

# PRELIMINARY HISTORICAL ANALYSIS ON POPULATION AND SOCIOECONOMIC ACTIVITIES OF PENANG MUSLIMS 1786-1970

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## Introduction

The aim of this section is to identify sources of data and to provide a preliminary analysis based on various findings on the (i) selected chronological development of the Muslim's community in Penang with special reference to the Core Zone of the World Heritage Site and (ii) the community's economic activities.

## Description on Research Findings

The findings can be grouped into two parts. The first is the historical documents and data set from various archival sources including a series of Strait Settlement Reports (SSR) of Penang between the years 1800 -1900 as well as manuscripts of Francis Light Letters. The second part is an analysis of processed data which resulted from a complex and scientific process of historical-sourcing, translation, micro-distilling, verification and integration from multiple relevant sources. Yet, these findings are arguably still preliminary but they include selected key milestone descriptions and the evolution of the Muslim population. This report also comprises documentation of selected events, including comments from key decision-makers and administrators, as well as other related references. In the process of historical sourcing, there were a number of archival records in Singapore that were refused accessed to. When one of our research team members went to retrieve the data in Singapore late October, she was asked to obtain permission directly from India as these records were linked to the organizations in India.

They are namely; extracts from short account of the settlement, produce and commerce of Prince of Wales Island; a memoir on Prince of Wales Island, compiled from official

documents and other authentic sources of information by Robert Winstedt; and Land tenure of Penang (1805 -1900). These three sources, particularly the third (Land tenure of Penang) will shed light on the evolution of population, including Muslim community in Penang, especially with regards to ownership of lands and socio-economic activities. Nevertheless, the research team managed to obtain eleven volumes of crucial and authentic historical records on Francis Light's official papers from the archive and manuscript Collection of SOAS, University of London. Aside from secondary sources such as journals, articles and books, such historical sourcing helps inform and authenticate the research process and provide original findings.

### Muslim Population and Economic Activities :

After micro-distilling, authenticating and integrating from various historical sources, the processed findings can be summarized in the two tables below. Due to the constraints of time and data, the period between 1833 and 1860 cannot be presented.

**Table 1**  
**Muslim Population and their Economic Activities, 1794 -1833<sup>1</sup>**

Location	Muslim Group	Activities	Year	Additional Notes
Georgetown	1000 (Indian Muslim)	Trade/business	1794	Some of them supplied hand manufactured tobacco-products such as cigars, (beedi) and snuff-powder
Georgetown	3,446 (Chuliahs)	Business	1833	
Georgetown – Datok Keramat, Jalan Perak, Lebuh Leith, Port	30,435 (Malays)	Agriculture, Fisherman, Business	1833	The businesses include Small- & Medium-size Enterprises

<sup>1</sup> Sources : Strait Settlement Report of Penang – 1800 -1900, SSR Years, 1794-1833 and Manuscript of Light Letters vol. 3, 5 and 8 (Archive, SOAS, UK).

Cornwallis, JalanArmanien.				(SMEs)
Georgetown	1,322 (Bengalese)	Business	1833	
Lebuh Armenians	214 (Arabs/ Parsees/ Armenians)	Business	1833	publication of newspaper and books
Lebuh Aceh/ Lebuh Leith/ DatokKeramat	347 (Achinese)	Business	1833	Bazars

Sources : Datas analysis from Strait Settlement Report of Penang – 1800 -1900, SSR Years, 1794-1833

and Manuscript of Light Letters, vol. 3, 5 and 8 (Archive, SOAS, UK).

**Table 2**  
**Muslim Population and Their Economic Activities, 1860 -1900<sup>2</sup>**

Location	Muslim Group	Activities	Year	Additional Notes
Georgetown	2,653 (Indian Muslims)	Trade/business	1860	Publication
Georgetown	3,446 (Chuliahs)	Business/ agriculture	1885	
Georgetown	61, 448 (Malays)	Agriculture, Business	1860	
Georgetown	2,804 (Bengalese)	Business	1870	
Georgetown	214 (Arabs/	Business,	1890	

<sup>2</sup> Sources : Datas analysis from Strait Settlement Report of Penang – 1800 -1900, SSR Years, 1794-1900 and Manuscript of Light Letters, vol. 3, 5, 7 and 8 (Archive, SOAS, UK).

	Parsees/ Armenians)	publication.		
Lebuh Aceh/ Lebuh Leith/ DatokKeramat	1,347 (Achinese)	Business	1900	

Sources : Combination records from Strait Settlement Report of Penang – 1800 -1900, SSR Years, 1794-1900 and Manuscript of Light Letters, vol. 3, 5, 7, 8, and 10 (SOAS, UK).

This research also seeks to capture larger demographic landscapes of Penang. The following three tables display various statistics of the historical evolution of Penang population. Looking as a whole beginning from the 1800s, the overall population (all religion-ethno groups) of Penang had indeed undergone a sure and steady increase as shown in the table below:

**Table 3**  
**Population in Prince of Wales' Island (Penang Island) and later**  
**Province Wellesle (SeberangPerai) in 1801 – 1833<sup>3</sup>**

Years	Total Population
1801	10,310
1805	14,000
1822	51,207, including Province Wellesley
1826	55,116
1828	60,551
1833	86,275

Source: Source: adapted from Braddell (1861).

Meanwhile there were also statistics suggesting that Malay population has shown some fluctuations albeit the numbers have increased since the late 1700s.

**Table 4**  
**Malay Population in Penang (1786 – 1860)<sup>4</sup>**

<sup>3</sup> Source: adapted from Braddell (1861).

<sup>4</sup> Source: adapted from Braddell (1861).

Year	Malay
1786	100
1812	6,504
1820	8,681
1830	11,943
1842	18,442
1850	16,570
1860	8,887

Source: Source: adapted from Braddell (1861).

Table 5 portrays a snapshot of population statistics in the year 1833 which shows the diversity of ethnic groups in Penang and within which there was also a mixture of ethnic groups even among the Muslim population (e.g. Chuliahs, Malays, Achinese, Bengalese, Arabs, Parsees, even some Battahs were also Muslims).

