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The 'Discovery' of Penang Island at Tanjong Tokong before 1785: Babu Alaidin Meera Hussein Lebai and Captain Francis Light

WAZIR JAHAN KARIM*

While historians dispute that Penang Island was 'ceded' and was in fact 'occupied' illegally on 11 August 1786, contravening the proposal for and conditions of the temporary lease of the island from Sultan Abdullah of Kedah, local Malay accounts of Tanjong Tokong's early history support statements that Captain Francis Light was determined to claim the island on behalf of the EIC, regardless of whether the lease was permanently secured; hence the eventual attack by Sultan Abdullah in 1791. Malay villagers at Tanjong Tokong, through oral histories and written genealogies, trace and blame the intrusion on Babu Alaidin Meera Hussein Lebai who, they claim, led English scouts to the peak of Bukit Meriam (Cannon Hill) where a Malay trading and fishing village had been established. Soon afterwards, land transfers to a French Roman Catholic order forced villagers to move downhill to merge with a Malay fishing village on the 'water's teeth' (gigi air). Hence land titles were never obtained, except by Babu Alaidin who had assisted Captain Francis Light secure the hill as a military post and eventually a French Roman Catholic mission.

Introduction

In 1785 a cannon (Malay: *meriam*) was placed at the peak of Tanjong Hill, the highest point of Teluk Tikus (Rat Bay), regardless of the presence of a thriving Malay-Jawi Peranakan village at the Tanjong promontory and the existence of a Malay fort (*kubu*) at the hill's peak, Cannon Hill. Malay narratives of historical significance, backed by written and oral histories of descendants of the pioneer families of Tanjong Tokong, recall that Captain Francis Light or his crew had scouted the hill overlooking Tanjong Penaga with the help of an Indian Muslim trader and settler, Babu Alaidin Meera Hussein Lebai.

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History of Tanjong Tokong¹

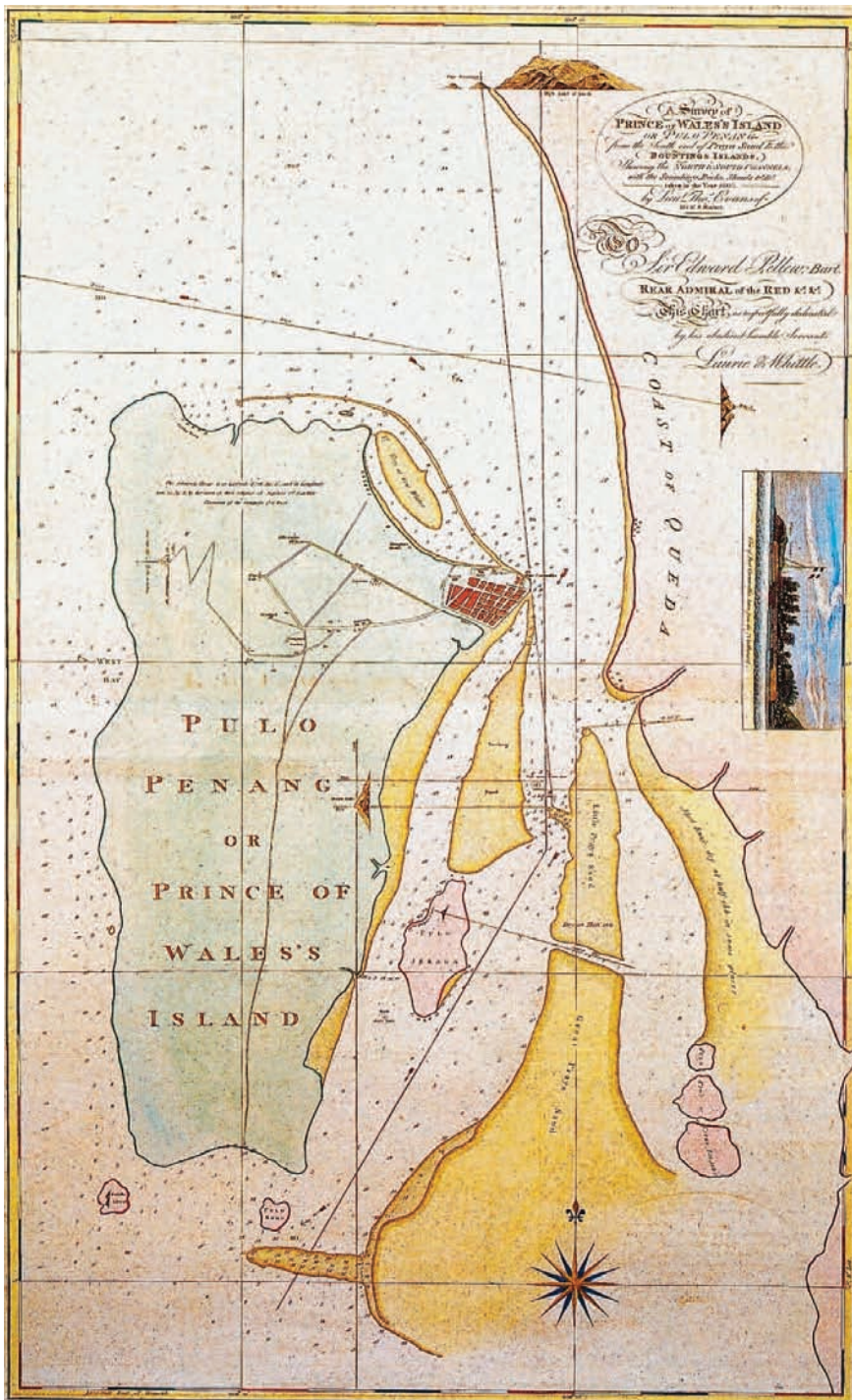
In the sixteenth century the island of Pulo Pinaom (Malay, *pinang*; 'betel-nut' island) or Pulau Kesatu (Malay, 'the first island') was known to Portuguese traders coming from Goa to the East Indies in search of spices. They used the island to replenish their water supply, and the name of the landing site, Batu Ferringhi (Malay: 'European or foreigner's rock'), is currently the name of the most densely occupied coastal area of the northeastern district of Penang (Map 1). The Malay term of reference, Ferringhi, suggests that Malay fishing communities had already existed on this part of the island where the Portuguese landed.² Further south on the northeast coast lies the promontory (*tanjong*) of Tanjong Tokong at the bay (*teluk*) of what was formerly called Teluk Tikus (Malay: 'Rat Bay') by local Malays.³ An island off this cape, Pulau Tikus (Malay: Rat Island), was a popular resting spot for Malay fishermen. This small island contains a *keramat Dato'* (sea spirit shrine) formerly founded and maintained by Malay *pawang* (sea sorcerers). The rise of Islamic revivalism in the 1980s caused much furor over Malay beliefs in sea spirits and the shrine was taken over by Chinese fishermen who use Malay *pawang* to bless and propitiate the shrine spirit. *Pawang* continue to be famed specialists of Tanjong Tokong although their public roles as sea sorcerers have diminished in coastal Malay villages.⁴ The main marketplace of George Town continues to be called Pulau Tikus and, although Pulau Tikus and the area now called Cantonment Road characterized a coastal Malay community more than a century ago, natural reclamation from a retreating shoreline has transformed this into a dense commercial and residential area occupied mostly by Hokkien Chinese. Many of the native

¹ Research on Tanjong Tokong commenced on 11 March 2008 after the general election in Malaysia when Cikgu Salleh Yahya, president of the Tanjong Tokong Residents' Association, approached the writer to assist them to prepare a paper to propose Tanjong Tokong as a National Heritage Zone. They said that earlier efforts to do so had been dampened by the previous State government under Barisan Nasional, since ownership of the land had been transferred to UDA Holdings in 1972. Penang Heritage Trust (PHT) had earlier asked the writer to help resolve the issue of land ownership and loss of Malay heritage in Tanjong Tokong.

² *Ferringhi* means 'Portuguese', derived from the European word 'Franks', meaning Portuguese, while the Arab and Persian variant is Farangi. The rock lies between Batu Ferringhi and Teluk Bahang on the far northern edge of the northeast district of Penang. Stories from Mary Massang-Nieukey described by Sibert (2002: 1) explain Portuguese trading operations at Pulau Tikus with stopovers at Batu Ferringhi: 'Malays used to refer to the Portuguese traders who parked their ships at the rock island for fresh supplies and Pulau Tikus [the island off the coast of Tanjong Tokong/Bunga].'

³ Sibert (2002: 1) suggests that the name *tikus* was given by Malays to refer to the mud ridges at low tide: 'the shoals of sand banks which appeared like the back of rats leading on to what is historically known as Pulau Tikus [an inland Island of Rats?]. Malays agree that the mud ridges looked like the back of rats with long tails and that at low tide they could wade to Pulau Tikus. The island off Tanjong Tokong and the bay was thus named.'

