laid out in a neat arrangement on plan, but paid no heed to the needs of the users and producers or the semiotics of their cultures. For example the *kolam* was planned as a fixed tile pattern, disassociated from either the Hindu family rituals or those of the temple. Furthermore, this Hindu symbol was placed at all crossroads including one within the more Muslim area of Little India. The beautification, therefore, had reduced the cultural vibrancy and spirit of the site to tangible concrete imprints of stylised Hindu motifs.

The MPPP held a public presentation in June 2002 where comments from the audience, supported by the local assemblyman, the Chief Minister's political secretary, echoed our findings and comprehension of the issues. *The Cultural Impact Assessment* report led to the Council's Little India Steering Committee inviting the architectural practice, on a voluntary basis, as consultants to the scheme. Our role was to review the design and propose appropriate alternatives. Thus, we reintroduced the historic George Town street edge, the open drain which served the gutterless roofs, crossed by a granite bridge and steps symbolising solidity and strength, a necessary foundation for any home or business to succeed [Fig.6-23].

Some of the community protested that they wanted covered drains in order to be modern like the new developments, and in some areas they will be installed, but once a justifiable explanation had been put forward, they appeared to understand our intent. Communication of our ideas and inclusion in the process was key to avoiding community contestation. What was encouraging was that the government officers, specifically those involved in the implementation of the project on site, were willing to reconsider their plans and began to take note of the cultural heritage of the area.

The *Little India* project site was evident on the earliest map of George Town. Therefore, the likelihood of interesting archaeological findings was possible. Initially for the contractor this project was simply a road to be torn up and replaced. All were inexperienced in how to work in such an environment but some had a greater sensitivity to both the site and community than others. As the project progressed a better comprehension of the needs of the project grew amongst the team. There are still hurdles to overcome, for example, the avoidance of loss of face by those who believed wholeheartedly in the first proposal. The soothing of the suspicions of the Little India community who, having seen the mistakes made over the previous pedestrian mall project by the Council (Campbell Street Mall) is another hurdle. At the start of the project, there was little confidence in the Council's abilities or willingness to listen to their needs.

The voluntary role of the architectural practice has been augmented by the voluntary work of the Liga Muslim, League of Muslims, who have diligently acted as negotiators between the *ottu kedai* and stall-holders (Muslim, Chinese and Hindu), and the Council, for both legalising their licence status and relocation after beautification. Even the League's efforts, however, have failed to stop a slow exodus of the larger commercial outlets, which, rather than risk two years of potentially disrupted trade, are beginning to move into neighbouring streets not affected by the project.

The various places of worship in the area are unable to move and the first phase of the beautification project was planned to take place outside the Sri Mahamariamman Temple. The project time schedule was made by the Planning Department with the Indian Chambers of Commerce who were concerned about

possible disruption to trade before the Hindu festival of Deepavali in November. The Lord Ganesha's birthday celebrations and nine-day festival of *Navarathri* as well as three small chariot processions connected to the temple in September and October had been overlooked. The temple priests were not consulted until these festivals were brought to the planners' attention.

The voluntary role of the architectural practice therefore is to act as advisors to the Municipal Council in two capacities. One, to ensure that the historic George Town street which is part of a holistic balance between building and climate is maintained, particularly with the introduction of modern services and utilities such as telephones, water and electricity and parking meters. In order to achieve these, the practice researched materials and building techniques for the bewildered and inexperienced appointed contractor. The second role is to bring the Council and community together, particularly in respect of the uses of the street as well as the semiotics of materials and beautification elements and their placement within a multicultural environment.

Although the management of the project and the co-ordination of the different utility companies' requirements currently seems to be a chaotic confusion, the inclusion of advisors from the private sector was to be commended. Coupled with a now experienced public, the contractor's nervousness is to be understood. It is hoped that out of this chaos, by working and learning alongside each other, all parties will benefit: the Council, the contractor, the chambers and associations, the architectural practice and the Little India communities.

After working alongside the Council for a year, the practice withdrew from the project. The initial design was then in the process of alteration by those who had been part of the consultation process, giving them a sense of "ownership" and a reassurance that the remaining streets will be more sensitive to the identity of Little India and all that that entails. Adding also to the potential of its sustained success is that Little India represents equally both Hindus and Muslims, mainly under the umbrella of Tamil Indian. The project is therefore identifiably Indian, still very much connected through business and labour to India. The MAIPP, the Malay Chambers of Commerce, and UMNO Tanjung have not been overtly involved. Instead, the Liga Muslim and the Indian Chamber of Commerce, to which both Hindus and Muslims belong, and both of which identify strongly with the Indian communities, have worked together to achieve the project's success.

The Gold Bazaar

As one challenge to the historic landscape diminishes another rises, recently fired by the seemingly unquenchable desire for lucrative government projects. However, each project demonstrates little, if any cultural research, community consultation, and

sensitivity, threatening to trivialise the intangible and tangible authenticity of the cultural heritage.

In contrast to the potential successful outcome, in terms of a sustainable design, of Little India, Federal funds were put forward for a further beautification project in support of the Muslim gold traders on Jalan Kapitan Kling, called *Gold Bazaar*. This stretched between the Chinese Kuan Yin Temple and the Yap Kongsi of Armenian Street. As the project started on site, the State presented the consultant's design to the land and business owners of the street. The landscape architect from Kuala Lumpur had successfully undertaken projects in the new development of Putrajaya, a green field site devoid of active communities of contrasting religions, ethnicity and cultures, historic architecture, irregular streetscapes, and new directives to create a barrier-free environment for disabled users.

The design for Jalan Mesjid Kapitan Kling placed a covered pergola the full length of the street in front of the existing shophouses. The regular rhythm of its posts were out of step with the syncopated rhythm of the varied old shophouse colonnaded five-foot-ways. Thus, they blocked entrances and disturbed the *feng shui* or *vaashtu shastra*. Traditional *neem* trees outside the Mosque were to be replaced with non-indigenous palms and the three main races of Malaysia were symbolised by patterns stamped in concrete close to their places of worship, irrespective of whether this use of their symbol was insulting to their culture or not. The Penang Heritage Centre, AR&T Heritage Consultancy, and my office were all asked to comment. The landowners, business operators, and religious worshippers in the street who attended the presentation echoed our professional understanding [Fig. 6-24/25/26]. A new design concept was requested incorporating the comments from the Penang community. Few changes were made and the project progressed.

The challenge of these projects from 'outsiders' to the authenticity of George Town was resulting in a voiced affirmation of cultural identity both their own and of others from the various multi-ethnic communities. However, the typical Asian shyness of challenging a government project, particularly when it has Federal funding, may result in the Kuala Lumpur landscape architect devaluing a streetscape once rich in intangible, unspoken, cultural heritage.

Conclusion

Since Engelhardt's first official visit to George Town in 1998, much of the cultural vibrancy he witnessed has diminished through depopulation following the *AKS Repeal* and attempts at revitalisation through tourism promotion. The contestations, which have arisen over the various development proposals examined in this chapter, be they

for tourism, *waqf*, or beautification, have to some degree illuminated the 'fragility of Malaysian society' (Kadir Din, 1997:109).

Misinterpretation of cultural heritage tourism development has led to the depopulation of Cannon Square. Equally the reinterpretation of *waqf* land in conflict with the Sixth Malaysia Plan's proposals for its inclusion within tourism development, has led to the eviction of traditional communities and the proposed destruction of their built heritage in favour of modern developments. Cultural tourism promotion, however, is still a sensitive issue, particularly for the Muslim Malays who are disdainful of the hedonistic and voyeuristic traits associated with tourism (ibid.:117), though the *waqf* debate appeared to relate more to identity perceptions and political ambitions than tourism.

The Penang Heritage Trust's management of the UNESCO *LEAP* projects has had little success in encouraging independent community ownership of the projects. However, the Nanyang Folk Culture Society has achieved its sustainability as the concept was initiated by the community it serves. It also had neither religious, ethnic, gender nor political undertones, which serve to confuse the *LEAP* issues.

The *Little India* project is beginning to strengthen a once weak link between MPPP and the community mainly due to the inclusion of a whole gamut of community members, from hawkers to the large retailers and wholesalers. This inclusion has created an ownership of the project on all sides and thus has increased the potential success and sustainability of the project.

In contrast, the *Gold Bazaar* project has not yet included the community in a regular dialogue or consultation, though it may well have consulted the community leaders. Without their inclusion, the comprehension of the diversity of the cultural heritage of the site is lost together with many of the intangible links between the various ethnic groups and respective trades. As the Penang Heritage Trust has moved towards the safer world of conferences and seminars and the MPPP officers who learned from the Little India project are not involved in the *Gold Bazaar* project, it is up to the diverse communities to request inclusion in the decision-making and custodianship of their interrelated intangible and tangible cultural heritage. It is hoped that their reciprocal relationships with each other will encourage them to follow the lead that Little India has given.

Whilst Chapter Six has examined the erosion of the 'intangible' cultural heritage or 'spirit' of George Town, following the *AKS Repeal*, the Khoo Kongsi, MAIPP development plans and trivialised beautification, Chapter Seven goes on to explore George Town's tangible heritage. Six case studies are examined for their relevance to the community, tourism and the state in order to determine the sustainability of each of the conservation projects and their place within urban development.


JALAN
LEBUH FARQUAR
LEBUH
JALAN LARUT
JALAN MACALISTER
JALAN ANSON
JALAN PANTAI
JALAN TRANSFER
PENANG
JALAN ARGYLL
LEBUH LEITH
LEBUH MUNTRI
LEBUH CHULIA
LEBUH KIMBERLY
LEBUH CARNARVON
LEBUH CHEW JETTY
LEBUH CHANNEL
LEBUH CECIL
JALAN KAPITAN KELING
JALAN PENANG
JALAN DR LIM CHWEE LEONG
JALAN GURDWARA (Brick Kiln Rd)
JALAN PATANI
JALAN KEBANGSAAN
JALAN KERAJA
JALAN KEDAH
JALAN TIMAH
JALAN MELAKA
JALAN SIAM
JALAN SEKOLAH
JALAN PASAR
JALAN KAMPUNG JAWA BARU
JALAN S P CHELLIAH
JALAN HUTTON
JALAN DICKENS
JALAN ZAINAL ABIDIN (Yahudin Rd)
JALAN RIA
JALAN JELUTONG
KOMTAR
Super Kontar
Police HQ
Penang Port Commission
Swettenham Pier
Green Hall
Lebuh Union
Lebuh Bishop
Lebuh Gereja
Lebuh Queen
Lebuh King
Lebuh Penang
Lebuh Pantai
Lebuh Aceh
Lebuh Melayu
Lebuh Pasar
Lebuh Chulia
Lebuh Cecil
Lebuh Maxwell
Lebuh Noordin
Lebuh Presgrave
Lebuh Tye Sin
Lebuh Macallum
Lebuh Katz
Lebuh Carnarvon
Lebuh Light
Lebuh Leith
Lebuh Muntri
Lebuh Argyle
Lebuh Farquar
Lebuh Chulia
Lebuh Penang
Lebuh Pantai
Lebuh Cecil
Gat Lebuh Presgrave
Gat Lebuh Macallum
Gat Lebuh Cecil
Gat Lb Acheh
Gat Lb Chulia
Gat Lb Ayer
Gat Lb Gereja
Gat Lb China
Gat Lb Rodrigo
Gat Lb Presgrave
Gat Lb Cecil
Gat Lb Macallum
Gat Lb Ayer
Gat Lb Chulia



a. The Golden Sands hotel one of many in Batu Ferringhi (www.the-hotels.com/pages/asia-my)



c. The Ship, restaurant, typifies the intrusive nature of a mass tourism product in what was once an idyllic *kampong* landscape



b. One small fishing village, which is home to both Chinese and Muslims, lies at the end of the hotel belt. How long will it remain?



c. The new wave of International tourists are from the Middle East. These Muslim tourists tend to stay within the international tourist belt and visit the modern shopping malls and are rarely seen in the inner city

Fig. **6-2** International tourist enclave and tourists



a. The Year of the Snake is heralded by the snake charmer and his cobra, on Love Lane



b. Street theatre " I used to live in an old shophouse", adds a contemporary element to the festival, behind him there are photographs of old Penang



c. Creating your own shophouse, a children's game devised to create local awareness



d. Traditional Chinese songs performed to an enraptured audience



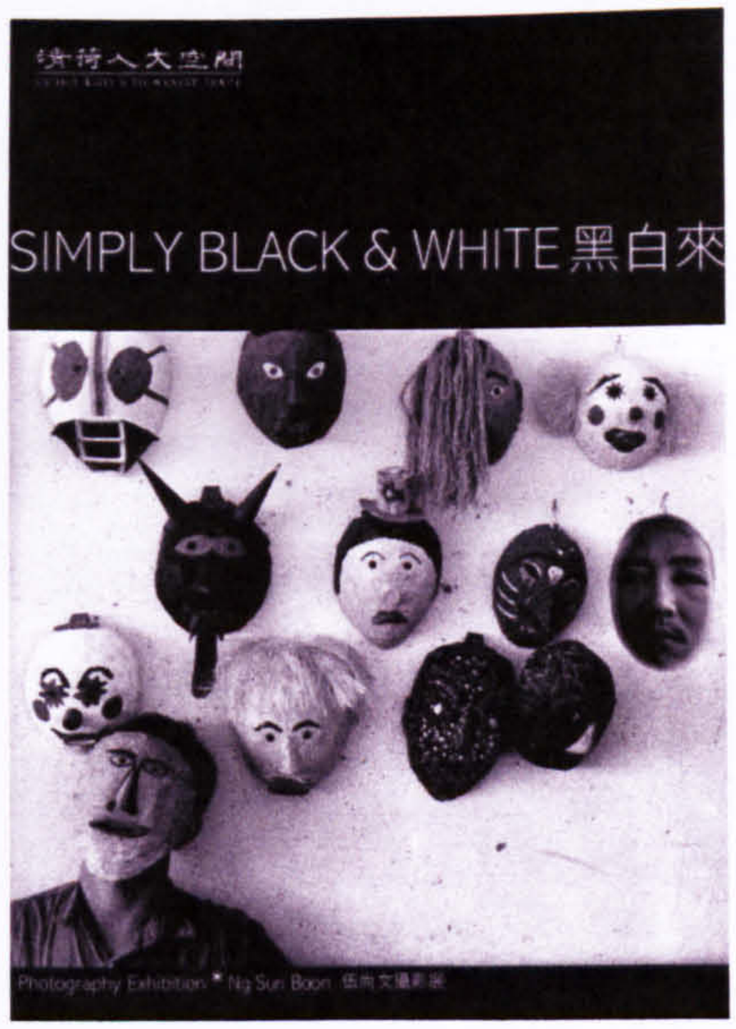
e. Cookery lessons, making the "Love Letter" traditional biscuits for Chinese New Year

Fig. **6**-3 The Wonders of Chinese New Year (Year of the Snake)

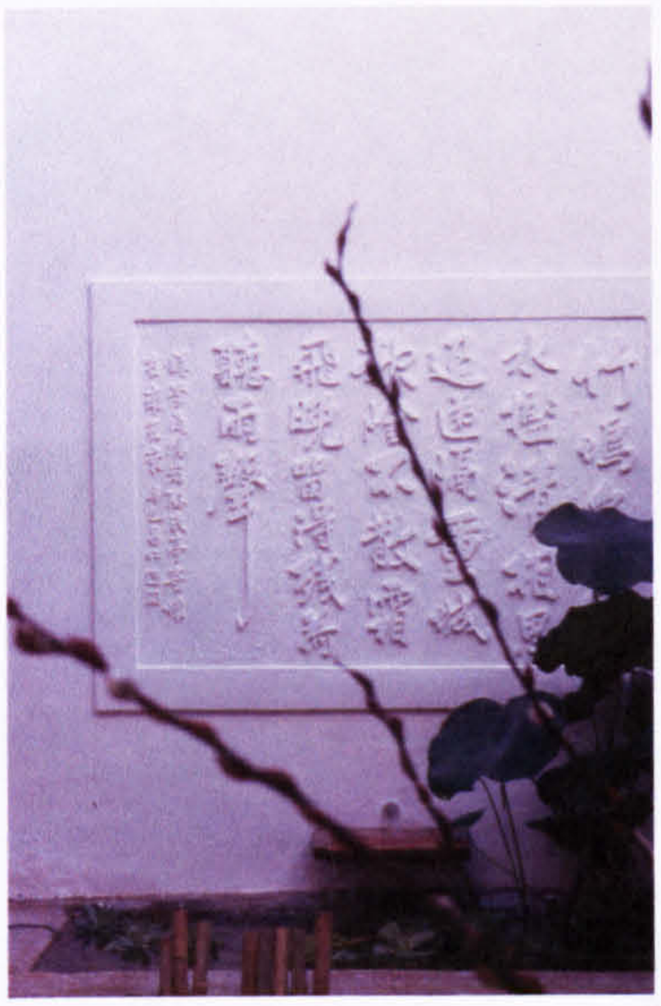


Tan Yeow Wooi

a. 83 China Street, Ching Lotus Humanist Space, restored and run by the Nanyang Folk Culture Society, as a gallery and art space in the hear of the inner city

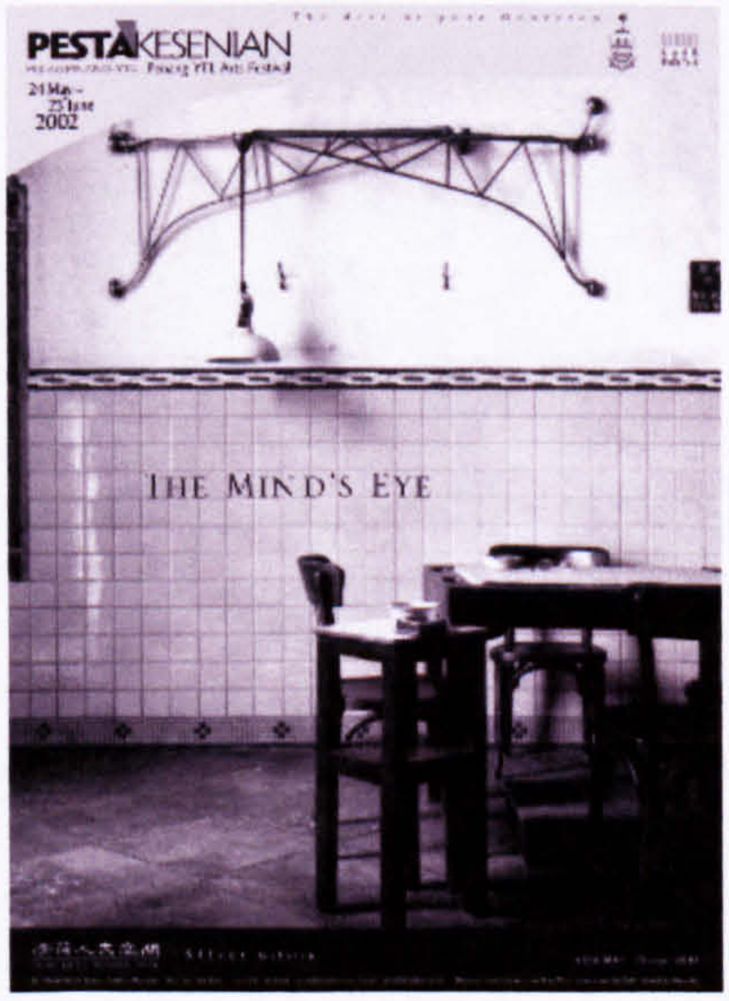






b. (left) The restored well and plaster calligraphy has become an art piece within the restored space





c. (right) The first floor serves as a café and gallery for topical photographs of George Town

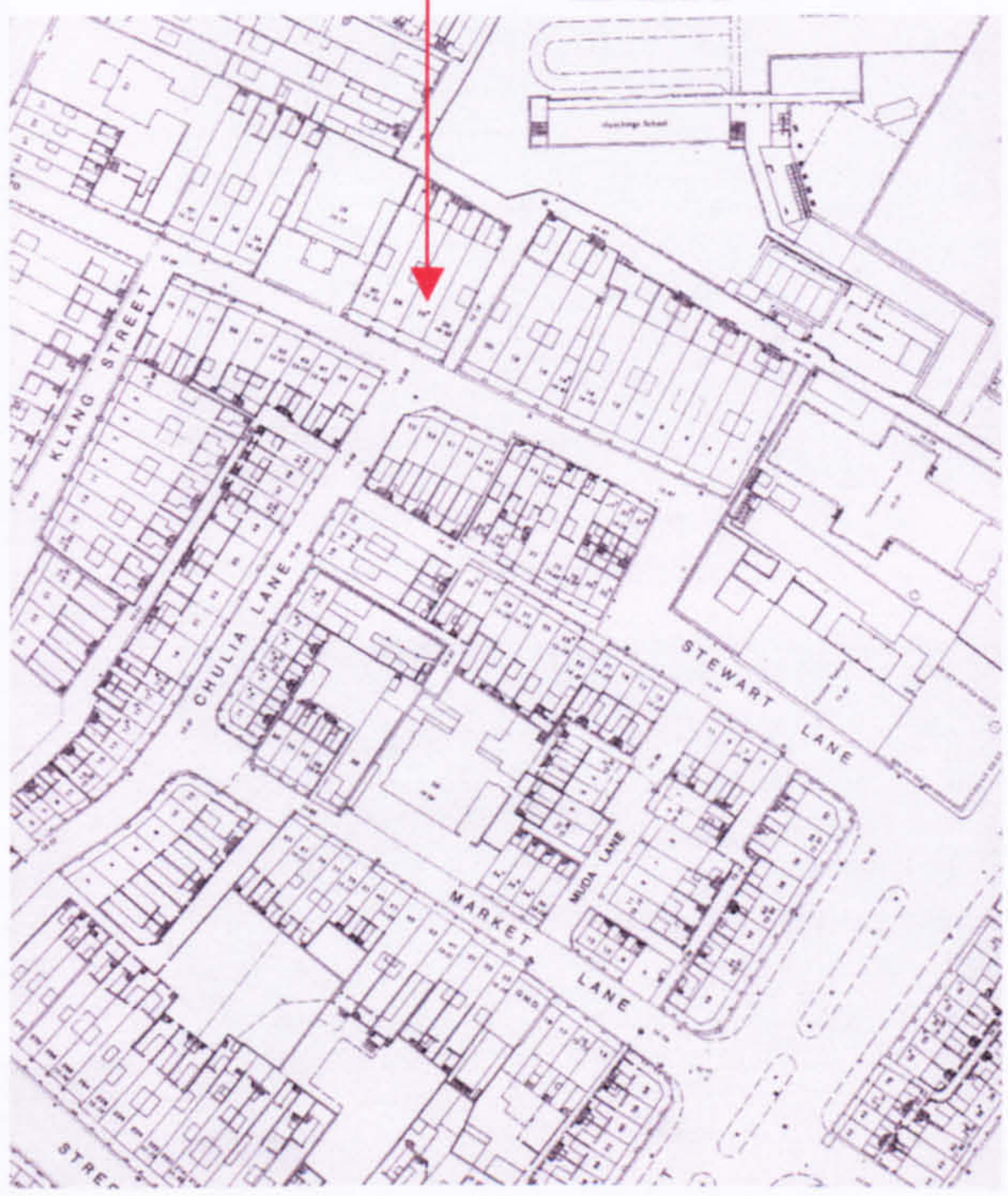
d. (all above) A sample of postcard promotions for various exhibitions held at 83

Fig. **6-4** Ching Lotus Humanist Space, 83 China Street



a. A shophouse on Stewart Lane has been the location of Penang Heritage Trust since 1998

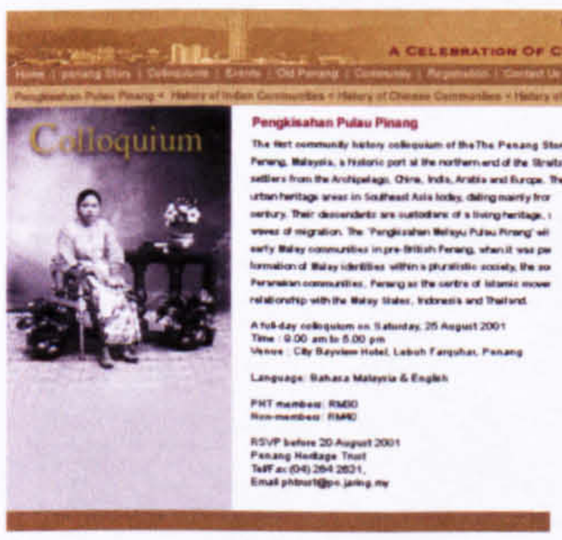




b. Sited in the heart of conservation Zone Two, it has become more in touch with the inner city communities



c. *Anak Anak Kota*, a joint project with PHT, where city kids researched traditional trades, and produced tourist brochures

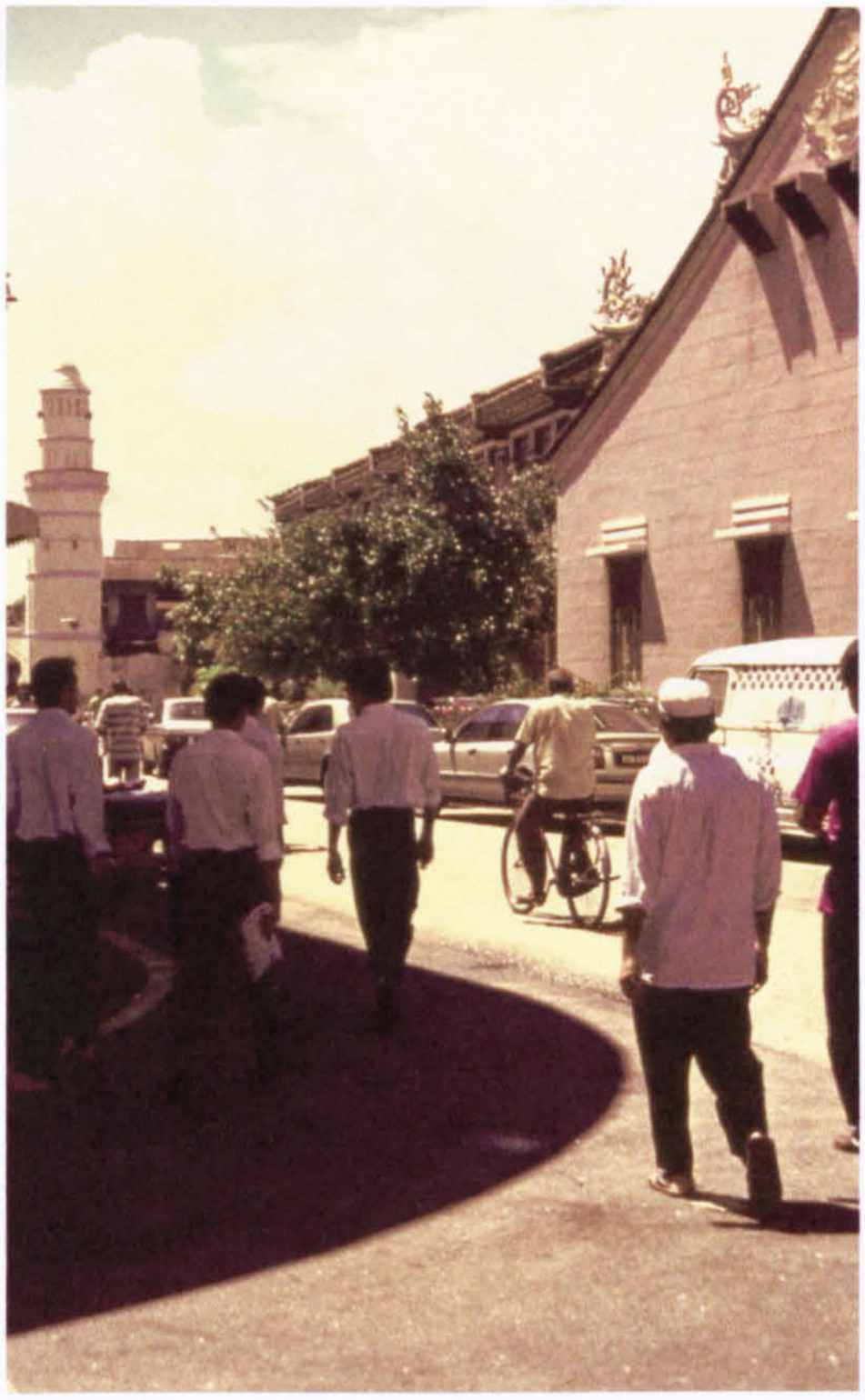


d. PHT has many facets, organising conferences and colloquia for academic exchange (above) and aiding local community participation. (right)reproduced from www.pht.org)