**Table 5**  
**Census of the Population of Prince of Wales' Island and the places subordinate and its Annexed areas (Prince of Wales' Island, 31<sup>st</sup> Dec. 1833)**

Europeans and their descendants	789
Armenians	21
Malays	16,435
Achinese	347
Battahs	561
Chinese	8,751
Chuliahs	7,886
Bengalese	1,322
Siamese and Burmese	648
Arabs	142
Parsees	51
Native Christians	708
Caffres	180
Native Military and followers	678
Convicts, including local prisoners	1,263
Average number of Patients, in the Chinese Poor House, Lunatic Asylum, and Native Pauper Hospital	140
Itinerants supposed here	400

about this season	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>40,322</b>

Source: Strait Settlement Report of Penang – 1800 -1900, SSR Years, 1794-1900

### Analysis from Historical Records

Prior to the occupation of the island by the British in 1786, it would appear from the ancient burial places, and other indications found thereon, that the Penang island has been formerly a place of considerable resort; though, when taken possession of, there were only a few Malay fishermen living in huts on the sea-coast. It had been from time immemorial, under the government of the Malay sovereigns of Quedah (Kedah).

#### a) Economic activities:

The economic activities included cultivation of pepper, gambir, indigo, cotton, areca, and tobacco. The Malays had several schools in Penang, which focused on Quranic teaching and principles of the Mohammadan religion. Bugesses, Acheenese, Muhammadan Tamils (the Chulias), and Malays were traders; Supplied with tin, pepper, betel-nut, rattans, birds-nests, dammar, Settlement at Acheen (from Madras), and a little way inland, stretch acres upon acres of rice fields cultivated by patient and placid Malay peasants: the padi stems as they open out to the sunshine reveal a lovely green.

#### b) Reports from manuscript, *Account of Pulo Pinang*, by Captain Thomas Forrest (never printed before):

Malay traditional history assigns considerable population to Penang before the British period. According to the Malays, an area on the present island known as Dato' Kramat was at one time a separate land in a swampy area. When Light landed in 1786, he found only a small remnant of Malays at Dato' Keramat. The point at which embarkation had taken place was called Point Penaga, by a small population of 58 Malays who were engaged a short distance inland, in collecting gum-damar. These hindrances, however, did not prevent the enterprising Chulias from quickly seizing the opportunity provided by the new outlet for trade, and within a few days they had opened a bazaar. As a result of the liberal awarding of land, there was a tremendous increase in the population of Penang within a few years of its founding. In 1816, Penang's population was 23,418; by 1830, it had risen to 33,59 (Braddell, 1861: Table 1).

In one of his journals, Francis Light mentioned that he came across about 30 Malays on the shore 4 days after landing on Penang at Tanjung Penaga (the present day site of Fort Cornwallis). Although he did not describe their origins, if we consider the name of their leader, Nakhoda Kechil for example, they were most likely to be related to the Malays of Sumatera. Sumaterans of Minangkabau and Acheenese descent were reputed to be adventurers, who often left their homeland to trade and work, and had congregated in the northern part of the Malay Peninsula, in Penang, Kedah, Perlis, and Siam. The reference to *nakhoda* also indicates that the group which Francis Light met at Tanjung Penaga was a group of traders or seamen who were probably already permanently settled there. They were the people whom Francis Light employed to clear the jungle, together with the Malays whom he had brought from Kedah. (Vaughan, 1857: 174). The government offered 42 Spanish dollars to the Malays for every *rehung* of land cleared and ready for farming (Low, 1849: 160).

The town grew outward from Tanjung Penaga. When the well-known family of Tengku Syed Hussein al-Idid arrived in 1792 and decided to settle in Lebu Acheh (previously Acheen Street), this decision was most probably due to the existence of a Sumateran community around Tanjung Penaga. Tengku Syed Hussein al-Idid, who was a member of the Acheh royal family and of Arab descent, held monopoly over the spice trade and was one of the wealthiest men in Penang at that time. Today, the settlement built by Tengku Syed Hussein still stands in the midst of bustling Lebu Acheh. The layout of this settlement with stone walls surrounding the mosque indicates that the family of Tengku Syed Hussein lived separately from the other Achenese (Khoo, 1993:24-25).

Dickens who became the first judge and magistrate of Penang in 1800, was of the opinion that the community existing there at the time of Francis Light's landing was a temporary one consisting about 20 to 30 fishermen who visited the island occasionally. According to him, this was the group which Francis Light came across a few days after landing. Even though various ruins and burial grounds were discovered, Dickens believed that a system of governance did not exist at that time (Dickens, 1805- in Logan (ed): 1851:293). Penang at that time was nothing more than a place for fishermen to anchor their boats. However, the narratives of the Malays recorded by the British since the 19th century as well as the information provided by early British visitors, indicate that Penang had been inhabited by Malays long before Francis Light's landing.

The journals made by Macalister, Captain and Commander of the Bengal Artillery based in Penang in the early part of the 19th century, confirm that the Malays were the first settlers. According to him, at the time of the acquisition of Penang in 1786, there were 2 to 3 original inhabitants of Penang who subsisted by fishing and collecting resin and wood oil. He met one of them who told him that about 60 years earlier, there had been more than 2,000 people living on the island. Most of them robbed the merchant ships which sailed to and from Kedah. When the Sultan of Kedah found out about these untoward activities, he sent his soldiers to expel them. Macalister (180:23) believed this account to be true, supported by the presence of burial grounds covering an area of about 2 square miles in Penang.

Two British officers were most probably referring to the villages in Pinang River, Perak Road and Datok Keramat. In a 1929 article, Stevens identified several locations which had been inhabited long before Francis Light's arrival based on the discovery of about 18 acres of village and burial grounds in Datok Keramat. These villages were recorded in an old journal dated 1795 which stated that the land in Datok Keramat had been inhabited for 90 years. In other words, the Malays had been living in Datok Keramat since 1705 (Stevens, 1929:388). The reference to the settlement was very specific, stating that it was in Perak Road in the direction of to the south Pinang River and the area between Green Lane and Perak Road. All these three areas later became known collectively as Teluk Jelutong.

The village of Datok Keramat was founded by an individual by the same name, Datok Keramat who hailed from Sumatera. Datok Keramat is said to have been of Acheenese descent. Long before the arrival of Francis Light, the Achenese were already in Penang trading their wares in an open area in Teluk Jelutong (Abdullah Husain, 1984:12). It was Datok Keramat and his younger brother, Haji Bayan who cleared the area and established a village there. In January, 1790, Light submitted to the Bengal Government an exhaustive report, which stated *inter alia* that there were then 200 houses built, planted lands estimated at 2,500 acres, producing 10,000 maunds of rice- expected to be doubled the following year – besides “great quantities of fruit trees, coconuts, pepper, gambier and sugar-cane.” Cultivating pepper with vines procured from Acheen and area of 400 acres was planted experimentally.

A survey register made in September 1796, showed an area of over 2,000 acres under cultivation, in addition to that, under spices. All nationalities contributed to this development,

Chinese, Malays, Siamese, Burmese, immigrants from Southern India, Bengal and Bombay, as well as the British settlers.