⁴ Karim and Razha (1987). This research on the propitiation of sea spirits was conducted in Teluk Kumbar, but the principle of appeasement of sea spirits is Malay. Increasingly at this time it is being taken over by Chinese fishermen throughout Penang Island. The Chinese continue to use Malay *pawang* privately to conduct these ceremonies.



MAP 1. Pulo Penang or Prince of Wales's island, Laurie & Whittle, 1807.

Pulau Tikus Malay families have since moved to Bagan Jermal and Pantai Molek, in the vicinity of Tanjong Tokong, while the more professionally trained generations of coastal Malays have moved to Kuala Lumpur.

The area now called Tanjong Tokong, sited at Teluk Tikus (Map 1), was pioneered by Kedah Malays who fished and collected jungle products, including mangrove wood, bamboo, *nibong* and coconut fronds for fishing stakes, house construction, walkways and thatching. Kedah Malays in the northeastern district often had permanent abodes along the coasts of Penang Island and constructed huts with *nibong* planking walkways to hoist their boats and dry nets. These Malay fishing villages were characteristic of the *kampung gigi air* ('village at the water's teeth') of Malayan islands before rapid urbanization of the coastal areas at the height of British colonization in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries relocated these settlements away from beach frontage. Penang Island enjoyed a similar maritime economy prior to British rule and attracted Indian Muslim, Acehnese and Arab Peranakan migrants from the surrounding islands previously referred to as the Dutch East Indies during Dutch colonial rule.⁵

More well-to-do Malays in Tanjong Tokong had houses with an *anjung* (balcony), a main room (*ibu rumah*, 'mother' of the house) and high stone stairs (*tangga batu*) to accommodate the rising tides. There were obvious socio-economic differences among Malays in the eighteenth century, depending on their trade and origin, but Kedah Malays and the Jawi Peranakan who traded in rice, poultry, spices, pepper and forest products were generally better off than the fishing communities along Tanjong Tokong and they constructed stone town houses in George Town along Jalan Kelawei, Jalan Kedah, Jalan Muntri, Jalan Hutton and Jalan Seratus.

The Jawi Peranakan, a hybrid community of Malay and Indian Muslim or Arab ancestry, traded at Tanjong Tokong but also owned most of the detached bungalow houses along Jalan Hutton and Jalan Kelawei in George Town (Fig. 1).⁶ Malay village houses were distinctly less solid, except for stone pillars and carved posts surrounding the *anjung* (Fig. 2). The first gathering of Jawi Peranakan traders and civil servants which led to the formation of the Penang Malay Association (Persatuan Melayu Pulau Pinang/Pemenang) on 27 March 1927 met at the house of Haji Mohamad Ariff Tajoodin at Jalan Hatın, close to the Masjid Hatın (Hutton).⁷ He was a Muslim betel-nut trader and a grandson of Bapu Alaidin Meera Hussein Lebai. At the time of this meeting Haji Mohamad Ariff had passed away and most of his property had been auctioned off in 1917.⁸ The Jawi Peranakan house at Jalan Hatın was offered as a meeting place to the Society's founders through Ariff Wan Chik Ariffin, his eldest son, and Mohamed Saidul Ariffin (M.S. Ariffin), who was appointed a committee member of the society.⁹ Persatuan Melayu Pulau Pinang

⁵ Karim (2009).

⁶ Ibid.; Halimah and Zainab (2004).

⁷ Pemenang (1997: 3).

⁸ *Straits Echo*, 7 June 1917.

⁹ Pemenang (1997: 4). The site of the house was transferred to the Education Department which converted it into a residential house for the teachers of Sri Tanjong School (Sekolah Sri Tanjong), Jalan Hutton (Ibid.: 3).



FIG. 1. 90-year-old Jawi Peranakan house at Tanjung Tokong. (Photo: Wazir Jahan Karim.)



FIG. 2. 110-year-old Kedah Malay houses at Jalan Tanjung Tokong Lama, Tanjung Tokong. (Photo: Wazir Jahan Karim.)

founded the Penang State branch of the United Malays National Organisation (UMNO) by spearheading the recruitment of members directly from Penang and enabling them to be registered in Penang in 1946.

Kedah Malays and Relationships with English Pirates and Traders along Tanjong Tokong

Tunku Ismail Jewa and Hooker confirm that Kedah Malays fled to Seberang Perai (Province Wellesley), Penang, during the Siamese invasion of Kedah from 1821 till 1841,¹⁰ but local Malay informants of Tanjong Tokong state that Malay fishermen were already occupying the coastal areas of the island from the early seventeenth to mid-eighteenth century, prior to Siamese intrusions in Kedah.¹¹

English ships followed, using the same approach from the Northern Passage, and landed on the northern shores of Pulo Pinaom after the Portuguese at Batu Ferringhi. The first Englishman to land in Pulo Pinaom in June 1592 was a merchant navigator, Sir James Lancaster (c.1555–1618), who was Queen Elizabeth's special envoy to the East and commanded the first East India Company voyage in 1601.¹² Before 1601, however, he had sailed to the Malay islands from Zanzibar to pioneer trade in the East Indies. He anchored at Penang Island in June 1592 and left in September of the same year, pillaging ships with the help of local Malay pirates. He described the coastal areas as mosquito infested, thick with mangroves and harbouring pirates. This kind of extended stay required fresh food supplies and water, and suggests dependence on local Malay fishermen and pirates harbouring in the area. Dense mangroves in particular made it a suitable island for fishing and a perfect hideout for mercenary pirates referred to as *lanun* or *ilanun*.¹³ These pirates were generally apolitical and sought favours from those from whom they

¹⁰ Ismail (2008); Hooker (2003).

¹¹ Shaikh Ali and M. Mohamed Yusoff, personal communication, June 2009. Captain James Low (1836: 187) stated that at least half the population of 'Keddah' fled to the area of Province Wellesley, now Seberang Perai. The estimate was more than 70,000. Detailed accounts of the massacres of Malays by the Siamese have been related. See Abdullah Zakaria (2006). This account relates brutalities on both sides, but states how British alliances with the Raja of Ligor under Siam caused Kedah to be overrun in November 1821. The British blockade of Kuala Kedah under Captain Hamley of HMS *Wolf* with the assistance of the gunships *Zephyr*, *Amarald*, *Alligator* and *Crocodile* paralysed Kedah's efforts at seeking reinforcement from the Malays of Penang or Perak. Kedah was ruled by Siam from 1821–42.

¹² National Maritime Museum Online Repro ID BHC2828. The EIC spent £40,000 to acquire and fit out the fleet of five vessels, and £6,860 was spent on purchasing English wares for sale or barter and £21,000 for acquiring goods in the Indies. The latter was supplied in *rials* of eight, the most acceptable currency in the Indies. He returned to England in May 1594 to carve a more respectable career as special envoy to the Queen and was knighted in 1603 (National Maritime Museum, London).

¹³ *Lanun* or *ilanun* is the Malay term used to describe a pirate, but *ilanun* also refers to the sea-faring communities of the southern Philippines who now constitute a cultural minority in Sabah. It was common after 1786 to label a Malay renegade as a *lanun* to charge him for sedition. Sultan Abdullah Mukarram Shah III (1778–97) fell back on *lanuns* to seize Penang from Francis Light in 1791. Governor R. Ibbetson's alliance with Ligor specified that any Malay who went to the aid of Kedah in 1821 and who opposed Siam would be a *lanun*

could gain materially. Hence by the late eighteenth century, although Captain Francis Light in 1786 'founded' Penang and made the island a 'safe' sanctuary from pirates and Siamese invaders, Kedah Malays were already occupants of the coastal areas of the island as fishermen, traders and pirates enjoying a symbiotic interdependency in maritime trade and economics.¹⁴ Karim also confirms that the areas were occupied by Malay coastal fishing and farming communities prior to its founding in 1786.¹⁵ Captain James Low estimated that there were about 1,500 Malays before 1800 and by 1826 about 84,500. The surge in population was a result of the Siamese invasion of Kedah by the Raja of Ligor in November 1821.¹⁶

Captain Francis Light, Sultan Muhammad Jiwa and Sultan Abdullah Mukarram Shah

Before the British took control of Penang, the island was under the jurisdiction of the sultanate of Kedah ruled by Sultan Muhammad Jiwa (1710–78), who in 1735 shifted his administrative centre from Kota Bukit Pinang to Kota Setar. This shift of Kedah's administrative centre further south drew attention to the coastal areas of islands south of the mainland of Kedah and across the strait to Penang Island. In 1767 the Burmese attacked the Siamese capital of Ayutthaya and took thousands of Siamese back to Burma. The Siamese recovered from this onslaught and moved their capital to Bangkok in 1780.¹⁷ Again they assumed suzerainty over the Malay states of Nakhon Si Thammarat (Ligor), Patani and Kedah where a flourishing trade in rice, pepper, poultry and tin existed among Malay, Indian, Chinese and European traders. Among these traders were Captain Francis Light and James Scott. The British exchanged opium and Indian textiles for tin, rice, pepper and gold dust. Other traders in tin, rice and pepper were the Danish, French and Swedish. The ruler of Kedah, Sultan Abdullah Mukarram Shah (1778–97), was asked to send to Bangkok the *bunga mas*, a ritual flower of gold and silver which symbolized the subservience of Kedah to the Siamese.