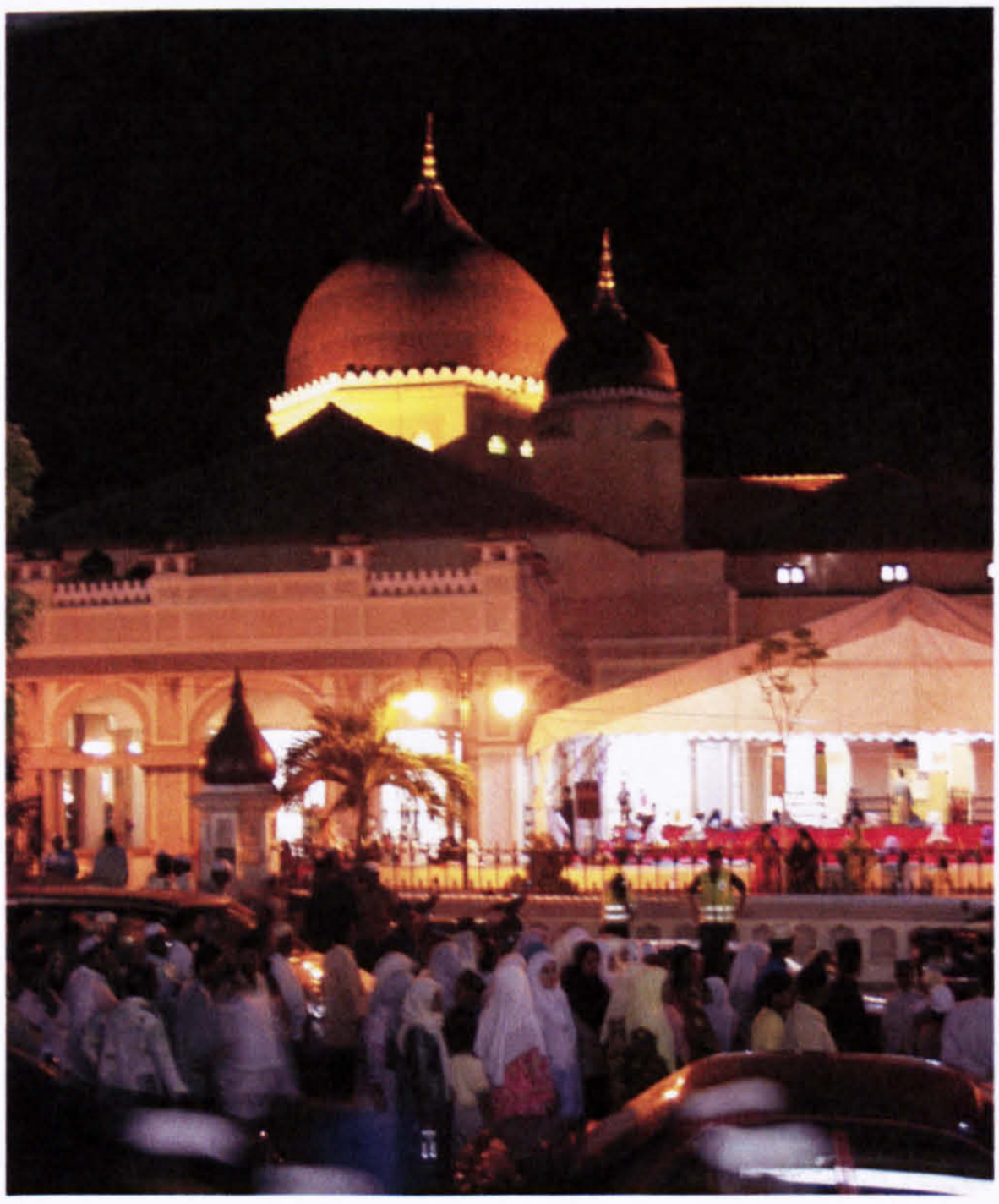


e. Monthly guided site visits are proving popular with members

Fig. **6**-5 The Penang Heritage Trust, 26A Stewart Lane



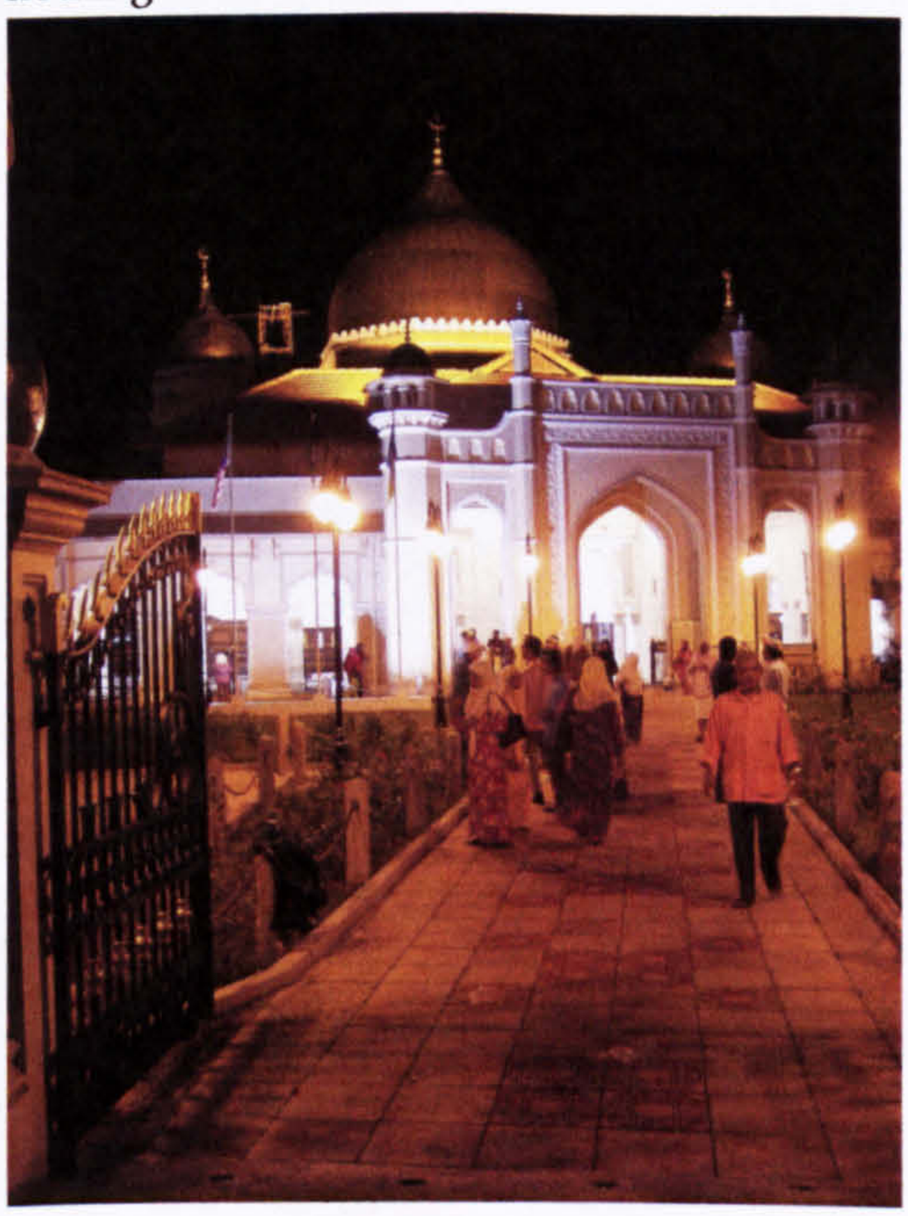
a. Whilst the Muslim community has fewer festivals which occupy generic space, their existence is audible through the calls for prayer. On Friday streams of worshippers can be seen making their way towards their mosques



c. In May 2003, to celebrate a Muslim religious day, Penang's Muslim organisations gathered at *Mesjid Kapitan Kling* for a walk through George Town



b. The month- long *Pasar Ramadan,* fills the streets with stalls selling foodstuff and clothing



d. The newly restored mosque was viewed by followers from all over Penang



e. A local watches as the marchers stream past

Fig. **6**-6 Muslim celebrations



a. Each area sets up a temporary temple in the street, for their three-day celebration of Por Thor Kong Festival



b. A paper effigy of *Por Thor Kong*, before the dotting of the eye ceremony, when his spirit enters the figure



c. Entertainment for the hungry ghosts varies from traditional Chinese operas with…



d. …traditional Chinese musicians



e. Less expensive, and now causing outcries of indecency from various religious factions, are the disco, karaoke, female entertainers



f. (right) On the third night *Por Thor Kong* is burnt, in the street, alongside piles of paper money, in order to return to Hades

Fig. **6-7** Chinese Por Thor Kong, Hungry Ghost





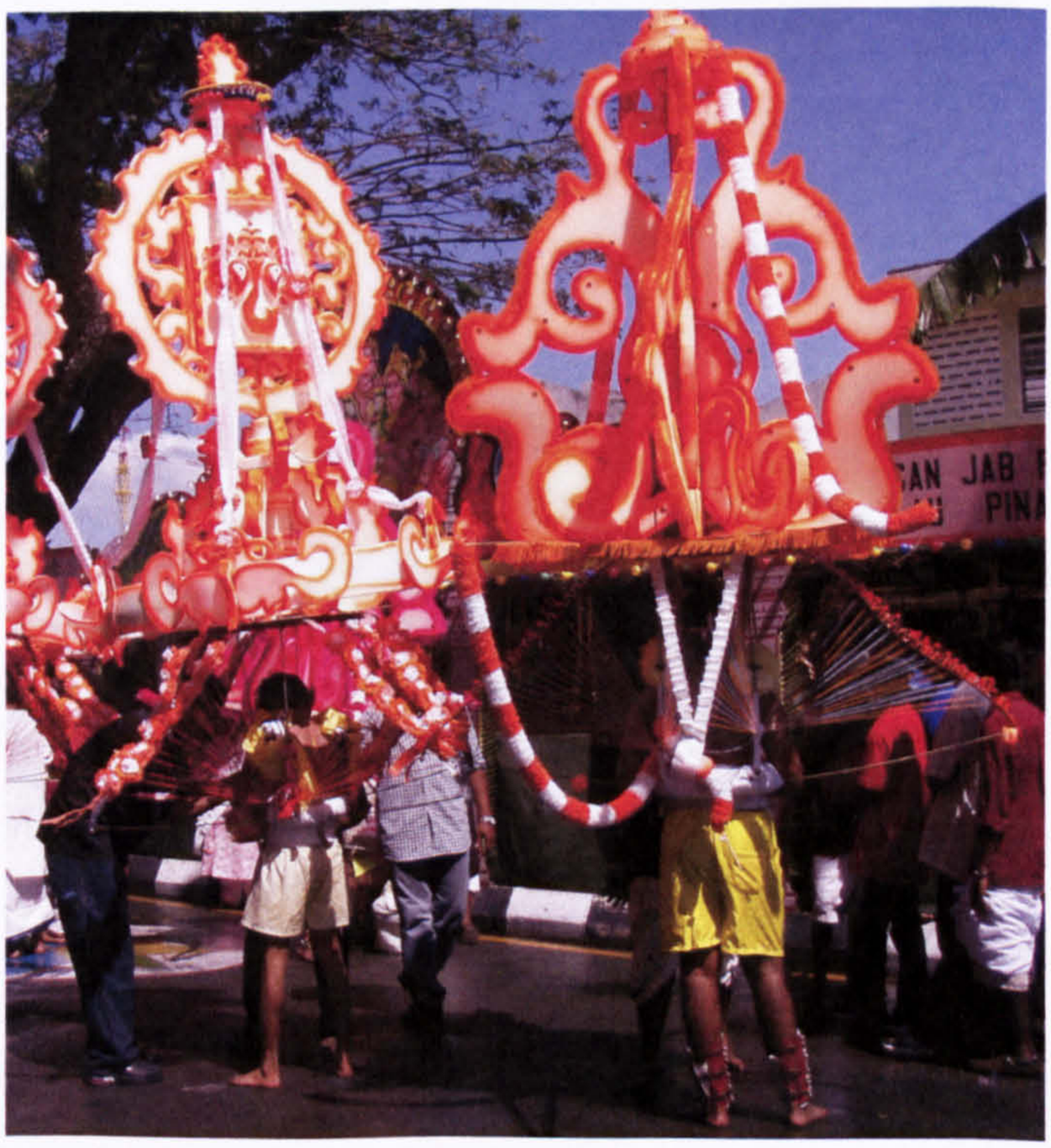


a. (above left) Chettiar *kavadi* carriers dance before the silver chariot on the first day

b. (above) crowds gather to give offerings and receive blessings from the temple priest, within the chariot

c. (left) Lord Murugan (Lord Subrananiam) is taken to the Waterfall Temple at the foot of the Penang Hills

d. (bottom left) The second day is a day of penance. *Kavadi* carriers making their way to the waterfall, whilst entranced and dancing





e. Early morning on the fourth day, Lord Murugan returns and the chariot is once more stored until next year

Fig. **6**-8 Thaipusam Festival



a. A *teh-tarik* (pulled tea) stall, although on wheels, is permanently located on the route between *Mesjid Kapitan Kling* and *Mesjid Melayu Lebuh Acheh*



b. Fresh coconut and iced drinks stall arrives in Little India in the afternoons



c. Chinese herbal tea stall on Cintra Street, is wheeled home in the late evening



d. Indian *'kue'* - cake hawker, moves around the inner city, until all his merchandise is sold

Fig. **6-9** Inner city patterns, hawker stalls





a. (above) a Muslim-owned fabric shop on Campbell Street

b. (above left) a Muslim owned flower stall provides for Chinese and Hindu customers



c. (left) a Chinese rattan weaver sits outside his shophouse in Queen Street

d. (below) an Indian barbers shop is a place to sit, read and pass the time of day





e. (left) A Chinese calligrapher and sign writer works openly on his five- foot- way

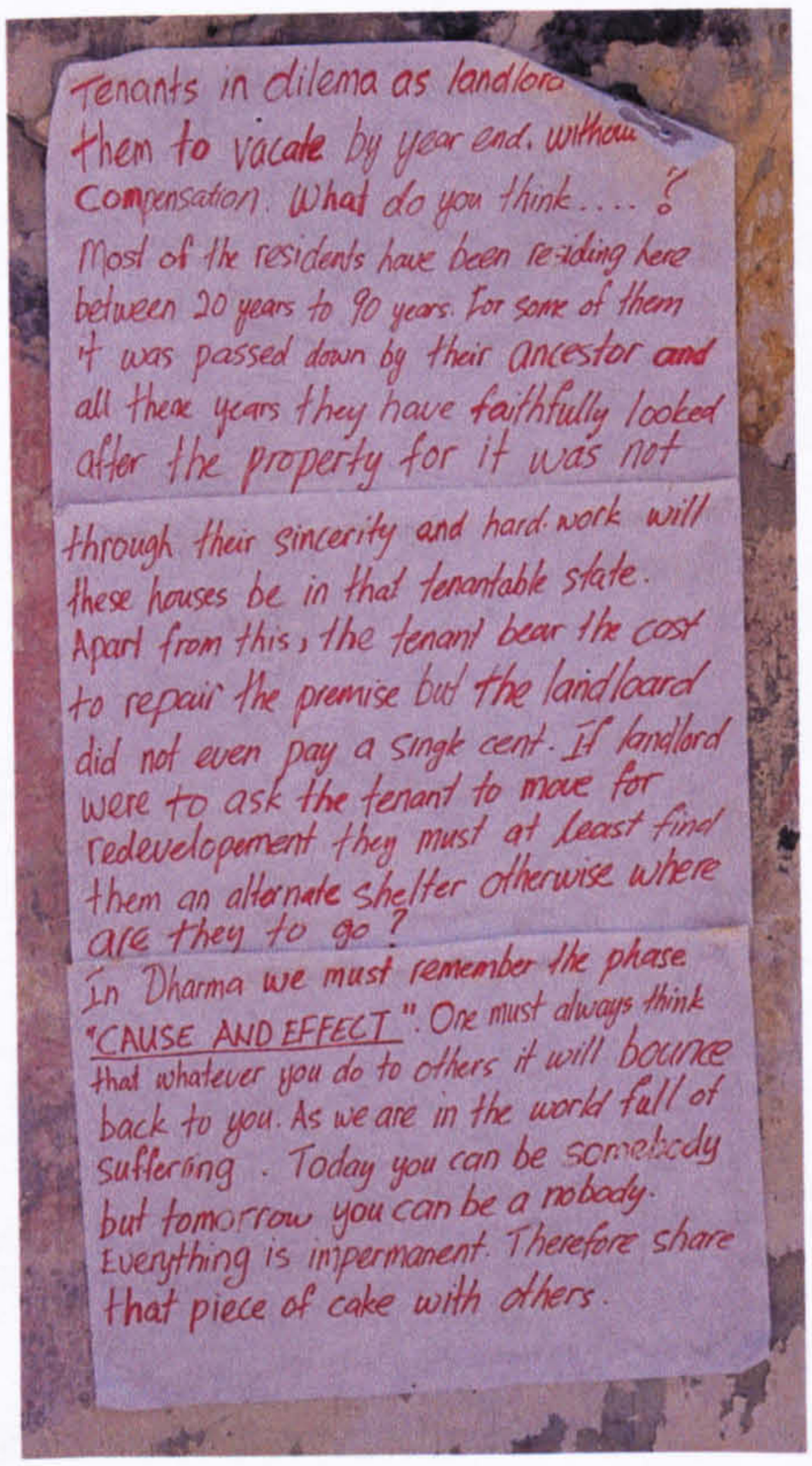
Fig. **6**-10 Inner city patterns, traditional trades



a . Frustrated Khoo Kongsi tenants, wrote their protest on the walls, in Mandarin, which most of the Trustees were unable to read



b. A meeting of tenants, together with their local state assemblyman, to discuss their proposal for participation in the Kongsi's tourism goals





c. A cartoon of the Khoo Kongsi proposal as a tourism venue and its affect on the tenant community

d. (left) Eviction without compensation drew outrage from the normally introspective community. In an uncharacteristic manner, they openly penned their frustration and papered the walls of the Khoo Kongsi stage

Fig. **6**-11 The Khoo Kongsi tenants



a. (left) Soon to be evicted from her home of over 90 years, Khoo Chye Huat and her son, wait to greet the late *Agong*, August 2001



b. Cannon Square, 2003, the exterior altars have been taken from the columns, showing the houses are now empty



c. Mr. Love Lane, a comic character, created by Chye Huat's grandson who performed with The Inner City Drama Festival for Children. 2002 (reproduced from the festival flier)



d. (left) A cartoon of one of the four plays written and acted by the *Inner City Drama Festival for Children*, 2002 (reproduced from the festival poster)

Fig. **6**-12 Khoo Kongsi tenants, Khoo Chye Huat and Mr. Love Lane



a. ((left) Dr.Richard Engelhardt, the Unesco Asia and Pacific Regional Advisor, meeting with some members of the *Kapitan Kling* Mosque and Youth Committees February 1998



b. The architecture, use and business arrangement for the modern building constructed on *waqf* land, causes the youth group concern







c. Women from the *Kapitan Kling* and *Mesjid Melayu Lebuh Acheh,* mapping their environment

d. No 67 Acheen Street, within the compound of *Majlis Melayu Lebuh Acheh,* was repainted as a PHT LEAP project 2000

Fig. **6**-13 UNESCO Local Effort and Preservation (LEAP) projects





a. (left) The boys were 'bathed' using fire hoses
b. (above) Interest came from Singapore as well as national media



c. Dressed in their finery the boys were led through the streets by bearers



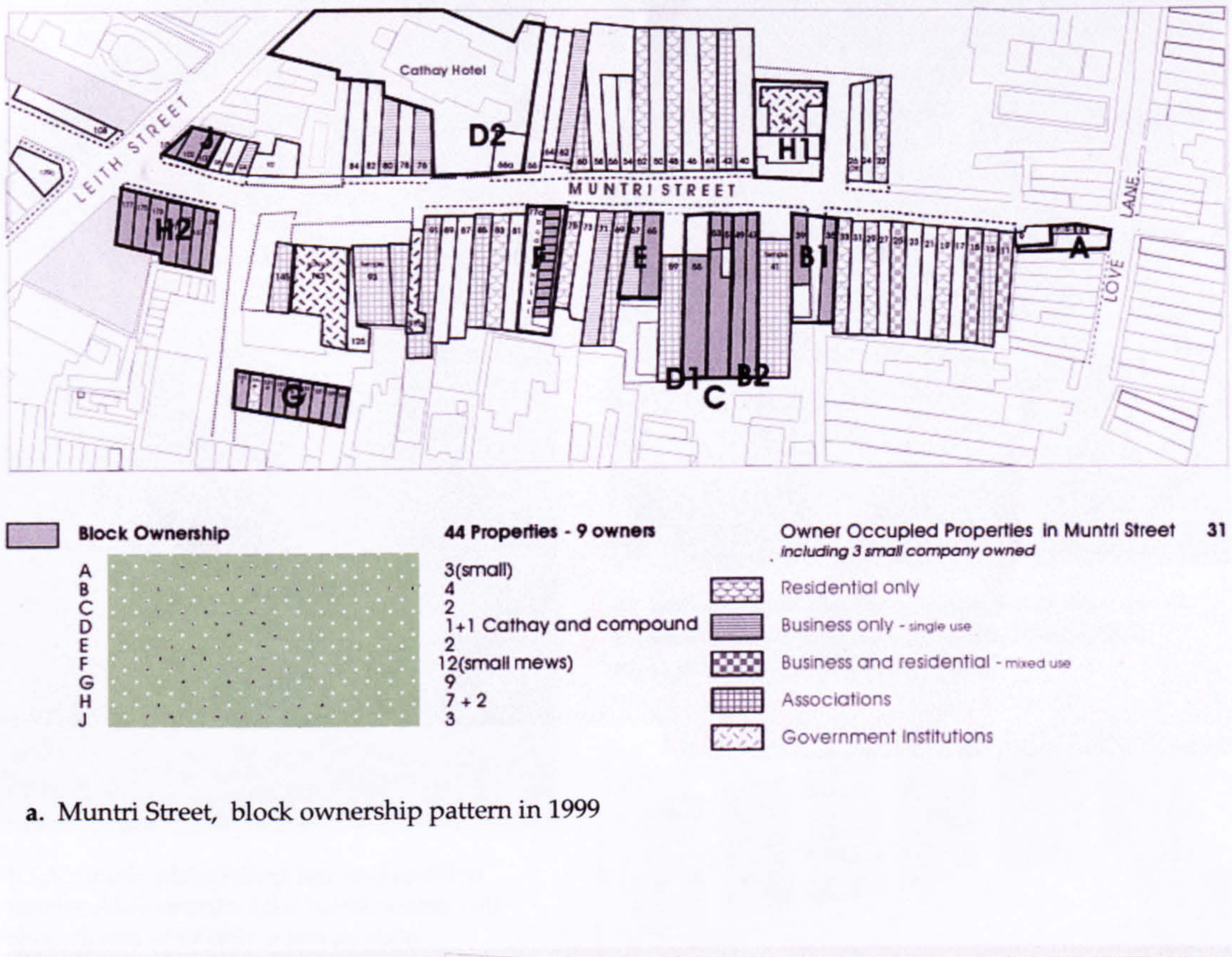
d. The wife of the Deputy Chief Minister feeding traditional sticky yellow rice to the boys



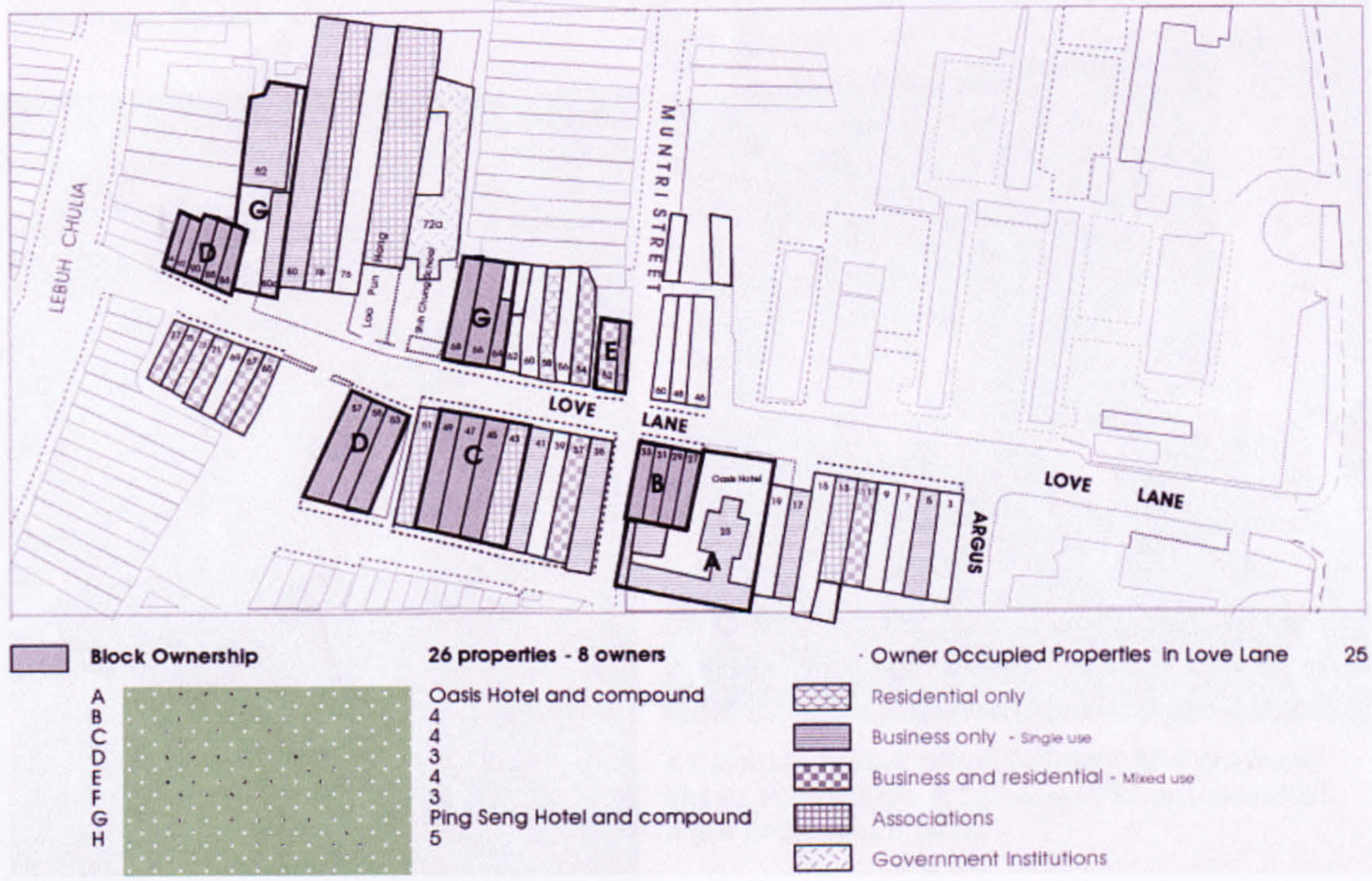


e. (left) The boys eagerly await their rice offering.
f. (above) All smiles before the bus ride to the general hospital

Fig. **6**-14 Inner city life, Muslim *Bersunat*, circumcision ceremony, May 2001



a. Muntri Street, block ownership pattern in 1999



b. Love Lane block ownership pattern in 1999

Fig. **6-**15 Muntri Street and Love Lane Physical Survey, example of block ownership



b. A mobile phone shop has replaced the former AKS tenants. Like many others, this shop closed after only a few months operating in the inner city



a . Swiflet breading has become a lucrative use of vacated buildings or upper floors. Their edible nests provide a profitable income



c. Close to Chulia Street, this former AKS property, like so many others in this area, has been converted into a backpackers' hostel



d. (left) This property has lain empty for many years its fine carved doors and screens removed to the owners bungalow. Now it has become a backpackers café

Fig. **6**-16 New uses for former AKS properties



a. Pilot Study Area

- Association / Religious
- Vacant
- Residential
- Commercial / Residential
- Commercial

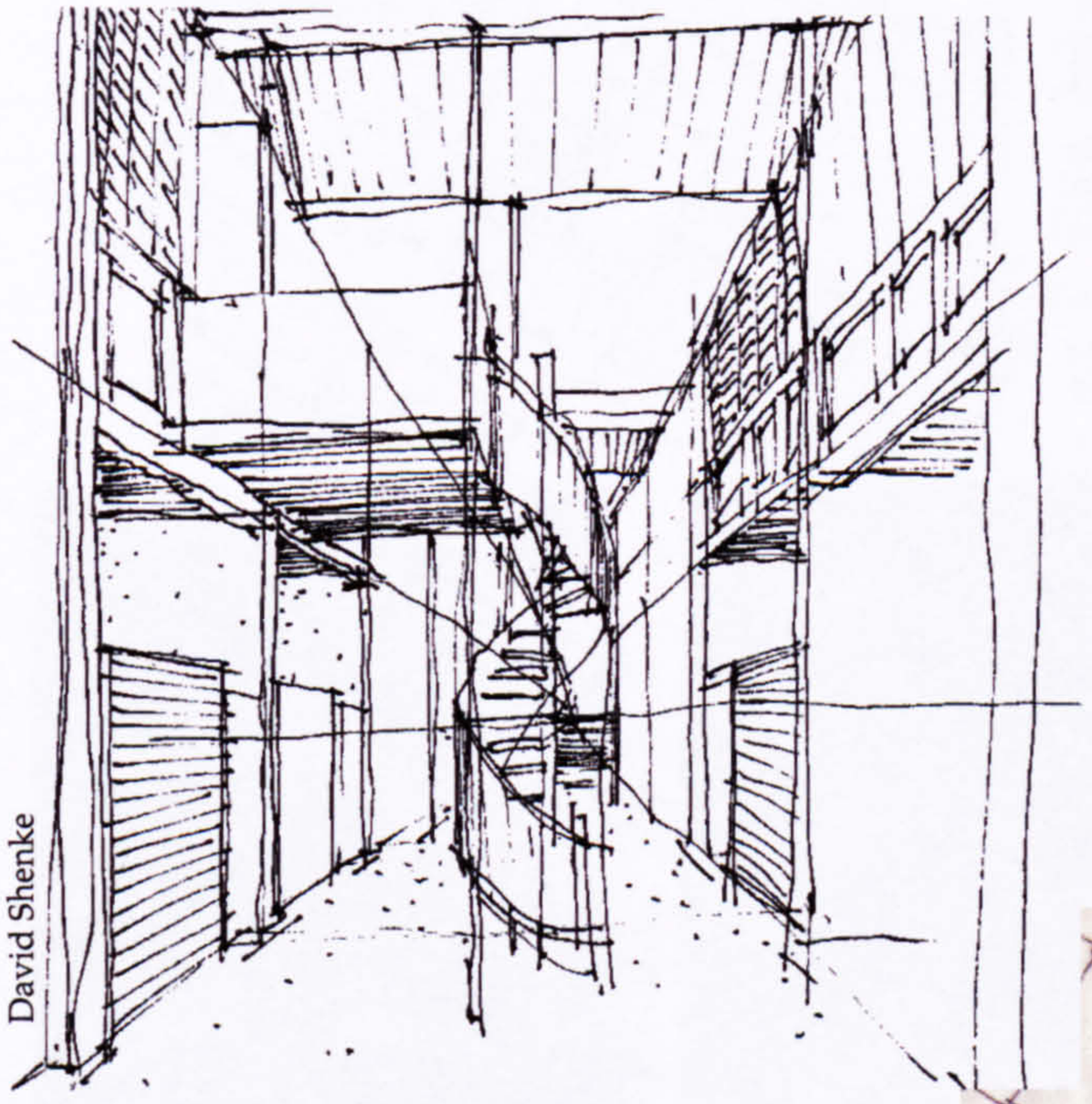
b. Key to building use, August 1999



Gwynn Jenkins

b. Sketch of typical shophouse

c. Section through the shophouse

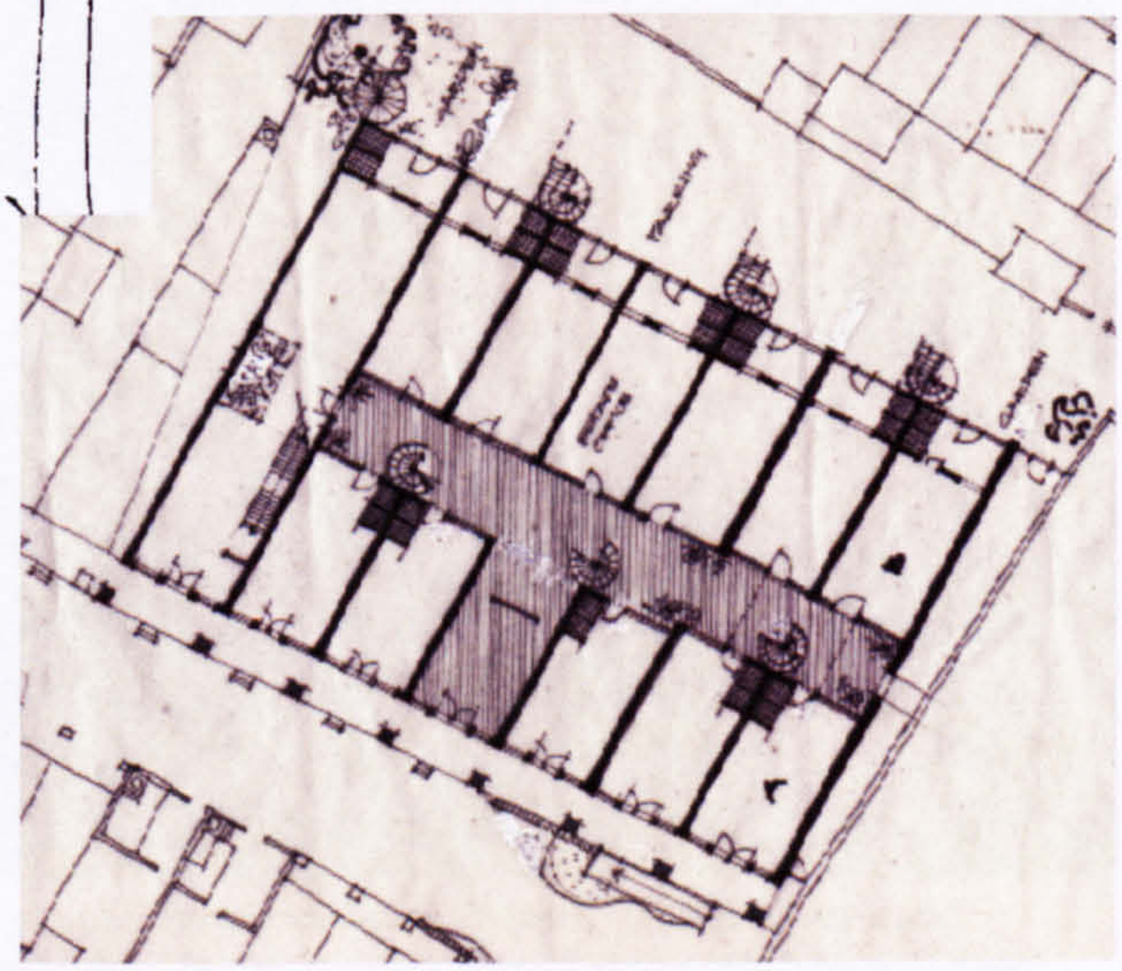


David Shenke

d. Sketch of the air well internal street

The central air well, typical of these shophouses, was to be cut through creating a longitudinal air well or 'street' which linked all the residential units together. Each unit would have been 50 m^2, suitable for low-cost housing

Restrictive parking space in the historic inner city meant that a residential walking or cycling population would be more beneficial to the area

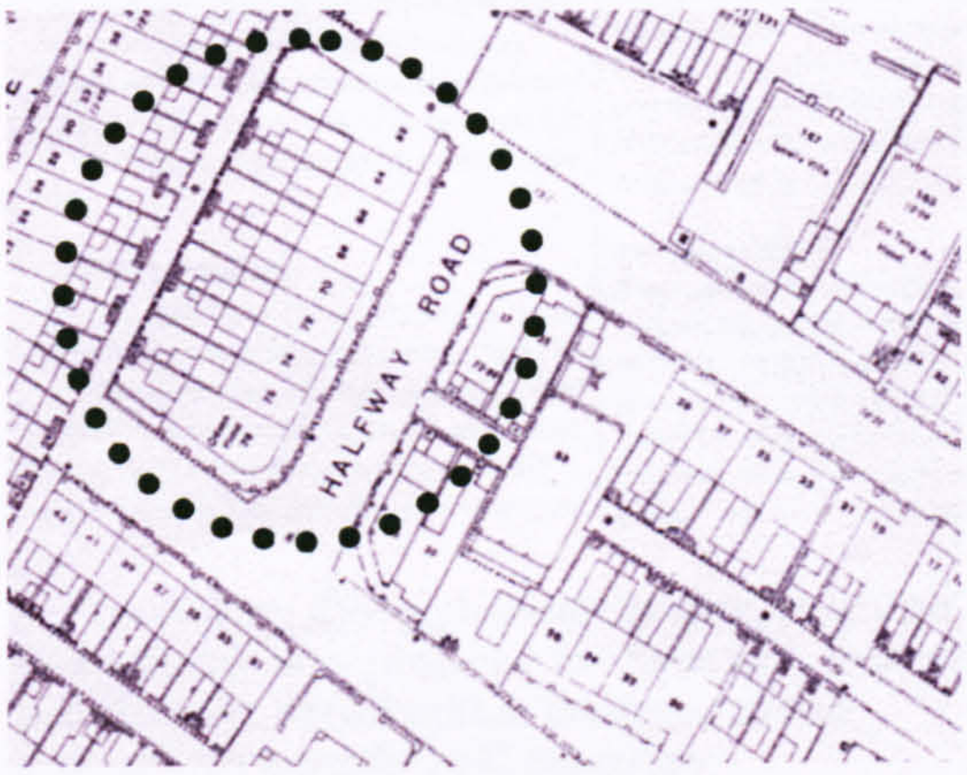


e. Overall plan of conversion concept

Fig. **6**-17 Social housing and urban revitalisation



a. Enforcement officers ensuring the eviction of former AKS tenants by removing their belongings from the shophouse into the street. 11.1.2000 Noordin Street





b. The last family in Jalan Sekerat,Halfway Road, waiting to hear if they have been allocated government housing. Their neighbours - mainly from one Indian Muslim family, are now disbursed across the island

c. (left) The row of housing indicated is under one owner, all the Indian Muslim tenants were evicted



d. A common site during the year 2000, a tenant moving to new accommodation



e. For the 'lucky' ones, highly desired Federal-funded rental flats, despite the substandard building work , small sized unit and five year tenancies, these offered a 'secured' tenancy

Fig. **6-**18 Community realities, AKS evictions

IT PAYS TO CONSERVE



Urban Renewal and Conservation and Revitalisation Programme
For Buildings and People affected by the repeal of the Rent Control Act

Since the repeal of the Rent Control Act (1966), the status of Penang's 12,453 prewar buildings and its residents, remains uncertain. With most of them within the inner city of George Town, some of the buildings have been torn down to make way for new ones, while others have been left derelict as it is. Property owners are now free to impose higher rentals, though unfortunately, tenants who cannot afford them are forced to find cheaper alternative homes or business premises, more likely away from the city. To date, it is estimated that as many as 60% of the pre-repeal residents have already moved out of the city.