According to George Leith, who became the first Lieutenant – Governor, a “count” in 1797 revealed a population of 6,937, which had increased in 1801 to 10,310, the total in each case being exclusive of European and Garrison. Leith observed that these numbers were probably underrated and that the population in 1801 had reached probably 12,000, “a larger population than has perhaps been known in any settlement in so short a period from its foundation.”

**c) Muslim Economic and Commercial Community in Penang World Heritage Site:**

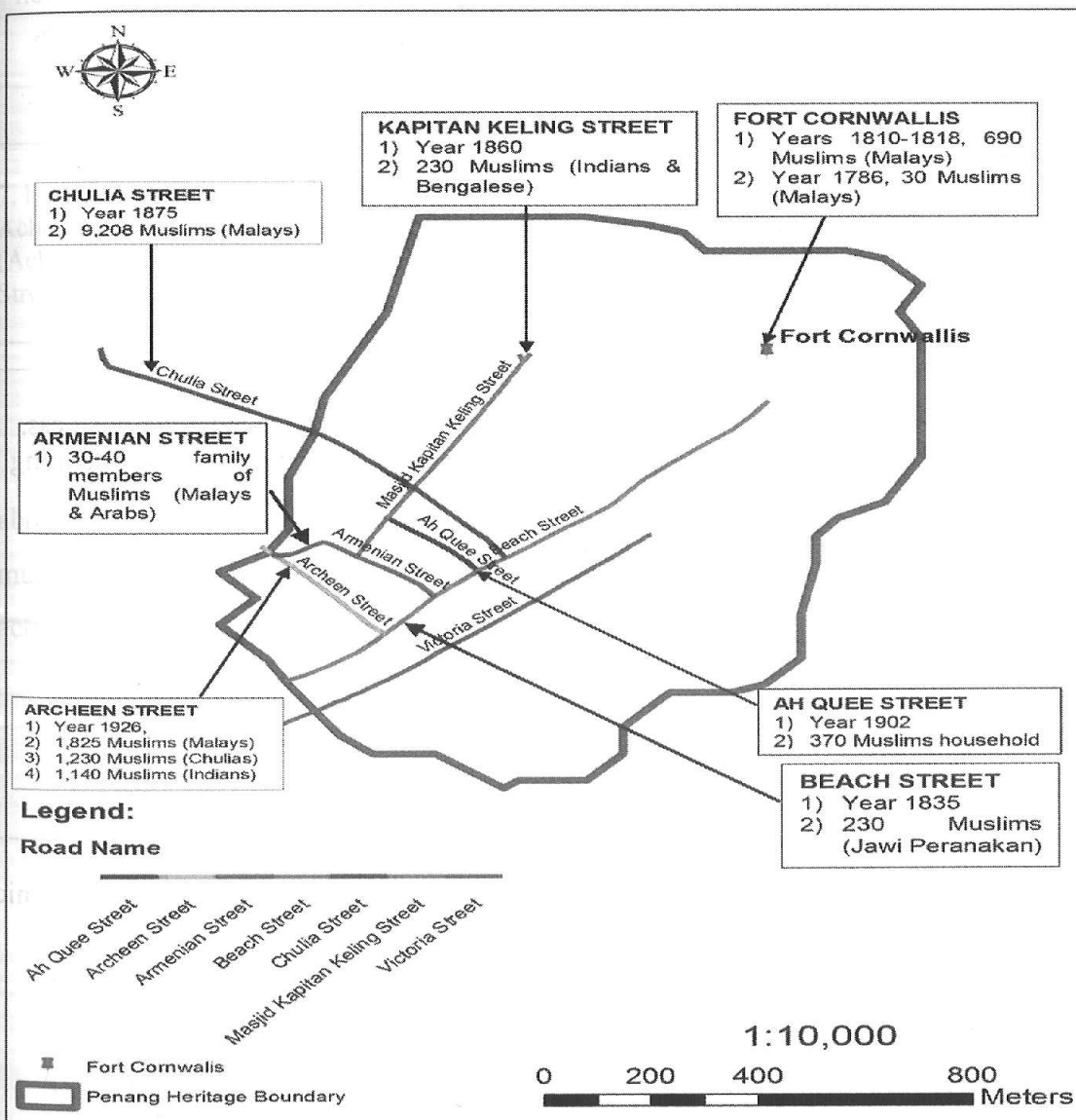
Under the designated Penang World Heritage Site, we have found historical records showing seven areas where Muslims communities were found to be active vis-à-vis economic or business activities. They are namely:

1. Lebu Ah Quee
2. Lebu Pantai
3. Jalan Kapitan Keling
4. Lebu Chulia
5. Lebu Armenia
6. Fort Cornwallis
7. Lebu Acheh

It should be noted that this is not to claim that these seven locations are in any way exhaustive or mutually exclusive in that Muslim communities may have well lived and worked beyond these specified areas. Table 1.1 below captures the seven areas and gives a sense of different temporal spatial presence of the Muslim communities within the Core Zone of the heritage site itself. Based on this temporal (or historical)-spatial spread, a number of observations and deductions can be made. Perhaps the obvious fact is that the Muslim community had their presence in the Core Zone for a long time, indeed from the very beginning of historical documentation (even before the arrival of Francis Light). Equally important is the continuity of this community throughout Penang history, not least within the heritage site, within various economic and commercial activities that they can be recognized or at least seen as a Muslim economic and commercial community (MECC). This MECC had also in effect functioned as a progressive and inclusive force that had grown and enriched

the heritage site to the point that it is worthy to be internationally recognized as a world heritage. In this regard alongside Melaka, Penang stood up and is chosen among many other cities in Malaysia, indeed in the region. MECC played a vitally pivotal role is incontrovertible.