Earlier, in the 1770s a royal succession dispute had forced his father Sultan Muhammad Jiwa to seek support from the East India Company (EIC) against incursions from the Siamese and the Bugis from Selangor and Riau who had raided Kota Setar, razing it to the ground. In 1772 he had asked for a British alliance which would give the EIC full control over Kuala Kedah and a monopoly of Kedah's exports of tin, pepper and elephant ivory in return for protection from the EIC

(Abdullah Zakaria, 2006). European piracy—as illustrated by James Lancaster's activities in Penang Island before he became special envoy to the Queen—was dependent on local piracy. Land bases were needed to establish look-out posts for approaching ships. In 1588 Sir James Lancaster had served under Sir Francis Drake, who also began his career as a pirate.

¹⁴ Piracy was a source of economic livelihood at sea while on land pirates led normal lives as villagers. They raised families and were integrated with Malay village life. They were useful informants for logistics, markets for local goods, replenishment for water and supplies and sources of cheap labour, including slaves.

¹⁵ Karim (2009).

¹⁶ Low (1836: 124).

¹⁷ Hooker (2003).

warships and opium purchased at a fixed price. However, assistance was never given and Sultan Muhammad Jiwa revoked this offer. When Sultan Abdullah assumed the throne in 1778, he in turn approached the EIC to offer them the lease of the island in return for EIC's assistance should Kedah be attacked. Captain Francis Light was the intermediary for this alliance.

Captain Francis Light and the Rise of the Catholic Mission on Penang Island

Captain Francis Light had mastered the colloquial Malay and Thai languages fluently and by then had befriended a number of Thai Portuguese settlers and Portuguese Catholic missionaries as well as local Malay, Indian Muslim and Jawi Peranakan traders. At Phuket, formerly Junk Ceylon (a mispronunciation of the Malay Ujong Salang), an island under the rule of Kedah, Captain Francis Light had met Martina Rozells, a woman of Thai-Portuguese Catholic descent with connections to the Kedah court.¹⁸ Portuguese missionaries had also established a Jesuit colony in Tanjong Salang, but Catholic settlers, traders and missionaries fled to Kuala Kedah (Port Queda) when the Siamese overran Tanjong Salang in 1778 and Phya Tak, the Siamese ruler, ordered the massacre of all Christians. Sibert mentions Protestant persecution of Portuguese Catholics (Malayan, Thai, and Eurasian) by the Dutch at the height of Dutch world supremacy (1641–1795).¹⁹ Many Catholics sought refuge in English trading centres at Kuala Kedah, Sumatra, Macassar, Goa and other Portuguese Jesuit centres such as Junk Ceylon, Chanthaburi, Hon Dat, Pondicherry and Malacca (1765–82).

The Burmese invasion of Ayutthaya in 1765 also forced the relocation of the French Catholic seminary to Chanthaburi and later to Hon Dat in Cambodia (now part of Vietnam) under the leadership of Pigneau de Behaine. This mission was also forced to leave Chanthaburi and flee to Pondicherry, India, in 1770. A seminary was established at Virampatnam, but closed in 1782 because it was too far from its seminarians in the Indo-Chinese region.

In 1781 two French missionaries—Bishop Coude and Father Arnaud-Antoine Garnault—reached Port Queda and asked Sultan Abdullah for a place to build a Catholic church. Sultan Abdullah had asked Captain Francis Light to protect Kedah against the Siamese and believed that goodwill to the Catholic community would help to seal this alliance. He gave them a house in Kota Setar where they were joined by another 80 Catholics of Portuguese descent from Kuala Kedah. Some had come from southern Siam, while others had left Malacca after the Dutch conquest in 1641.

However, this community did not remain in Kedah for long. Captain Francis Light brought them with him to Penang when he took possession of it on 11 August 1786.²⁰ Four days later he sent his ship *Speedwell* to collect the rest of the commu-

¹⁸ Junk Ceylon or Ujong Salang, now called Phuket, is situated close to the west coast of Thailand and about 200 miles north of Penang. It had large deposits of tin ore and the Portuguese-Thai community traded in tin and elephants.

¹⁹ Sibert (2002).

²⁰ Ibid.

nity, who arrived on the eve of the Feast of Assumption; the first church, Church of the Assumption, was built on Church Street. Garnault was made a bishop and his presbytery was located on the adjacent street, which became known as Bishop Street.²¹ Soon after Captain Francis Light took control of the island, several parcels of land were given to the mission to extend their parish from Pulau Tikus along the northern coast covering Tanjong Bungah, Tanjong Tokong, Batu Ferringhi and Teluk Bahang.

In 1808, prompted by Captain Francis Light's favours to the Portuguese Catholic seminary and the French seminary of Missions Etrangères de Paris (MEP) (Catholic Mission Society, Paris) under Bishop Garnault, Father Superior Lolivier arrived with five seminarians from Macau and the seminary was revived the following year in Pulau Tikus with twenty seminarians from China.²² Lolivier became the first Rector of the College General from 1808 till 1833. Hence, the College General Seminary which was first established in Ayutthaya in 1665 to train priests for the Catholic Church in Asia was re-established at Gurney Drive opposite the Eurasian Portuguese community at Kelawei after 1786. Around 1810 a holiday-cum-retreat house named Mariophile was built on the peak of Mount Meriam and the cannon signifying British occupancy of the island was relocated at Mariophile.

The Malayan/Thai Portuguese Catholics who had followed Captain Francis Light to Penang were now under a 'foreign' French Catholic mission, under the 'founding parishioners' of the revived Catholic Church and faith. Within two years after the 'founding' of Penang, the Eurasian Catholic community numbered 200, living mostly at Kampung Serani, at Argus Lane, Love Lane and Muntri Street. They were obviously a favoured community and although the Portuguese Catholics lost control over the parish when the French mission, Missions Etrangères de Paris, assumed control, the Catholic Church had secured sizeable parcels of valuable land on the peaks of the hills covering the northeast coast, including Cannon (Meriam) Hill where the original village of Kampung Tikus, now known as Kampung Tanjong Tokong, was located.²³ These land titles were given to Catholic seminaries some time after 1786 although Malay local history stated that the hill was first occupied as a military post after the cannon, dated 1785, was placed there. They were chased down Cannon Hill about a year before the official 'founding' of Penang and the hill was taken over by the mission.

²¹ In 1857 the Church of the Assumption moved to its present site on Farquhar Street which was previously occupied by the convent orphanage. The congregation could have moved in 1802 and the building only erected in 1857.

²² Woon (2008).

²³ Villagers living on the peak made a living from trade and missionary work, while those living at the edge of the water were mostly fishermen. The Malay fort on the peak suggests that piracy was absorbed into the livelihoods of traders and fishermen. Villagers state that the area changed its name to 'Tokong' only after the British changed the naming system of locations and roads in the eighteenth century.

Bapu Alaidin Meera Hussein Lebai and Captain Francis Light at Tanjong Tokong

One of the Indian Muslim traders who befriended Captain Francis Light along the coastal trading posts of Kuala Kedah was Bapu Alaidin, a trader in cattle, buffalo, betel-nut, fish and mangrove wood.²⁴ Bapu Alaidin followed Captain Francis Light to Penang, where he took him to the strategic site on the hill of Teluk, Bukit Tikus, now named Bukit Meriam, overlooking Fort Cornwallis or Tanjong Penaga. On this hill was located a Malay and Jawi Peranakan village with a sprawling cemetery.



FIG. 3. The *penaga laut* (*Calophyllum inophyllum*), the plant from which Tanjong Penaga got its name.

The Jawi Peranakan were second-generation urban Malays of Indian Muslim and Malay parentage. From this hill viewers obtained a clear view of Tanjong Penaga, named after the tree *penaga laut* (*Calophyllum inophyllum*, Fig. 3). This became a suitable military post to alert Captain Francis Light about hostile pirate ships entering the Northeast Passage.

According to one of his descendants, Hassan Haji Ariffin,²⁵ Bapu Alaidin is believed to have been a Muslim Malayali who came from the Malabar coast in India. His trading activities extended from southern Thailand to Kedah, northern Perak and Balik Pulau, Penang. Trade was usually conducted from the rivers where small boats (*prahu*) and bigger boats with sails (*tongkang*) would collect at the banks to receive these animal and mangrove products in exchange for rice, fish, Indian textiles and, often, workers (*kuli*; probably bonded servants and slaves). Hassan wrote in his family genealogy that Bapu Alaidin had taken Francis Light to view the promontory of Tanjong Penaga from the fort (*kubu*) on the peak of Cannon Hill

²⁴ Hassan (2005); Khoo (2009). Khoo referred to Bapu Alaidin as 'Alauddin' although the printed family genealogy spells it as Alaidin. It also mentions that he was friendly with the sultan, but better acquainted with Captain Francis Light. According to Tanjong Tokong elders he was not 'Chula', but Malabari, '*macam Tun Dr Mahathir*' (like Tun Dr Mahathir). This is based on past narratives of elders like Tok Ali Salleh and Haji Aziz, remembered by the elders today.