WHY? WE PAY YOU TO!

As much as RM100 million has been allocated to encourage property owners to conserve their buildings. Funded by the Federal Government, State Government and the Majlis Perbandaran Pulau Pinang (MPPP), this financial incentives* come in forms of loans at very low interest rates and grants of up to RM30,000 per property for conservation.

UNIT WARISAN is set up to benefit both the property owners and the tenants, to help preserve both Penang's historical architecture and its existing inner city life. Through this UNIT WARISAN's pioneer programme, property owners can now easily apply for financial incentives to restore and renovate their prewar buildings. Other benefits include free consultation by conservation experts like architects, surveyors and contractors, to assess the value of works required, together with a team of people to help you with the necessary paperwork for MPPP and other relevant bodies. All it requires is for you to pay us a visit.

ASSURED TENANCY

If your prewar building is currently unoccupied, UNIT WARISAN, with the help of the State Housing Division, will provide you new tenants. Whether it is for residential or commercial purposes, a mutually agreed rental will be assured for at least the next five years. If your building has existing tenants, we appeal that you will allow them to stay for at least another three years.

Current or interested tenants are also encouraged to register with UNIT WARISAN. We will appeal to your landlords to participate in this programme, or help you find other affordable housing or business premises within the neighbourhood.

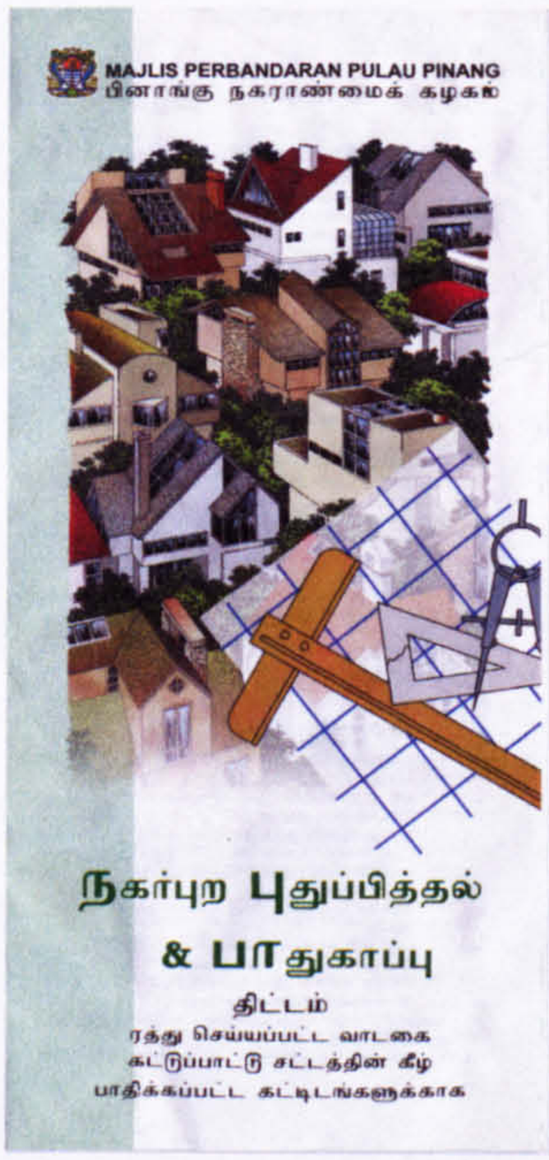
ALL IT TAKES IS TO SIGN THE DOTTED LINE

With attractive financial incentives and assured tenancy offered to you, all we ask is that you continue to provide affordable housing to these existing communities for the next few years. We also hope that this would encourage new investment and as a result, bring renewal and revitalisation to George Town. And after all, at the end of the period, the restored heritage building is yours to do as you wish.

For further enquiries, please contact or visit us at

UNIT WARISAN - Urban Renewal and Conservation and Revitalisation Programme
128 Armenian Street , 10200 Penang
Tel: 04 - 261 0934 or Fax: 04 - 261 0976

a. A prototype flier explaining the concept of Unit Warisan, this was prepared for discussion, prior to the launch of the *RM100 million loan/grant scheme* (reproduced from the PHT mock-up)





b. The brochure, produced by the Municipal Council, in order to promote the *RM 100 million loan/grant scheme*. Although produced in different languages, the visual language was of a modern housing complex, not a heritage city (reproduced from the MPPP project brochures)

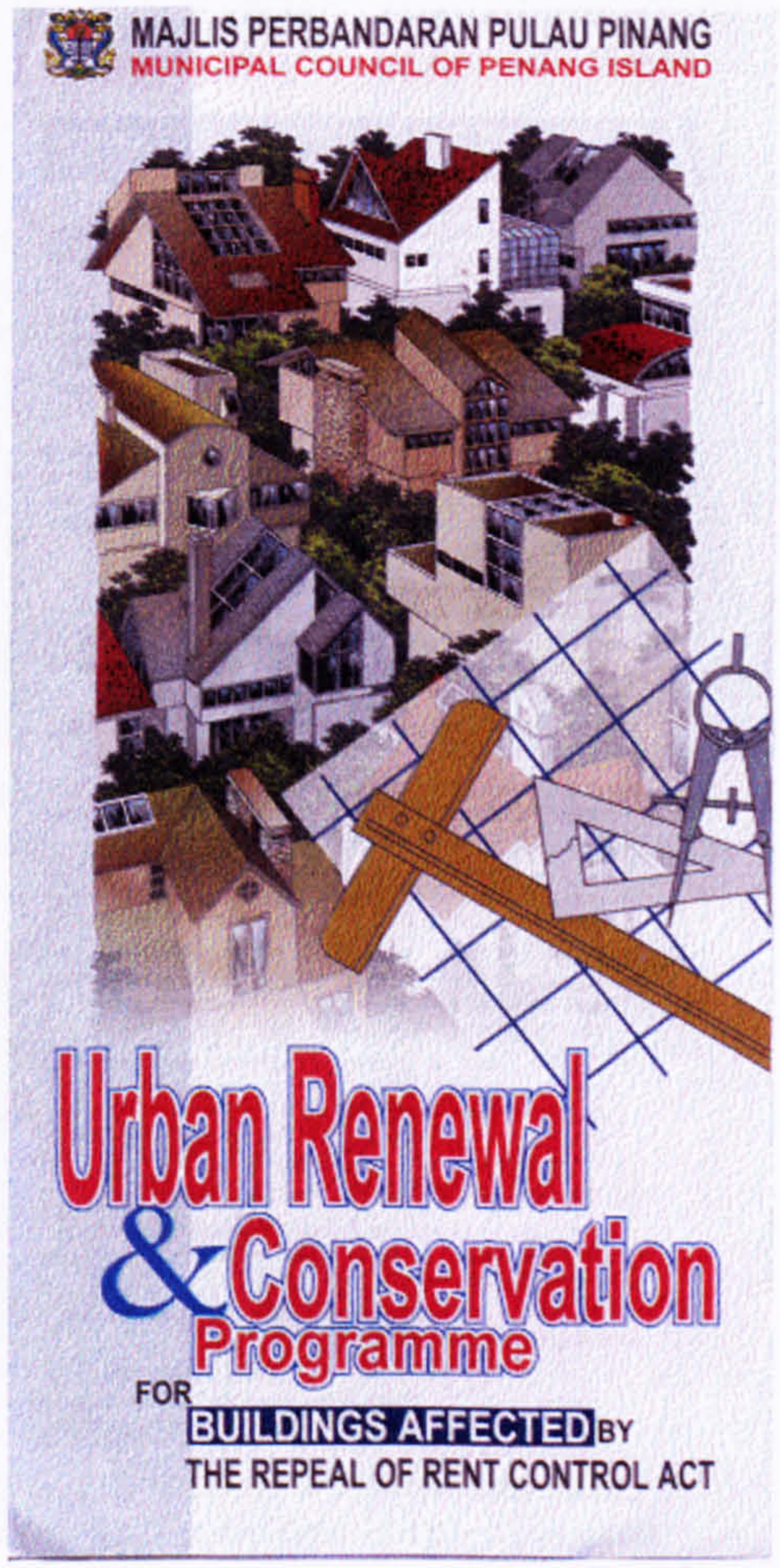


Fig. **6**-19 Unit Warisan and the RM100 million loan /grant scheme



a. A rotten beam has fallen leaving no support for the battens, allowing the Indian tiles to decant into the street; the car owner is unaware



b. (right) Once inhabited by a large extended family, now vacant a fire has made sure they won't return



c. Real estate agents' signs were once unheard of for prewar buildings, owners preferred to sell privately



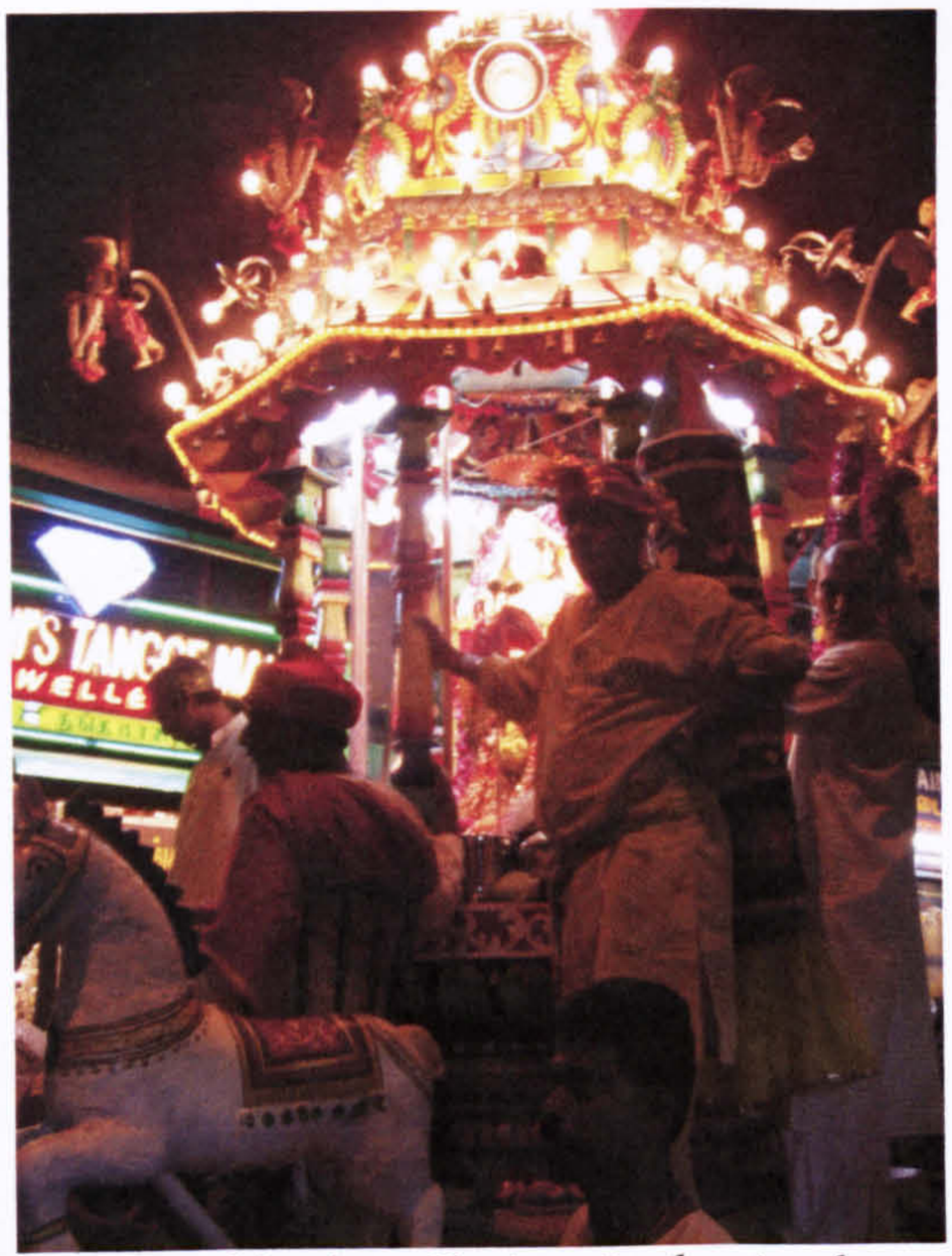
d. Drug addicts and antique dealers make an unhappy combination. Fine decorative air vent carvings have been prized out of the doors

e. (left) a few days later they returned for the tiles

f. (left) Few Indo-Malay properties have escaped fires, once their tenants have gone



Fig. **6**-20 Deterioration of the tangible heritage



a. One of the three Chariots for the nine day *Navarathri* festival enlivens the night scene in Little India



b. *Otthu kedia* - stuck on shop, attached to a building



c. CD's and colourful Punjabi outfits for the ladies



d. A calm pace of life, taking place on the five foot way, part of the theatre of the street

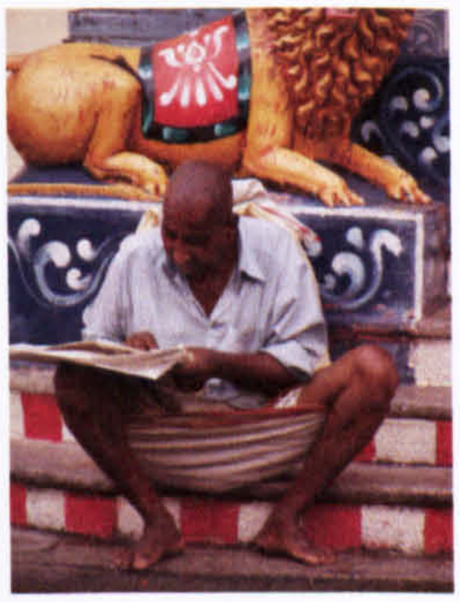


e. Most permanent hawker stalls are Muslim; these are sited close to the Hindu temple



f *Puti mayam* hawker arrives as the sun sets

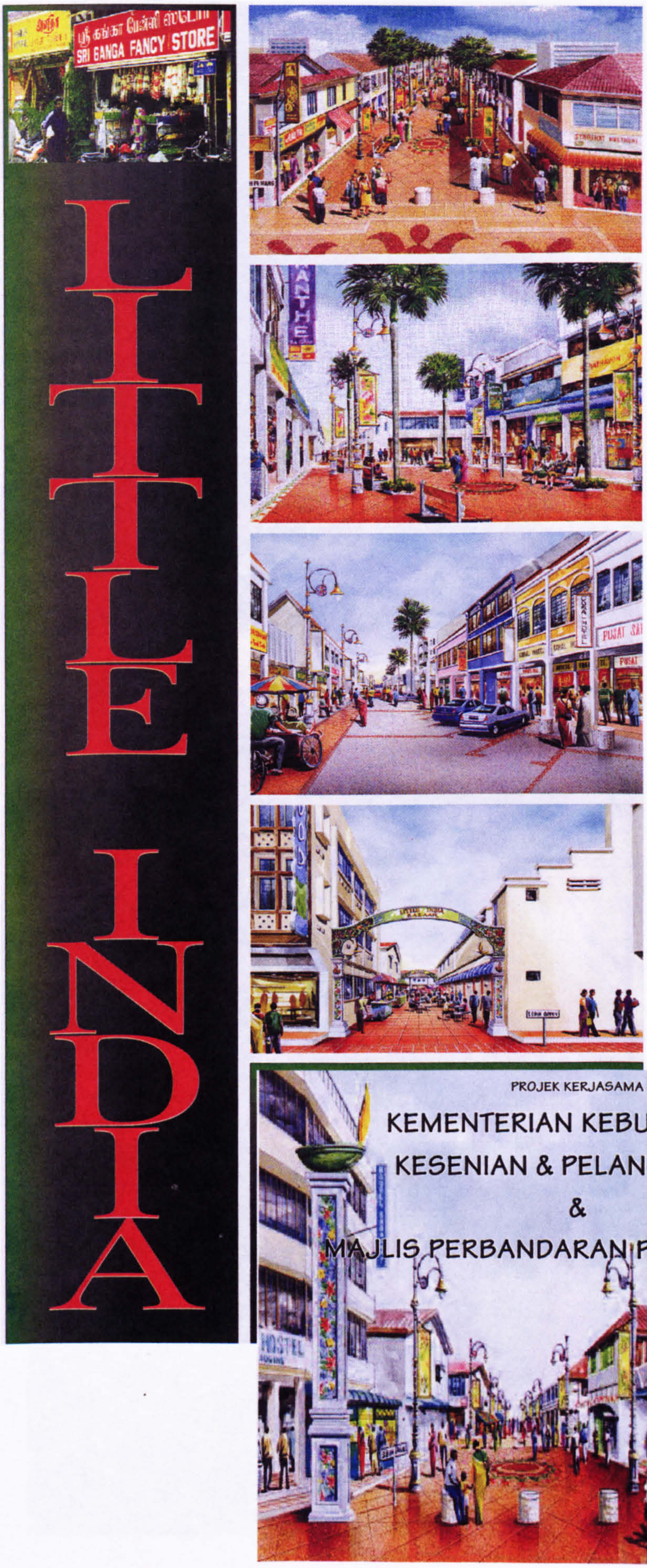




g. Reading on the steps of the Sri Mahamariamman Temple

h. (left) papaya and bananas are sold to help digestion after a heavy rice lunch

Fig. **6**-21 Little India, before beautification



a. (left) The Municipal Council's brochure for the *Little India* beautification project. Publication of the images in the local press created concerns amongst the community (reproduced from the MPPP project brochure)

b. (below), 'Indian' lamps atop decorative columns, mark the entrance to the area. However, Little India's original focus was the opposite end of the street, towards the quayside (reproduced from the MPPP project brochure)

Fig. **6**-22 Little India, beautification project



a. (left) Open drains run in front of the shophouses and collect the water from gutterless roofs. Utility installations crossed over the drain and resurfacing of the tarmac, without removing the old, has left a raised and ragged edge.
The first design was to cover the drains



b. Bigger open drains were to be built and corner details as above, with hand-made wedged shaped bullnose bricks, restored



c. The contractors ignorance towards the traditional civic engineering destroyed much of the original granite culvert and bullnose brick edging



d. Mock up proposal, reuse the existing bullnose on a wider drain, maintaining the materials and purpose

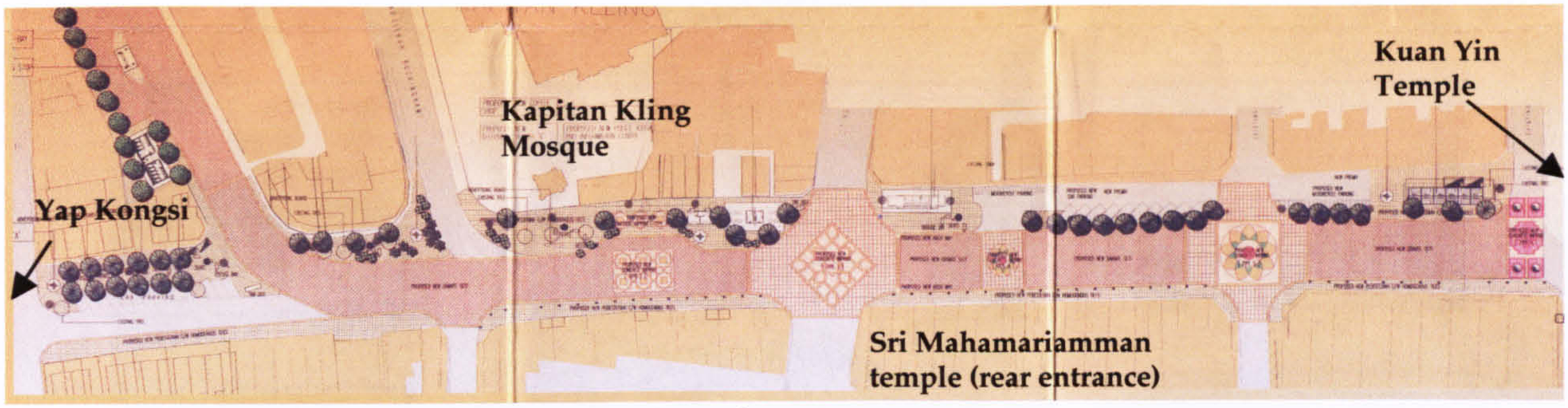


e. A second mock up, using new, softer and smaller bullnose bricks. Rejected by MPPP



f. (left) Mock bullnose edging was made out of coloured concrete for the first road as too many of the originals had been destroyed. The granite bridge was maintained and herringbone brickwork used for paving

Fig. **6**-23 Little India, recreating the historic George Town street



a. Overall plan for the Gold Bazaar beautification project,
(reproduced from the Gold Bazaar promotion brochure, MPPP)

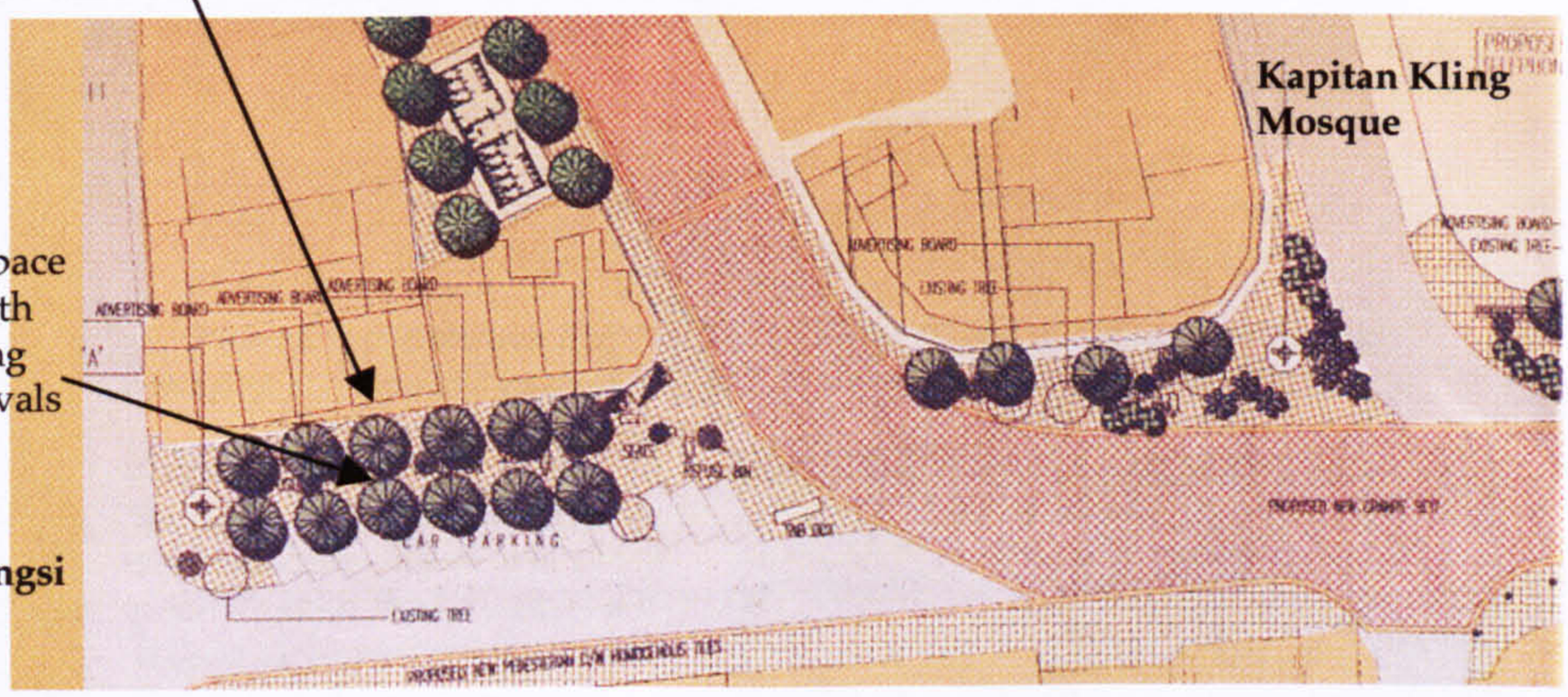




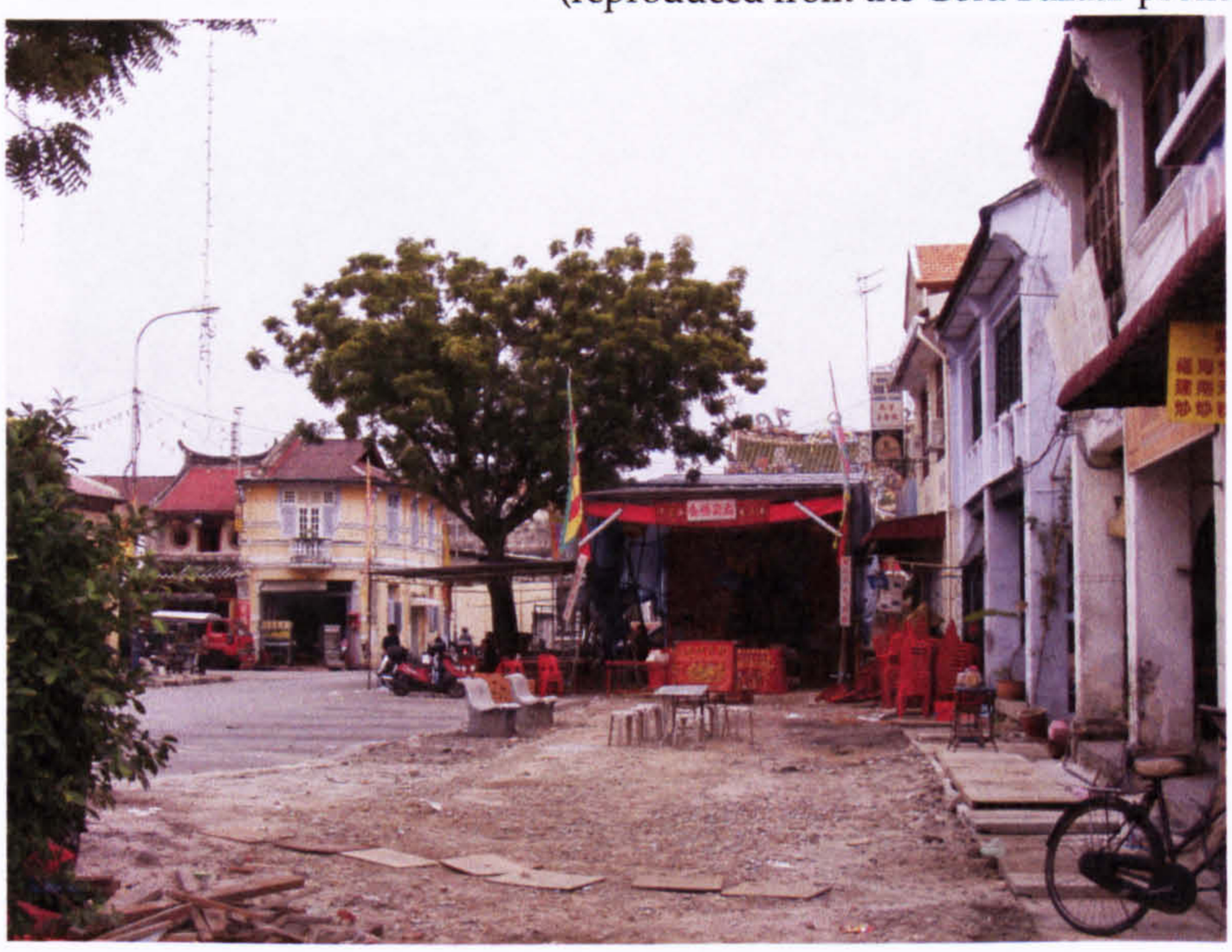
b. A thriving tea stall before the beautification works began
c. The shophouse today, business disrupted the tea stall owner returned to India

Current open space shown filled with trees, obstructing traditional festivals

Yap Kongsi



d. Plan of area between Yap Kongsi and Kapitan Kling Mosque,
(reproduced from the Gold Bazaar promotion brochure, MPPP)





e. The Chinese festival of *Chneang Hoay*, uses the space for a temporary altar

f. The Chinese festival of *Por Thor Kong*, Hungry Ghost, is held on the open space. Even the Muslim *bersunat* ceremony was held here