**Table 1.1.**  
**Temporal (Historical) and Spatial Spread of Muslim Community**  
**in Penang World Heritage Site (Core Zone)**



**Table 1.2.**  
**Seven Muslim Economic and Commercial Community (MECC):**

## A Brief Summary Explanation

Location	BECC History	Economic/ Business Activities
1. Lebu Ah Quee (Ah Quee Street)	Previously known as Lorong Takia as it was the area where Kampung Takai was located. In 1902, records show that there were 370 houses of Muslim households.	Historical records documented that Muslim commercial community in this area was engaged in businesses involving food and spices. Indian Muslims were also found to be active here in cotton and textile businesses.
2. Lebu Pantai (Beach Street)	<p>This area had a number of Muslim ethnic groups. They included India-Muslims/ Chulias as well as Acehnese. The Syed Aidid family played a pivotal role in this area.</p> <p>In the year 1835, a total of 230 persons of Jawi Peranakan background was recorded as residents in this area.</p>	Among the commercial activities they were engaged included textile especially cotton cloth, spices, stork/kingfisher bird nests, hajj pilgrimage services, printing and trading bazaar.
3. Jalan Kapitan Keling (Kapitan Keling Street)	In 1860, a total of 230 Indian Muslims and Bengalese Muslims were residents in this area.	They were involved in shipping business, bazaar, hajj pilgrimage services, operating in close proximity to Masjid Kapitan Keling.
4. Lebu Chulia (Chulia Street)	There were as many as 9,208 Malay Muslim residents in 1875 living in this area.	Hajj pilgrimage activities
5. Lebu Armenia (Armenian Street)	There were 30-40 family members of Arab and Malay Muslims residing in this area in mid 1800s (amongst them the Syed Alatas family)	Historical records on their economic activities have yet to be verified.
6. Fort	Between the years 1810 to 1818,	They were operating businesses and

Cornwallis	<p>approximately 690 Malay Muslims were residents in this area.</p> <p>By the year 1860, the number of Malay Muslims residents increased to 1326.</p> <p>As early as 1786, Francis Light documented a number of 30 Malays in this Fort Cornwallis area (TanjungPenaga).</p> <p>The presence of Jawiperanakan Muslims from Madras and Benggal were also documented in the year 1835.</p>	trading bazaars.
7. Lebuah Acheh (Acheen Street)	In 1926, there were 1825 Malay Muslims, 1140 Indian Muslims, and 1230 Chulias.	These diverse groups of Muslims provided a whole host of business products and services including spices, groceries, bazaars, cotton clothing and textile, gold and jewelries.

Muslim economy then show commercial activities that cater for demands of nations abroad, indicating that the Muslim economic and commercial community (MECC) were very much linked to the international trade of that era. As far as their economic or business activities are concerned, their products and services include:

1. Textile
2. Cotton
3. Food and Restaurants
4. Spices
5. Hajj pilgrimage services
6. Printing and publishing
7. Retail businesses and Bazaar
8. Shipping
9. Gold and jewelries
10. Groceries

## Composition of Muslim Economic and Commercial Community (MECC)

The Muslim economic and commercial community (MECC) comprises a wide range of ethnic groups. As historical documents have directly and indirectly indicated, these ethnic groups take many forms. They are partly a melting pot (such that they intermarried and built amalgamated communities of mixed parentage such as the Peranakan Pekan) and partly salad bowl (such that they continued to a large extent maintain their cultural heritage and many times practice simultaneously acculturating and interacting with the local society) and indeed some even assimilated into the existing local Muslim communities. They consist of mainly communities from the Malay Archipelago (Malays, Acehnese, Medanese, Minangs, Javanese and the likes), the Southern Asian subcontinent (Indians, some are known as Chulias, Bengalese, Pakistanis) as well as Arab nations.

The spatial settlements often reflect the kinship (family) and clan networks interwoven between local and migrant Muslim communities. Indeed the term migrant Muslims is a misnomer as the Malayo Archipelago (or one can term it as 'Nusantara') is a roaming sociological-habitat of the large Muslim population regionally. In other words, one may be born in one part of the archipelago (e.g. Sumatera island) attended a pesantren (traditional religious school) in another part (Java island) married with a local in Singapore island and built a family in Kedah and eventually worked and spent the rest of the lives in Penang island. In fact some of the Chulias originated not directly from India but from the state of Kedah, hence had been integrated as local Kedahans before roaming and working in Penang island, not unlike present day citizens of Malaysia who were born in one state and worked in another. The difference is that the then 'Nusantara' was their roaming and the equivalent to the 'state' today. This reflects the historical reality of a rich maritime community, diverse and was still a single large sociological entity.

Building upon this historical significance, MECC has more or less built a socioeconomic ecology in the Core zone whereby some of cultural heritage landmarks can be found. This is seen in the following Table 1.2. It should also be noted that the MECC in actuality extends beyond the Core zone. Indeed, many more enclaves and loci of economic activities existed and continue to exist in the Buffer zone and even beyond.

## Penang Pilgrimage Hub for Hajj

The Sumatran - Penang relations had long been established in the history of pre-colonial Penang. Ethnic Achenese and Minangkabau who were Sumatrans were central in this regional historical connection. Leaders such as Nakhoda Intan, Nakhoda Kechil and Dato' Jannaton played crucial roles in the early periods of Penang even before the arrival of Francis Light. Indeed, it was Nakado Kechil who invited Francis Light to the island back in 1786. Subsequently, Lebuh Aceh was developed to be among the earliest urban Muslim settlements in Penang. But the population in Lebuh Aceh grew rapidly in 1971 as the royal family of Tunku Sayyid Hussain Aidid moved to Penang, alongside his entourage and followers. With the credibility brought by this royal family's presence, more ships traded at Penang. In the month of August 1986 five Acehnese ships docked at the port Penang, as it also became more welcoming as free-port. This royal and communal presence was a key historical impetus to the growth of trade and commerce among Muslim business community and Penang's local domestic economic capacity which enabled it to prosper as a port city.

An agreement was signed between Tunku Sayyid Hussain Aidid and Light, which in many ways indicated the negotiating strength of Tunku Sayyid Hussain Aidid's political-economic position. The agreement allowed the royal family of Tunku Sayyid Hussain Aidid to have a geographical settlement of their choice in Penang. Under the agreement, Tunku Sayyid Hussain Aidid was also entitled to enforce his laws on his people and subjects. As they had chosen Lebuh Aceh as their enclave of residence, if there were to be an intruder encroaching upon this area and was later killed by his royal family, Francis Light had no right to prosecute them (those who killed the intruders). His community is given the freedom to trade except for tin. However, if the tin was acquired elsewhere out of Penang, then they have the right to trade with anyone. As part of his trading business, Tunku Sayyid Hussain Aidid brought in his ships such as *Futty Salim*, *Kelantan* and *Kota Jawa*. He was the agent to Palmer and Co, whose headquarters was in Calcutta<sup>5</sup>. This MECC in Lebuh Aceh eventually grew and propelled business activities in the surrounding areas and beyond. In 1808, a masjid was built, which is known as Masjid Lebuh Aceh or Masjid Melayu. In essence, all kinds of trade and commerce started to flourish further. Against this background, the pilgrimage activities to Mecca grew in Penang. The island then developed into a pilgrimage hub for Hajj

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<sup>5</sup> John Anderson, *Acheen and the Ports on the North and East Coasts of Sumatra*, Oxford University Press, 1971, p81).