²⁵ Hassan (2005).

where he had settled with other Indian Muslims and Kedah Malays.²⁶ The Malay *kubu* functions as a hideout and look-out post in the eventuality that a village is attacked, and in Tanjong Tokong, the close association of Malay fishermen with piracy suggested that such attacks were likely. The look-out post at the peak of Teluk Tikus gave a clear view of ships approaching the island. Kampung Tanjong Tokong was then a cluster of Malay fishing villages sited on a bay overlooking Tanjong Penaga²⁷ and was a thriving centre for fresh and dried fish, mussels and clams (Figs. 4 & 5). According to local elders' descendants of pioneer residents in



FIG. 4. A rickshaw in Tanjong Tokong, early 1900s. (Photo courtesy of Cikgu Salleh Yahya, 2004).

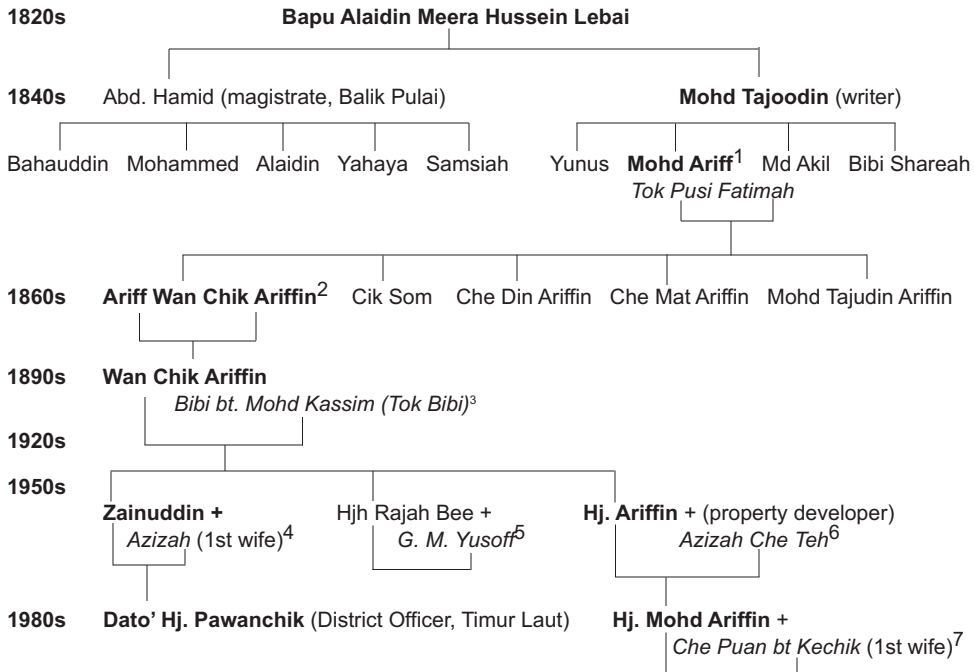


Fig. 5. 'At the Edge of the Water's Teeth', Tanjong Tokong, 1913. (Photo courtesy of Cikgu Salleh Yahya.)

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Penaga refers to the *penaga laut* plant (*Calophyllum inophyllum*), found at the site of what is now Fort Cornwallis. The *Newsletter of Friends of the Penang Botanic Gardens* (No. 14 (Sept. 2008): 1) quotes C. V. Cowan, a botanist who in 1950 wrote: 'When George Town on Penang Island was laid out, groves were planted at a place called Tanjong Penaga, which presented a spectacle for many years.'

Kinship Chart Bapu Alaidin Meera Hussein Lebai



- ¹ The wife of Mohamed Ariff, Nyonya Tok Pusi Fatimah was a Eurasian (Thai Portuguese) of the same hybrid ethnicity as Martina Rozells. She was a young nun at the seminary on Mount Meriam and he persuaded her to run away with him. It is not known where they were married, but the Muslim ceremony most likely took place in Kedah or southern Thailand. Wan Chik Ariffin was her first-born son.
- ² Wan Chik Ariffin had eight wives. He built a grand Jawi Peranakan stone house at Hatın Lane which is now the New Savoy Hotel. Wan Chik's daughter Hajah Raja Bee married G. M. Yusoff, who was president (*yang di pertua*) of Persatuan Melayu Pulau Pinang (Pemenang) in 1961–2. G. M. Yusoff was a court interpreter who lived at 38 Chow Thye Road. He was an ordinary committee member in 1949. In 1951 he was vice-president of Pemenang; by then he had moved to 6 Tavoy Road. He retired in 1964 as a Public Trustee and JP.
- ³ The other wives, in order of marriage: Mak Bee (1 son, Baharuddin), Tengku Fatimah bt. Tengku Mat (2 children, Wan Sah and Wan Nah), Che Su bt. Mohd Saad (2 children, Habib and Wan Chik), Chombee (1 son, Che Mat Din), Che Bee (childless), Kelsom Bee (childless), Che Jan (childless).
- ⁴ The other wives, in order of marriage: Halimah Che Teh (5 children, Mohd Shariff, Ismail, Khatijah, Faridah Hanum, Yusoff Z. Ariffin), Che Siah Che Teh (younger sister of Halimah; 8 children, Jaharah, Zainol, Zakaria (d. 5.5.1985, 41 years), Abdullah Sani, Mohd Hussein (d. 14.5.1998, 49 years), Kalsom, Mariam (d. 6.1.2005, 51 years), Mohd Razali, Mohd. Annuar, Hasanah).
- ⁵ Rajah Bee had 14 children: Latifah Hanoum, Ahmad Tajuddin, Ahmad Kamaluddin, Ahmad Khairuddin, Rogayah Hanoum, Naemah Hanoum, Ahmad Jalaluddin, Ahmad Wahiduddin, Fatimah Hanoum, Fadhillah Hanoum, Ahmad Noordin, Ahmad Jamaludin, Ahmad Salahuddin and Ahmad Zainuddin.
- ⁶ Azizah Che Teh had 13 children: Mohamed Ariff, Mohd Ibrahim, Fathimah, Ahmad, Pawanchik, Mohamed Othman (d. 24.12.2002), Aisha, Siti Rahmah, Zakiah (d. 15.1.1990), Md Hassan, Mohd Ali, Md Omar, Mohd Noor. Hj. Ariffin (d. 2.11.1983) and his wife Azizah (d. 13.4.1988).
- ⁷ Hj. Mohamed Ariff had 3 wives: Che Puan bt. Kechik (7 children: Sharipah, Zarinah, Zuraidah, Zulkifli, Mohd. Rosli, Zaimun, Azreen), Farida (3 children, Azreena, Asma Hanum. Asma), Hanim), Ishah Bee (2 step-children, Emilia and Erwan). Hassan, who collected the family genealogy (2005), is the tenth child of Hj. Ariffin.

Tanjong Tokong, fishermen and pirates lived together and developed a congenial trading relationship in fishing and mangrove products. Tanjong Tokong elders describe these Kedah Malay families with inclinations to piracy as *kahaq*, meaning 'rough, brave, strong, etc.'.

Malays Chased from the Peak of Mount Meriam (Cannon Hill) in 1785

Villagers collectively recall past narratives of village elders, including prominent leaders such as Tok Ali bin Salleh, Haji Aziz, Pak Pin Chanai and Pak Kancil, that the villagers were dislocated from the cemetery at the hill peak when they moved downhill. The cemetery was located in what was previously referred to as Bukit Tikus. Malay Muslim villages were always located next to cemeteries, and the reason why the existing Muslim cemetery is on the peak of Cannon Hill while the village is now on lower hill slopes or roadside of Jalan Tanjong Tokong Lama (the original shoreline of Teluk Tikus) is because they were chased downhill (*hambat turun*). They were assumed to be in cohort with pirates and, realizing this, Francis Light secured this hill to maximize security for British and other European ships after they had assumed control of the island.

In Kedah and Perlis, the early system of land tenure was influenced more by the ancient Thai law of property than by Malay customary law. From an early date, *surat putus* ('document of title') was issued by the Kedah sultans. Originally, a *surat putus* was a written decision of a *hakim* (judge of the state) following an ownership dispute, countersigned by the sultan. The documents recorded the evidence submitted and the decision made, together with the dimensions and area of the land concerned and a rough description of its locality and abuttal. The earliest survey of property lots started around 1912 in Kedah. On Penang, Captain Francis Light allowed anyone, migrant or native, to register land in their name when they had cleared forests or swamps, but Malays lost out in this deal because they assumed that they had customary rights over the land they had cleared.²⁸ The *surat putus* did not apply in Penang over the early and late nineteenth century, and Malays were marginalized in the movement towards acquisition of new capital or property due to poor schooling, legal illiteracy and lack of formal representation by native leaders; they were soon outnumbered by European, Chinese, Indian Muslim and Chettiar land owners.²⁹ The following description of Malay marginality in early Penang is provided by Ariffin Omar.