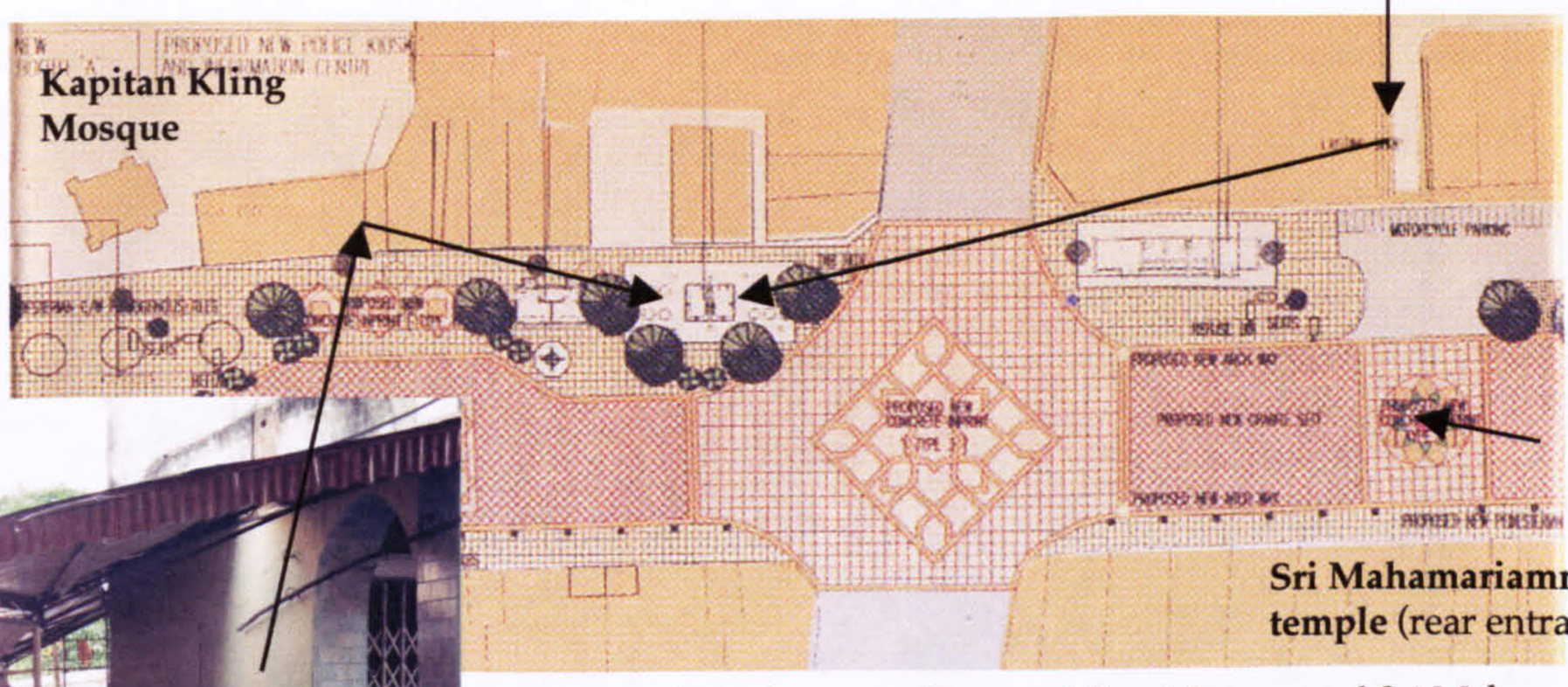
Fig. **6**-24 Gold Bazaar, Yap Kongsi area



a. 30 year old *neem* tree cut down to make way for a building



b. Chinese drinks stall to be relocated into the new building, away from its present customers



c. Plan of area between Kapitan Kling Mosque and Sri Mahamariamman temple(reproduced from the Gold Bazaar promotion brochure, MPPP)



d.(left) A *nasi kandar* -rice food stall, is to be relocated into the new building. There was much protest about the building as it would obscure the gold traders shops and detract trade



e. The space in front of the shops, before the project started, was open with a good view of the shops



f. This thirty year old *neem* tree once gave shade in the heat of the day. The chopping of the trees caused a public outcry

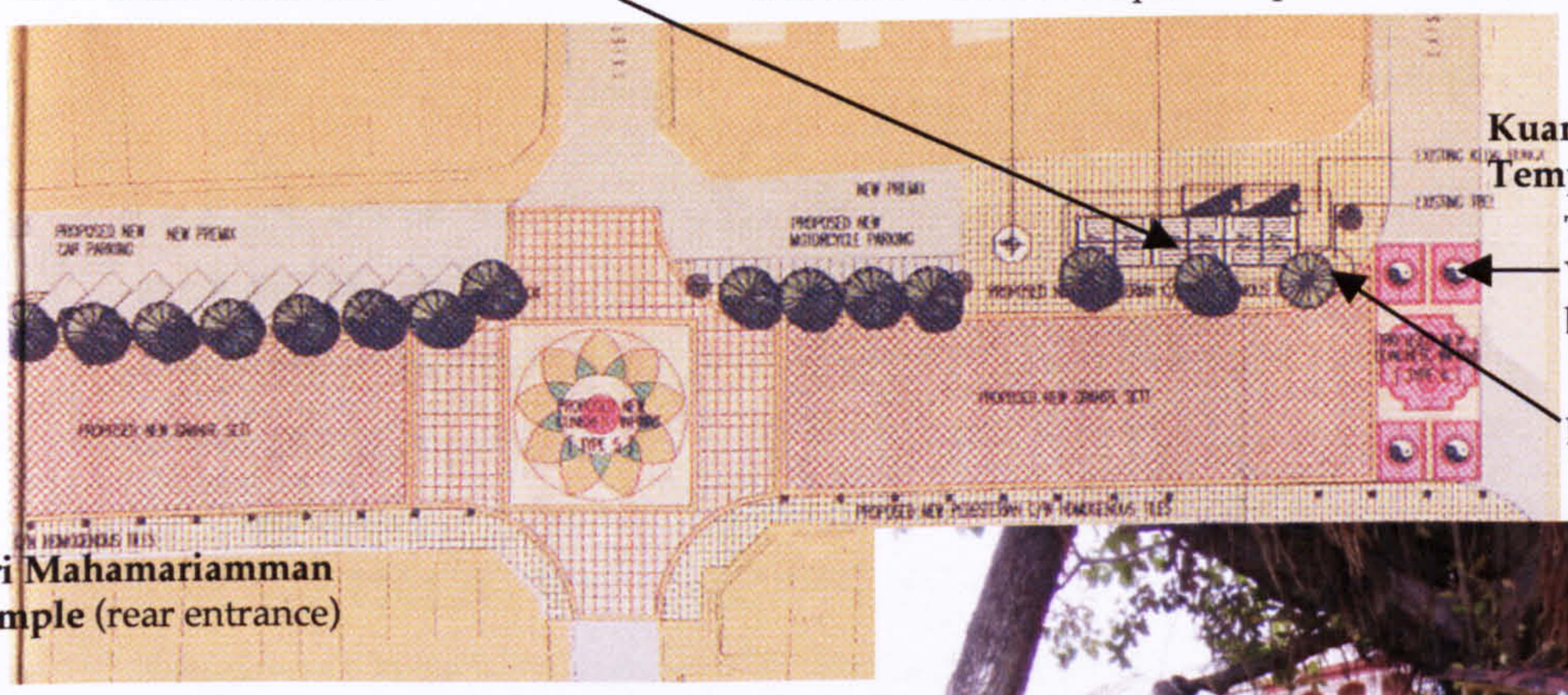
Fig. **6**-25 Gold Bazaar, Muslim gold traders area



a. The Indian Hindu and Muslim flower stalls provide for their mainly Chinese and Hindu customers



b. Kuan Yin temple is the site on many festivals throughout the year, including the 15th day of every Chinese month, the surrounding space therefore needs to be open for performances, and extra stalls



c. Plan of area between Sri Mahamariamman and Kuan Yin temples (reproduced from the Gold Bazaar promotion brochure, MPPP)





d. Extra stalls appear during festival time



e. Lord Ganesha bedecked with garlands sits beneath three trees significant to Hindu and Chinese beliefs. Behind is a Chinese Shrine, the flower stall belongs to a Muslim. This is 'Malaysia truly Asia' without the need of reconstruction or tourism promotion

f. (left) a cake stall arrives every 15th of the month to sell outside Kuan Yin temple

Fig. **6**-26 Gold Bazaar, Lord Ganesha and Kuan Yin Temple area

7

CASE STUDIES

Introduction

Chapter Seven examines several conservation projects as case studies in order to evaluate their role in the evolving landscape of George Town's historic urban centre. Undertaken between 1990 to 2000, from a construction boom period through a period of economic recession, they reflect the changes that have taken place within the inner city, particularly over the period of the *AKS Repeal* and the preparations for UNESCO Heritage Listing. They comprise the Council-owned Syed Alatas Mansion, the Religious Council-administered *Mesjid Melayu Lebuh Acheh,* (Acheen Street Mosque) and the Chinese clan association Khoo Kongsi Temple enclave. These three projects are within the *Lebuh Acheh, Lebuh Armenian Heritage Development Project* area and were in receipt of government funding for part, if not all of each project. This chapter also examines case studies in other areas of George Town; the privately owned restoration of the Cheong Fatt Tze Mansion and two conservation projects from the Penang Heritage Trust's portfolio: the state-owned Suffolk House and the Carpenters' Guild, the Loo Pun Hong Temple.

These case studies are used to demonstrate both the political economy of conservation, and the cultural identity embodied in architectural forms and urban landscapes. They are examined for the reactions to the conservation efforts by the tenants, landlords, NGOs, local authorities and politicians as well as international bodies such as UNESCO. In writing the history of these case studies it became clear to me that their success or failure in terms of perpetuation of use falls loosely into three categories, as noted in Chapter One, and as such have been grouped to demonstrate these concepts.

The first category characterised by 'cultural discord' recognises projects where a relationship with or sense of ownership between the building and its current custodians or owners is discordant, or lacking. These projects have a great risk of

failure, as their new use is seldom sustainable. The Syed Alatas Mansion, Khoo Kongsi enclave, and Suffolk House are examples of this category, at the time of writing.

The second category 'cultural contestation' describes projects where two cultures contest 'ownership' over a conservation project. The Carpenters' Guild Loo Pun Hong temple conservation project is a fitting example of cultural 'hijacking' to the effect that the use of the building remains but further conservation has not taken place.

The third category recognises the possibility of 'sustainable conservation', when both the cultural identity of the owner and use or even new use concur. The *Mesjid Melayu Lebuh Acheh* is an example: although its conservation programme was fraught with discord, and it is currently the centre of a development debate, the result is a restored and used Mosque. Likewise, the restoration of the Cheong Fatt Tze mansion, which changed its use from a residence into a private mansion-stay, maintained the philosophy of the original form for its the conservation and use, which has led to a new and sustainable identity.

In a city where immigrant cultures evolved as diverse communities, Penang's present cultural composition inevitably produces a number of interpretations of cultural heritage. The case studies examined below have been chosen to demonstrate the complexities and richness which these interpretations and reconstructions can create.

Cultural discord

Lebuh Acheh, Lebuh Armenian Heritage Development Project seemed at its inception to be a well thought out, balanced, pilot project proposal for urban renewal and conservation. The realities for putting the proposal into practice, however, have been fraught with challenges unimagined by those who proposed the plan and those who supported it. The three projects recorded below examine some of the areas of discord in order to identify the climate in which conservation is being received as a form of urban renewal.

The Syed Alatas Mansion

The restoration of the Syed Alatas Mansion was proposed as a demonstration project of restoration techniques that could expand the expertise of the local building industry and encourage further projects. It was hoped that the ethnic fusion or integration in marriage between its original owner, the Arab Muslim leader, Syed Mohamed Alatas, and the daughter of a Hokkien Chinese leader and fellow pepper trader, Khoo Tiang Poh, would provide the opportunity of creating a cross-cultural identity, reflected in the juxtaposition of local communities in the area (Khoo Su Nin, 1993). The mansion was acquired by the MPPP, after the Second World War, for road-widening land,

although nothing had subsequently taken place. By the time it was considered for the inaugural project, the late-nineteenth century Anglo-Indian villa had been a store and dormitory for Indian Chettiar bottle recyclers for almost 50 years. Used for shelter and security, the original fabric was virtually intact, although in need of repair.

The occupiers were easily persuaded to leave, joining the remaining Indian recycling community, which occupied many of the premises adjacent to the mansion. At that time in 1993, *AKS* accommodation was available in the area. However, cultural tourism, it seems, required a more sanitised environment and the Chettiars are now threatened with relocation away from the 'tourist gaze' (Khoo and Jenkins, 2002: 215).

In 1993 the MPPP took possession of the building for the *Syed Alatas Mansion Heritage Development Project* and after many delays, the restoration took place, eventually funded by the Federal, state and MPPP governments. A Penang architect, in consultation with the French team of architects and craftsmen, supervised a local contractor, who had expressed an interest in conservation practice.

As the work progressed, the site was used for restoration courses, the first to be held in Malaysia, and over 75 people from the government and private sectors were trained. However, due to the intense shortage of labour in the building industry the conservation skills were mainly passed on to labourers from Bangladesh and Indonesia. Thus, Penang failed to gain a pool of newly skilled resident artisans. Furthermore, there was no opportunity for the professionals who attended to test out their newfound knowledge as few heritage buildings were released from the bonds of the *AKS*.

The enthusiasm created by the project was endorsed by Prime Minister Dr. Mahathir, who, during his visit on 20 December 1993, signed the plaster rose installed on the entrance gable [Fig. 7-1]. The Honorary Secretary of the Penang Heritage Trust, who was appointed project manager for the site, saw the project as the beginnings of 'a new trend in heritage development... The project is expected to produce a snowballing effect by encouraging the demand for heritage development' (Khoo Su Nin, 1994). But the 'snowball' melted before it could gather speed and the restored building was once again left vacant. Finally, in 1996 the building was leased to the state government for the establishment of the Penang Heritage Centre with funding from the Prime Minister's Department. It also became the office for AR&T Heritage Consultancy. As noted in Chapter Five, other than during the inaugural years, few training workshops have taken place and attempts to enliven the premises with a café were thwarted by the constant flooding. Occasionally concerts or lectures from a passing conservation expert were held, but there was little to see and little to learn from, other than the building itself. Used as the logo for PDC's *Visit Penang Year 1999*, however, the building became a symbol of heritage tourism.

Two further buildings owned by the Council, 126 Lebuh Armenian, and the adjacent 118 Lebuh Acheh, whose owner was found willing to lease, were to become a handicraft gift shop and Tourist Information Centre respectively. However, once French expertise and energy left the site, neither of these two projects was implemented and the privately owned building fell into a forested ruin.

In 1999, the restoration won the Badan Warisan Malaysia's award for *The Most Excellent Project* in recognition of its conservation quality and potential in encouraging further conservation projects. The award recognised the identity politics of the project, the fusion between Muslim and Chinese cultures through its original owner's marriage. It also gave a strong message of encouragement to the Planning and Buildings Departments of the MPPP, in a state of entrepreneurs more known for their enthusiasm to demolish and develop. The award was presented by the Malay President of Badan Warisan Malaysia, Tan Sri Ahmad Sarji Abdul Hamid, and was received by the Chinese President of the MPPP and the Chinese Director of Planning (Sira, 1999).

The project did not serve as a catalyst for the conservation of historic buildings as was hoped. With government funding, foreign expertise, and a government organisation as a tenant, the project failed to reflect the realities of the city. In the private sector an owner would have to remove *AKS* tenants at a heavy cost, local expertise was negligible and new tenants were considered untrustworthy, as many landlords had discovered their *AKS* tenants subletting for large profits and believed it to be common practice. With no *Tenancy Act* to protect either landlords or tenants, there was distrust on both sides.

The building, however, caught the imagination of the Penang Malay Chamber of Commerce and the UMNO Tanjung branch that publicly announced its proposed conversion into Penang's first Islamic Museum. This was before receiving the state government's approval and whilst it was still tenanted (*Star*, 8.12.1999). The Chamber also announced a redevelopment master plan for the Lebuh Acheh enclave, the same enclave which the State Economic Planning Unit had highlighted as part of the 1993 *Lebuh Acheh, Lebuh Armenian Heritage Development Project*. The Chamber clearly had political support and in October 1999 the Tanjung UMNO Youth division leader gave an ultimatum to the Chief Minister to resolve the issue of converting the mansion or risk demonstrations (*Sun*, 14.10.99). As the Chamber and UMNO Tanjung's demands became further politicised, the incident of a former café manager illegally selling alcohol in the Mansion, an offence on government property, was used to emphasise the misuse and justify the conversion to an Islamic Museum.

The Chinese Chief Minister agreed to a museum but suggested that it should remain in the location proposed in the 1993 Economic Planning Unit Proposal (*Star* 8.10.1999). The Muslim Deputy Chief Minister, who is also president of Majlis Agama

Pulau Pinang, publicly disagreed. Further endorsement of the Chamber's proposal was gained from the new Muslim Deputy Prime Minister, who may not have been fully conversant with all the issues or original proposals from the EPU. As a result of both political and ethnic pressure, the Chief Minister acquiesced.

In the Chinese-dominated city where the smaller Muslim community has no elected Malay representative in the Barisan National government and where the commercial sector is predominantly Chinese, the UMNO Tanjung and Malay Chamber of Commerce perhaps see their main role as ensuring the development of the Muslim population. Thus, they are eager to propose projects for the UMNO-led Federal government to support. In a later bid, perhaps to be less controversial, the Deputy Chairman of the Chamber claimed that the use of the Mansion as a museum would enhance the state's application for UNESCO Heritage Listing.

As the concept of the museum was well received and the Mansion was clearly underutilised, the museum proposal was difficult to refuse. What was curious, however, was that the proposal had come from a commercial Chamber and not from a Muslim heritage society. The Penang Malay Association had already made a proposal for a Malay Museum in Penang's oldest school, although nothing has yet transpired (Hassan, 8.7.1999). The Association was never mentioned in the Islamic Museum proposal (which would supposedly embrace all ethnic followers of Islam, including Arabs and Indians). This suggests that the Malay Chamber and UMNO Tanjung members were more constitutionally rather than ethnically Malay in composition. Although the importance of Syed Alatas, of Arab decent, to Muslim identity was stressed in relation to the museum, the Chinese connection with the house was ignored.

As if to justify its continued existence in the Syed Alatas Mansion and to emphasise the Malay connections, in July 2001, the Penang Heritage Centre held an exhibition of rare Islamic heritage items called *Towards Islamic Heritage Awareness,* officiated by the Governor of Penang [Fig. 7-2]. The press coverage of the event also announced the appointment by the Penang Malay Chamber of Commerce of an architect to evaluate the feasibility of their proposal. However, local rumour reported the building was too small for requirements, inferring that the museum exhibition would be larger than the building and therefore 'important'. There would be no shame, therefore, in needing to find a new home for such an exhibition and the discordant episode could be quietly forgotten. By October 2001, the AR&T Heritage Consultancy moved into a restored shophouse further along Armenian Street (Emmanuel, 2000). The Penang Heritage Centre remained in the mansion until 2002; since then the mansion has remained empty [Fig. 7-3].

The study of the Syed Alatas Mansion conservation project and subsequent debate as to its use serves to illustrate that inaugural conservation projects are unlikely

to take place and sustain their use without both political and economic support. However, this support can also create an unrealistic view of the economics of the project and its market potential. During the conservation works, the project received international, national and state level support. However on completion the cultural ownership of the building became localised as a religious, ethnic, cultural, commercial, and political issue.

The Khoo Kongsi Temple and Cannon Square

An equally controversial project was the inclusion of the Khoo Kongsi clan enclave, as a themed heritage tourism product within the *LALA Heritage Development Project*. In contrast to the bustling streets at its perimeter this quiet enclave of Cannon Square, in which the clan temple and opera stage are located, offered peace and tranquillity for both tourists and the residents living within the compound. It was built with just three small entrances typical for defence, 'giving little indication of the magnificent exaggerated Ch'ng dynasty Zhang Zhou style of architecture which lay within' (Khoo and Jenkins, 2002: 219).

It supported the cultural, religious, and social needs of the Khoo clan members of George Town in the nineteenth century. In the Second World War the square was used by the Japanese as a location in which to behead errant Chinese, whose displayed heads were used to intimidate others (Kratoska, 1998: 94). In 1945, an action group organised the repair of the bomb damage and the restoration of the temple and the surrounding houses, using incompatible modern materials of the times, thus causing more damage to the original fabric.

By the turn of the twenty-first century, the traditional Chinese marriage ceremony, where couples would come to pay their respects to their ancestors and deities in the temple, and proceed to the rooms below the main hall for the tea ceremony, had died out. Trustees suggest the attraction of non-clan-based, ebullient Christian religions with activities more in tune with modern interests and needs, has created this situation. The use of the Kongsi temple, therefore, has been reduced to the celebrations of *Cheng Beng* (All Souls Day) when the ancestral tablets in the temple would be honoured and *Tang Che*, a winter solstice celebration, mainly performed by the older remaining generation of Khoos. One further reason proposed for the decline in interest by the younger generation was that women could not be elected as trustees, though the Kongsi celebrated the tertiary academic or honorary achievements of all its clan members with an award ceremony in the ancestral hall (Khoo K.S., 1990). Only the male names are inscribed on a plaque in one of the halls. Few young Khoos are active within the association, preferring the many sports and social clubs that allow liberal interaction with those outside their clan, gender and ethnic group. The young Khoos

have little interest in the introspective traditions, and the committee of trustees currently laments the decline in young members' interest.

In June 1999, whilst the last tenants hung on to their homes, (see Chapter Six) work on the Khoo Kongsi Temple restoration began [Fig7-4]. Federal funds had already been invested in the opera stage which was restored in 1996, giving reassurance that Chinese heritage would not be neglected in a development proposal which had already part-funded two monuments of Muslim heritage. The work for the stage was later to win a PAM award in the year 2000.

Much of the previous restoration work to the temple, carried out in the 1980s, had to be replaced, removing modern materials and replacing them with those originally intended. Typically, the temple was built in harmony with the environment, as well as following certain beliefs and principles. Thus, repair materials chosen more for fashions rather than function had caused building stress and damage.

Like the appointed architect, the main contractor chosen was also the main contractor for the Cheong Fatt Tze Mansion, the Khoo Kongsi stage, and the Cheng Hoong Teng Temple in Melaka. And as such had the most experience of 'pure conservation' projects building up their experience and knowledge together. Although a few adaptive reuse projects had taken place, none other than the Cheong Fatt Tze Mansion, Khoo Kongsi stage, and the Cheng Hoong Teng Temple, had been based on research into the philosophy, methodology, materials, craftsmanship, or symbolism of what was being restored.

For the restoration of the temple, the contractors imported artisans from China who declined to pass their skills onto their local subordinates. Whether this was self-preservation on their part or lack of interest on the subordinates' part is unclear. The result is a continual lack of skilled artisan labour in Penang and a perpetual need to import. With the bureaucratic red tape for work permits, only the purist conservation landowner would undertake restoration work of this quality, although many shophouses, in need of conservation, have decorative *chien nien* panels along the main beams of the front façades, or alternatively allegorical paintings. However, not all artisans and restorers of the Khoo Kongsi were from China. The restoration of the painted door gods on the huge entrance doors was undertaken by Indian conservationists (Yong, 1999b).

The conservation work, completed in 2002, caused confusion amongst the trustees, some of whom expected that at the cost of RM 3.5 million the temple would look like new [Fig. 7-5]. Instead, because of the conservation philosophy of 'minimum intervention', the appearance, until time has faded the paint and dulled the new gold leaf, was patchy. The allegorical paintings along the main beams were stabilised and minimal touch-up work was done. Previous restoration work would have included the

repainting of the entire panels, which was no longer considered as good practice, although perhaps it might have been culturally more authentic (see Chapter One).

Since the conservation of the temple stage, funded partly with federal funds, and following the recent restoration, the Kongsi enclave has become a port of call for visiting dignitaries. Most importantly, as a message of 'inclusion' in Malaysia's cultural assets, the Deputy Prime Minister in 1999, the Prime Minister in January 2001 and later the *Agong* have publicly visited the site [Fig. 7-6].

Following a Penang Heritage Trust members' site visit, an expatriate member wrote to complain about the Malaysian need to touch everything in sight, describing it as 'a primate instinct,' thus potentially damaging the wall paintings and gold leaf carvings. Nevertheless, it is arguable that certain items, particularly within a temple, are meant to be touched as part of a belief system. For example, the Cheng Hoon Teng temple's newly gilded lions were soon rubbed clean, simply because they were part of a perpetual ritual. The temple has requested less touching, but has not forbidden it outright (Chuah, 2001). Although 'touch' eventually leads to 'damage,' damage leads to repair, thus the original craft would have been perpetuated ad infinitum. Through the master craftsman/apprentice relationship, there were always quantities of good craftsmen who were taught the technique of copying brush strokes and carving. Thus, repairs were of as high a quality as the masters' originals. As 'primates' became more 'civilised' and kept their hands to themselves, the need for craftsmen almost died out, as fewer repairs were required. Thus, there is now a gap between the cultural need to touch and the lack of craftspeople to repair due to modernisation of skills and technologies.

Shortly after the completion of the temple, the lower hall was converted into an unintentionally non-communicative museum, undertaken by a local interior designer and a few Kongsi trustees. The exhibits were culturally difficult to follow other than by Chinese observers, there were mainly panels of text with an audio tape repeating what was written and very few objects exhibited to enliven the displays. This was in marked contrast to the excellent state museum, which could have been used as a model [Fig. 7-7].

By July 2002, the last of the tenants moved out from the shophouses in the square to make way for its promotion as a heritage tourism product (see Chapter Six). Conversion of the housing into the heritage hotel or other commercial use was proving more difficult than the state example, Hotel 1926, suggested. The Cannon Square houses were much older with the challenge coming from the attempt to convert back-to-back shophouses into two separate commercial units, one on either floor. Without a rear entrance, there was no means of escape and therefore no approval from the Fire Department. Waiting for the Department to have a change-of-heart rather than suggesting a redesign to the architect, has meant that the project for the hotel is still

onhold and no rents, however meagre, are being collected by the Kongsi. However, the beginnings of a tourism venue can be seen. Number eight Cannon Square, the auspicious number for the Chinese, and former home of Khoo Chye Huat, has become the ticket office; new gates bar the public from discovering the square without payment, and two of the secret entrances are blocked. The atmosphere is very different from when I first encountered this magical place in 1995, full of life and vitality with mysterious pathways leading to the outside world. The tenants had held an intangible link to the square, through the evidence of their daily rituals, festivals and activities. Without them, it is now nothing more than an interesting and well-restored collection of monuments sited amongst currently shabby and disused housing.

Ironically, the closing dinner of the *Penang Story International Conference*, May 2002, attended by academics and conservationists who supported the conservation of living cultural heritage, was held in the square, amongst the almost empty houses and the barely used temple. With many more years of experience in the conservation of architectural monuments, UNESCO had only recently gained experience in the conservation of sites of living cultural heritage (and these have involved Communist governments as in Li Jiang, China, and Hoi An, Vietnam). It was clearly unprepared for the mistranslation of its encouragement of economically viable projects within a heritage city. Nor had it been exposed, in any depth, to the complexities of a multi-ethnic society such as Malaysia, having communicated mainly with those who were already eager for UNESCO's support.

But the story of Cannon Square, though tragic, is not exceptional and will often be repeated for it serves to emphasise the complexities of 'ownership' of a heritage site; UNESCO, the state government, the landlords, the tenants or the tourists. Although the original purpose of the tenancies had been surpassed - the young Khoo clan members barely showed interest in the association, and many of the older generation shared little cultural identity with the temple - the existence and former use of the square had provided the city with a stable urban community environment.

In its eagerness to create a flagship heritage tourism project the state had encouraged the Khoo Kongsi at a time when the value of a living cultural heritage community was not considered. During the promotion period, the city was still under *AKS*, vibrant and active. It was only after the *AKS Repeal* and the multiple evictions that took place in the urban centre, resulting in a deadening of the city, that the communities themselves gained value. The Khoo Kongsi temple and stage buildings have regained some of their tangible splendour. However, the intangible qualities that gave meaning to these buildings, has diminished to two ceremonies each year and a few cultural shows. In June 2003, the Khoo Kongsi held a Chinese opera on the stage during the *YTL Arts Festival*. Prior to the conservation project, this was traditionally performed for the deities and spirits during such Chinese festivals as the *Por Thor Kong*

as part of the cultural heritage of the community. Post-conservation, and following the eviction of the community practising such beliefs, the colourful spectacle has now become a 'traditional' event for a cultural tourism festival.

Between such events, the square remains lifeless other than the occasional fee-paying tourist and flocks of swiftlets and bats nesting in the abandoned buildings. If Cannon Square is to survive in its role as an income-generating tourist attraction, a new community and new use needs to be found. But as noted in Chapter Six, the trustees seem unfamiliar with commercial enterprise. Therefore, in order to create a sustainable environment, perhaps they should return to the familiar pattern of landlords and residential tenants, though for the new generations of tenants a new intangible connection to the spirit of the place would be created.

Suffolk House

As has been suggested by the last two case studies, the lack of a cultural identity between the owner or custodian of a heritage building and its reuse have led, in both cases, to unsustained use. In the case of the Syed Alatas mansion, the recent state of abandonment and neglect was due to a redefining of identity and position amongst those who believed they looked after the well-being of the local Malay population. For the Khoo Kongsi, the desire for a high-profile tourism product was initially suggested by the state government, rather than the trustees themselves. They had little affinity with the commercial proposal, though understood the need to conserve the temple and stage. The third case study in this category of cultural discord is Suffolk House, which offers an insight into the complexities of promoting the conservation of colonial heritage.

In August 2003, Suffolk House stands as a half-restored/half 'noble' ruin reflecting the struggles within Federal and local governments towards the conservation of historic colonial monuments. Although debates and challenges over its original builder continue, Suffolk House represents the period of British administration in the island's history.

Although in terms of architectural value the origin of ownership has little relevance, for those proposing and marketing the restoration proposal, it was highly significant for the raising of awareness and funds for the conservation work. The Penang Heritage Trust willingly supported the theory that the original builder of the house was Francis Light, the first Superintendent of the Island, having taken the advice of a visiting academic. A connection with Light was useful as it opened the doors to the conservation networks of Adelaide, Australia, which Light's son founded, and to British enthusiasm for history and conservation. The accuracy of the claim was less relevant than the value of the support it could engender.

The former President of the Penang Heritage Trust, Datuk Lim Cheong Keat, an enthusiastic advocate of Suffolk House's restoration, constantly reminded the Trust of their inaccuracy, citing William Edward Phillips as the original builder (Lim C.K., 1995). My own research recorded below suggests Light was not the builder, but further research is needed for those keen on historical accuracy. In 2002, having explored the local evidence I then put my theory to both the Trust and to the Datuk. The Trust, confident that they had succeeded in promoting the house's historic value, was no longer concerned with the connection, though it did not want the state government disillusioned by any contradictory theory. Datuk Lim on the other hand offered new evidence, which confirmed my findings.

An early reminiscence of his visit in 1818 to Suffolk House by Captain Welsh, Light's son-in-law, published in 1830, suggests Light as the original owner. However, in 1929, F.G. Stevens claimed the land known then as 'Suffolk' was once owned by Light, but the house was built by William Edward Phillips (Stevens, 1929). By 1936 Purcell, who had previously confirmed Welsh's claim, was to investigate further stating that in fact Suffolk was not built till many years after Light's death in 1794 (Yong, 2000a). This was also confirmed by Crawfurd's account

> This morning we landed and our whole party was received into the hospitable and elegant mansion of my friend Mr. Phillips, the Governor of the Island. Mr. Phillips' residence is called 'Suffolk', after the native county of the first owner, Mr. Francis Light, the founder of the settlement. In the time of this gentleman, the ground was little more than an ordinary pepper garden, but the taste of Mr. Phillips has rendered it the most beautiful spot of the kind in India, after Barrakpoore, the country residence of the Governor-general... 11 December 1821 (1828).

An indication of the origins of the house lies in three documents. The first is a list of 'Brick Buildings upon the Prince of Wales Island.' Light was reported to have two Dwelling Houses and Offices (cited in City Council, 1966). The second indication comes from Light's will in which be bequeaths '...unto the aforesaid Martina Rozelles, the pepper gardens with my **Garden house** plantations and all the land by me cleared in that part of the Island called Suffolk...' Light goes on to mention '**a Bungaloe** in George Town', and describes the fine furnishings therein. He also wills '...all the other of my effects with **the Brick House** and out houses and ground there unto belonging; be sold...'

Thus, it appears that three properties are mentioned, whereas the 1793 list identifies two. It could be argued that the 'Bungaloe' and 'Brick House' are one and the same, but Light's will is meticulously laid out and sectioned according to subject

matter, for example, plantations (under which Suffolk House in mentioned), houses, and slaves. He is also consistent in his references, making the use of two terms for one property unlikely. The term 'Garden house plantation' is where the confusion lies. The description garden-house was used in India to identify brick residences of the East India Company officers in Calcutta, Madras, and their suburbs. It did not come into common use until the early nineteenth century (King A., 1984: 38).