and Umrah in Mecca among Muslims in the region. Pilgrims and their families came from the Nusantara region, namely Indonesia, Thailand and Malay Peninsula, to board ships from the Penang port to Mecca. This was arguably driven or at least largely driven by the community in Lebuah Aceh and their leaders and surrounding partners in the Muslim community. Lebuah Aceh was consequently known as the Second Jeddah, for Jeddah supposed bears similarities to Penang, as Jeddah means coastal and was located along the coast of Red Sea and became an important port in Saudi Arabia. This pilgrimage-oriented socio-economic hub lasted for a long time until 1977. Lebuah Aceh became vibrant due to its synergistic nature with Islamic socio-cultural ecology, commerce, Penang's free-port status as well as the anchoring Muslim community of Sumatrans, Indians and Peninsula Malays. This was in essence the heart of MECC in urban sector. Upon his death Tunku Sayyid Hussain Aidid left a sizable estate, including a piece of 66,396 square-feet land in Lebuah Aceh itself. According to Clodd, Tunku Sayyid Hussain Aidid was the richest man in Penang. He also noted that Tunku Sayyid Hussain Aidid amassed decorative items made of gold as well as Spanish money<sup>6</sup>. As he passed away in 1840, his economic dynasty was inherited by the next generation including his sons Sayid Abdullah and Sayid Akil<sup>7</sup>.

The rise of Penang as a hub for hajj was evidently unmistakable. In 1885, total number of pilgrims was 3,685. This number doubled by the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century by an increase of 3,116 making total number of pilgrims 6,861. At the beginning of World War I, in 1914 there was still a total of 8,344 pilgrims departing for Mecca. Nevertheless between 1915 to 1918 no operation was discontinued. Likewise, during World War II, between the year 1941 to 1945 no voyage to Mecca was documented. As the war ended, the number rose again. In 1950 there were 3,886 pilgrims registered in Penang; hence, the progress of Penang as a hub for hajj was punctuated by such events and members of the pilgrimage-related commercial community who persevered were among the more resilient, reflecting the historical contribution of MECC in the development of Penang.

Other ripple effects originating from the Hajj socio-ecology can also be seen in the hospitality industry, especially the hotels. These hotels are mostly owned by the Chinese community. In other words, the Hajj Pilgrimage Hub had actually spurred the growth of

<sup>6</sup> Harold Parker, Clodd, *Malays' First British Pioneer: The Life of Francis Light*, Washington: Photo-duplication Service Library of Congress, 1975, p119.

<sup>7</sup> Salina Haji Zainol, *Hubungan Perdagangan Aceh dengan Pulau Pinang*, p414.

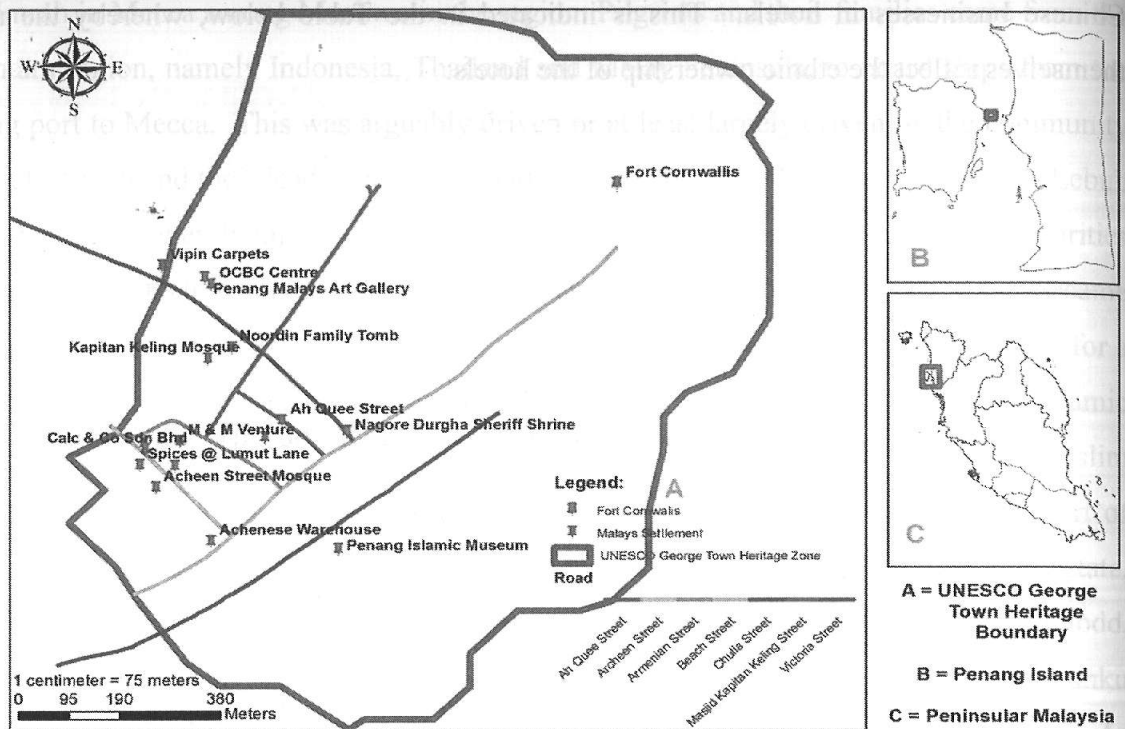
Chinese businesses in hotels. This is indicated in the Table below, whereby the names themselves reflect the ethnic ownership of the hotels:

**Table 1.6**  
**Table on Lodging Houses and Hotels in Penang in the early 20 Century**

<b>Bil.</b>	<b>Names of Hotel</b>	<b>Address</b>
1.	Ah Chew Lodging House	120, Lebuah Aceh
2.	Anandha Bhavan Hotel	133/135, Lebuah Penang
3.	Ban Aun Hotel	224, Jalan Perangin
4.	Bangkok Hotel	
5.	Ceylon Hotel	30, Lebuah Penang
6.	Ho Say Kai Hotel	300, Lebuah Chulia
7.	Huah Chew Hotel	284, Lebuah Chulia
8.	Huan Kew Hotel	431F, Lebuah Chulia
9.	Indo-Ceylon Hotel	24, Lebuah Penang
10.	International Hotel	208/210, Jalan Dato Keramat
11.	It Sin Hotel	151/155, Lebuah Chulia
12.	Izumi Hotel	142M, Jalan Burmah
13.	Jooi Hean Hotel	302, Lebuah Chulia
14.	Loke Kim Aik Hotel	80A/82, Lorong Love
15.	London Hotel	166, Jalan Argyll
16.	Nam Wah Hotel	381, Lebuah Chulia
17.	Penang Hotel	368/370, Lebuah Chulia
18.	Shanghai Hotel	43, Jalan Kelawai

Source: *Malayan Directory of Commerce, Retailers & Residents 1936*, pg. 287.