The lot of the Malays during the first 50 years of British control was anything but rosy. Unlike the Chinese which came with their various clan associa-

²⁸ In Kedah, only Malays could be issued the *surat putus*. Penang had no Malay land reserves.

²⁹ Early Muslim landowners in the Straits Settlements of Penang, Singapore and Malacca in the nineteenth century were mostly Arab, Indian Muslim or Sumatran (*see* Karim 2008a, 2009). Ariffin (2002) comments on James Low's negative views of the Jawi Peranakan as grasping money lenders, but the foundations of Malay landownership on Penang island today were laid by the Jawi Peranakan community who are now categorized and referred to as 'Malay'. Endowed land (*tanah waqf*) in Penang's inner city was mostly from Indian Muslim and Jawi Peranakan families.

tions, the Malay were left to fend for themselves. They were exposed to the full force of capitalism and being unprepared for this found that they had no value or worth in a social and economic system where profits were the criteria for evaluating the contribution and worth of any ethnic group. Thus Malays who found themselves living in the British settlement of Penang had to face the grim reality that they were being steadily displaced and reduced to being an insignificant community that only existed to provide cheap labour and products for the other communities that had successfully entrenched.³⁰

A century later, Malay landownership on the island was almost negligible when the Torrens system was introduced in 1889, requiring all land owners to have title deeds, registered and issued by the state.³¹

Tanjong Tokong Settlement Becomes Bukit Paderi

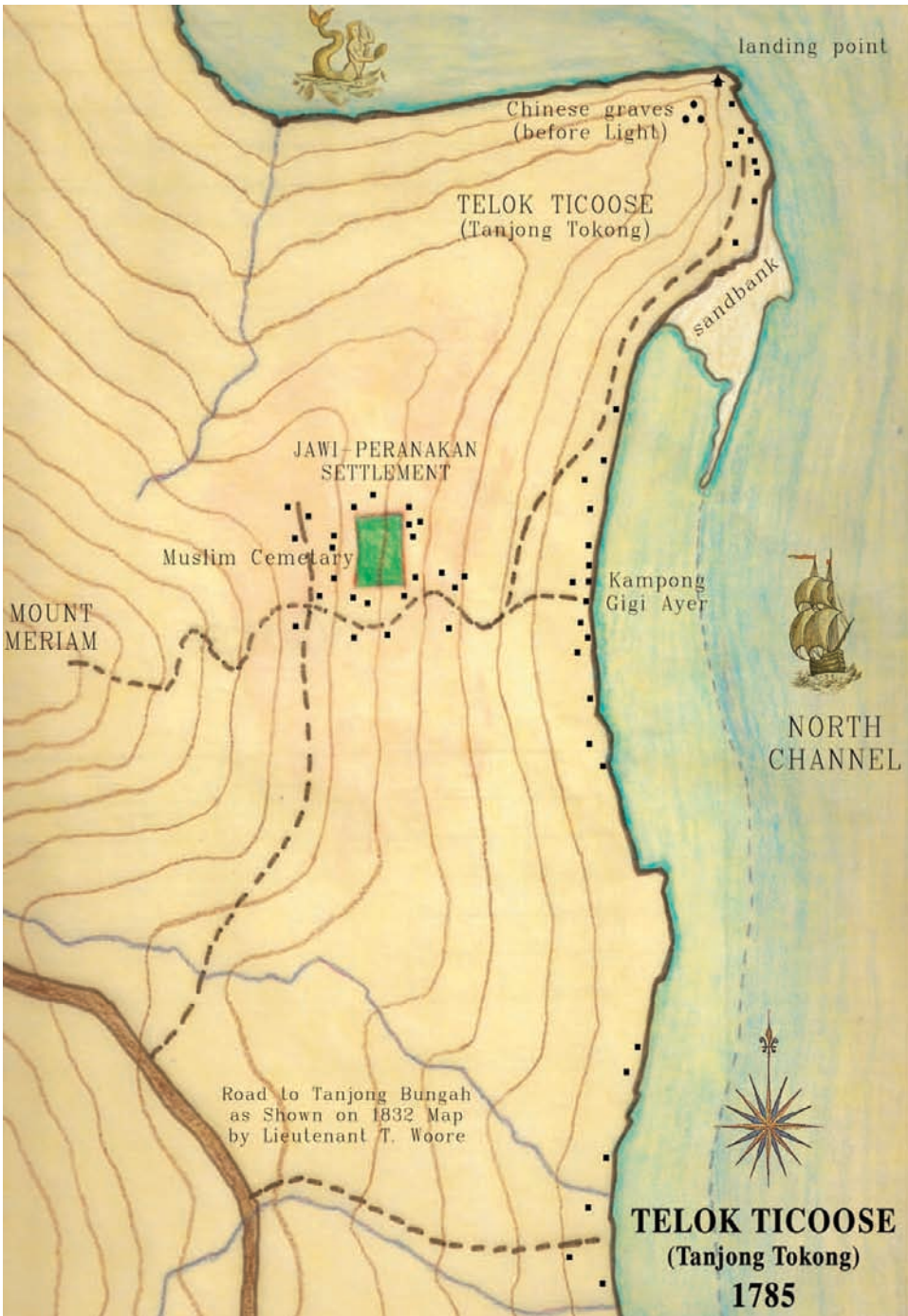
When Malay lands on the major parts of Mount Meriam (Cannon Hill) were transferred to the College General in the early 1800s, the hill came to be referred to as Bukit Paderi (Priest Hill). However, the name Bukit (Mount) Meriam was officially retained by the seminary and later by the Mount Miriam Hospital on Priest Hill. Hence European ownership of the hill was secured as early as 1804. The military post, however, preceded Fort Cornwallis in 1786, while the subsequent brick construction of Fort Cornwallis in 1804 coincided with the building of the retreat on Mount Meriam, which also had a tax collection office to enable priests to collect taxes from the Malay villagers who stayed in this area.³² By then the land system was based on registration after clearing and native status and usufruct rights had been lost.³³ Captain Francis Light did not create Malay land reserves, nor did the British land administrators after him propose Malay land reserves on Penang Island despite the dire loss of ownership of Malay land. The early Tanjong Tokong residents here recall a curse on Christian priests who used to plague them for money in lieu of the taxes they were supposed to pay as tenants 'occupying' Christian lands. This curse, according to local elders, is peculiar to this area in the original village on the hillside and is not known by other Malays on the island. It is *konkek*

³⁰ Ariffin (2002: 7–8).

³¹ The English laws of real property and conveyance continued to be used until they were repealed and substituted with a system of registration of titles under the present National Land Code (Penang and Malacca Titles) Act, 1963. The Torrens system introduced in Adelaide in 1885 did not recognize customary or native land law and unregistered lands were subject to disputes.

³² This site of this office was close to the cemetery, but there are no traces of it today. The area is now covered with bungalow houses.

³³ While the Tanjong Tokong Malays on the hill claim that they had cleared the forests on Mount Meriam, it was not recognized to be theirs and, with a more powerful counter-proposal from the French Roman Catholic mission, Missions Etrangères de Paris (Catholic Mission Society Paris), any Malay claims would have been strongly rejected. Light favoured the missions and had hardly any dealings with local Malays. The spelling of 'Miriam' by the mission and mission hospital conforms to the Jewish name of 'Mary', mother of Jesus.



MAP 2. Map of Telok Ticoose (Tanjong Tokong) 1785, showing a Jawi-Peranakan settlement on the hill. (Courtesy of Laurence Loh. Research on mapping by Wazir Jahan Karim: 'Dossier on the Conservation of Tanjong Tokong', March 2010.)

seghari (*serani*) or 'fornicate the European', shouted out loud with all the energy a person can muster. This curse is supposed to express the derogatory position of the European endowed with such an apparatus.

The cemetery, however, was not destroyed. When the mission and military occupied this hill where the original village of Tanjong Tokong was located and had chased the villagers from the hilltop to the edge of the hill, the village on the hilltop merged with the Malay fishermen who had huts at the water's edge on what was previously called Kampung Telaga Air (Map 2). The early families of traders, who were mostly Indian Muslims, secured their titles, but families of pirates and fishermen lost out in this venture. Without their 'fort' (*kubu*) on the hill they were reduced to petty mercenaries and poor fishermen.