The third document comes from Major Macdonald, Superintendent for the Island in 1796, known for his 500-page despatches to Bengal. Macdonald did not, as far as my current research has disclosed, describe Suffolk House. He does, however, describe how Light and his business partner Scott assimilated themselves 'to their dress, manners and mode of living' to the ways of the indigenous population, the Malays, describing Scott's house as being 'built of wood in the Malay fashion' (cited in Logan, 1851:104).

Whilst the original builder remains as supposition, the more pertinent question for the conservationists was how and what should be restored. The conservation lobby looked to early paintings and sketches, which began to appear in 1811, with the first currently recorded, a watercolour, noted as the work of James George [Fig. 7-8]. This shows the two-storey colonnaded bungalow from its eastern aspect. In the same year, James Wathen undertook several watercolours leaving a visual record of the type and style of properties to be found on the island, from harbour and town scenes to a simple Malay hut and European residences including Suffolk House. He also describes a dinner party held at the house, which gives some further information.

> At seven o'clock we arrived at Suffolk House which is a very splendid mansion, built in a mixed style, English and Indian architecture. The dinner was sumptuous and elegant and the dessert such as can only be found in a tropical climate. The wines were excellent, the rooms were kept cool by watered mats... (cited in Purcell, 1928: 116).

By 1818, Suffolk House appears in two oil paintings by Captain Robert Smith and in the same year as an aquatint of the same view by William Daniell (Penang Museum, 2002). The simplicity of Wathen's watercolour of 1811, and errors in perspective as well as numbers of openings along the façade, suggests that it was hurriedly sketched in situ under the equatorial sun. It depicts a ten-bay colonnaded bungalow of two stories with a low roof hidden behind a parapet and a single-storey porch on the north façade. Captain Robert Smith's oil paintings show a thirteen-bay, colonnaded façade with a parapet and a central jack roof.

Purcell, however, observes an enigma

> 'Suffolk' still stands between Ayer Itam and York Roads but in appearance does not correspond very nearly with the coloured print in the Penang library and it seems to have been rebuilt at sometime or other (Purcell, 1928: 91).

The main house as it stands today has nine bays along its north façade, which could possibly be as depicted in Wathen's water-colour sketch [Fig.7-9]. The central jack roof also exists, as in Captain Robert Smith's oil painting. The main roof, however, is an overhanging pitch, a more typical bungalow form, rather than hidden behind a balustraded parapet, as shown by both artists. The parapet was much used in the Palladian architecture of Georgian England and in the colonial administration buildings of Calcutta at that time, and could possibly be a fashionable embellishment by either artist. It is this difference, between paintings and reality, which was observed by Purcell in his account of 1928.

Over the centuries the Suffolk Estate lands were further divided and passed through many owners; a portion was acquired by the Municipal Council, which proceeded to build large bungalow residences. A further portion on which Suffolk House stood was bought from a Chinese merchant, on behalf of the Methodist Mission in 1929. The building housed the Anglo-Chinese School, which later became the Methodist Boys School. During the Second World War, it was commandeered by the Japanese (PHT/PPPP, circa 1988). At the war's end the house returned to school use as an office and later a canteen until 1974 when the building became unsafe (Sharifah, 2000).

The first attempt by the City Council to offer an exchange for the house and land came from the City Secretary in a letter to the Methodist Boys School in 1961. The land negotiations took many years and it was not until 1977 that MPPP land of 68,677 square feet, was agreed for exchange with the Methodist Church land of 54,984 square feet, on which Suffolk House stood. Muzium Negara declared its intentions to preserve and maintain Suffolk House, recommending the gazetting of the house as a national monument following a visit by the Museum's Research Curator in 1980.

By 30 September 1980, a meeting was held by the state for the 'Restoration of Suffolk House', and included the Church, Museum Board (represented by Datuk Lim Cheong Keat), and State and Municipal Council representatives. During the meeting, it was agreed that the State Government should seek to gazette the property. Pertubuhan Akitek Malaysia (PAM) was requested to study the historical significance of the land following a permitted survey, and offered to restore the House at an estimated cost of RM 400,000. MPPP's co-operation was also sought to help in achieving the objectives of restoring Suffolk House and for its maintenance thereafter if need be.

Six years later, following a visit to Suffolk House, the newly formed Penang Heritage Trust - under Datuk Lim Cheong Keat's chairmanship, proposed a linear park, which would encompass Suffolk House and the Sri Rama Temple. This called for the inclusion of private land north of the river in front of Suffolk House converting the house into a Heritage Museum set within an indigenous arboretum. The linear park was identified in section 10.3.4 of the *Draft Structure Plan*, in September 1987, although was removed from a subsequent revision.

By 1987, the land exchange had still not taken place and the condition of the vacant house overrun by parasitic plant and insect life and used as a shelter by grazing cows, was beginning to be a cause for concern. A year later, MPPP were permitted to began *Operation Clean Up* to remove the 'Angkor Wat' atmosphere of 'jungle ruins'.

In conjunction with *Visit Penang Year* in 1988, the State formerly endorsed the linear park proposal which was marked by a garden party held at the house and officiated by the then President of the Municipal Council. It also marked the beginning of a fund-raising campaign for the restoration. Much hope was raised amongst the conservation lobby by such positive activity.

The next decade began with the incumbent Chief Minister, Lim Cheong Eu, losing his constituency and office. Earlier, in 1988 Datuk Lim Cheong Keat had stepped down as Chairman of the Trust. Both were regarded as part of the old regime. Pursued by the booming development industry, the newly appointed Local Government officers were less anxious to continue the work of the former Chief Minister.

By July 1993, the required land exchange had still not taken place; the house was deteriorating rapidly [Fig. 7-10]. The state endorsed this sense of urgency by suggesting that, as Suffolk House was an important link with the Commonwealth, it would be a prestigious showcase for Malaysia during the Commonwealth Games of 1998. The house was then surveyed, at the Penang Heritage Trust's request, by the South Australian Government's Department of Housing and Construction, (SACON). A dilapidation survey was prepared and an RM 2million restoration cost was estimated.

The Penang Heritage Trust set about gathering support for the restoration project, attracting the interest, time and finance of the British High Commission, a French Plantation Management Company, the South Australian Government, Friends of Suffolk House in Adelaide and heritage NGOs in New Zealand, Japan, Taiwan, Singapore and England. In 1993, the Trust produced a glossy poster and prepared a report entitled; 'Project Suffolk House, PHT Plan to restore Suffolk House in time for the Commonwealth Games, 1998'. It was important, therefore, if international help was to be secured, to reiterate the Light claim. The response to its efforts to raise awareness for the conservation project gave the Penang Heritage Trust confidence that restoration could be completed in time for the 1998 Commonwealth Games.

In 1996 the State Government made an allocation of RM 80,000 for a semi-permanent shed covering. However the instruction to the Public Works Department, was issued too late for them to design, draft, call for tender and award the contract before the end of the financial year, causing the funds to be surrendered. However at the same time the State government applied for funding of RM 4 million under the Seventh Malaysia Plan, though due to the economic downturn of 1997, the plans for restoration were put on hold (*Star*, 15.9.1998).

The Penang Heritage Trust recommended that the house be turned into an international standard tourist precinct and venue, such as the Alkaff Mansion in Singapore, and offered assistance in the setting up of such a project. In 1994, the building industry in Penang was nearing the height of its boom period, and the then President of Council (who had been linked to the demolition of the Metropole Hotel, in 1993) was not known for his enthusiasm for conservation. The Trust's enthusiasm over Suffolk House did not receive a reciprocal response from MPPP. Furthermore, there was little or no expertise within MPPP to decide the house's future use. Leisure activities, which required a disposable income from a broad middle-class, were only just beginning to emerge in the form of water theme parks and adventure spaces. The more moneyed classes took their entertainment abroad; the less moneyed, from the almanac of rituals and events relating to their religions. Thus PHT's experience and suggestions related more to the experiences of the international travel market than to the domestic market of George Town, which at that time was too small to sustain such a use.

By June 1998, with the Commonwealth Games due in September and no land exchange nor funds for conservation forthcoming, the Penang Heritage Trust issued a press release expressing its frustration over the local government's handling of the project. Funding promised for the full restoration in 1994 by a large Malaysian corporation was thwarted by the lack of land exchange, which had still not taken place.

> It is painful and embarrassing to examine the records. None of the parties involved is shown in a good light. It is a sorry tale of lip service, unfulfilled promises and foot dragging laced with sheer bureaucratic incompetence (Choong, K.K., 1998).

In spite of PHT's conviction that private funding could be found for the project once the land exchange was finalised, the Land Office's comment that the process would be completed before the year end (1998) came to nothing (*Star*, 18.9.1998). In January 1999, the Chief Minister announced an invitation to former 'colonialists' to contribute to the rescue of the house. In the same month the State Councillor for Culture, Arts and Tourism announced the state lacked funds to prevent Suffolk

House's descent into oblivion. In her article on 'The sad saga of Suffolk house,' the journalist, Sharifah Al-Attas, ends with a valid question.

> Is there a purpose to the decades-long delay to take concrete measures to intervene in the fate of Suffolk House? Is it intended that what remains of the mansion should be allowed to deteriorate until all talk of rescue is academic? (Sharifah, 2000).

Without any notification, the land exchange went ahead and a small state fund became available. Work began in November 2000, 39 years after the initial request from the City Secretary, following the appointment of the Chinese architect-conservator of Cheong Fatt Tze Mansion, and the *bumiputera* contractor of the Fort Cornwallis restoration. This created a balance in the composition of the expertise assuring a multidimensional cultural approach and avoided claims of political or ethnic preference. The combination was to be repeated later in the restoration of the Governor's Residence. Perhaps the main criteria for the choice of architect and contractor were their experience, willingness to research and learn, and evident interest in national heritage. It was also perhaps the wisdom of the newly appointed chief architect of the Public Works Department who, unlike many who were uncomfortable with colonial memories, was enthusiastic in his involvement in the conservation of part of his country's history.

Funding of RM 500,000 for the initial stabilisation and repair of the jack roof phase came from the state with a further RM 3.5 million applied for from Federal Government funds for the Eighth Malaysia Plan (Hwa, 2001a). The decision at that time, mainly following the advice of the Australian report, was to return the building to the image depicted by Captain Robert Smith in 1818, although both this painting and those by Wathen and George may well have been artistically embellished and may not have depicted the true physical state of the house. Externally the image of the paintings is far grander than reality, and would, therefore, gain greater interest for its sense of prestige, once fully restored.

By 2001, the first phase was complete. Rumours of RM 7 million funding to complete the restoration and establish the change of use, filtered through from both the State Exco Office for Culture and Tourism and the State Museum. In anticipation, The Penang Heritage Trust's members were granted two site visits in 2001 in which both the building and the conservation works were admired [Fig. 7-11]. They waited in expectation for the next and final phase to begin. By August 2002 PHT's newsletter reported

> The funds for Phase 2 were supposed to have been set-aside in the *8th Malaysia Plan*. We were told they were forthcoming, then we were told they had gone missing and now we are told, no one seems to know anything about it. Perhaps Suffolk House is destined to remain noble, as ruins (PHT, 7. 2002: 6).

On 1 January 2003, during an impromptu site visit, I had to climb over piles of building debris to reach the house. Neglected following the end of phase one, the house had become an unofficial dumpsite.

The history of the conservation of Suffolk House, and in particular Penang Heritage Trust's involvement in it, serves to illustrate the Trust's earlier confidence in non-Asian expertise and its courtship with western academics, government representatives, companies, and NGOs. The Trust's preference for 'foreign experts' over local, less experienced enthusiasts was perhaps insensitive in the delicate climate of identity restructuring which was taking place as Malaysia developed. It was clear that the Trust was uncomfortable dealing with people outside of its own sphere of members, friends, identity, and culture where it was successful in gaining considerable support giving an illusion of potential success. Without inculcating a following from Malaysians, who had yet to develop a relationship with that period of George Town's architectural history, this monocultural-class approach expressed a lack of confidence in the multicultural responses of Penang's own society.

More importantly, the lack of experience or expertise within the MPPP, in maintaining an international style tourist venue, suggested by the Trust, has reduced the urgency of completing the restoration. Until those who are responsible for organising the conservation of the site can identify with its future use, the risk of Suffolk House remaining derelict as in the Khoo Kongsi houses or conserved but empty or underused, as in the Syed Alatas Mansion, is very real.

Cultural contestation

In 1995 the Penang Heritage Trust decided to become directly involved in the running of a conservation project, having been an observer during the Syed Alatas Mansion restoration. At this stage in its history, the Trust had an antique collectors' section, which heard of an auction of Chinese antiques at the Carpenter's Guild on Love Lane. These antiques were a collection of intricately carved wooden 'sedan' chairs used to carry the statues of the deity Lu Pun and others during the feast-day processions. The wealth of the Guild had seriously declined with the reduced interest in membership over the years, and the urgent need to repair the temple roof had left the aging committee with no alternative but to sell their antiques. The Cheong Fatt Tze

conservator-architect and a Malay committee member of the Penang Heritage Trust approached the Guild in order to find alternative funding and retain the unsold antiques for public display.

Loo Pun Hong - Carpenters' Guild

The Loo Pun Hong, a Cantonese Temple, stands along Love Lane in Conservation Zone Two. Loo Pun, *Lu Pan,* or *Lu Ban* is the patron of the Chinese building trade. Born in the 5th century BC, many inventions of carpenters' tools have been attributed to Loo Pun; both he and his wife *Yen* were considered fine artisans. Loo Pun was also the inspiration of the *Lu Ban jing,* an illustrated guide to Chinese carpentry methods and spiritual needs. His guidance ranged from deciding the favourable day for plastering a house, building a gatehouse, the design of a clothes chest or the joinery for a main hall, as well as the measurements required for such items as doors. Loo Pun's carpenter's square rule was divided into eight increments. Each increment was marked with the symbols wealth, illness, separation, righteousness, office, plunder, harm, and 'root'. Items were constructed following the incremental meaning required. For example 'in the case of a small single-leaved door the doorway is taken as two *chi* and one *cun* wide. 1 = White, and on the foot rule of Ban the measurement corresponds with Righteousness (Ruitenbeck, 1993:169)

Loo Pun's divine guidance was used for the erection of the Imperial Palace of the Ming Dynasty in Peking. His influence spread with the Chinese diaspora. Newly-arrived craftsmen from China to Malaya and the region, would come to the Love Lane temple to pay their respects and ask for guidance before departing to their various regional destinations. The Guild was established as caretakers of the temple for Loo Pun, and the dormitory quarters for new arrivals as well as apprentices and master craftsmen. It also formed a nexus for a social support network, organising welfare and activities for those who remained in George Town. The temple in Love lane was not built until 1856, though the Guild had been established earlier in Penang Street (Khoo Su Nin, 1993: 119)[Fig.7-12].

Today, only a few of the remaining carpenters are interested in working on restoration projects of traditional Chinese architecture, as many have moved into the furniture industry. Time-consuming butterfly joints for example, carved for the repair of large supporting timbers, have been replaced by the nail-gun. The few capable carpenters were employed on the restoration of the Cheong Fatt Tze Mansion and are now kept in full employment on smaller restoration projects. No new apprentices have appeared to work alongside these elderly carpenters. In recognition of their rarity, their costs are high and time schedules frustratingly long, limiting their clients to a few wealthy conservationists.

The Penang Heritage Trust and the Guild came together to form a project committee with the intention of making the fund-raising and conservation work a

'community 'effort. The definition of this 'community' was never very clear. The Carpenters' Guild consisted of only small-scale contractors and a few elderly carpenters more interested in their *mahjong* sessions in the temple hall. The Trust had involved PAM northern branch, the Institute of Engineers Malaysia and the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (RMIT), and as a result dominated the humble Guild with academics and professionals none of whom understood the semiotics or cultural form of the building, or the language or culture of the Cantonese Guild members. With typical politeness and happy that their fund-raising efforts would receive help, the Guild agreed to the PHT's requirements. In the meantime, the Guild presented their own ideas for fund-raising, such as using the disused dormitories for backpackers and home-stay accommodation. Unfamiliar with both the backpacking culture and uneasy with any other than their own culture and language group, the idea soon faded away.

The Penang Heritage Trust, however, continued with their efforts and in July 1996 a group of Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology architecture and interior design students arrived to work on an artefacts exhibition and landscape proposal. Local Malaysian RMIT students were also involved, and the intention was to give both cultural groups an opportunity to study restoration of the Guild (*Star* 26.6.1996). Many of the Guild members could not understand why the volunteers from the Trust and the Institute were concerned in their temple at first and thought them curious to be interested in old items.

A year later, the Loo Pun Hong Restoration Sub-committee met to organise its structure and strategies for the restoration. The Penang Heritage Trust and the Loo Pun Hong each had a co-chairman, co-treasurer, and co-secretary. The meetings were to be alternatively chaired by the Trust and the Guild. Initial funding from the Trust amounted to RM 27,000 and from the Guild; RM 20,000 had come from the sale of furniture, RM 13,000 from the State Government with a further RM 12,000 in pledged donations. The Guild intended to raise a further RM 200,000 by offering advertisements of sponsors' names on plaques within the building, a method regularly used by Chinese guilds and associations. With an estimated cost of repair for the temple of RM 500,000, the PHT was to approach the Museum for a request for Federal funding. Neither of the latter two ideas materialised.

The Trust tabled their philosophy behind a Grade One restoration and stressed the Guild committee's moral responsibility to retain and preserve the skills and materials of the original builders. The Trust spoke mainly English or Hokkien, the Guild Cantonese or Hakka. Both sides were unable fully to use the national language. Thus, there were frequent misunderstandings and misinterpretations. It was not evident however, until the work began, whether the requirements were culturally and contextually understood even though the Trust's team also included a Mandarin-

speaking architect. The Guild chairman encouragingly responded to the philosophy as 'very Cantonese -back to Canton', though no one was sure what his comprehension of Cantonese architecture was.

The Loo Pun Hong's chairman was often attending the funerals of his ageing members and their families. Thus, the Trust's Malay chairman took over the position on a permanent basis whilst the Hokkien Chinese project manager did all the negotiating and the Welsh secretary wrote the minutes. As the project progressed it became evident that cultural assumptions and misunderstandings created more communication difficulties than the multiple languages used. Whilst the pathway to conservation of the physical form was becoming familiar, and one which had many learned guides and documents to refer to when help was required, there was little guidance available for the conservation of an 'active cultural site'.

As the Guild's committee members began to regret the Trust's involvement in the project the relationship with their own chairman soured. The Trust felt he was an 'old fool', although it was his tenacity that had initially persuaded the Guild to accept the Trust's offer. The Trust, however, determined not to give up the project and in order to raise further funds joined together with the Penang International Hoteliers Association and the State Exco Councillor for Culture, Arts, and Tourism in order to organise a street party event in Love Lane.

In December 1998, the Guild's new chairman called a meeting to request the funds raised by the Trust to be transferred into the Guild's accounts. Concerned that the funds would be 'lost' the Trust declined. As the funds grew, the Guild took greater interest in the ownership of the project, sending a team to China to source for materials and contacting a local Penang contractor to assess and plan the restoration work. Meanwhile the Trust approached the contractor restoring the Hokkien Khoo Kongsi stage that had already sourced materials and arranged for the Chinese craftsmen's visas, thus potentially saving the Guild such costs. Both parties neglected to tell the other of their intentions. The Guild's trip to China, therefore, was seen as an unnecessary use of funds and the Guild's contractor a hindrance to the Trust's plans. The Guild, however, were determined to use their own contractor, whom they trusted and knew well and, more importantly, was Cantonese.

The work was scheduled by the Guild to begin in March 1999 with the Guild organising their own materials supply from China. The question of who should do what work and to whose specification became a battleground. The Trust felt their solution of using the Hokkien Khoo Kongsi contractor was the more practical. The Guild, however, wanted their own people to do the work in their own way, especially as they could identify with the needs of a Cantonese temple. Old misunderstandings and resentments between Hokkien and Cantonese began to rise, the Hokkien representing the elite and the Cantonese representing the artisans and trades classes.

This was a very simplistic division, as not all Hokkien were from the elite *Baba Nonya* families and not all Cantonese were working class. But both the Trust and the Guild were guilty of scorning the other through such inaccurate but long-standing sentiments. However, publicly a strong bond of co-operation between the two groups was presented.

By January 1999, the Guild agreed to put to its members the suggestion that they would use their own craftsmen to undertake general maintenance, to repair leaks, gutters and timber carvings, whilst the Trust would cost for the repair of timbers and tiles of the temple roof. The Guild's craftsmen from China would undertake the fine decorative Cantonese ridge work.

In March 1999 the two contractors, the Trust's and the Guild's were called to interview by the two subcommittees, although only the Chairman of the Guild's subcommittee represented their side. The Guild's contractor did not attend as he had remained in China. For the Trust's consultants such non-attendance by an invited contractor was considered unprofessional, for the trade Guild such practice was understandable and accommodated. Thus, a further interview meeting was scheduled for his return but when he failed to attend that meeting, there was a unanimous decision to award to the Trust's contractor.

The Guild had continued to use its fund, intended for the repairs, on more general maintenance items, although the generally dilapidated state of the temple did not give evidence of such work. Without consultation with the joint committee, the Guild had also signed a contract for three Fujian craftsmen to repair timber carvings, although this was not in the original scope of work. The Guild was also anxious that the Trust's funds be spent first and the Guild's fund would be used only to 'top-up' if required. It was clear from their eagerness to either transfer the Trust's funds into their account, or to use the Trust's funds first, that a sizeable amount of their own funds had been spent. As a result, much to their surprise, they were asked to account for their expenditure by the Trust.

Finally, the Trust persuaded the Guild to agree to a joint account with three signatories; the Chairmen of the Guild and the Trust together with the third signatory, the local Assemblyman, who was considered an impartial party.

The repair work to the roof finally began on the 20th day of the first moon in the Chinese calendar (21 February 2000) with the Trust's contractor, employing ten craftsmen from Xiamen [Fig. 7-13]. During, and subsequently following the conservation work the Guild was to have arranged for a general cleaning of both the building and grounds with minor repairs to the gatepost and walls. By October 2000, the main works were completed, but the Guild's work had not even begun, much to the frustration of the Trust's project manager. They were duly criticised by the Trust

and responded with a request that immediate rectification and repair works be carried out on leaks coming from the Trust's contractor's conservation work.

The Trust's male chairman, rather than the female project manager, then approached the Guild with a request for their work to be completed and as an incentive for action requested the date of the official opening and press conference to highlight the completed work to the roof. Even the request by the Mandarin-speaking Nanyang Folk Culture Society to use the Guild as part of the *Wonders of Chinese New Year Street Festival* to be held in Love Lane in February 2001, failed to spur the Guild into action. Finally, the Trust decided to invite Penang's Chief Minister to commemorate the completion of the pilot phase of the restoration work at the Loo Pun Hong. On 7 January 2001, the ceremony took place after a week of frenzied activity from the Guild. The walls were patched up and lime-washed and the temple swept and tidied in the usual manner of piling up unwanted items into one corner.

During his speech, the Chief Minister attempted to encourage the Chinese community to practice heritage conservation for long-term benefits. However, the suggestion that it would increase the state's tourism prospects seemed to bear little relevance to the Guild members present. Their President, far from being eager to continue to save the temple and Guild buildings, stated during the opening ceremony that no further conservation could take place due to lack of funds (Gurunathan, 2001). The Penang Heritage Trust decided unanimously to withdraw from any further involvement with the Guild other than including it as part of its *Heritage Tours*.

The frustration experienced by both parties came from an assumed mutual understanding that in reality did not exist. The most proactive relationship occurred between the Trust's Malay subcommittee chairman and the Loo Pun Hong subcommittee, as the cultural differences were instantly apparent and respected. In contrast and in spite of their ethnic similarities, the Cantonese Guild and Hokkien, *Baba-Nonya* Trust project manager made many assumptions about each other's comprehension of conservation and willingness to listen. As one visiting observer noted, the Trust's project manager showed 'lack of sensitivity and the opinion that there was only one way to go'. The Guild was equally as chauvinistic.

The Trust claimed 'ownership' of the conservation project of the Loo Pun Hong Temple, as it had raised the bulk of the funds. Through its own professional contacts, it arranged for the damage to be assessed and a proven contractor found. It was hoped by the Trust's appreciation of traditional trades that the Guild's few remaining active craftsmen would become involved and to some extent advise. Possibly intimidated by the academics and conservation activists, and the outspoken Hokkien project manager, who had been one of the conservators of the Cheong Fatt Tze mansion employing Guild craftsmen, the craftsmen declined. They also appeared to take pleasure in causing delays and indecision, which frustrated the Trust. What little ground was won

in the onset of the project in rekindling the Guild's respect for its culture and heritage became lost in a battle of wills and egos.

Since the Phase One roof project was completed, no further fund-raising or repair works have been carried out. Plant life has again begun to dislodge the decorations on the roof ridge. However, the temple is still actively in use and the *mahjong* sessions continue every afternoon. Whilst the temple building may have been 'hijacked' to appease the need to conserve by the Penang Heritage Trust, the intangible 'spirit of the place' was only temporarily disturbed.

Sustainable conservation

From the case histories of the four projects described above, it would appear that conservation of George Town's built heritage is repeatedly challenged by the oscillating climate of identity politics, lack of skilled contractors, trained professionals, and government officers. However, a greater challenge perhaps, is balancing the cultural identity of the owners, custodians, and conservators with the target use and end-user.

This next section continues with a description of two projects, which reflect successful sustainable conservation, though both projects faced discord and contestation throughout their progress. Both sites are currently in use by communities whose cultures are reflected in the buildings' activities. The two projects are remarkably different in character, culture, use, and ownership. However, the cultural balance between the owners/custodians and the users of the buildings brings these two projects under the banner of sustainable conservation.

The Mesjid Melayu Lebuh Acheh, Acheen Street Mosque

In recognition of the need to encourage both political and 'ethnic' support for conservation from the Muslim communities, the Penang Heritage Trust took the Malaysian Prime Minister on an unscheduled visit to the *Mesjid Melayu Lebuh Acheh* during his official visit to the Syed Alatas Mansion project site [Fig. 7-14]. In mid-1994, the Prime Minister's Department had allocated RM 3.5 million intended for the restoration of the Mosque and the surrounding properties in the compound (Ghafar, 1996: www). A high-profile project co-ordination committee was established, and included representatives from the Department, Muzium Negara, and the Badan Warisan Mesjid Melayu Lebuh Acheh (Acheen Street Mosque Heritage Society). The project itself was co-ordinated by a project manager from Universiti Sains Malaysia, who was answerable to the committee, and an architectural firm that was answerable to the project manager. As is common in a government project, the architect, contractors, and project manager were Malay.

With such high profile attention, particularly from Muzium Negara as the mosque and site were protected under the Antiquities Act, and with little local expertise, the project was not easy to complete. Furthermore, local 'experts' had emerged and the Penang Heritage Trust having gained academic, as opposed to practical hands-on, experience from the Syed Alatas Mansion, was quick to criticise without offering alternative solutions. An example of their approach related to the extension of the mosque. The mosque had become too small for the expanding congregation at Friday prayer over the years and had been extended with a metal roof above the veranda. Rejecting the use of terracotta tiles for the new roof the Trust stated that 'a modern extension should be distinguishable from the old building whilst harmonising with it' (Cheah, 1995). However, PHT gave no alternative examples.

The extension had been necessary to accommodate the combined congregation of the *Mesjid Kapitan Kling* and *Mesjid Melayu Lebuh Acheh*, who attended the fortnightly *Jama'ah* prayers together in alternate mosques. This was a practice introduced by the British in an attempt to settle differences between the congregations (Khoo Salma, 1995). The Majlis Agama Islam Pulau Pinang (MAIPP), the administrator of the mosque, feared halting the practice would create a division, with the Indian Muslims worshipping in the *Mesjid Kapitan Kling* and the Malays worshipping in *Mesjid Melayu Lebuh Acheh* (Ghafar, 1996: 6).

The Honorary Secretary for the Penang Heritage Trust sent a long letter on the history of conservation 'abuse' to a major English daily newspaper (Khoo Salma, 1995). She was supported by the Consumer Association Penang (*NST* 26.8.1995). Her article pointed out the lack of protection of historic elements like the carved pulpit (*mimbar*), for example, once the roof covering had been removed, and the reshaping of an original wall creating 'the only pentagonic mosque in Malaysia' (Khoo Salma 1995). These were typical examples of the methods of site contractors. Even as Muslim contractors, there was little appreciation of the needs for mosque conservation. As the Malay President of the Penang Heritage Trust commented, 'A conservationist would approach a historic building as any Muslim would approach a mosque, that is with respect and humility' (Nazir, 1995). In his letter to the newspaper, the President suggested that such problems could be resolved if planning and museum authorities worked together with NGOs, architects, and other building professionals with interest and experience in conservation. 'Inflated egos, the *'bodoh sombong'* (arrogant stupidity) syndrome and being too proud to ask others, are attitudes that will only result in tragic foul-ups'. Such vocal criticism caused the topic to be discussed by the Cabinet and work was temporarily stopped (Faezah, 1996).

The slow distribution of government payments meant that the project was further delayed and for the first time in the mosque's history the Hari Raya prayers

celebrating the end of Ramadan could not be performed, much to the frustration of the community (Shahariah, 1996). The project was completed in June 1997.

The controversy exposed the embryonic stage of conservation practice in Malaysia. Although the French conservation architect was employed in a consultative capacity, his infrequent visits left much to the local project manager and architect to handle. His practical contributions and lack of criticism were appreciated at site level but his employment caused discomfort amongst the fledgling experts of Muzium Negara.

Whilst a canvas roof was installed for temporary protection and the chopped corner was reinstated, the decision over the veranda roof remained unresolved. The result of the indecision and lack of guidance meant that after completion, a new metal awning was installed by the community [Fig. 7-15]. Throughout the project, lack of consultation or communication with the Muslim community living in the compound of the Mosque created frustrations. The Mosque *Qariah* (Parish) committee was not represented on the steering committee, though the members were sometimes invited to meetings. The Badan Warisan Mesjid Melayu Lebuh Acheh formed in 1992 for the project, often had different approaches and opinions from the committee and the two disputed amongst themselves. Misunderstandings of motives behind events that took place at one stage caused clashes necessitating police intervention to settle the dispute.

The challenges to this project were therefore greater than just the conservation of the building. Considerable additional pressure to the conservation team came in the form of the expectations of (at that time) an inexperienced Muzium Negara, frustrations over the dependence on foreign expertise, the overzealous attitude from the Penang Heritage Trust (at one stage breaching contractual law), the miscommunications with the community and the ever eager press awaiting an interesting story.

The constant communication with and reference to foreign experts distanced the Penang Heritage Trust, and to some extent the state government, from understanding the various local communities involved, in particular the mosque *waqf* residents, the officers within the MPPP and the various chambers and associations. Preference for foreign expertise and talk of 'economic value' and 'tourism' products created resentment that the only beneficiaries from the 'showy' project would be the tourists who were being pandered to at the expense of the community.

Despite the difficulties and complaints during the project, the community appear to be proud of their mosque, though lack of explanation as to the maintenance requirements has left the mosque vulnerable to unintentional abuse through such issues as incompatibility of modern and old building materials. The project manager was also proud of the final achievement and entered the project for the *Preservation Award* from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's Ministry of Higher Education. The project

won and the award was presented at the opening ceremony of the *Symposium on Mosque Architecture* at King Saud University, Riyadh in January 1999. The project has not received any award in Malaysia.

To date the mosque is still active, although many of the Lebuh Acheh shophouse community have been relocated awaiting the new development project described in Chapter Six. Even if the compound housing is replaced by modern developments, the historic mosque will still serve the Muslim community of Acheen Street. Thus, the conservation project has served to sustain both the tangible and intangible heritage of the Muslim community.