**Snapshots of Population Changes in Georgetown: Proportionate percentages comparison of three major social groups (between Early 1900s to 1957)**



## Further Reflections on Marginalization of Muslim Community

A number of factors had contributed to the marginalization of Muslim community. These factors are the same forces at work inside and outside of the Penang World Heritage Site. Although not exhaustive, collectively, they provide the main explanation underlying the underrepresentation of Muslims in Georgetown and other presently more developed and urban areas in Penang.

### a) Social Cultural Dynamics and Need for Money

One of the factors Muslims' moving out from urban areas is their own social-cultural dynamics. This is a key narrative about the phenomenon of land marginalization, especially local Muslims. The dynamics include the value-system and prioritization placed on properties relative to their social and familial needs interwoven with their religious duties and cultural obligations. As our historical analysis show from land-transfer documents, there were cases where Muslim landowners sold off their lands to finance their children's wedding. In the context of religious obligation, there were cases whereby lands were sold in order to support their parents Hajj pilgrimage. Land ownerships were also transferred out of the hands of Muslims as part of redistribution settlement upon the death of family members. For these reasons, local Muslim community is often perceived to have a lack of estate and financial

management competencies. Coupled with their social cultural complexities, this arguably became a source of weakness in the context of a more modern cash economy. Nevertheless, the fault lines do not stop here.

Although it may appear that there was this seemingly social cultural lack, this does not explain why the Muslims have retained their lands for generations before the arrival of colonial powers. Historically, these social-cultural traditions had not impoverished them of their lands. As the following analyses show, new politico-legal environment emerged that had created socially antagonistic currents pushing these people towards certain directions.

#### b) Leith Proclamations

On 21<sup>st</sup> February and 6<sup>th</sup> October 1801, two proclamations on land policy were made by George Leith. They covered matters pertaining to land purchase, land mortgage, will-writing and estate redistribution. The proclamations required the government to call back all forms of land title documents for the purposes of reviewing, updating and correcting errors before the issuing of new grants. It states that "all persons in possession of land or houses, for which they have not received a grant, or required, within six calendar months from the 1<sup>st</sup> day of March next, to make application for the same to Mr. Philip Mannington, registrar, under penalty of not having them issued at a future period, unless the claimants give sufficient reasons for the neglect."<sup>8</sup> This move had made land transfers from the ownership of locals (including local Muslims) to foreigners and non-locals much easier and in effect contributed to a substantial number of legal grant transfers. The proclamations changed the legal landscape of land ownership.

Within this new legal framework, according to historical records, the ruling government then approved one thousand one hundred and eleven (1,111) cases of new land transfer in Georgetown alone (Phillips, p. 35) The social undercurrents were then in favour of those with capital. Lands in Penang were in effective opened and commercialized for capitalist games. Penang was then became a different economic playing field. The locals, very few of whom were cash-rich and well-versed in cash economy, were at a disadvantaged at this game.

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<sup>8</sup> W.E. Phillips, Minutes on Landed tenures pp. 29-30.

**c) Dominance of European land ownership**

Europeans obtained not only large area of lands but also lands in more valuable areas. A large part of their lands were under grant titles before leasing system was introduced. In 1823, the total amount of land mass with ownership grants held in the hands of Europeans was 4,392 'relong' compared to 2,872 relong of lands without grants but with a documentation system based on simple written statements called surat tebang and surat ukur (1,853 relong held with 'surat tebang' and 1,019 held with 'surat ukur'). In contrast, Asians only held a total of 5,128 relong of land with ownership grants versus 8,984 relong of land without such grants. There is a number of reasons why Europeans possess high levels of ownership even at the early stages of their stay. A prominent reason is that Penang Island did not many buildings for them to settle in. Therefore, their administrators and officers had to acquire lands to build their dwellings. As for those Europeans engaged in trade and commerce, lands were also needed to erect shops and offices for their business operations.

In "A contribution to the early history of Prince of Wales Island", F. G. Stevens wrote vividly the ways in which lands were obtained by the Europeans for the purposes stated above. Francis Light, for instance, owned a rather large piece of land on the northern beach near Fort Cornwallis. Light had then built a bungalow which, among other things, became a place where he did a major part of his administrative work. Light also owned about an acre of land at the end of Light Street. This plot of land is known as "Well Estate" for Light had dug a well there as a source of water supply for the surrounding community. James Scott, Phillip Mannington Sr., Captain James Gray, Thomas Pigou, Dr Hutton and many more Europeans and Eurasians who were in Penang during the era of Francis Light also had ownership of large land estates at Fort Cornwallis, Love Lane and Beach Street. In the writings of W.E. Phillips (1823), it was noted the existence of a grant reflecting the dominance of European ownership especially in the area of Tanjong Penegeri (which is now Georgetown). This grant issued in 1795 to Juan Augustin covered a land with the size of 2 relong 2 jemba. Located at Tanjong Penegeri, this estate was bordering with the land owned by Layton, another European, to the north and to the south and east bordering with James Scott's estate.

The Europeans also dominated some trade and commercial areas such as the northern shore, especially where Beach Street is. The warehouses belonging to James Scott, Dr Hutton, C.W. Young, Perkin, Thomas Pigou were and some others were located there. James Scott also possessed a 10-acre land towards the north of Penang Road as part of salt production facility. Another reason why the Europeans and Eurasians were in possession of many large plots of lands, despite their small number, was the goal of the government to turn Penang into a production zone for a selected food and export items. A number of English men who had aspirations for agricultural ventures actually obtained large pieces of lands to fulfil this colonial goal. According the Stevens, Europeans were allowed by Francis Light to take large estates in the valleys of Waterfall and Ayer Itam. Francis Light himself owned 160 acres of agricultural land in the south of Ayer Itam, known as Suffolk Estate. In addition, Light was also the owner of 150 acres of land on the west side of Penang Road and a farm land in southern Penang as stated in his will.

James Scott, a good friend and business partner of Francis Light, acquired not only large land areas but also fertile and strategic. In December of 1794, Scott was given lands as large as 268 relong (350 acres) located at the valley of Highlands, in close proximity to Light's valley estate at Ayer Itam – Waterfall. When this grant was renewed by the Lieutenant Governor George Leith in 1802, the size had grown to 359 relong (480 acres). Beyond that, James Scott also owned 200 relong of land properties on the west of Sungai Pinang (Penang River) which was turned into rice paddy fields. The capital imperative played a pivotal role in favouring the Europeans in land acquisition. At the early period of English settlement, lands in Penang Island were not priced as high. What that meant was that the cash-rich Europeans had high purchasing power. As the policy on land ownership was indeed liberal, colonial administrators and officers with financial strength were in position to amass real estate properties. Land owners also did not have to pay high taxes or adhered to strict rules.

