

PENANG'S CHINESE POPULATION: A PRELIMINARY  
ACCOUNT OF ITS ORIGIN AND SOCIAL  
GEOGRAPHIC PATTERN\*

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A. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE AND PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY

SINCE THEIR FIRST APPEARANCE IN SOUTHEAST ASIA, CHINESE COMMUNITIES have occupied the interests of numerous historians, sociologists, economists and geographers. There is scarcely any other subject on which there are already so many detailed studies. Under various aspects these works are concerned with the situation of the Chinese in a specific place, country, or in the whole of South-east Asia. There is also a number of books and essays analyzing the motives and history of Chinese emigration and on the question of why nearly all the emigrants came from Fukien and Kwangtung (*Chen Ta* 1923, *Mosolff* 1932, *Pelzer* 1935, *Lattimore* 1937, *Chen Han Seng* 1937, v. *Eickstedt* 1944, *Purcell* 1948 a. 1951, *Skinner* 1957, a.o.). But it is surprising that very few of the above mentioned book really consider the places of origin as well. In most cases only a small chapter, accompanied perhaps by a small map, is given showing the approximate distribution of the different languages<sup>1</sup> and emigration ports in Kwangtung and Fukien (*Purcell* 1951, *Ginsburg/Roberts* 1958, *Sandhu* 1961 a.o.). Only a few studies give a more detailed investigation of the emigration areas. One of these is *Chen Ta's* (1940) *Emigrant Communities in South China* in which the subject is treated in general terms, but unfortunately *Chen Ta* does not provide us with a map of the "emigrant communities". *Kulp's* survey (1925) considers only a small village in the Han Chiang valley. In *Wien's* book (1954) more emphasis is placed on

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<sup>1</sup> This word is used as applied by Y. W. Skinner in *Chinese Society in Thailand, An Analytical History* (Ithaca, New York, 1957).

the physical geography of South China and its influence on population movements, but it is more concerned with the internal migration.

In only two books do we find an attempt to localize more precisely the places of origin. *Skinner* (1957, pp. 34, 36, 39) offers in his book *Chinese Society in Thailand* three maps in which the most important places of origin of all the Nanyang Chinese are shown. *Newell* (1962, pp. 16/17) in his work *Treacherous River* presents a map, wherein the home villages of all the Teochew inhabitants of two villages in North Malaya are shown. At the same time he brings out a detailed comparison of the geographic and socio-economic patterns between the mother country and the new overseas settlement.

Apart from *Newell*, none of the authors has given a map in which the physical environment of the emigration area under discussion is considered as well. But as v. *Richthofen* (1877-1912, vol. 3, pp. 399-402) had already pointed out, the diversity of languages and habits in Kwangtung and Fukien could most probably be explained by the complicated structure of the South Chinese mountain ranges which lead to the isolation of the different valleys. The resulting different social patterns of the various speech groups is one of the most important aspects which one has to consider when one makes studies of the Nanyang Chinese.

How can one explain the relative lack of studies on the emigrant communities?

1. Lack of statistical data: It is unlikely that any of the records, kept either in China or in any Southeast Asian state, will provide us with details of the specific places of origin and destination of the emigrants and the number of emigrants leaving a particular place in a particular time (except for the big ports of emigration). However, each Nanyang state registered the approximate number of immigrants.
2. Membership in a certain speech group has been the predominant criterion for a subdivision of the Chinese population of any place in the Nanyang. Other regional differences were generally not so obvious.

The Chinese community of Penang is taken as an example in the attempt to provide the answers to the following questions:

1. To what extent can the original places of emigration of a Chinese immigrant community be reconstructed?

2. How far do the different origins bring about the social geographic differentiation of the cultural landscape?
3. To what extent do British colonial influences contribute to a regrouping of the Chinese community?

#### B. GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF PENANG ISLAND<sup>2</sup>

Penang (see map 1) is an island of about 90 square miles situated in the Straits of Malacca off the northwest coast of the Malay Peninsula. In 1786 Francis Light took possession of Penang in the name of the East India Company and founded George Town in the northeastern part of the island. So, after Malacca, Penang became the second oldest colonial settlement in the area of present day Malaysia. This new acquisition was to serve three purposes:

1. As a naval base in the struggle against the French in the Bay of Bengal.
2. As a trading centre, in order to break the Dutch monopoly of the spice trade.
3. As a port for supplies on the China-trade route.

In the first decades after the founding of Penang the cultivation of pepper, nutmeg and clove plants was carried on with varying degrees of success. Its function as the first naval base and centre for entrepôt trade was soon to be taken over by Singapore.

A steady growth of Penang's population and economy only began after

1. the opening up of the Suez Canal which caused the transfer of the main trade route from the Sunda Strait to the Straits of Malacca.
2. British intervention in the Malay Peninsula which led to a more intensive exploitation of the tin ore deposits,
3. the opening up of the "Oostkust-Cultuurgebied" in Sumatra by the Dutch,
4. and the introduction of the *Hevea* in Malaya.

In comparison with the increase of Penang's entrepôt trade with the Malay States, South Thailand, South Burma and Sumatra, its production of agricultural goods lost more and more of its

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<sup>2</sup> "Penang" in this study means "Penang Island" (including George Town) in contrast to the "State of Penang" which consists of the island and Province Wellesley, a territory on the Malay Peninsula itself.

importance. Today since Indonesia, Burma and Thailand aspire to the direct control of their own imports and exports, Penang aims like Singapore at a changeover from a purely entrepôt trade economy to one based more on local production e.g. foundation of the industrial estate in Butterworth.