The Cheong Fatt Tze Mansion

The next project which is considered equally as successful in terms of sustainable conservation is the private restoration and adaptive reuse of the Cheong Fatt Tze Mansion, which in 2000 won the *Most Excellent Project* category for the UNESCO *Asia and West Pacific Heritage Award for Cultural Heritage Conservation* (Choong, K.K., 2000d). During the award ceremony, which was officiated by Malaysia's Deputy Prime Minister, UNESCO's representative Richard Engelhardt claimed

> The restoration of the Cheong Fatt Tze Mansion is an exceptional achievement in conserving the historical and cultural heritage of the George Town community. History was preserved by meticulously applying extensive research on the architecture, traditional skills and materials to the restoration....
> It has stimulated restoration and adaptive reuse of structures in its immediate vicinity and serves as a model for restoration projects throughout the city of George Town and indeed the broader region (cited in Loh-Lim, 2002: 59).

Whilst Engelhardt's first paragraph is a true description of the project, the second is an interesting reflection of his own perceptions of the conservation movement in George Town, the realities of which, together with a description of the conservation process for the Cheong Fatt Tze, are described below.

The mansion was the former home of the rags-to-riches Hakka millionaire Cheong Fatt Tze who arrived in Southeast Asia from China in 1856, at the age of sixteen. Marrying a merchant's daughter he developed an aptitude for trade from which he amassed his fortune. Promoted to Mandarin of the Highest Order by the Manchu Empress Dowager for his support of the modernisation and industrialisation of China, including the banking system and railroads, he gave his sons a western

education in order to communicate more effectively in a global market. With eight known wives, he maintained homes in Indonesia, Singapore, Hong Kong, and China as well as the mansion in George Town.

The construction of the mansion on Leith Street, George Town, began in stages during the latter half of the nineteenth century. The central courtyard section is finer in detail and materials whilst the later courtyard wings on either side, said to be for his wives, children and numerous relatives, were of simpler, more humble materials.

Other Hakka millionaires built their mansions along Leith Street, rotating the position of Vice-Consul for China between themselves. Whilst they chose to follow the Chinese courtyard house form internally with European façades, Cheong retained a more traditional appearance to his Chinese courtyard house. Subtle introductions of western elements were included, such as encaustic tiles from Stoke-on-Trent, Art Nouveau stained glass and cast-iron columns, and capitals and balustrades from Macfarlane's of Glasgow. The latter was clearly a fashion that can be found in other Hakka mansions around George Town.

These western imports were juxtaposed with auspicious bats and bees carved into solid granite corbels supporting the main beams of the first floor. Gothic lancet and arched window-openings clash into *chien nien,* 'cut and paste' porcelain work borders below the roof parapet of the side-wing courtyards. The building is a tribute to fine craftsmanship of both East and West. In addition to the physical quality of the structure and decoration is the adherence to the principles of Chinese geomancy and the elegance of spatial form and hierarchy. As 'Nature's wealth should be drawn inwards', the 'gutters with rainwater take circuitous routes, emptying into internal courtyards, backing up in loops, cooling both floors and ceiling spaces' (Loh-Lim, 2002: 22). Like the more humble shophouse, the movement of cooling air is also directed through the building through open air-wells, louvered shutters, and cast iron filigree fanlights

Constructed out of alignment with the road, the mansion is auspiciously placed facing the rising sun and the sea with Penang's hills behind. The building rises in stages towards the rear to compensate for the lack of a sloped site so that the main body of the house is three steps higher than the garden and road; the rear of the main courtyard is then raised by a further step.

When Cheong Fatt Tze died on 11 September 1916 he stated in his will that his estates could not be sold until the death of his youngest son. By the time of his son's death in 1989, the moneys entrusted for the upkeep of the mansion had clearly not been used for that purpose. The mansion was in a squalid condition and housing more than thirty tenant and subtenant families of the last surviving daughter-in-law (ibid.:14). Stories are still told of tuition classes held in the front hall and badminton

played in the side-wings' granite courtyards amongst the washing lines and lean-to shacks.

In 1987, the MPPP's *Draft Design Guidelines for Conservation Areas* identified the property as *Heritage Building Category One*, forbidding demolition, alteration or extension and works other than repair. The State Museum Board had already requested the acquisition of the property by the State Government. During a dinner, held at the mansion, following the UNESCO *Economics of Heritage* conference in 1999, the restoration architect revealed more of its history. On news of its pending sale and in recognition of its architectural and historical importance, a group of potential conservationists from George Town persuaded the estate agent of their sincere intent to restore the mansion. Though other financial offers from Singapore and Kuala Lumpur were higher, the agent managed to persuade the judge administering the trust to sell to the local enthusiasts at the reasonable price of RM 2.75 million. This was his last transaction in Penang and the agent then migrated to Australia. The history of the mansion's conservation is, therefore, a history of many exceptional people, not only the original builder, but those who stood out from the crowd of development and profit in order to conserve the fast-disappearing memories of George Town's early pioneers and their cultural environment.

The purchase of a substantial inner city site of 56,000 square feet with the sole intent of restoring a derelict mansion was considered foolhardy during a pro-development climate. Lack of government incentives for conservation in the form of grants, or expertise in the form of quality craftsmen and contractors made the project an even greater challenge.

Nevertheless, the project caught the attention of a few local craftsmen bereft of quality projects in the cheap and tacky development climate that was sweeping Penang Island. A George Town craftsman in his small workshop on Penang Hill painstakingly restored the Art Nouveau stained glass windows and fixed panels. Local craftsmen, some from the Loo Pun Hong, restored the timber ceilings, louver shutters, windows, timber columns, and finely carved capitals. Craftsmen from China were brought in to restore the *chien nien* decorative tile work, damaged over the years by crows and small boys with catapults. Even the local university was involved in the analysis of the composition of the lime plaster in order to replicate a new plaster as close to the original as possible.

Ironically, the restoration of the mansion benefited from the demolition and clearance of shophouses for the building of the Prangin Mall shopping centre. Large granite slabs from five-foot ways and driveways were acquired to provide a solid driveway for the mansion. In addition, later doors complete with their original brass doorknobs were bought from the Eastern and Oriental Hotel shortly before its modernisation, and used as bathroom doors for the adaptive reuse of the mansion.

In 1995, at the culmination of the restoration project, the PAM architectural award was received in recognition of design excellence achieved in the 'Conservation and Adaptive Reuse Buildings' category. By March 1996, shortly after this award, and as plans for reuse were being made, the hammer piling works for a 20-storey extension of a neighbouring hotel began to cause damage [Fig. 7-16]. Cracks appeared in the mansion, beams, once embedded in the 18-inch thick walls, moved from their 100 year-old positions. Both side-wings required their first floor galleries to be propped; tiles cracked and once-watertight terraces began to leak. The result was heartbreaking for all those who had invested so much in the restoration.

It was at this point that the conservation of the mansion began to influence the policy-making of the city and disturb the complacency of both developers and pro-development members and officers of the local government. Private meetings with the hotel owner's representative and engineer regarding a change of piling methods proved futile. The mansion's owners, who had formed an incorporated company for the restoration, filed and were granted an e*x parte* injunction against the hotel on 15 May 1996 (Dielenberg, 1996a).

The defendant (the hotel) claimed that restraint from its current operation 'would amount to a derogation of the defendant's right to reasonable use' of its own land. The High Court judge requested the examination of scientific findings on which the evidence was based. This exposed that earthworks plans were only submitted to the MPPP by the hotel's engineer after work had proceeded contrary to requirements under Section 70A(1) of the Street Drainage and Building Act 1974. The judge dismissed the defendant's application with costs. He also ordered that the plaintiff's interlocutory injunction 'be continued until such time that the defendants could satisfy this court that a safe piling system would be employed' (Salleh, 1997).

The hotel then went to the Court of Appeal and on the 4 July obtained an *ex parte* order to suspend the High Court injunction; piling works commenced ten days later, and the damage to the mansion was exacerbated. Cheong Fatt Tze also went to the Court of Appeal and on 23 July obtained an *inter parte* order which discharged the *ex parte* injunction granted to the hotel, which the hotel appealed against. The hotel refused to be beaten and eight days later the Court of Appeal set aside the injunction for 14 days, long enough for the piling to be completed (Dielenberg, 1996b). Work began on the 17 August, and finished before the Municipal Council issued a stop-work order (Selva and McIntyre, 1996). The President of the Municipal Council had visited the Cheong Fatt Tze on 22 August and from the following day the MPPP began monitoring the cracks and issued a stop-work order four days later. After nine days of frenzied 24-hour activity, the piling work had been completed.

During the final piling works, the Penang Heritage Trust staged a protest criticising the Municipal Council for inaction when clearly the by-laws and building

codes had been violated (Yong, 1996). The protest lasted long enough for the press photographers to capture the moment, for the police to drive by, but to arrive fifteen minutes after members of the upper middle-class establishment had dispersed [Fig.7-16b].

Clearly determined that their land rights had been violated the hotel owners persisted with a series of confusing actions, where two courts of appeal produced different verdicts on the same issues. Eventually on 21 August 2002 in the Federal Court, the defendant's (hotel's) application for leave to appeal against the decision of the Court of Appeal (5 July 2002) was dismissed with costs. The damages hearing has now to be heard in the civil courts.

Many questions are raised with regard to action or inaction of the MPPP. When the building works began to reach headline news, was the development checked for its legal status? When the earthwork plans were submitted after works began, contrary to regulations, was the hotel developer penalised? In addition, why did it take over three months before the MPPP monitored the damage? It raises the question, was the MPPP so inefficient, and the development lobby so powerful, at that time, to cause such inaction?

Meanwhile a featureless, grey-painted, concrete block with tinted glass has been added to George Town's sky-scape behind the mansion. However, not long after the damage, two milestones changed the muscle of the heritage lobby. The first was the state adoption of the amendments to the *Town and Country Planning Act (1976)*, September 1996. The second was a five-storey height-limit on new development within the five *Conservation Zones*, and later that year a sixth zone was added to the existing five conservation areas (Cheah, 1996). A year later in August 1997, hammer piling was prohibited within the zones and for projects in densely populated areas (*Sun*, 7.1.1997).

In the *Heritage 1997 Seminar*, the Cheng Fatt Tze Mansion's servants' quarters (five shophouses opposite), were presented as examples of adaptive reuse possibilities. Three were converted into a pub and Japanese restaurant, the other two into an Indian restaurant. These examples were closer to the realities of commercial adaptive reuse in terms of private ownership and funding. In 1997 the vast majority of heritage property was still under *AKS* and such types of commercial ventures were rare outside of hotels. The middle-class trend of Starbucks, Cigar bars and pubs, growing in Kuala Lumpur, had yet to reach George Town, which by then had only just opened its second leisure and retail complex.

In the six years from the dismissal of the defendants' application, the mansion has been further repaired and restored. Its reuse as mansion-stay accommodation resembles a family home that has evolved over the years, with new furniture bought as the fashions changed, dotted amongst the traditional Chinese antique mother-of-pearl and rosewood chairs and opium beds [Fig.7-17]. The result is an eclectic fusion of

styles, for example as well as traditional Straits Chinese furnishings a 1950s room was installed, with Malaysia's Cliff Richard LP covers adorning the walls, hoop cane furniture and laminated dressing tables which were found stored in a warehouse for the last 50 years. Much has been donated or is on long loan as local interest in the project grew.

Bathrooms were introduced into the rooms of the side-wings, taking care to respect the proportions of the rooms, natural airflow, and *feng shui* elements. Chinese homes were traditionally introspective, the inner courtyard being more a focus than the exterior garden, and the placing of the modern bathrooms followed these requirements. Two rooms were converted into a museum housing a photographic display of the conservation project and the seventh wife's fine silk *cheong sams*, found in the mansion after it was bought.

A few concerts, plays and poetry readings have been held over the last years, proving the natural acoustics of the central courtyard as excellent and exposing the audiences to the richness of the setting [Fig.7-18]. By December 1997 restoration tours were introduced. In February 2000, the Penang Heritage Trust invited the Chief Minister to an informal dinner, accompanied by the then President of Council and the State Executive Councillor for Culture, Arts, and Tourism. Such was the magnificent ambience of the setting that it was in itself a powerful and persuasive tool to convince the invited guests of the importance of respecting George Town's heritage. UNESCO and State Heritage Committee meetings are now often held within its captive atmosphere. The mansion has now become an unofficial state treasure, visited and publicly admired by the Malaysian royalty and high-ranking politicians, including the Deputy Prime Minister and Prime Minister, as well as international public figures. Public as well as government appreciation of the efforts of the conservators has been widely acknowledged. With such endorsement of the value of heritage architecture, it will be interesting to hear the outcome of the damages hearing yet to be held.

Whether it can be said that the conservation was a catalyst for further conservation projects is debatable for as a unique building reused for a niche market, it fails to resemble the realities of the remaining city. Nevertheless, what can be claimed is that it has influenced those who have visited, stayed, or worked on the project itself.

Conclusion

The case studies identified in this chapter have been chosen in an attempt to illustrate the complexities of the issues relating to the conservation of built heritage in a multi-ethnic developing Asian city.

The 1993 *'Lebuh Acheh, Lebuh Armenian Heritage Development Project'* brought conservation into the urban planning debate. Its concept, guided by the German consultant within MPPP, was based on western planning models with no

understanding of the specific local challenges it would create. The Syed Alatas Mansion brought in not only 'foreign expertise' for the project, but also a use alien to the needs of both the local community and the communities it attempted to target. These were the landowners, professionals, and the building trade. Perhaps the one group able to comprehend its potential was the well-travelled heritage tourist. Local political agendas contested the mansion's lack of use and proposed a concept more relevant to a sector of the local Muslim community. However, it would appear that the tenancy and misuse was more relevant to their claim than its proposed new use in terms of identity politics, for the building is currently unused.

The second case study examined within the *Heritage Development Project* was that of the Khoo Kongsi Temple and enclave. Here, the Kongsi trustees' willingness to support the state government's desire for a heritage tourism product led to the eviction of the communities who had provided the social and cultural link to the temple, which the trustees could no longer assume. In a city where all other temples are vibrant with life and use, including Kongsi temples, this is the only clan temple that requires an entry ticket and fee and has severed its connection with a local community. It now demonstrates how an ill-directed desire to attract heritage tourism can be detrimental to both living cultural heritage and cultural tourism.

The protracted attempts to *Save Suffolk House*, squabbles over the authenticity of its claimed ownership and dependence of foreign experts to support these claims demonstrate a sense of cultural insecurity and social superiority which did little to encourage local support for the project. Suggestions for reuse as a venue for concerts, exhibitions, the performing arts and cultural shows were more relevant to the lifestyles of its supporters and foreign friends whose numbers were too small to sustain its use. It must also be noted that state funds for phase one only became available after rapid development had taken place throughout Penang, providing much needed housing and infrastructure, and when local conservation expertise had begun to emerge. However, perhaps as the restoration and eventual reuse was unlikely to create many jobs or even income, funds were diverted elsewhere. Equally, Penang Heritage Trust's seemingly 'aggressive' behaviour generally, did not encourage the project to be supported from many sections of local government. Thus, it is currently an incomplete restoration project.

In contrast, the Loo Pun Hong Temple, in spite of the 'cultural hijacking' and only partial restoration, is still in daily use as a temple and social club for *mahjong*. The building has not received any maintenance since the PHT's contractors left the site. No effort has been made to raise any further funds by either party; it is unlikely that they will. However, its life and vitality and cultural context remain, although unsustainable, unless, in the future, the Guild themselves decide what they want to do.

The next case study to be examined, the *Mesjid Melayu Lebuh Acheh*, was much more of a local exercise, but was challenged by the inexperience of both its exponents and its critics as well as the rarely consulted community for whom the mosque held particular relevance. It is because of this relevance, however, that the restored building is still in use today, though again local identity politics have threatened the existence, not of the mosque, but of its community (see Chapter Six).

Finally, like the *Mesjid Melayu Lebuh Acheh*, the Cheong Fatt Tze represents successful 'sustainable' conservation. Privately purchased with the intent to conserve by those conscious of its architectural value, the mixed background of the owners, Chinese-and-European-educated, allowed for an osmosis of ideas and approaches, parallel to the thinking of Cheong Fatt Tze himself. Its current use as mansion-stay accommodation and a tourist venue have attracted a devoted following of return visitors and guests, thus creating a new and sustainable cultural use for the heritage property.

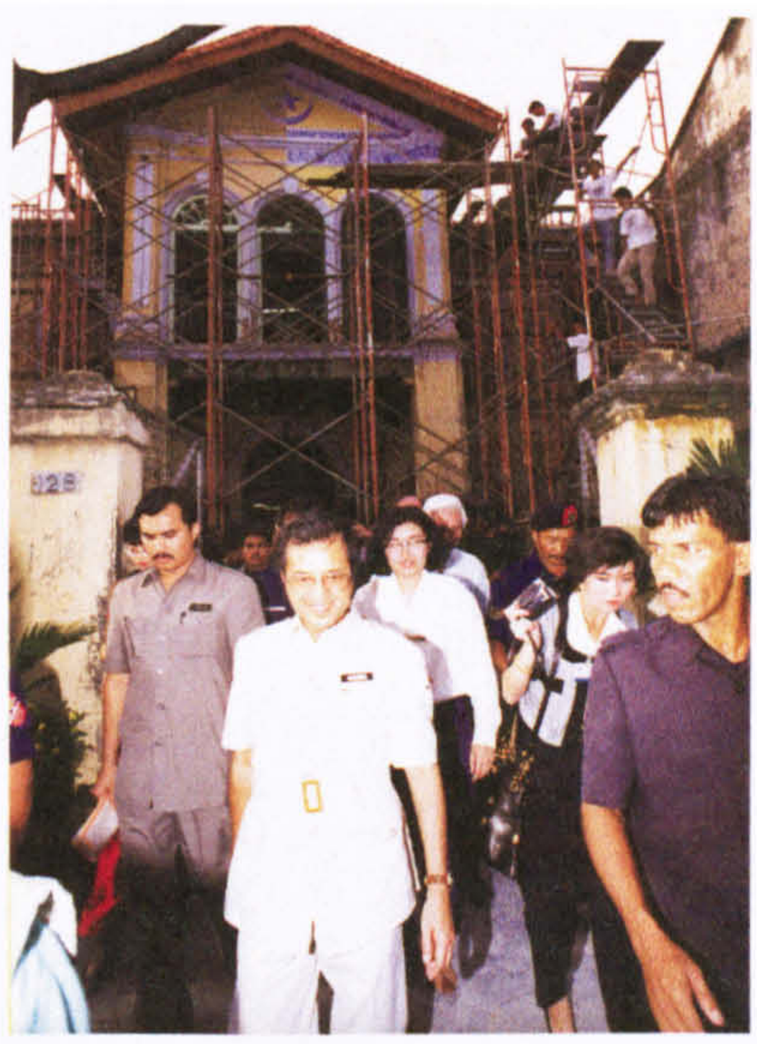
For a conservation project to sustain its existence, therefore, it must be 'culturally owned', and the cultural identity between use and owner, tenant and/or community is vital to its sustainability. In order to maintain or plan new uses for heritage architecture and even revitalisation of a heritage city, an understanding of the complexities of identity politics, at all levels, is required to encourage heritage architecture as an effective form of identity. As a nation develops, these identities are perpetually oscillating, and the context in which these case studies are placed may well change, leading to their conservation or decline.

UNESCO nomination, seen as a support for further conservation, can only take place if the site is proposed by the nation. However, national cultural identity promotion, translated into heritage tourism products, and local identity reconstruction can often conflict, especially in such a diverse multicultural environment as George Town.

In the following chapter I shall review the previous chapters of this thesis, and reflect on the heritage and identity reconstructions that have taken place in the context of conservation and development. This is in order to reflect on the authenticity and relevance of global conservation criteria and consider in what manner and for whom the cultural heritage of George Town will be conserved.



a. The Prime Minister's visit to the conservation Site, December 1993



b. (left) Inspecting the new roof tiles, designed to took like the Indian tiles, but easier to install. Manufactured in Malaysia



c. August 1997, white ants attack a beam



d. August 1997, the *porte-cochere* propped, awaiting repair works emphasised that conservation was a continual process



e. May 1998, constant flooding was a problem for the ground floor café

Fig. 7-1 Syed Alatas Mansion, conservation



a Visit by the Deputy Prime Minister, April 1999



b. Open house during the neighbouring National Chinese New Year celebration opened by Dr. Mahathir, January 2001



c. *Anak Anak Kota*, city kids, discussing photographs of heritage buildings



d. (left) *Anak Anak Kota*, city kids, using the Mansion as a venue to discuss heritage conservation with the ICOMOS representative, advisor to the state government, for Unesco Heritage Listing. February 2001

e. (above) Awaiting the late King's visit to the Islamic exhibition, August 2001



Fig. 7-2 Syed Alatas Mansion, use and visitors



a. Syed Alatas Mansion in August 2003, empty and no longer maintained



b. The garden at Syed Alatas, unkempt since the Penang Heritage Centre moved down the street. It is now awaiting conversion into the Islamic Museum

Fig. 7-3 Syed Alatas Mansion, unused, August 2003



a. The Khoo Kongsi Temple, prior to conservation works, in 1995



b. The Temple stage, hidden behind bamboo blinds was restored in 1996 with Federal aid



c. A steel cage was built over the temple and a temporary roof installed, for protection during restoration

d. (left) One of a pair of lions stands guard over the temple

Fig. 7-4 Khoo Kongsi Temple, conservation



a. (left) The newly gilded pendants below the roof line stand out from the remaining gilt which was cleaned but not replaced



c. The prayer hall dedicated to the ancestors' tablets, includes a Czechoslovakian chandelier



b. Carved granite columns support the roof above the temple five-foot-way



d. Minimum intervention, paintings were cleaned and stabilised rather than repainted





e. (left) Decorative plaster work was refinished using sympathetic materials

f. (above) New gilt will eventually fade to blend with the old

Fig. 7-5 Khoo Kongsi Temple, August 2003



a. (left), The traditional position for visitors' photograph. On the front row from the left, Penang's Chief Minister, the Deputy Prime Minister and the Chairman of the Khoo Kongsi. April 1999



b. (right) All in costume, following the filming of 20th Century Fox's film Anna and the King, 1999



c. The visit from the late *Agong* (King) and his wife, centre, brought a large group of senior Malay politicians and civil servants to the Khoo Kongsi, including the State Secretary and the Governor as well as the CEO of AR&Total Project Management. Such an endorsement was hoped to encourage further conservation works, August 2001

Fig. 7-6 Khoo Kongsi Temple, visitors



a. A new era for Cannon Square. Most of the houses now stand empty, the residential tenants have taken down their altars and moved on



b. (left) The former home of a Khoo tenant is undergoing modernisation, adding air conditioning, therefore enclosing the air well, once part of the original 'air conditioning' system

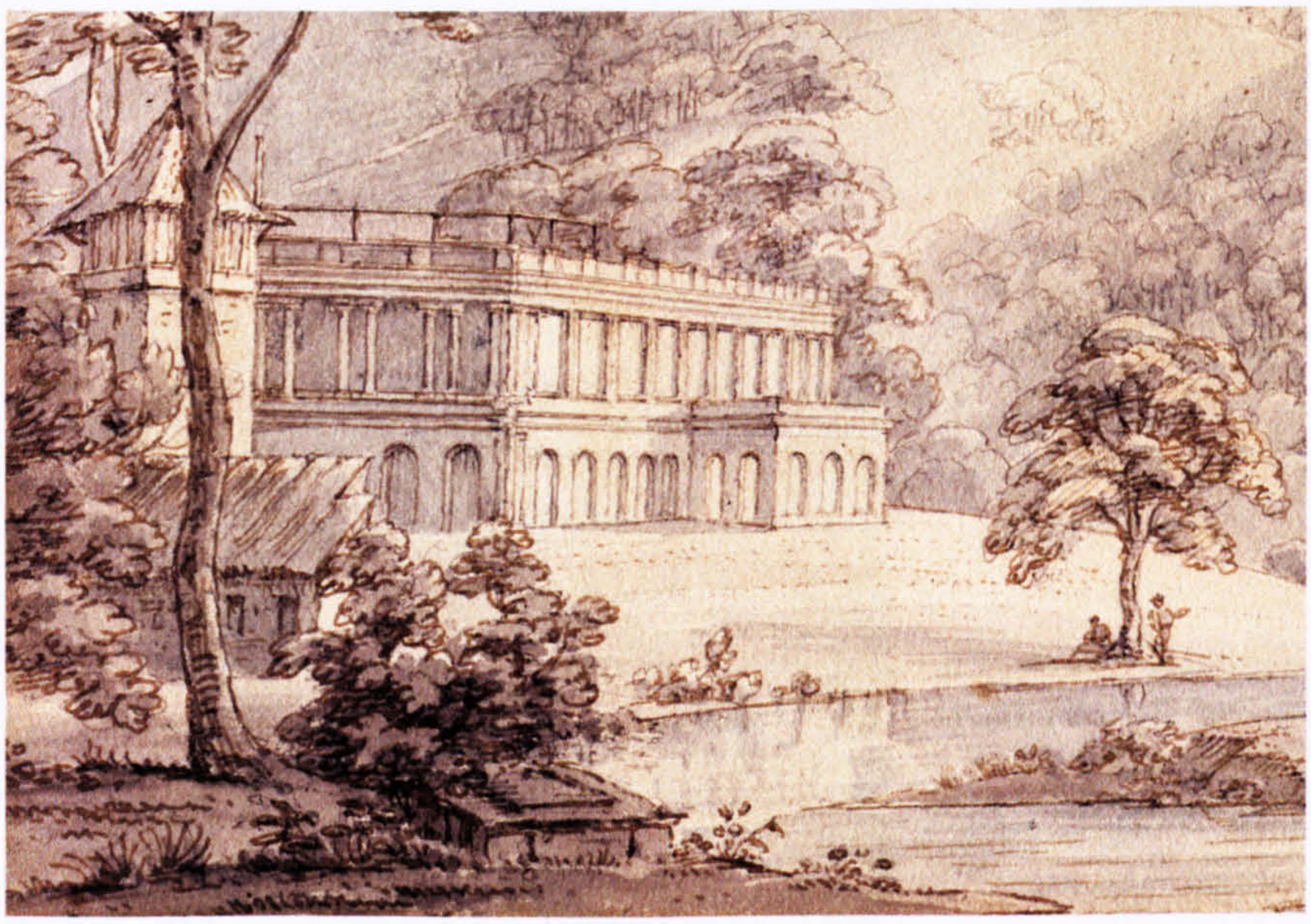


c. (right) A new museum has taken over the space where the marriage tea ceremony used to take place, below the main temple

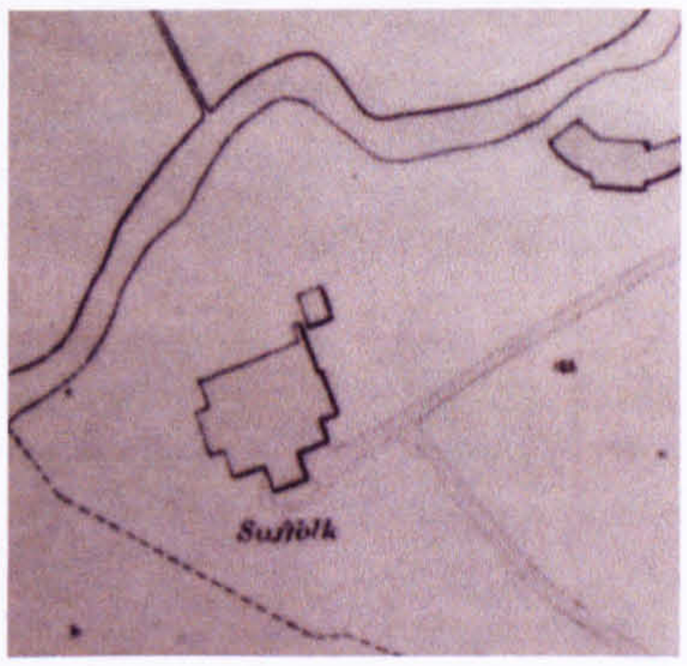
Fig. 7-7 Khoo Kongsi Cannon Square, August 2003



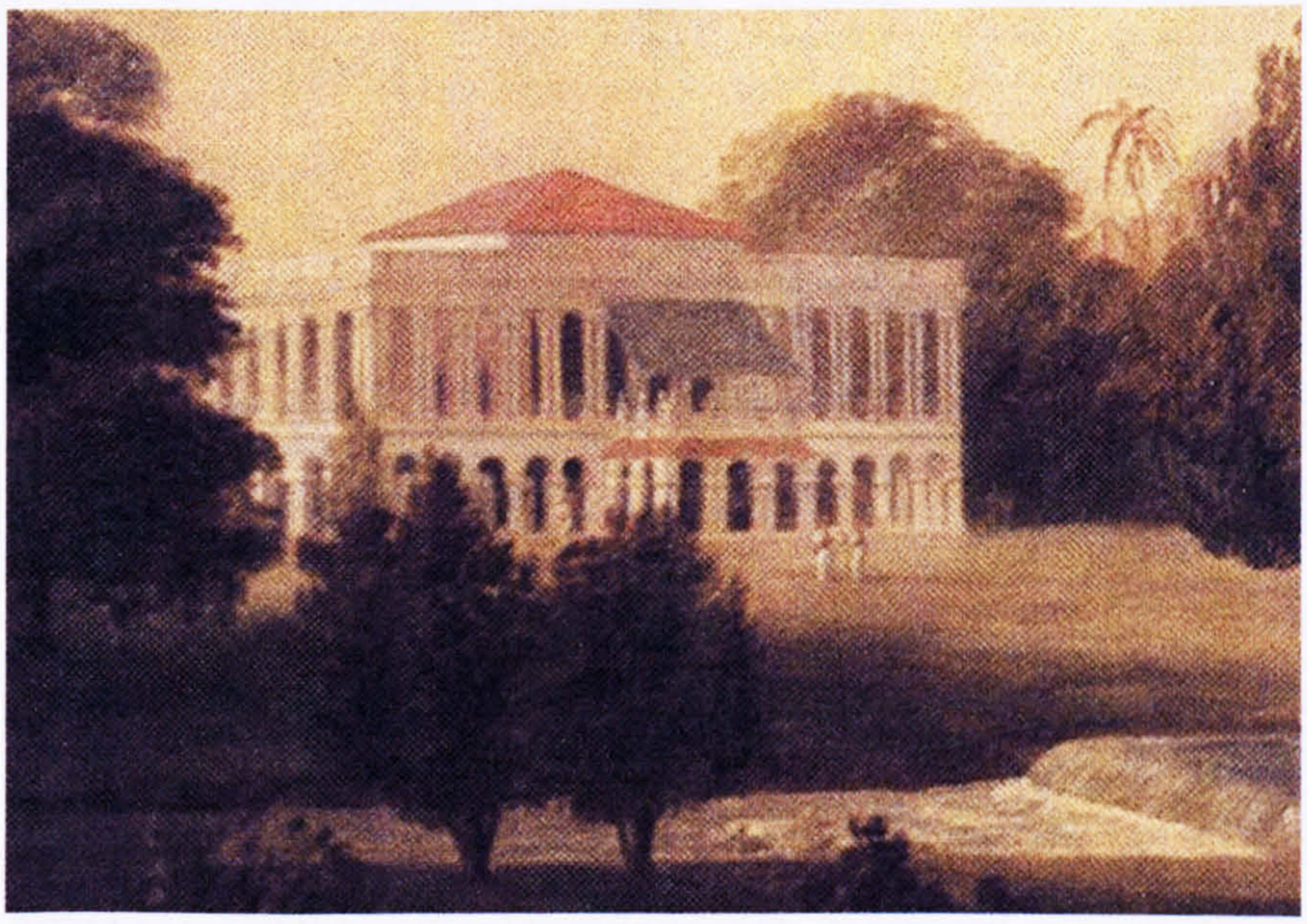
a. A detail from James George 1811, *Suffolk House*, a view of the east side (reproduced from Lim, 1986)



b. A detail from James Wathen 1811, *Suffolk House* (reproduced from Lim, 1986)



c. A detail from an 1893 map of Penang, suggests the footprint of the tower shown in Wathen's sketch (left)



d. A detail from Captain Robert Smith, 1818, *Suffolk House* (reproduced from Lim, 1986)

Fig. 7-8 Suffolk House, evidence from early paintings



Penang Heritage Trust Archives



a. The house as it stood in the early 1990s, shows a jack roof in the centre, but also a pitched roof over the remaining building, rather than a flat roof with balustrade. The contrast between Smith's paintings and the reality, are clear

b. (left) A corner detail showing how the corner column is shorter to accommodate the slope of the roof (see also Fig.2-9 a &b). Could this have been the original shape, and the paintings are therefore artists' impressions?