The government itself was encouraging Europeans with capital to own lands in order to spur economic growth. McDonald, a government administrator himself described those who acquired lands more than their capacity to cultivate them as speculators. Many of these property owners spent most of their time outside the Penang Island. They bought lands to speculate on and to make profit out of it. According to McDonald, James Scott, Layton and C.W. Young were among these people with such motives.

#### **d) Unfavorable Institutional Environment**

In 1805, historical records show confusion on the part of relevant state land authorities on issues of land management, land granting and land ownership in Penang. Subsequently, in April 1808, the then Governor of Penang issued a statement of concern about the decreasing number of productive land use in the state. Disappointed by the failure of receiving land titles for the farms they had cultivated for a long time (in some case even after ten years), many hardworking farmers had left their lands. This disappointment is worsened by declining prices of agricultural commodities. Many of these were local Muslims<sup>9</sup>. The institutional practices were unfavourable and punishing to them. The process to obtain land ownership titles took too long in addition to the high tax burden if they were to register the lands.

New laws on land took effect on 28<sup>th</sup> April 1809. The board of directors issued a new directive allowing Penang state to continue granting new land titles. Among the regulations is that each new grant given to an applicant by the State could not exceed 50 'relongs'. Furthermore, the size of land was to be given in accordance to the capacity of the applicant. All ethnic groups including Europeans were allowed to own these state-given lands. The lands not in use for a certain period of time will be taken back and return to the State. Taxes on the land were also imposed. The State also required registration fees to be paid for issuing of land grant titles. All these new factors and impositions contributed to the locals being marginalized in this new market environment<sup>10</sup>. Yet it was in part the non-competitive and accommodating nature of local Muslims, and by extension the business community MECC, that allowed other groups to take root and to benefit from their stay in Penang Island. Nevertheless, the process and forces of marginalization had taken place. As the various statistics below indicate, by early 20<sup>th</sup> Century and throughout the decades prior to Malaysia's independence in 1957, the proportionate percentages of Malays and Indians have been low (around or below 15%) and on the decline. Although not all Indians were Muslims, a sizable percentage of them were of Muslim background. Yet even with both these two

<sup>9</sup>Letter from Governor Macalister to the Secret Committee dated, Fort Cornwallis, 7<sup>th</sup> April 1808, Board's collections, F/4/261/5828.

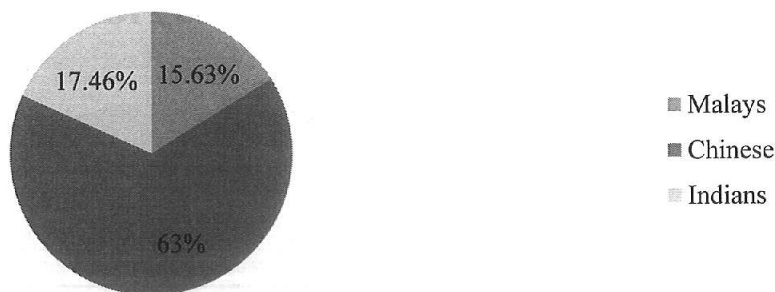
<sup>10</sup>Extract Prince of Wales Island Public Consultations, 8<sup>th</sup> February 1810, Board's collections, F/4/346/8090.

ethnic groups combined, they were still outweighed by the Chinese. Specifically, the pie charts below portray that the percentages of the Malays have shrunk from 15.63% in 1911 to 12.81% in 1931, to 11.39% in 1957 which was the year of independence. Similarly, the percentages of Indian community (and a percentage of which was Muslims) have declined from 17.46% in 1911 to 16.14% and by the time of independence to 13.63%. In comparison as shown in the pie charts below, the percentages of Chinese population have moved from strength to strength from 63% in 1911 to 67.79% in 1931 and to 72.90% in 1957.

e) **Georgetown in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century and Post-Independence years**

The following paragraphs statistics and brief discussions on the comparative percentages of Malays, Chinese and Indians in Georgetown in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century and Malaysia's post-independence years.

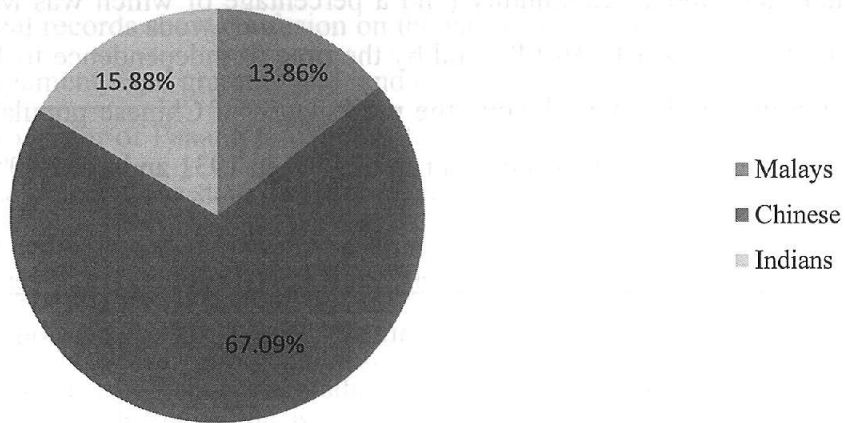
**Percentages of Malays, Chinese and Indians  
in Georgetown in 1911**



Source: Badaruddin (2005).<sup>11</sup>

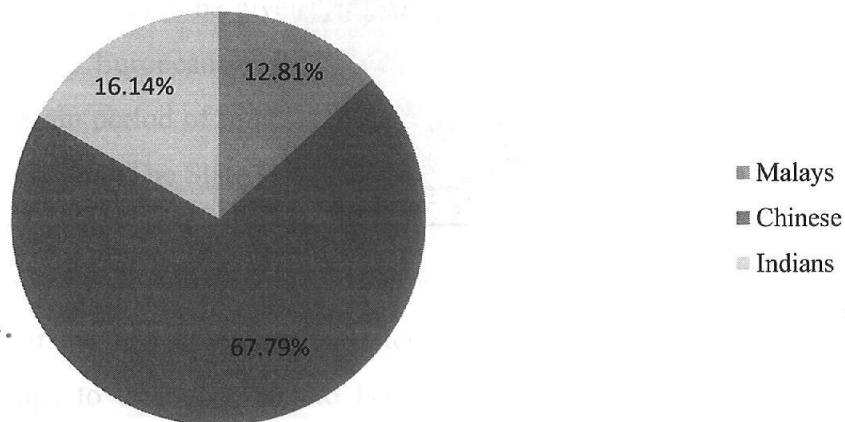
<sup>11</sup> Amir Hussin Baharuddin ed., "Ekonomi-Pemasalahan Melayu Pulau Pinang", Dalam, "Melayu di Pulau Pinang: Himpunan Kertas Kerja Kolokium Kebangsaan Melayu Pulau Pinang", Pulau Pinang: Universiti Sains Malaysia, 2005, p68.