Cikgu Salleh Yahya, a descendant from maternal kin of Bapu Alaidin's family, also agreed that Bapu Alaidin Meera Hussein Lebai was responsible for leading scouts of Captain Francis Light up the hill to the village to show him the look-out stations of Malay pirates. He also showed him the strategic location of Tanjong Tokong vis-à-vis Tanjong Penaga, where Fort Cornwallis is located, to show the clear visibility of ships approaching Tanjong Penaga from the peak of Cannon Hill. For this reason, Captain Francis Light placed a cannon on the peak of the hill a year before declaring Penang the sovereign territory of the British Empire. The cannon, now located on the site of the present Mt Miriam Cancer Hospital, is dated 1785, a year before the official 'founding of Penang' (Fig. 6). Hassan Hj. Ariffin's accounts of his ancestor showed him appointed as *penghulu* or head (*ketua kaum*) of the Malay community at Balik Pulau where he had considerable pieces of land. The date of the visit to the peak of Tanjong Tikus is put at 1786 + or -, but it is possible, based on the engraving of the date on the cannon, that this was before 1786.³⁴

In return for taking Captain Francis Light to Tanjong Tokong, Bapu Alaidin asked Light for parcels of land at Tanjong Tikus.³⁵ Bapu Alaidin did not help local Malays secure land titles despite his close connections to Francis Light, nor did he engage in philanthropy despite accumulating immense wealth in Kedah, Perak and Penang.³⁶ Families who later procured titles were descended from Bapu Alaidin Meera Hussein Lebai, from Kuala Sungei. Tajuddin Ariff and Wan Chik Ariff inherited much of Bapu Alaidin's wealth. They sold a portion of their land to the Hai Zhu Tua Phek Kong in 1964. It is believed that Bapu Alaidin cleared the land on the peak of Tanjong Tokong for the cemetery, and this remains the only parcel of Malay

³⁴ The subsequent naming of the hill as Bukit Meriam by the Malays refers to the presence of the cannon rather than the renaming of the hill after 'Mary' (Meriam in Malay/Arabic), the mother of Christ, as sometimes suggested. The name of the cancer hospital established in 1976 by the Sisters of Franciscan Missionaries of the Divine Motherhood (FMDM) also takes its name from 'Cannon Hill' ('Bukit Meriam').

³⁵ A small lot of his original land next to the Masjid Tuan Guru at Jalan Tanjong Tokong Lama is still in his family name. The site of the *masjid* was bought from his family for the modern construction of the mosque and compound. This is now registered as *waqf* (endowed) land. His lands on the hill slope were sold to the Tua Phek Kong in 1964.

³⁶ He had wide trading networks in Balik Pulau and was made *ketua kaum* for Balik Pulau by Captain Francis Light. He could have engaged in philanthropic activities in Balik Pulau, but villagers are unaware of his activities there.



FIG. 6. The cannon dated 1785 at the College General, Mount Meriam, Tanjong Bungah, 2004. (Photos courtesy of Cikgu Yahya Salleh.)

Muslim endowed land (*waqf*) on the peak of Mount Meriam.³⁷ Since this pre-colonial settlement was on the water's edge, the Malays made no attempt to procure titles. They had assumed the shore and its resources were theirs.

Bapu Alaidin's Descendants at Tanjong Tokong

Bapu Alaidin had two sons, Haji Mohamed Tajoodin and Abdul Hamid.³⁸ Haji Mohamed Tajoodin in turn had four children; among them was Mohamed Ariff Haji @ Mohd. Aris. Mohamed Ariff had five children: Wan Chik Ariffin, Cik Som, Che Din Ariffin, Che Mat Ariffin and Hj. Mohd Tajudin Ariffin.³⁹ After Mohamed Ariff's death, the *Straits Echo* (7.6.1917) stated that 72 lots of his property were auctioned off in Penang, Seberang Perai and Kedah. They all lived on Hutton Road and built houses there to expand their commercial activity in George Town. He also ran a shop selling Islamic scriptures at 111 Lebu Pitt, now Jalan Masjid

³⁷ Elders in Tanjong Tokong agree that the land for the burial site was opened by Bapu Alaidin and other pioneers, stating that Muslims would never bury their dead on Christian lands. The land must be free of encumbrances; hence it was endowed, not 'occupied' illegally by the Malays. The cemetery is now under the jurisdiction of the Majlis Agama Islam Pulau Pinang (MAIPP).

³⁸ According to Hassan Hj. Ariffin's family notes and reconstructed genealogy of Bapu Alaidin, Abdul Hamid bin Bapu Alaidin became a magistrate at Balik Pulau, while Mohd. Tajoodin became an author and writer of Malay text books for secondary schools (Hassan 2005: 1).

³⁹ Hassan (2005: 3).

Kapitan Keling, and later at 46 and 48 Jalan Dato Keramat, where he rented out tables and chairs for weddings and feasts.

The eldest son of Mohd Ariff, Wan Chik Ariffin, endowed a portion of his inheritance for the building of a mosque named Masjid Ariff (formerly named Masjid Wan Chik Ariffin) and another for the construction of a road named Ariffin Road and Ariffin Court. He also donated a silver cup for football to the Moham-madan Football Association (Persatuan Bola Sepak Mohammadan), the largest-ever cup commissioned in England costing then RM100,000 and now kept by the Persatuan Bola Sepak Melayu Pulau Pinang (Malay Football Association). He was also the president of the Association and patron of the Red Cross Society.⁴⁰ The children of Wan Chik Ariffin were Zainuddin, Hjh. Rajah and Hj. Ariffin. One son of Haji Ariffin and grandson of Wan Chik Ariffin is Hj. Md Hassan, who compiled this family genealogy. The family seems to have retained Ariffin as a family name to denote a patrilineage, according to southern Indian kinship system, regardless of their Muslim faith where lineage names are usually dropped. Most of the Ariffins married their first and second cousins, while those who married local Kedah Malay and Jawi Peranakan women of Tanjong Tokong spoke Malay and had dropped Malayalam in the generation of Wan Chik. According to the genealogy compiled by Hassan Hj. Ariffin, Bapu Alaidin Meera Hussein Lebai's family extends to eight or more generations in Tanjong Tokong.

Penang, a Colony of the British Empire

It should be noted that a formal lease was not signed on 11 August 1786; the British were only given permission by Sultan Abdullah to occupy Penang temporarily until a formal agreement was made. However, Francis Light took possession of the island on 11 August 1786 in the name of King George III. This was 'an action which was legally in breach of international law'.⁴¹ Light built a fort named Fort Cornwallis after the Governor-General of Bengal. This fort was first constructed from *nibong*, and its purpose was to ward off hostile Kedah Malays and pirates loyal to the sultan. The use of pirates as informants and fighters was common and, as explained earlier, British navigators and traders like Sir James Lancaster had also hired pirates to provide information on logistics and hostile ships.

In May 1787 the Siamese asked Sultan Abdullah to send 200 *perahu*, arms, ammunition and food for 10,000 soldiers fighting the Burmese in Bangkok, but this request was beyond anything he could comply with and he sent, instead, the *bunga mas*. In 1791, angry over lack of support from the EIC, Sultan Abdullah hired Ilanun pirates to raid Tanjong Penaga, now renamed George Town, to dislodge the EIC from Penang Island, but the Malays were defeated and a treaty of peace and friendship was signed; Penang was leased for as long as it wished, for 6,000 Spanish dollars.⁴² In 1800 the area known as Province Wellesley, now Seberang Perai, was also leased for 4,000 Spanish dollars, the total sum being 10,000 Spanish dollars per

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Hooker (2003: 92).

⁴² Hooker (2003).

annum, equivalent to £1,500. By 1787, a year after the 'founding' of Penang, 60 Chinese families moved into Tanjong Penaga to trade.⁴³ They were only preceded by Malabar and Tamil Muslim traders from South Indian and Kedah Malays who brought in their small boats, rice, tin, spices, pepper, gold dust, ivory, ebony and rattan.⁴⁴ The Chinese and Indians set up a small bazaar where jungle and mangrove products formed the bulk of local commercial merchandise while opium, gunpowder and Indian textiles comprised the products of the Europeans, Indians and Chinese. Kedah Malays, followed by Sumatran Malays, continued to trade in Penang in the area marked 'Malay Town' in Popham's map of 1798.⁴⁵ Many more settled in Tanjong Tokong, Tanjong Bungah and Balik Pulau, developing a mixed economy based on fishing and wet-rice cultivation.