c. (below) Over the years, the rectangular plan was extended with additional wings. The roof may have been changed, to accommodate these wings



Fig. 7-9 Suffolk House, Purcell's observations



Penang Heritage Trust Archives

a. The ballroom below the central jack roof, in 1995



Penang Heritage Trust Archives

b. The grand staircase, entwined with roots and near collapse in 1995





Penang Heritage Trust Archives

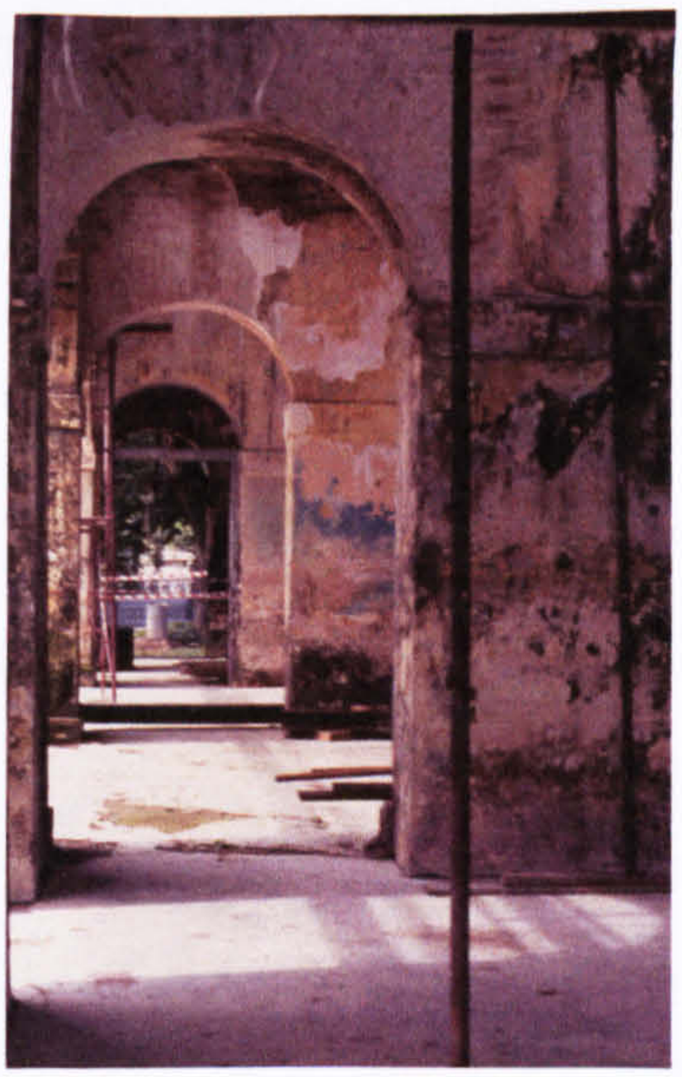
c. Vegetation taking over and causing severe damage, 1995

d. (right) Roots choking a first floor pair of Tuscan columns

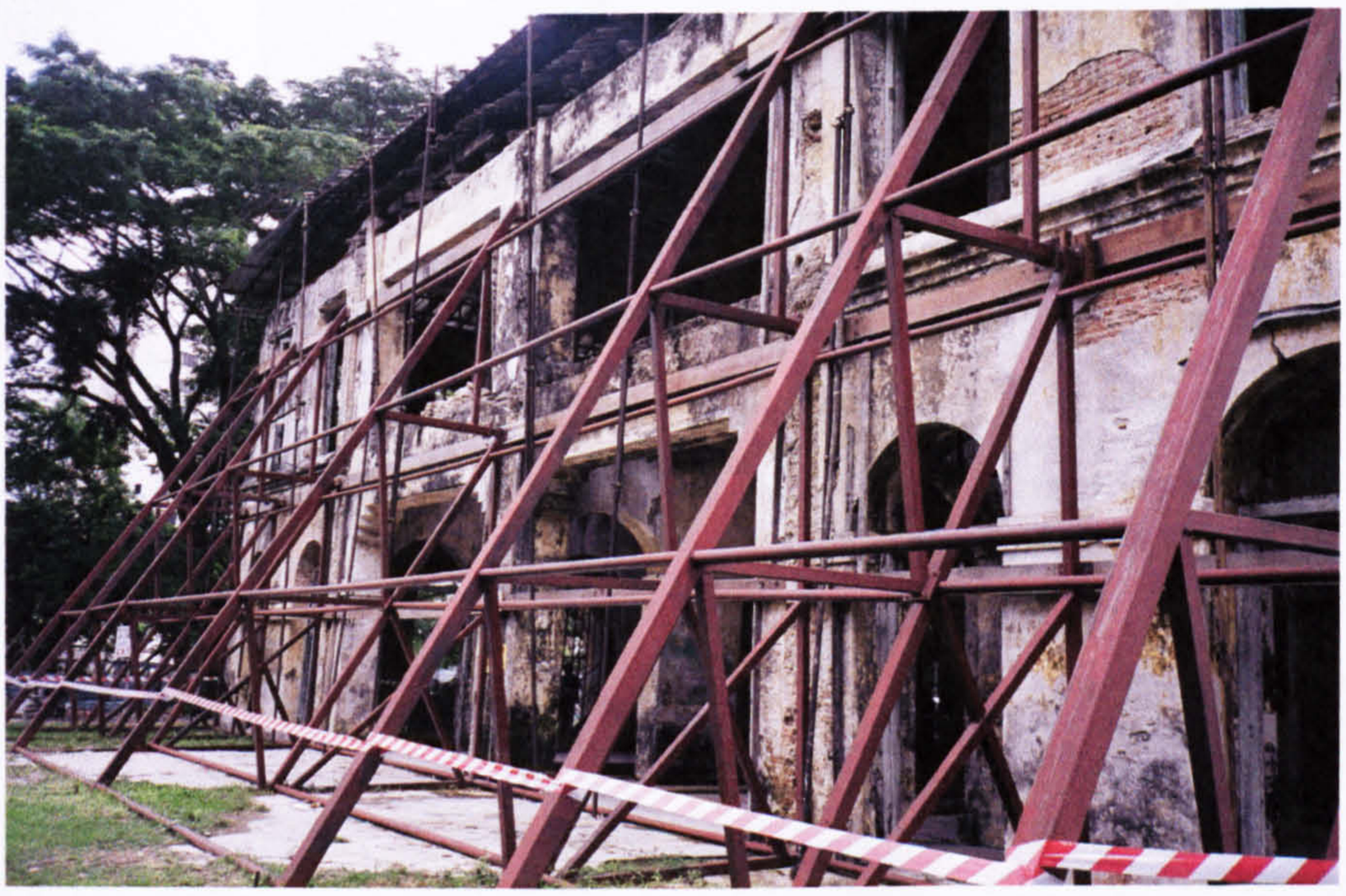
Fig. 7-10 Suffolk House, slow deterioration



a. Phase one, restored the jack roof, replacing rotten timbers and retiling the roof with Chinese temple tiles



b. Through ventilation learnt from India



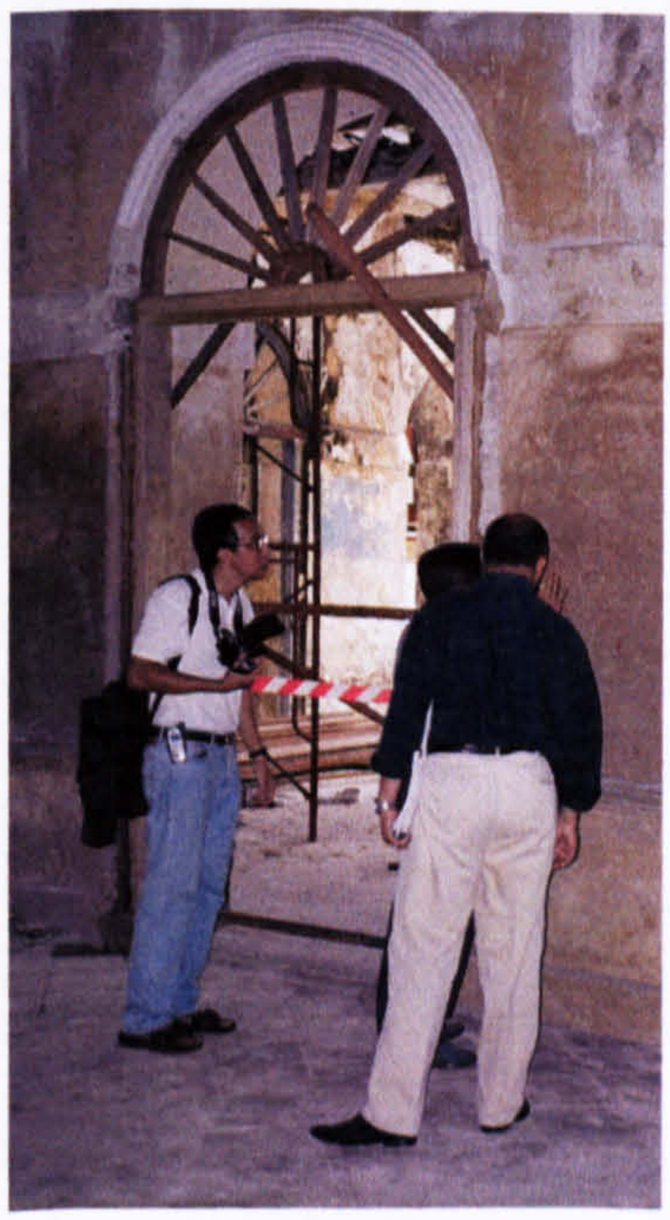
c. Stabilisation work was also included in phase 1, whilst funds were sought for the remaining work



d. Quadrant column bricks were dismantled and stored ready for rebuilding in phase 2



e. One of two site visits, for members of the PHT. The conservation talk was held in the restored shell of the ball room



f. (right) Discussing the inclusion of laterite in the lime plaster wall finish

Fig. 7-11 Suffolk House, conservation phase one, completed



a. The Loo Pun Hong Temple and Carpenter's Guild is set back from Love Lane. It is a Cantonese guild temple and former lodging for master craftsmen and apprentices



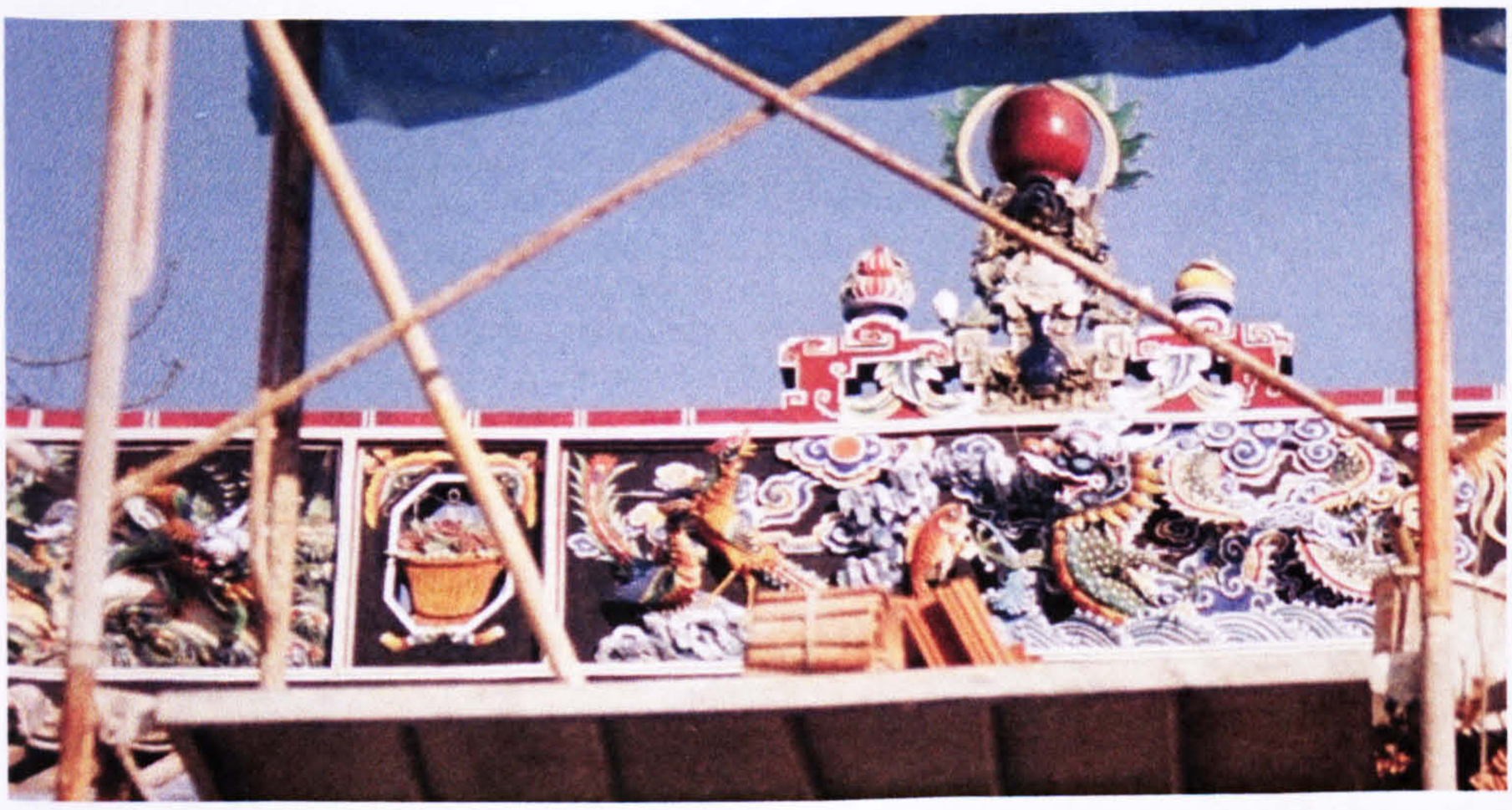
b. The statue of Lu Pun sits below a carved altar panel in the first temple hall, used for prayer



c. A typical afternoon for the committee members, quietly reading the days news

Fig. 7-12 Loo Pun Hong Temple, before conservation



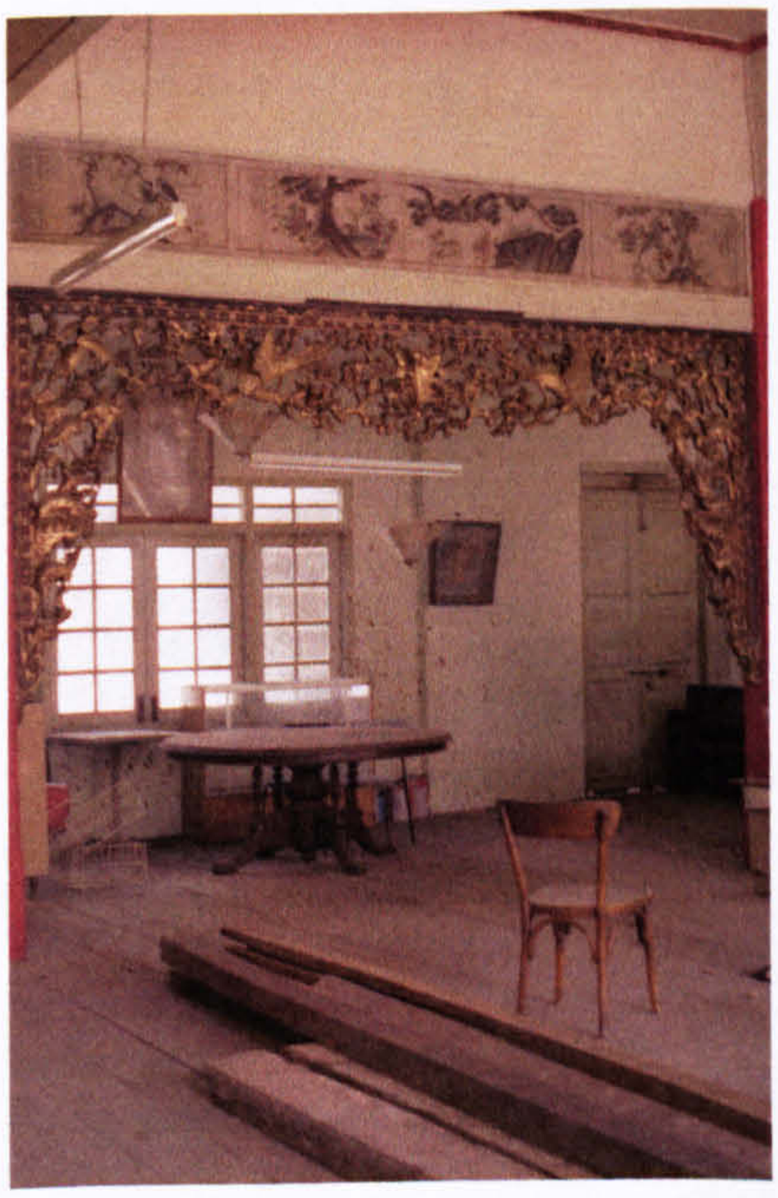


a. On the 20th day of the first moon, the conservation work for the roof began

b. (left) The roof ridge, decorated with sculptured plaster work, animals, birds, baskets and fish



c. New ridge and furrow roof tiles imported from China



d. (right) First floor rooms, with fine gilded and carved screens and painted allegorical panels is currently unused

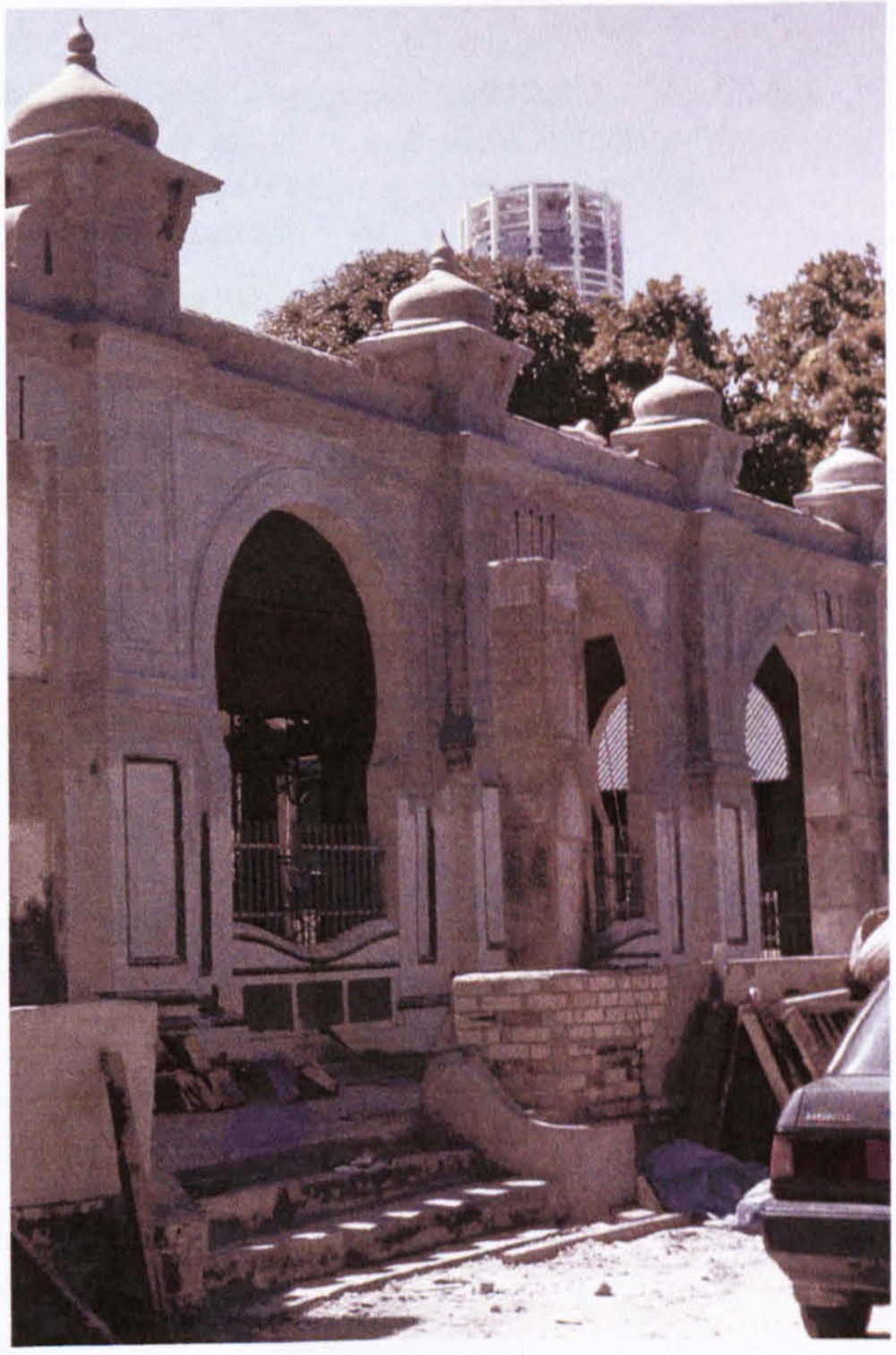


e. The thanksgiving ceremony commemorating the conservation work officiated by the Chief Minister, 7 January 2001

Fig. 7-13 Loo Pun Hong Temple, conservation and thanksgiving



a. In 1994, following a site visit to the Syed Alatas Mansion, the Prime Minister was walked to the *Mesjid Melayu Lebuh Acheh*. Shortly after, funds were forthcoming for conservation works to begin



b. The walls were stripped of years of commercial paints in order to identify the original colours. This shows a later screen wall of Mogul arches



c. The junction of the original terrace outer colonnade of octagonal columns, and a later extension Mogul- arched screen wall, was a weak point, with much water damage from a vulnerable roof joint

d. (right) The short- lived, PAM northern chapter Heritage Standing Committee was invited to a site visit in August 1997, directed by the project steering committee spokeswoman

Fig. 7-14 Mesjid Melayu Lebuh Acheh, conservation works



a. (left) The unresolved extension required for the Friday congregation. PHT objected to a 'matching' roof of terra cotta tiles, but offered no solution. The community installed the practical metal roof

b. (below) Now adorned with decorative lighting, the mosque exudes a calm, in contrast to its troubled conservation





c. The restored east wall before the metal canopy was installed, aesthetically more pleasing, but it does not serve the congregation



d. The restored inner veranda, with the octagonal colonnade



e. (left) The Georgian arches and fanlights and timber doors. All the colours were taken from the original. Many early 1800s paintings show green timber work



f. (left) The teardrop shape to the fanlight leaves, shows a high quality of craftsmanship from the original builders

Fig. 7-15 Mesjid Melayu Lebuh Acheh, conservation completed



a. The Cheong Fatt Tze Mansion, in 1995. The Malaysia and Continental Hotels to the rear, had been built in the late 1970s, the tower to the right was completed mid 1990s

b. (right) Hammer piling for an adjacent hotel extension caused the north-east terrace room to sink and the north wing to move away from the main central building, in 1996. Local protest could not stop this work, but encouraged the ban on hammer piling within the historic city



c. (below) Almost completed, the new extension towers above its main hotel building



Fig. 7-16 Cheong Fatt Tze Mansion, development pressures



a. The Cheong Fatt Tze Mansion, opened its doors for restoration tours in 1997 and to guests from 2001



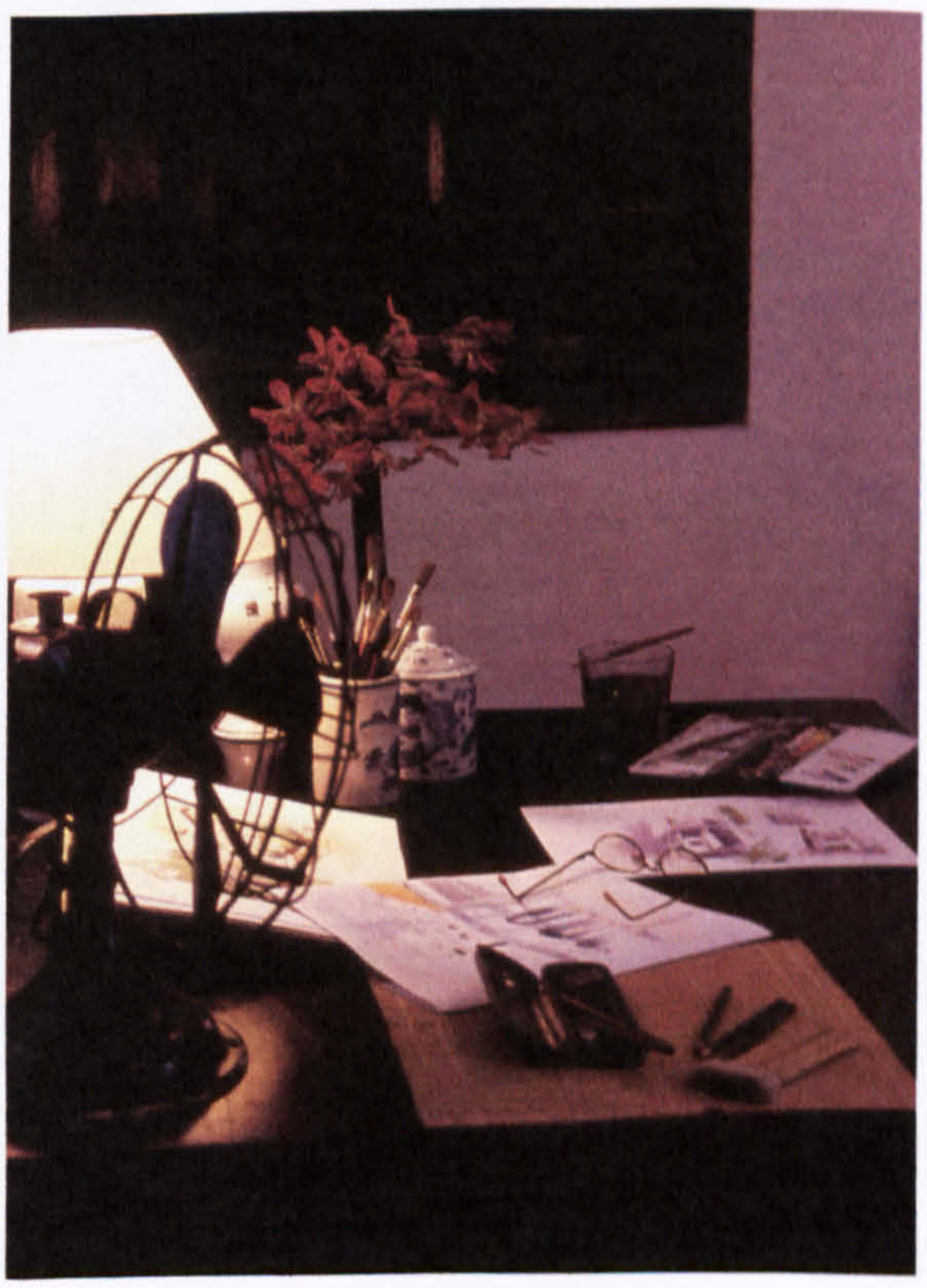
b. (above right) The side wing courtyards offer a secluded setting, it is hard to imagine the high rise towers just meters away



c. (right) Art Deco traditional rosewood chair sets, on long loan appeared from a dusty warehouse to be cleaned and polished



d. Guests breakfast around the main air well, on Art Nouveau bentwood chairs and altar or Mahjong tables



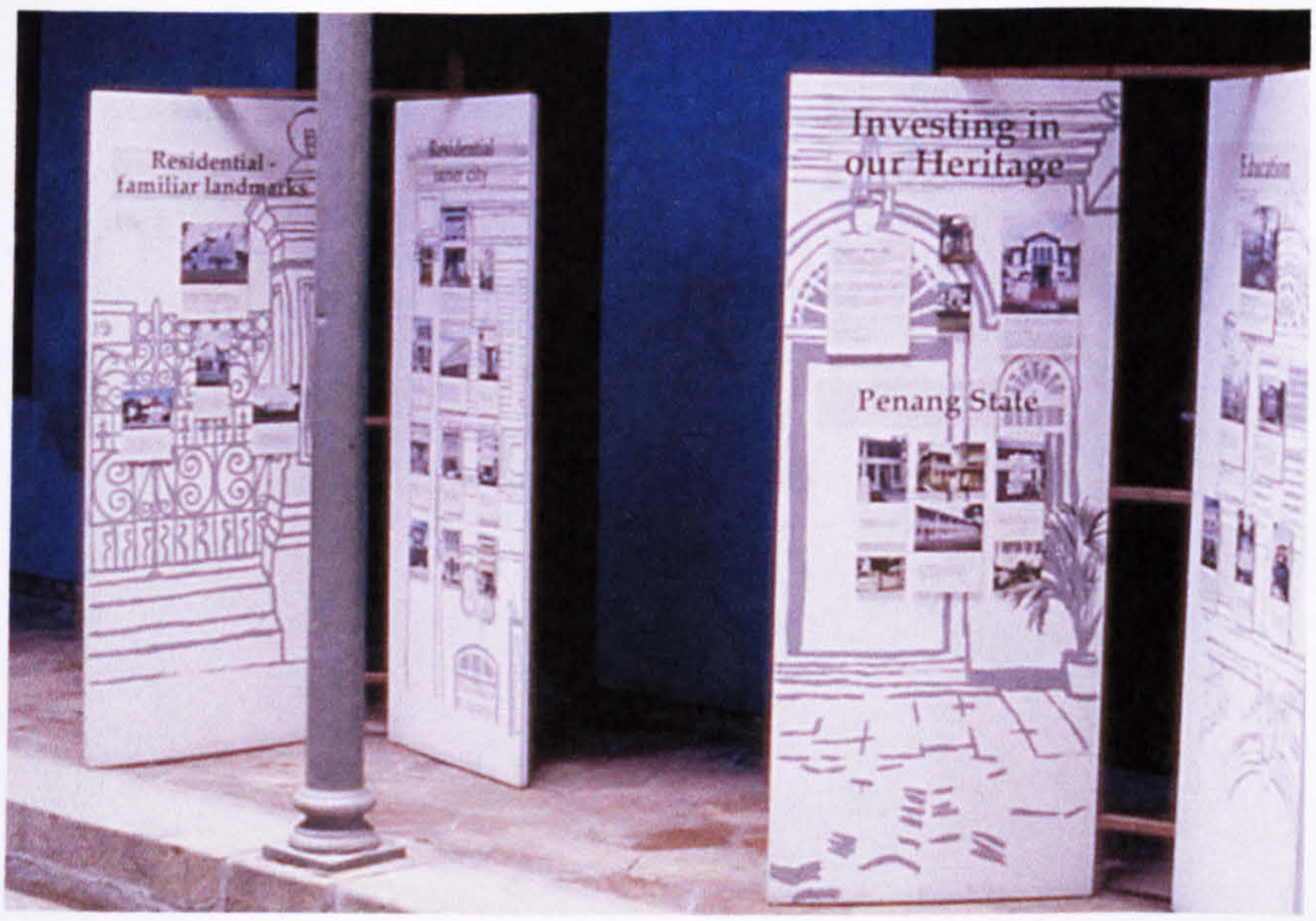
e. (right) The calm and elegant atmosphere presents inspiration for travelling artists and writers

Fig. 7-17 Cheong Fatt Tze Mansion, reuse





a. (left) Conservators of the Mansion receiving, congratulations from the Deputy Prime Minister during the UNESCO, 2000, *Asia and West Pacific Heritage Award for Cultural Heritage Conservation.* January 2001



b. (left) PHT's exhibition, first prepared for the AKS Repeal- the aftermath, seminar in 1999, was displayed during the awards ceremony

c. (below left) The mansion was also used by advertising companies, on many occasions, exposing a wider audience to its magnificence

d. (below) Much to their delight, two guests, on their first visit to Malaysia, were granted their wish to be photographed together with the late *Agong* and his wife, during their visit to Penang August 2001

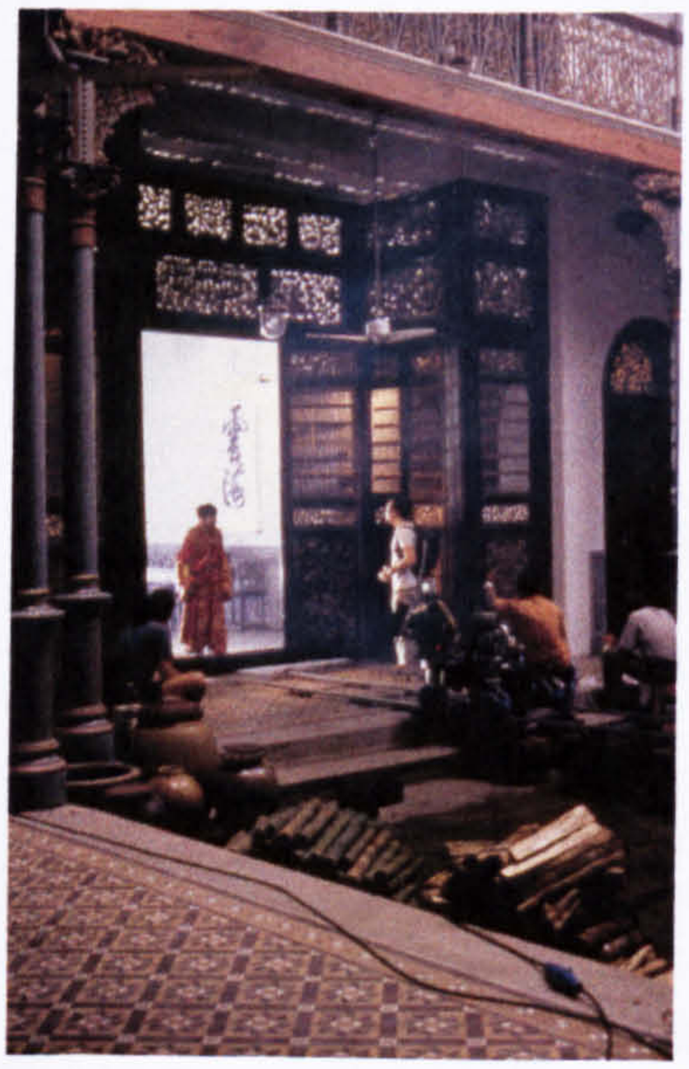




Fig. 7-18 Cheon [illegible], interest and exposure

8

CONCLUSION

This thesis, which has examined the contested space of George Town's historic inner city, concludes with a hypothesis distilled from the previous seven chapters. One of the main preoccupations of this thesis was to understand and analyse George Town's heritage properties 'within the cultural contexts to which they belong' (Lemaire and Stovel, 1994: www). This perspective was presented in the *Authenticity in Relation to the World Heritage Convention,* in Nara, Japan.