### Percentages of Malays, Chinese and Indians in Georgetown in 1921



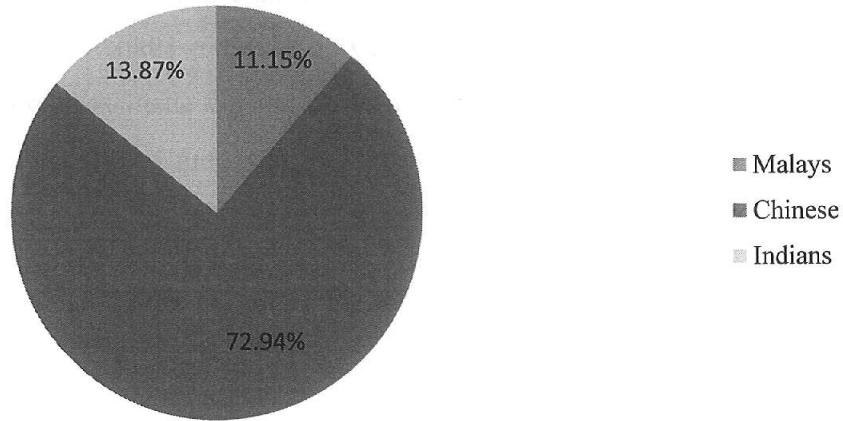
Source: Badaruddin, 2005.

### Percentages of Malays, Chinese and Indians in Georgetown in 1931



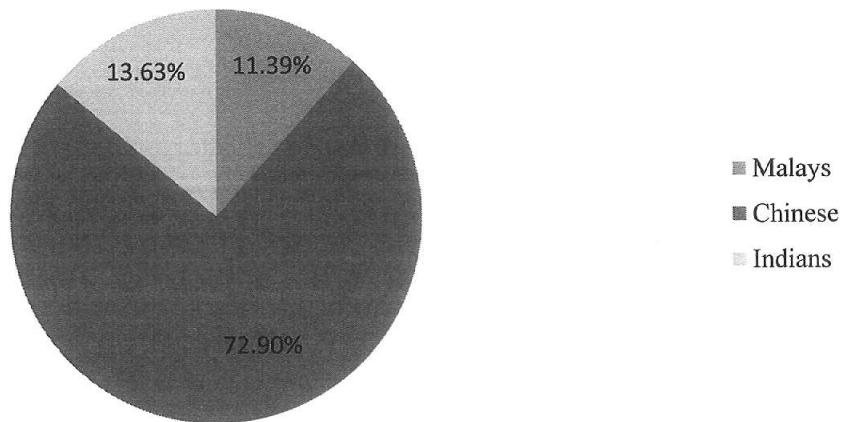
Source: Badaruddin, 2005.

### Percentages of Malays, Chinese and Indians in Georgetown in 1947



Source: Badaruddin, 2005.

### Percentages of Malays, Chinese and Indians in Georgetown in 1957



Source: Badaruddin (2005).

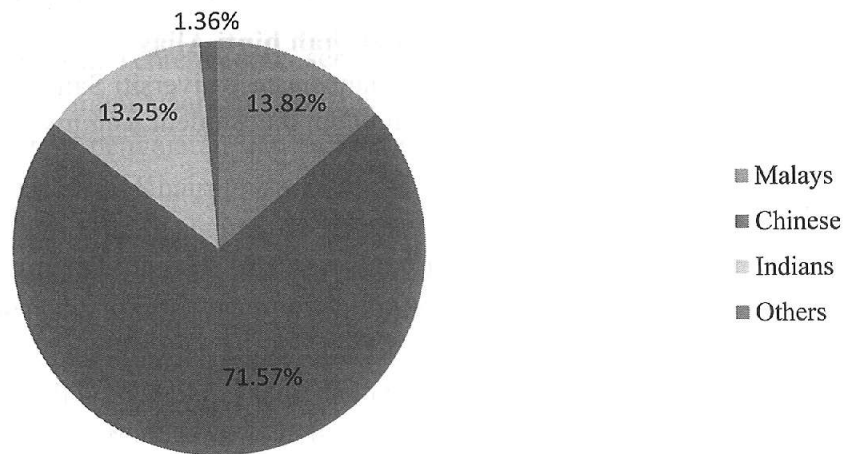
#### Conclusion

A decade after independence, the declining trends of Malay Muslim community seem to reverse. Indeed as the charts indicate, there is an increase of percentages of Malays and Indians in Georgetown, albeit not as significant.

In 1970, the percentage of Malays is 13.82%, the percentages then rose to 16.38% in 1980, to 20.08% in 1991, to 21.21% in 2000 and to a sizable 23.35% in 2010 (almost a quarter of the total population in Georgetown). However, the percentages of Indian population (of which some are Muslims) fluctuated but did not eventuate in much difference. As indicated in the charts, the percentages were 13.25% in 1970, 11.71 in 1980, 9.7% in 1991, 8.47% in 2000 and 10.18% in 2010. In essence tracing through the changes in proportionate percentages through the four decades, the trends show a slow but steady increase of Malay Muslim community repopulation in Georgetown area where the heritage site is. However, since the percentages of Indian community actually dropped from 1970 to 2010, the present statistics is not able to conclude if there is an increase in total percentages of overall Muslim community in Georgetown.

What can be objectively deduced based on the historical records is that demographic reductions of Muslim community percentages in Georgetown from its original population had occurred after centuries-long colonial occupation. Evidently, there is an increase since the country's independence, albeit the percentages rise has been arguably slow and limited. In this empirical context, the marginalization of Muslim community and by implication their living heritage from the Heritage Site has not been effectively reversed in post-colonial Penang.

## Percentages of Malays, Chinese and Indians in Georgetown in 1970



Adapted from Chandler<sup>12</sup> (1972).

<sup>12</sup> R.Chander, 1972, "Banchi Penduduk dan Perumahan Malaysia 1970", Kuala Lumpur: Jabatan Perangkaan Malaysia, p180.