It should be noted that, unlike the conquest of Malacca by the Portuguese in 1511 and the Dutch in 1641, Penang was not ceded to the British. Historians agree that the Sultan of Kedah did not cede—but only agreed to lease—Penang to the EIC and that the EIC did not make a direct promise of protection to Kedah although the statement in the temporary lease that 'Kedah and Penang shall be as one country' was strong enough for the sultan to assume that Kedah would be given assistance should there be Siamese intrusions.⁴⁶ Sultan Abdullah died in 1798 and in 1802 Sultan Ahmad Tajuddin Halim Shah went to Bangkok to be installed as ruler by King Rama III of Siam. Sultan Ahmad Tajuddin was in contact with the Burmese and this led Rama III to suspect his loyalty. The British signed the Burney Treaty with Siam in 1826; this agreed on trade with Bangkok, provided the British recognized Thai suzerainty over Kedah. Hence, when the Siamese attacked Kedah in 1821, the British did not provide military assistance to Kedah, which resulted in tens of thousands of Kedah Malays seeking shelter in Penang. Hooker states that the numbers ran to 70,000 and more, with about 20,000 people left in the state of Kedah. Sultan Ahmad Tajuddin lived in exile in Penang for 20 years and when he returned in 1842 had permanently lost the provinces of Setul, Langu and Perlis.

Muslim Missionaries after Babu Alaidin in Tanjong Tokong

Oral historians in Tanjong Tokong said that the village also became well known for its religious activities when a Muslim missionary, Tok Guru Haji Hassan Fusanah, migrated to Penang in the mid-eighteenth century, around 1750.⁴⁷ He was a religious teacher of Arab Peranakan origin from Madura. He was also believed to have contributed to activities of the Muslim congregation at the Batu Uban mosque, an area earlier founded by a pioneer Dato' Nahkoda Intan Mohd Salleh around the 1740s. The earliest landing sites of Hadramis and Acehnese were at Batu Uban, another area undergoing rapid urban development. In this sense, the history of Batu Uban is linked to Tanjong Tokong. It is believed that these Muslim mission-

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Popham (1798).

⁴⁶ Abdullah Zakaria (2006); Bonney (1974); Hooker (2003).

⁴⁷ Cikgu Salleh Yahya, Shaikh Ali and M. Mohamed Yusoff, personal communication, Dec. 2008.

aries settled in Malay coastal villages and married Malay women, eventually gaining access to land and other resources. Around the same time, Gelugor, the area adjoining Batu Uban where Universiti Sains Malaysia is now located, was founded by Dato' Jannatul with the permission and blessings of Sultan Muhammad Jiwa. The gravestone of Dato' Jannatul is located outside the Minden gates of Universiti Sains Malaysia. The tombstone of Tok Guru Hassan is sited at the Tanjong Tokong cemetery on the peak of Bukit Meriam (Cannon Hill).⁴⁸ Masjid Tuan Guru, the first mosque at Tanjong Tokong, was founded by Tuan Guru Hj. Hassan Fusanah.⁴⁹

All along the northeast and southeast coasts, Malay fishing villages known as *kampung gigi air* were the landmarks of an island populated before the official founding by Captain Francis Light in 1786. There were already Arab Peranakan and Indian Muslim missionaries and traders who had entered the island via Batu Uban for religious and trading activities. These Muslim migrants were readily accepted into Malay communities and their knowledge of Islam, Arabic and other 'worldly' languages captured the interest of the local Malays schooled only in oral Malay and the local Arabic script of Jawi (Malay written in Arabic characters).⁵⁰ These Muslim migrants married Malay women for ready acceptance and '*loci standi*'. It should be noted that the Malays who offered their women to Indian Muslim and Arab Peranakan Muslims who had earlier settled in the islands of the Dutch East Indies and subsequently moved to the coastal areas of Penang became the first Jawi Peranakan families of Tanjong Tokong and were the first landowners of these Malay-occupied areas. They were literate and aware of the emergence of land ownership through titles, issued by the British after they occupied Penang Island in 1786.

Another family of prominence in this village was that of Tok Ali bin Salleh, who originated from Kedah and died at the age of 103 around 1890.⁵¹ His son Lebai Hassan had two children, Hussein and Che Ani. Among their children are Syukri, Abdul Rahim and Illias; the children of the latter, who still live in Tanjong Tokong, comprise the sixth-generation Malays of this area. This line of Tok Ali, from Lebai Hassan, descends to Hussein, Syukri, Mohd Fahmi, Lebai Dan, Pak Dali, and Che Puteh, Salmah and Ghazali.

Other pioneer families who remain in Tanjong Tokong are the those of Haji Aziz, Pak Pin Chanai, (*penghulu*) Pak Kancil, Pak Khamis, Pak Haji Mohd Noh (*penghulu* and *jermal* trap owner), Tok Mat Diah, Lebai Dan, Bahauddin, Mastan Pak Abbas, Pak Yit, Pak Seman Kelabu, Haji Hassan Fusanah, Pak Niana, Pak Ajan, Mak Hatiah, Mastan, Romsa, Nayan Saidan, Pak Nagor, Pak Sheikh Hassan and Hassan Kassim. In 1893 Karwa Nina Mohamed of Nina Mohamed and Sons financed the Masjid Karwa at Tanjong Tokong (Fig. 7). He was a wealthy money-changer and importer who lived at Muntri Street and set up a money-changer's shop outside the Netherlands Trading Society in Beach Street.⁵²

⁴⁸ Tan Sri Datuk Elyas Omar, a former Mayor of Kuala Lumpur, is descended from the family of Hj. Hassan Fusanah.

⁴⁹ Ahmad (2012).

⁵⁰ Karim (2009).

⁵¹ Cikgu Salleh Yahya, personal communication, 2010.

⁵² Khoo and Wade (2004).



FIG. 7. Plaque at Masjid Karwa, Tanjung Tokong. (Photo: Wazir Jahan Karim, 2009)

From the names, it can be established that the Tanjung Tokong pioneer families of Indian Muslim and Malabar origin (Pin Chanai, Niana, Masan, Nagor Sheikh Hassan) assimilated with Kedah Malays to develop the hybrid Jawi Peranakan. Their strong influence in local politics led the British to acknowledge Jawi Peranakan as an ethnic identity in Penang in the early twentieth century.⁵³ These families only communicated in Malay, and their socio-economic advantage led them to be professionally trained as teachers, journalists and civil servants. Among the influential *imam* of Masjid Tuan Guru and Masjid Karwa were Haji Mahmud, Haji Wahab, Lebai Dan and Tok Haji Mat Diah, all Kedah Malays.

Around 1820 and pushed by rapid urban development of the eastern seafront of the island at Gurney Drive, Kelawei, Cantonment and other fishing areas of *kampung gigi air*, more Malay fishermen settled at Kampung Tanjung Tokong. The eastern seafront where Malay fishing villages were formerly located became the most prestigious area of housing for Hokkien Chinese *kapitan*, *taipan* and the Kedah royalty. These newcomers secured titles, while the indigenous poorer communities became even more marginalized by the British crown system of land ownership and their inability to afford to buy titles for the lands they were occupying.

⁵³ Dato' Azmi Merican, personal communication, 2002; Yusuf Azmi Z. Merican, personal communication, 2010. The British acknowledged Jawi Peranakan as an ethnic category in the 1930s. During the Penang Story Colloquium in George Town in 2002, Yusuf Azmi Z. Merican, a local Jawi Peranakan historian and retired headmaster, produced his birth certificate which showed his ethnicity as Jawi Peranakan. This ethnic category was dropped after 1957 and Malays of mixed Indian, Arab, Thai or European ancestry who were Muslims were registered as 'Malay'.

The Tanjong Tokong Cemetery on Mount Meriam (Cannon Hill)

Tanjong Tokong Cemetery is one of the earliest Muslim cemeteries on the island and predates the largest Muslim cemetery in Dato Keramat. Residents of Tanjong Tokong claim that it grew with the village on the peak of Mount Meriam where the original village was sited (Fig. 8). The cemetery extends to the borders of the site of the original Tanjong Tokong school on the peak facing Jalan Gajah and borders the Tua Phek Kong at the edge of the peak. The earlier tombs were river stones; most have been removed and replaced with cement tombstones.⁵⁴ It is believed that the earlier tombstones were imported from the island of Madura; these included the tombstone of Sheikh Hassan Fusanah which is at the edge of the cemetery towards Jalan Gajah (Fig. 9).⁵⁵ The family tombs of Bapu Alaidin are at the edge of the Tua Phek Kong walls, next to some of the earliest graves in the cemetery. Raised on a mound beside the family tombs of Bapu Alaidin are the graves (with the original tombstones in place) of a distinguished Haji and Hajah believed to be



FIG. 8. The Muslim cemetery opened by Bapu Alaidin Meera Hussein Lebai at Mount Meriam or Cannon Hill, next to the original Kampung Teluk Tikus, Intersection of Tanjong Tokong and Tanjong Bungah. It overlooks Tanjong Penaga or Fort Cornwallis. (Photo: Wazir Jahan Karim, 2009)

FIG. 9. (inset). Tombstone of Sheikh Hassan Fusanah. (Photo: Wazir Jahan Karim, 2009)

⁵⁴ Stacking of graves and piling old tombstones is common in old Muslim cemeteries and creates difficulties in the reading and dating of graves and tombstones.