Chapter One places Malaysia's national identity building within a global and regional context, and highlights local-national, national-regional and regional-global differences in interpretations of cultural authenticity. This is particularly apparent in the commodification of cultural heritage as a national tourism product authenticated through the UNESCO World Heritage Site 'label'.

Chapter Two explores George Town's urban composition; its settlement patterns and the ethnic-based urban *kampongs* which created a richness and multiplicity of architectural forms. Whilst these reflected the ethnic diversity of the population, their architecture also embraced new fashions from the west, placing a fusion of cultural ideas and styles into the urban landscape. Even the earliest modernist architecture, reflecting the desires of the new nation, sat comfortably within the existing urban forms.

Following independence from Britain, local political ambitions and jockeying for greater power amongst the ethnic groups, led to a series of national policies and practices employed to unify, stabilize and control the multicultural population. Chapter Three examines these policies and recognizes that whilst they achieved many of their goals they also encouraged 'an opposite and equal reaction'. This was notably 'the personal and ethnic collective sense of relative deprivation' and a 'sense of receiving less than one desires and deserves' (Lee, H.G., 2000: 15). This sense of

deprivation cuts across both the ethnic and socio-economic divides in Malaysian society.

It could be argued that the 65-storey KOMTAR tower, discussed in Chapter Four, was a 'statement of strength' by a former opposition Chinese Chief Minister, in a predominantly Malay government, as well as a more considered approach to urban renewal. Whatever the reason, its impact was to bring western concepts of urban planning into the heart of an Asian city, paving the way for social, cultural, and economic transformations, including the birth of the conservation movement.

Chapter Five, examines the quest for a Malaysian architectural identity. It also looks at the changing urban landscape of Penang under new political leadership, which coincided with Mahathir Mohamad's *Vision 2020*, and which promoted 'national' rather than 'ethnic' ambitions through mega development projects.

Confused by the seemingly contradictory pro-development (encouraged by KOMTAR) and pro-conservation (established by KOMTAR's architect) lobbies, the state and local authorities failed to promote a vision for the city from which either lobby could develop a stand. The view from KOMTAR's 58th floor clearly demonstrates the power of the pro-development lobby, for in less than five years since 1995 over 120 new high-rise towers were constructed. A view from the ground exposes the poor coordination within the existing landscape and highlights the malpractice that has accompanied many of these projects.

The heritage lobby has, however, been equally active, following the demolition of the Metropole Hotel, evidenced by the establishment of *Lebuh Acheh, Lebuh Armenia Heritage Development Project,* the State Heritage Unit, the Penang Heritage Centre, the Heritage Consultancy and state-sponsored conservation projects. However, the conflict between the two camps and dilemmas within the Council created the strange permutations, half-conservation half-development, which appeared at the end of the decade.

In order to present an authoritative stance 'foreign experts' were consulted for ideas and support. Ideas flowed freely and Council officers, landowners, and developers alike attended seminars, workshops and conferences. Investment in conservation, however, remained minimal suggesting ineffectual communication or comprehension of 'conservation' in terms of both the concept and its implementation. The state then turned to UNESCO for support for both its authority and its prescribed criteria, which encouraged the economic returns of conserving cultural heritage by supporting an ever-hungry tourism industry; the 'carrot' for the 'stick' of conservation costs.

In 1998, Richard Engelhardt, UNESCO Regional Advisor for Culture in Asia and the Pacific, discovered George Town, vibrant with festivals, set within lively neighbourhoods and active street life. Chapter Six, however, describes how attempts to commodify this vibrancy, for the sake of living cultural tourism, aided its decline. Few

other than the Nanyang Folk Culture Society promoted the living inner city, its architectural legacy, and its wealth of multi-ethnic community life, as a valuable resource, nor viewed the city in other than commercial terms. The Penang Heritage Trust whilst encouraging adaptive reuse and conservation, declared itself as 'guardian of Penang's traditional trades and communities'. In reality, their position was fragmented, particularly over the *AKS Repeal* and the evictions, protests and arrests that ensued.

The *AKS Repeal* was the turning point of the health of a city as it emptied of many of its tenants, and the decay of already derelict properties escalated. The failed promotion of the *RM 100 million, loan/grant scheme,* served to expose the problems which urban renewal of private properties would face. The MPPP's response to the lack of Councillor support for conservation for social housing, and landowners' ineptitude over the future of their former *AKS* properties, was to beautify the streets, whilst the Malay Chamber of Commerce and MAIPP prepared for the development of *waqf* land.

By 2000, the inner city communities had become more aware of the value of their heritage, partly due to the work of the Penang Heritage Trust with city kids, tourist trails involving local traders, Muslim communities and the *AKS* tenants, and Nanyang's contemporising of cultural heritage. As a result, when *Little India's* beautification was announced, the community voiced their discontent in response to the plans to commodify their environment and reconstruct their cultural identities. The MPPP, to its credit, sought local consultation and included the community in future decision-making. However, the MPPP had little control over a Federal design for the *Gold Bazaar,* but again, the once silent community had the courage to voice its concern. In both cases, the state tourism body has made no comment.

Chapter Seven examined several examples of conservation projects and identified a gradation of their sustainability. Three categories emerged which I have glossed as, 'cultural discord' (where instigator and users/maintainer are culturally different), 'cultural contestation' (where two cultures of the same ethnicity contest the conservation project), and 'sustainable conservation' (where a balance between conservator and user is authenticated). What becomes evident is that, unless there is cultural ownership of a project, in other words, it is recognised as the cultural heritage of the custodians and users, it is unlikely to be sustained.

Since the year 2000 there has been a discernible move by the Federal government to encourage the vision of Malaysia as a plural and harmonious society, both nationally and globally. *Tourism Malaysia's* inflight commentary supports this image

> What makes Malaysia really special is its people. For all its contemporary sophistication, Malaysia proudly embraces its rich and ancient heritage

with a mix of Malay, Chinese and Indian cultures. (*Tourism Malaysia* promotional CD, 2003)

Celebrations for *National Chinese New Year*, officiated by the Malay Prime Minister, which began in 2001, and more recently the Indian Hindu *National Deepavali* celebration, officiated by the Deputy Prime Minister and the King and Queen, are clear markers of the inclusion of these cultures in the national vision. These are in marked contrast to the cultural policy of the 1970s.

Federal funding has also been available for conservation of both state-owned monuments, such as the former colonial Fort Cornwallis and the Governor's residence as well as religious buildings such as the *Mesjid Kapitan Kling*, the *Mesjid Melayu Lebuh Acheh* and the Khoo Kongsi Stage. At the other end of the scale, local communities are voicing their cultural identity awareness, and the MPPP's on-site participation in the *Little India* project suggests a growing understanding of the value of the city's urban cultural identity.

However, between the Federal levels and the grassroots is a large gulf of misunderstanding and misinterpretation of policies and ideas. The conservation of George Town's cultural heritage faces many challenges; many borne perhaps from the sensitivities left over from earlier interventionist policies, which affect those who envisage a participation in new development projects, but perceive conservation as restrictive. They come from all the ethnic communities.

Although the climate in Penang is changing, development projects are still proposed and decisions are still being made to circumvent the 'sense of relative deprivation'. As an example, when the *Little India* project began, more projects were agreed in support of other communities, with no regard for the consequences of implementing simultaneously four major 'road-surgery' projects within neighbouring areas [Fig. 8-1].

A further challenge is evidenced in the 'moulding' of western-based policies and legislation to suit local conditions, and the inability to formalise the *Structure Plan Review, Local Plans* and *Conservation Guidelines*. Furthermore, what evidence is there to suggest that professional considerations of Municipal Council Departments in line with UNESCO conservation criteria will not be thwarted by developers' ambitions with political 'friends' in local government?

Support for the concept of cultural heritage is demonstrated regionally through such bodies as ASEAN COCI. The Office of the UNESCO's Regional Advisor for Culture in Asia and the Pacific region has also developed a four-year project for *Cultural Heritage Management and Tourism*, with eight pilot sites of which Melaka is one. However, local sensitivities were overlooked, when a regional workshop in 2003 was hosted by Penang, (which is not a pilot site), rather than Melaka.

Organisations and higher learning institutes that are engaged in teaching and research for heritage conservation and management in Asia, are now offered a website network for the 'dissemination and promotion of cultural heritage conservation and management in Asia' with UNESCO's formation of *The Asian Academy* (asian-academy@unescobkk.org). Meanwhile the UNESCO *LEAP Project* has formed *'LEAP Online'* as a 'meeting place in cyber-space where heritage site managers throughout the Asia-Pacific region can "meet"' (www.unescobkk.org/leaponline). But whilst the academic, cultural tourism planners, and *LEAP* site managers have a forum in which to discuss cultural heritage conservation and management, the cultural heritage they seek to conserve is disappearing [Fig. 8-2].

Where does the future of George Town's contested spaces lie? As Engelhardt has stated 'heritage conservation has nothing to do with tourism'; equally neither has UNESCO World Heritage Listing, although it is promoted as such. The northern England city of York for example, is not a UNESCO site and yet encourages tourist numbers far greater than the size of its own population. UNESCO listing for the south –west English city of Bath has helped curtail inappropriate policies of the Council and has reversed ambitious development projects of the 1960s and 1970s, which destroyed large areas of Georgian artisan housing. However, as a World Heritage City it is now finding ways to discourage mass tourism in favour of selective cultural tourists who spend more and stay less, in order to restore a quality of life to the residents and local users.

Tourism is also proving to be a volatile industry, easily affected by perceived or real threats of terrorism, viral outbreaks, and economic fluctuations. Heritage conservation, therefore, plays a greater role in urban revitalisation and cultural identity building within the national development process.

In Malaysia, the political environment has seen recent changes with the succession of a new Malaysian Prime Minister who hails from Penang State. The local response to this position in terms of gaining support for development projects has yet to emerge. Both the state and MPPP Planning Departments have new Department Heads, both more pro-conservation. The MPPP has formed a new heritage unit headed by an officer who gained onsite experience from the *Little India* project. The inner city communities too are less afraid to express their cultural identities and protect them.

However, following the devastation of the *AKS Repeal*, and the consequential loss of large sections of ethnic populations, dereliction of already decayed heritage properties and the disruption to trade caused by simultaneous 'road surgery' beautification projects, the survival of George Town's rich tangible and intangible heritage hangs in the balance. Its place within the developing society, however, has been identified through recent community concerns.

Whilst the climate has moved slowly towards cultural heritage awareness and conservation it is in need of reinforcement [Fig.8-3]. As discussed in Chapter Seven, if

the concept is 'culturally owned' its sustainability is better assured. How then is 'cultural ownership' of the concept of conservation to be encouraged in a multicultural provincial society where the sense of 'relative deprivation' still exists, although it is diminishing?

Currently all state and local government efforts have been focused on the few landowners who own many properties; these are, in the main, Chinese. If they respond in a positive manner, then a large proportion of the city will be conserved. However, their lack of vision, comprehension, or will has resulted in a large portion of the city remaining derelict. Alternatively, support, through incentives, grants for example, could be given to the 17% owner-occupiers, who have held the city together through the ravages of the *AKS Repeal*. This may even encourage the sale of properties and new ownership and a move towards reconceptualisation of land-versus-property value.

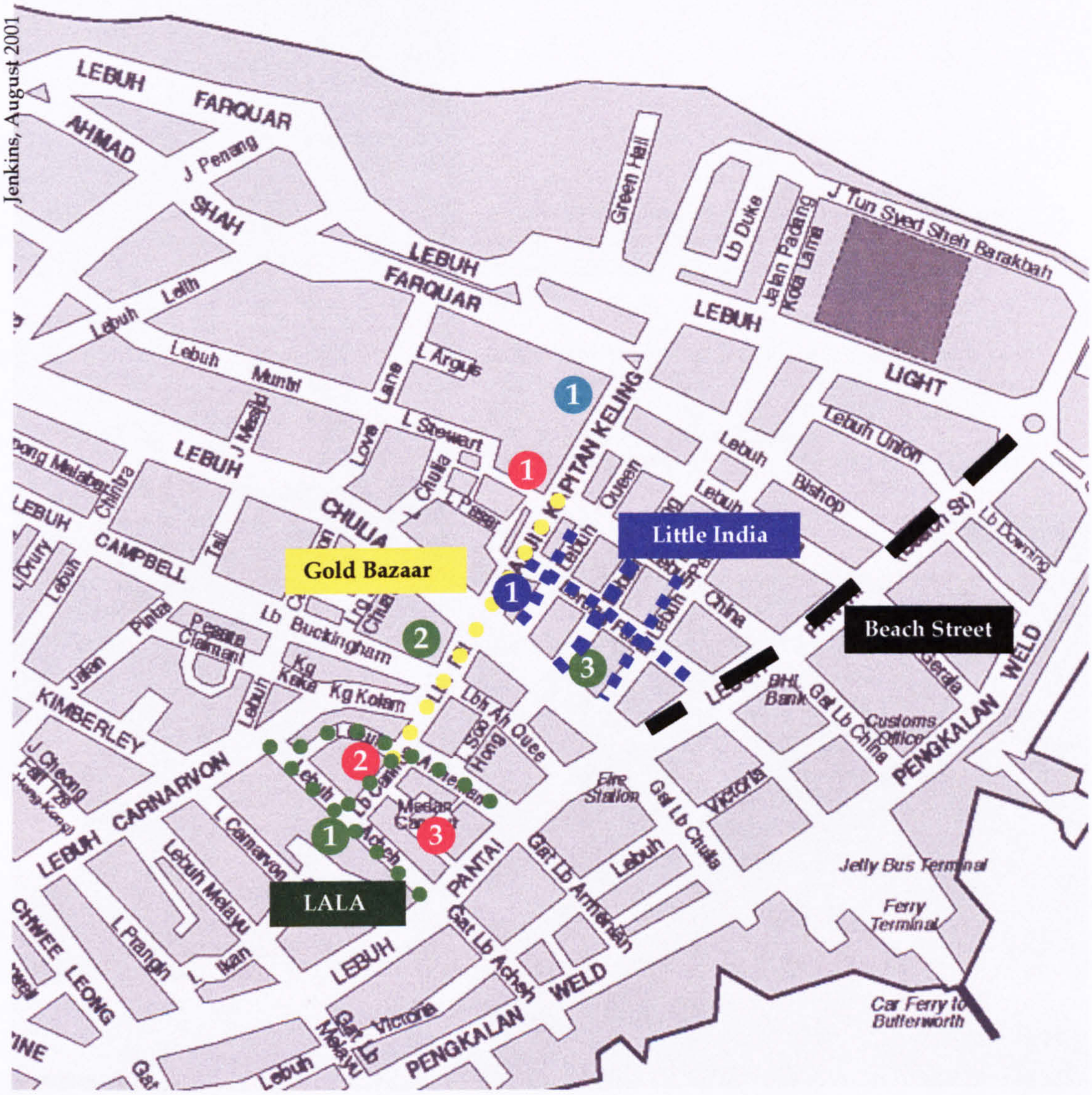
Contact with UNESCO has given support to those already practising conservation in an aggressively pro-development environment, and the process of application for nomination to World Heritage Status has required the architecture to be described in order to assess the 'relative artistic or technical values as well as rarity values'. However, the western-based management plan may be difficult to implement in the current pro-development milieu. Recent observers of George Town's dilemma suggest the implementation of western models for conservation strategies (Fels, 2002; Lee, 2002). However, those that have been implemented, for example government conservation projects, have not been the catalyst for widespread conservation as was hoped. Therefore, even if Penang and Melaka were successful in their application, how soon would they be declared as 'Heritage in Danger'?

There is an argument that UNESCO's involvement, through advisors, workshops and in particular the *LEAP* projects, is more favourable and more sustainable than Heritage Listing. Equally the new Federal amendment to the *Town and Country Planning Act*, in favour of conservation is more enforceable than an 'intrusive and foreign' management plan.

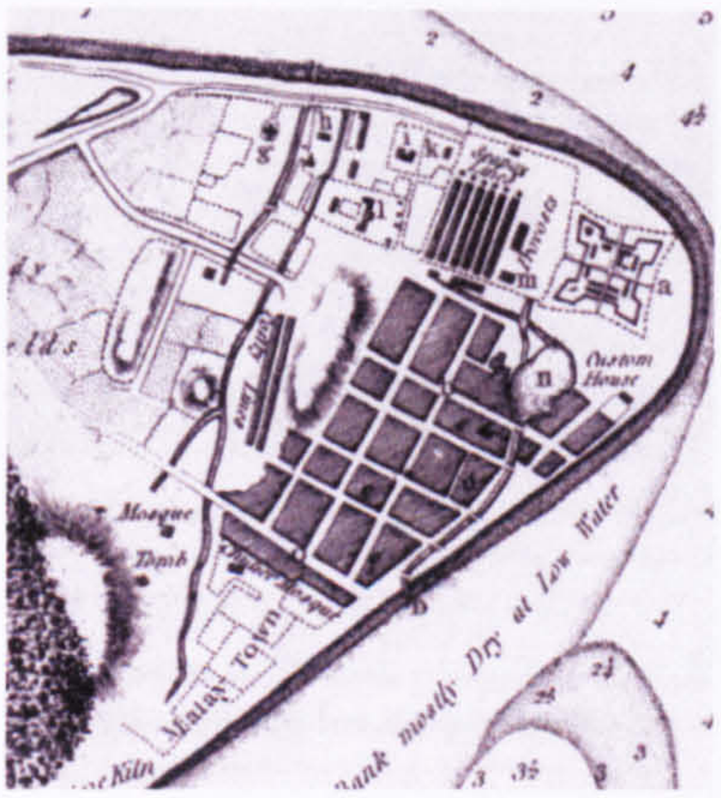
Currently, other than the colonial buildings, what few conservation projects have taken place have been matched by the ethnicity of their architects, for example, a Chinese architect would restore a Chinese building. Research to existing UNESCO Sites has focused on those with a Chinese emphasis, Hoi An (Vietnam) and Li Jiang (China) for example. Muslim World Heritage Cities, such as those of Morocco, the Yemen, Syria, Turkey, Azerbaijan and Uzbekistan, particularly those along the influential Silk Road, have yet to be explored in order to comprehend cultural identification of the 'genius loci' and therefore the response to conservation of heritage within a predominantly Muslim context.

Perhaps, crucial to creating an authentic sustainable environment for cultural heritage is the inculcation of an awareness of George Town's architectural legacy as a valuable resource in architectural education for all levels and ethnicities, students,

academics and practitioners. There are as many varied responses to the intangible 'spirit of the place' as there are people, formed through a myriad of influences, local, regional, and global. As Herb Stovel, Director of ICOMOS Heritage Settlements Programme stated 'it is the architect's job to learn the pertinent values [of a host culture] before starting work' (cited in Darbee, 2001: www). This thesis intends to aid this awareness and provide a foundation for future studies of George Town's architectural legacy, placing it firmly within its global, regional and national context and as a resource for the modernising world. Thus, George Town's physical legacy may well be reflected in both conserved as well as post-modern architecture, by learning and borrowing from the past and being refined into a contemporised form. Thus, respect for the living cultural heritage of the remaining ethnic communities, could perhaps enable a less frenetic pace of modernisation in which a new 'authentic' cultural heritage, reconstructed and distilled from a once contested space, could be encouraged to evolve.



a. Map of beautification projects taking place 2002 - 2004



b. A detail from the 1798 map of the historic grid of the early settlement

Little Indian	September 2002 to February 2004
Beach Street	May 2003 to December 2003
LALA	May 2003 delays due to stop work order
Gold Bazaar	June 2003 delays final date unknown

1. Mesjid Melayu, Lebuh Acheh
2. Mesjid Kapitan Kling, Jalan Kapitan Kling,
3. Nagore Shrine

1. Sri Mahamariamman Temple

1. Kuan Yin- Goddess of Mercy
2. Tua Pek Kong -God of Prosperity
3. Khoo, Cheah, Lim, Yap and Tan Kongsi district

1. St. George's Anglican Church

Fig. 8-1 Beautification of the historic inner city, creating order out of chaos?



a. (left) 54 King Street, the first floor beam collapsed, due to white ant infestation. The first floor façade did not collapse, but was removed by the property owners

b. (below) Modernisation took place, alien to the original function of the building elements. Sheets of glass with air-conditioned rooms replaced, louvers and shutters and natural ventilation.
The result, it encouraged its neighbour to do likewise





c. These three shophouses had retained the green ceramic air vents on the first floor, though had lost other features over the years, until one occupier decided to modernise for contemporary use

d. Modernisation of this shophouse, attempted to maintain a 'heritage look'. Terracotta coloured roof tiles, casement windows and plaster mouldings, pilasters and decorations



Fig. 8-2 Authenticity, traditional remodelling or vandalism?



a. Whilst the corner unit was occupied until the AKS Repeal, the taller buildings on the far left were in a dangerous state of decay. Bought by Singaporeans in the early 1990s, in the hope of demolition and development

b. Purchased in early 2000 by a local engineer, whose clan house lies opposite. The taller houses are now the home of the state Penang Heritage Centre whilst the corner unit is now a *nonya* restaurant





c. (left) Hakka millionaire Chung Keng Kui's office and home declined with the death of its owner. It was then let out as individual office space and eventually boarded up, until 2002



d. (right) Now owned by a local antique dealer, the house and surrounding buildings are being renovated to be put back to use. What this use will be, is currently just speculation

Fig. **8**-3 Authenticity, conservation



GLOSSARY

Place names

Common usage	Historical usage	
Kedah	Queda	*Light (1786)*
Kuala Muda	Qualla Moodo	*Light (1786)*
Melaka	Malacca	
Penang Island	Prince of Wales Island	*Light (1786)*
Perlis	Perlees	*Captain Kyd (1787)*
Phuket	Junk Ceylon	*Light (1786)*
Pulau Pinang	Poolo Pinang	*Light (1786)*

	translation
Bang-ka-li-hang	Bengali Lane, (Hokkien)
Datuk Keramat	Chief Spirit Shrine, and the area of and early Malay *kampong*
Gurdwara	Sikh temple
Jelutong	wild rubber, also name of a district in Penang
Kampong Kebun Sayur	Vegetable Garden Village
Kampong Kolam	Pond Village
Kampong Kuil	Temple Village
Kampong Serani	Eurasian Village
Kitengi Teru	Street of Company Godowns, (Tamil)
Lebuh Acheh	Acheen Street
Lebuh Armenian	Armenian Street
Mesjid Melayu	Malay Mosque
Padang Kota	Town Field
Padavukara Tharuva	Street of Boatmen (Tamil)
Seklani-hang	Serani (Eurasian) Lane, (Hokkien)
Sentosa	tranquillity (Sanskrit) here refers to a leisure island in Singapore

Peoples and ethnic names

Baba Nonya	Straits Chinese intermarried with the Malay (Malay)
Bengalis	from Bengal, the Chinese referred to Indians as Bengali
Bumiputera, bumiputra	'sons of the soil' (Malay)
Burgesses	Bugis from Sulawesi, Indonesia (Leith 1804)
Cantonese	Chinese group from Kwantung
Chettiar	Hindu group from southern India
Choolia, Chooliah	Tamil Muslim (Light, 1786; Leith, 1804)
Chulia	Tamil Muslim (Lo, 1900:205)
Gujerati	from northwest India, Gujerat (Hindustani)
Hakka or Kek	Chinese from Kwantung, Kwangsi and Fukkien provinces
Hainanese or Hylam	Chinese from Hainan Island
Hindoo	Hindu (Leith 1804)
Hokkien	Chinese from Amoy, Fukkien province
Jawi Peranakan	Indian Muslim married to a Malay
Jawi Pekan	Town Malay

Kling	Tamil Muslim or Chulia from southern India
Malabaris	Hindu and Muslim group from southern India, Malabar Coast, also *Malayalee*
Parsee	Persians from India
Punjabi	from the Punjab, northwest India (Hindustani)
Serani	Eurasian (Malay)
Sindhi	from the Sind Province, now southeast Pakistan
Sikh	a north Indian sect, disciple (Hindustani)
Tamil	from Tamil Nadhu, formerly Madras state, southeast India
Teow Chew	Chinese from Kwantung, Kwangsi and Fukkien provinces

Titles and positions

Bangsa Malaysia	Malaysian Race (Malay)
Datuk	elder male e.g. grandfather, also title of honour (Malay)
Dewan Negara	Parliament (Upper House) or The Senate (Malay)
Dewan Rakyat	Parliament (Lower House) or House of Representatives (Malay)
Harian	Daily newspaper (Malay)
Jurubina Bertiga,	Team Three (Malay)
Kapitan	Captain or headman (Malay)
Liga Muslim	Muslim League (Malay)
Majlis	Council (Arabic)
Malaysiakini	'This is Malaysia' (Malay)
Melayu Baru	The new Malay (Malay)
Mufti	Islamic scholar (Malay)
Muzium Negara	National Museum (Malay)
Nanyang	Overseas Chinese
Operasi Lalang	Operation Long Grass refers to a police operation (Malay)
Penghulu	headman of a *kampong* or district of several *kampongs* (Malay)
Qariah	Muslim Parish (Malay)
Syariah	Islamic Law (Arabic)
Unit Warisan	Heritage Unit (Malay)
Utusan Konsumer	Consumer Herald, newspaper (Malay)
Utusan Malaysia	Malaysia Herald, newspaper (Malay)
Utusan Melayu	Malay Herald, newspaper (Malay)
Yang di Kedua Mentri	Chief Minister (Malay)
Yang di Pertuan Agong	The King (Malay)
Yang di Pertuan Negri	State Governor (Malay)

Festivals

Bersunat	Circumcision festival (Malay)
Chap Go Mei	Fifteenth night – Chinese Valentine's day
Cheng Beng	All Souls Day (Chinese)
Chitraparuvam	Hindu processional festival,
Chneah Hoay	Fire watching ceremony (Chinese)
Deepavali	Festival of Lights (Hindu)
Dondang Sayang	Singing troupe during *Chap Go Mei* (Chinese)
Hari Raya Adilfitri	Celebration to end the Muslim Ramadan fasting month (Malay)
Pasar Ramadan	Ramadan market
Navarathri	Hindu, processional festival – nine days in autumn
Por Thor Kong	God of Hades (Hokkien) Hungry Ghost Festival
Ramadan	Muslim fasting month (Arabic)
Tang Che	Winter Solstice festival (Chinese)
Thaipusam	Hindu festival of Lord Murugan or Lord Subrananiam (Hindu)
Tua Pek Kong	God of Prosperity, annual procession (Chinese)

Terms:	**Origin/use common meaning or usage**
ada gula ada semut	if you have sugar you have ants (Malay)
amah	nanny (Malay)
ang moh lau	European bungalow
ang moh kong kuan	European club
anjung	projection over a porch (Malay)
atap	palm -leaf roof (Malay)

becak	trishaw
betel	medicinal nut and leaf from the *areca catechu* tree
baju panjang	long dress (Persian)
bakau	mangrove wood (Malay)
balik kampong	back to the village (Malay)
bangsarpuri	apartments for one race (Malays)
bangsawan	Malay opera (Sanskrit)
bodoh sombong	arrogant stupidity (Malay)
boria	comic sketch with song and dance performed in Malay originating from Penang (Hindustani)
bunga raya	hibiscus, national flower (Malay)
Bungaloe, bungalow	two- storey detached, mansion or villa (Hindustani)
charpoy	camp bed
cheong sam	Chinese female dress
chi	positive energy (Chinese)
chick	bamboo slat blinds
chien nien	cut and paste porcelain decoration (Hokkien)
chowrasta	four cross roads (Hindustani)
chunam	lime form betel nut chewers and plaster, mortar (Hindustani)
coolie	Indian or Chinese contract labourer
feng shui	the 'science' of Chinese geomancy (Chinese)
godown	warehouse, storehouse, or factory (from *gudang*, Malay)
Hui	Chinese brotherhoods
huo	fire (Chinese)
jawi	Malayo-Arabic Characters
jin	Gold or metal (Chinese)
joget	Malay dance(Javanese)
joss	luck
kabaya	thin blouse
kaki lima	five-foot-way
kampong	village (Malay)
kavadi	burden, carried as penance during the Thaipusam festival
keramat	Shrine of miracle working e.g. rock, tree (Arabic)
kiasu	me first (Japanese phonetic)
kolam	pool or decorative floor pattern, from rice flour (Tamil).
kongsi	a society (Chinese)
kopi 'O'	black coffee (Malay)
kueh	cake (Malay)
kuil	Indian temple
ku kah lau	house on stilts (Chinese)
lam-cha-na	soft ground (Hokkien)
madrasah	Islamic religious school (Arabic)
Malaysia Boleh	Malaysia can [achieve]
mu	wood (Chinese)
nasyid	Quranic poetry and song recital (Malay)
nasi kandar	carried rice, cooked rice meal stall
neem	name tree used in natural medicines.
ottu kedai	stuck on shop
pandan	screw pine leaf (Malay)
piloti	exposed ground floor columns (stilts)
porte-cochere	drive under porch
putu mayam	white dough sweetmeat
queue	Chinese plat
rambutan	hairy fruit (Malay)
reformasi	reformation (Malay)
roti	bread (Hindustani)
sampan	three plank boat (Chinese)
sangam	male dormitory accommodation
sarong	long cloth used as dress
seang poh	'dividing a pair' two red pieces of wood, thrown for divine guidance (Hokkien)
sepoy	Indian serving in the British Army (Persian)
shanghai plaster	plaster with marble chippings
Shek Wan	ridge style with porcelain figures for Cantonese temples
Shui	water (Chinese)

sinkeh	labourers newly come from China (Hokkien)
teh tarik	pulled tea
tiang seri	central wooden post in a Malay house (Malay)
tidak-apathy	pun on *tidak-apa* doesn't matter (Malay) and *apathy* (English)
tu	earth (Chinese)
Vaashtu Shastra	art and science of Hindu geomancy (Hindustani)
waqf	Muslim endowment property (Arabic)
wenwu	treasured old object (Cantonese)
yin and yang	Chinese philosphpy of opposites, dark and light, void and solid

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