⁵⁵ The inscriptions on Sheikh Hassan Fusanah's tomb have been almost totally weathered down but dates 18—(?). Traced and transcribed by Dato' Dr Mohd Razha Rashid, an anthropologist from Universiti Sains Malaysia. The burial site shows a later date than the tombstones closer to the edge of the Tua Phek Kong.



Fig. 10 (inset). A jermal trap from which Bagan *Jermal* got its name, Tanjong Tokong, 1920s. (Photo courtesy of Cikgu Yahya Salleh, 2004.)

husband and wife, of Kedah Malay-Acehnese descent.⁵⁶ The inscriptions on the tombstones have weathered with age, but give the dates of death as ‘Jumaat Rejab (7) 1231’ (Friday 31 May 1816) for the Allahyarham and ‘Ahad, Zulhijjah 1231’ (Sunday 6 October 1816) for the Allahyarhamah. Reviewing the history of Tanjong Tokong as pre-dating 1786 and the age of death as somewhere between 60 and 70 years, this makes them among the earliest inhabitants of the village.⁵⁷

The *Jermal* Traps and *Pawang* (Sorcerers) at Tanjong Tokong

From 1820 till 1920, areas where the *jermal* fishing traps⁵⁸ were used on the shores at the bay of Tanjong Tokong came to be known as Bagan Jermal (*bagan*, ‘town’) (Fig. 10). This area was gradually bought over by Chinese entrepreneurs. Wealthy

⁵⁶ This couple are not mentioned here and villagers have vague recollections of them. However, the fact that they had performed their *hajj* so early denotes wealth and piety; Cikgu Salleh said that several Madurese and Acehnese religious teachers migrated to the area even before the ‘founding’ of Penang by Captain Francis Light.

⁵⁷ Inscriptions in Jawi read for Allahyarham, ‘Telah kembali kerahmatulllah Jusoh bin Arshad (?) pada hari Jumaat 3 Rejab 1231’ (returned to Allah Jusoh bin Arshad on Friday 31 May 1816) and for Allahyarhamah, ‘Inilah kubur al Marhumah Hajah Asariah (?) binti Muhammad kembali kerahmatulllah pada empat belas bulan Zulhijjah hari Ahad 1231’ (this is the grave of the deceased Hajah Asariah binti Muhammad who returned to Allah on Sunday 6 October 1816). Inscriptions read by Dato’ Dr Mohd. Razha Rashid from Universiti Sains Malaysia. Both died in the same year, but in different months.

⁵⁸ The *jermal* is a tidal wave trap placed in the inner shores or rivers. It has closely spaced

Malays who had earlier settled here moved out of Bagan Jermal and Tanjong Tokong. Bagan Jermal and Pantai Molek were urbanized by Chinese merchants who bought land in this area; the coastal Malays who had earlier dominated this area become a cultural minority. The only Malays who continued to live here were fishermen, labourers, teachers and vendors who nucleated around the bay Tanjong Tokong. Features of coastal Malay communities remained—mosque, community hall and school, fishing boats, fishermen's rest huts and wharfs. More fishermen from Kedah begin to settle at Tanjong Bungah and Batu Ferringhi and the local Malay population moved northwards to the northeast coast at Batu Ferringhi.

Sea sorcerers (*pawang laut*) were also used to ward off and appease sea spirits (*semangat / hantu laut*) and to ensure a bountiful catch via *jermal* and other traps like the *belat*.⁵⁹ The legendary *pawang* of the nineteenth century—Pak Khamis, Pak Talib, Pak Chin Dahamn, Pak Hassan Kering and Pak Eman—were noted for their ability to propitiate sea spirits through their helping spirits, Tok Panglima Putih and Tok Panglima Hitam. A shrine of Tok Panglima Hitam exists on Pulau Tikus, off Tanjong Tokong. *Pawang* were mostly of Kedah Malay ancestry and obtained finance from their Chinese patrons, village leaders (*penghulu*) and Indian Muslim merchants. Two famous patrons were Penghulu Pak Haji Mohd Noh, owner of the *jermal* trap, and the Indian Muslim merchants like Bapu Alaidin and his descendants.

It was only at the turn of the century that Europeans begin to develop an interest in the northeast coast and founded the Penang Swimming Club in 1903. In the early twentieth century Tanjong Tokong was a famous gathering ground for crustaceans and turtles. Hafiz Ghulam Sarwar, the first Sunni Muslim to translate the Qur'an into English, gives a special mention to Tanjong Tokong and Tanjong Bungah in 'The Word of God and the Wonders of Science' published in *The Muslim* 1929 (pp. 13–14). He describes turtles laying eggs on the shores: 'Malay women scout the sandy shores and when they see turtle laying eggs, they sit down and watch. When the poor creature has retired into the sea, the keen eyed fisher-women digs up the sand and triumphantly carries her basketful to the market.... Life is indeed a struggle, a *jihad*.'

Tanjong Tokong in the Pre- and Post-War Periods

In the 1930s before World War II, the shores of Tanjong Tokong were reclaimed by the British from funds of the Hindu and Muslim Endowment Board. Shifting

stakes behind which fish become trapped when the tide recedes. Fish are caught in large nets behind the stakes, which are made from *nibong* (*Oncosperma* spp.) and mangrove wood (*kayu bakau*) (*Rhizophora* spp.) with three parts, the mouth (*mulut*), body (*badan*) and bag (*kantong*) which progressively disenable the fish to turn back when it enters the mouth. The trap is still widely used in Pahang; along the Sg. Bera there are at least 29 such traps at Kampung Sg. Bera. River fish conservation has led to a campaign to ban these traps in Malaysia.

⁵⁹ The *belat* is a traditional Malay-Indonesian trap comprising a plaited bamboo screen designed to trap fish in three chordate chambers: outer (*sayap*), inner (*bunuh-paril*) and inmost (*bunuh-mati*); see Stevens and Schmidgall-Tellings (2004: 112). It is hardly used in Malaysia today, but is still used on Indonesian islands such as Madura.

currents left the shores muddy and open to disease. Land reclamation was stopped during the war years. In 1941 the Japanese bombed George Town, Tanjong Tokong and other coastal areas on the island. The Japanese Occupation and surrender in 1945 created a surge in Chinese residents from George Town moving into this area, at first to protect their families from atrocities and, after the occupation, to establish retail businesses. In 1954 Tanjong Tokong residents were offered houses funded by the Endowment Board (EB) and given temporary occupation licences (TOL) (Fig. 11). Natural reclamation (retreating shoreline caused by changes in the sea currents) enabled reclamation to be done with only lateritic soil. In 1955 the Christian seminary sold that portion of their land where the villagers had moved on the hill slope and road frontage to a Chinese company, the Hokkien Brothers, and the original settlers on the hill appealed to UMNO to assist them get back their lands.⁶⁰ After independence in 1957 the land was placed under the Penang state government and temporary occupation licences were issued to all the original settlers. In 1972 Tun Abdul Razak visited the village to inform the people that the federal government had assigned the Urban Development Authority (UDA) to develop the area for the benefit of the villagers of Tanjong Tokong. Because there was little agreement on the development plans for Tanjong Tokong to transfer residents into high-rise low-cost flats, a village residents' association, Persatuan Penduduk Kampong Tanjong



FIG. 11. Houses built after 1954, Kampong Tersusun. (Photo courtesy of Cikgu Salleh Yahya.)

⁶⁰ Penang state was then ruled by the Barisan Nasional and UMNO had a significant role in the development of Malay areas on Penang Island. The Chief Minister was the late Tun Tan Sri Dr Lim Chong Eu.

Tokong, was formed on 4 March 1984 to monitor the development of Tanjong Tokong.⁶¹

Conclusion

Penang Island was occupied by Kedah Malays prior to the occupation of the island in 1786 and the lives of traders, fishermen and pirates of Malay, Indian Muslim and Arab Peranakan origin were symbiotically connected for mutual advantage and interest. It also seems to be an undeniable fact that Tanjong Tokong was then a multi-cultural significant fishing village which attracted traders and pirates, and was possibly the first look-out post of Captain Francis Light in 1785. Oral histories and written genealogies reveal the role of Babu Alaidin Meera Hussein Lebai in befriending Captain Francis Light and members of the Kedah court to enable him to envisage the logistics of Teluk Tikus in relation to the proposed landing site at Tanjong Penaga where Fort Cornwallis was sited. While Captain Francis Light favoured the Portuguese Eurasian Thai community and the French Catholic missionaries, Malays were marginalized in the process and Malay-occupied lands at Tanjong Tokong on the peak of Teluk Tikus were transferred to the missions at an early date after the occupation of Penang Island. Babu Alaidin's intermediary role was typical of the migrant Indian Muslim communities of the day and it usually led to the accumulation of land and resources at the expense of local Malays. However, they were also pioneers in the bequeathing of *waqf* land for religious and communal purposes and the historical landmarks of Tanjong Tokong are related to communal ritual sites such as the cemetery and mosques.

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WAZIR JAHAN KARIM

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