Penang at the beginning of British control was almost uninhabited. The *laissez faire* legal structure given by the colonial government led to large-scale immigration. The government remained strictly neutral towards the newcomers who came from almost all parts of southern Asia, but mostly from southeastern China, and from territories which today are known as Indonesia, Malaysia, South India and Ceylon. There was no discrimination against any single group; all had equal economic opportunities. Moreover, Penang was a free port (and still is) and the system of indirect rule was maintained more or less until 1957. *Mills* (1925, p. 213) describes the attitude of the Chinese towards government as follows:

So free from irksom restrictions was British rule, that they almost forgot, that they were in a foreign country, and looked upon Penang and Singapore as Chinese cities, the administration of which was left in British hand. With no desire to assume the wearisome task of governing themselves, and indifferent to who ruled them so long as their business was not interfered with, they regarded the British as inexplicable philanthropists who for some quite undiscoverable motive took all the burdens of administration off their shoulders, and left them at full liberty to make as much money as they chose.

From the beginning the majority of Penang's population consisted of Chinese immigrants. Being attracted by the better economic prospects, many came from the then Dutch Malacca and soon afterwards direct immigration from South China started. *Low* (1836, p. 291) mentions Chinese from "Hokkien, Changfoo, Kainchoo, Teochoo, Macao, Sinin, Khangeen, Choongsan, Shiyongsan, Chinj-hin". All the pioneers opening up the tin ore deposits of South Thailand, Larut and Kinta had their base in Penang. Thus Penang, next to Malacca, developed into one of the most tradition-minded and important cultural centres of overseas Chinese in the eastern Nanyang. This can be seen through the numerous temples, clan houses, community buildings of various speech groups and occupational organizations, the great number of schools, and the extensive cemeteries at the foot of Penang Hill which attract the attention of every foreign visitor. There is scarcely another place in Malaya the appearance of which is as richly imprinted with Chinese cultural life as Penang.

## C. THE ORIGIN OF THE PENANG CHINESE

Before considering the origin of the Chinese population of Penang, it should be pointed out that there have been two different tendencies of social development. On one side, one may observe that in the last years the process of fusion among the Chinese speech groups has taken place at an increasing rate. Apart from this process the government has tried to integrate the various ethnic groups into one people, the "Malaysians". This process of mutual adjustment can be seen especially clearly in Penang where western value systems and modes of living have created a feeling of oneness. The process has been much facilitated by the fact that

1. in 1957, already 81 per cent of the Chinese population of the State of Penang were locally born (1957 Pop. Cens. Rep. No. 3, Table 9b, p. 28);
2. all Chinese children, if they at all learn Chinese in school, are educated in Kuoyu (i.e. "Mandarin") and not in their local mother tongue. In addition they have to learn Malay;
3. in 1957, 52. per cent of the total population of the State of Penang (as is the case with the total Malaysian population) were under 20 years of age (1957 Pop. Cens. Rep. No. 14, Table 4, p. 63).

On the other hand *McGee's* observation (1963, pp. 185, 186) on the structure of Kuala Lumpur's population can also be applied to that of Penang:

... there was [in 1957] a sharp division between the small middle and upper class areas... and the traditional areas of settlement... The growing middle and upper classes of Malaysians [i.e. Malays, Chinese, Indians, and Eurasians] were separated to a great extent, physically by residence, economically by wealth, and socially by choice, from the great mass of the city's population who dwelt in the tradition-directed areas where little racial merging had occurred....

*Fell* (1960, p. 13) mentions this contrast between the traditional attitude and process of adjustment in the following statement:

The Chinese population is becoming more and more a permanent settled community with established roots in the country. The different social, cultural and occupational habits of the various specific communities are being modified by long residence and are becoming less and less important. This is not to deny that differences still exist or that the growth in numbers of the various specific communities is still of importance.

Thus the investigation of the origin of the Chinese immigrants appears justified and is even necessary for the better under-

standing of the present socio-economic structure of Penang.\* A complete survey of the origin of the Penang Chinese and the division of the various economic branches according to speech group and place of origin has not yet been carried out. So far only *Vaugham* (1854, pp. 14, 16) has come close to these questions:

Chinese in Penang may be divided into two classes, the Macao and the Chin-chew. The former includes Kehs and Ahyas. The latter are natives from Fuk-kien and the northwestern provinces. Keh-langs and Ahyas come from the Province of Quang-tung on the border of Fuk-kien. Nearly all the former belong to the city of Kia-ying and its environs. The latter are from Chan-chaufu and the neighbouring towns...Macao are divided into seven great kongsees: Sin Neng, Hiong Shan, Chen Sang, Ku Yin Chew, Chong Far, Win Tai Kwan and seven lesser Kongsees: Nam Hoi, Sen Tak, Poon Ngwi, San Wi, San Oon, Hok San, Howi Peng.

Kongsees are formed by men of the same town, village, or district and no other natives are admitted. The above titles are the names of certain localities in the Province of Quang-tung...

For a more thorough investigation (which confirms *Vaugham's* findings) we are dependent on the records of the "Registrar of Societies". Classifying the Chinese associations of Penang according to the divisions used by *Coughlin* (1960, pp. 32-67) in studying the Chinese associations in Bangkok, we have (not considering religious, entertainment, and social organizations)<sup>3</sup> 81 Surname Associations; 57 Regional and Dialect Associations; 71 Occupational and Business Associations; and 62 Benevolent and Charity Associations.

In the constitutions of the "Surname Associations" one rarely finds precise information about the places of origin of the members and if at all, then only in the constitutions of the oldest associations (i.e. Khoo, Chea, Lim a.o.), whose members originally came from the neighbourhood of Haicheng<sup>4</sup>, Fukien. In these constitutions we sometimes find hints for a phenomenon which has already been described in the literature frequently: that in Southeast China members of almost every village population were at the same time members of the same kinship or clan. *Freedman* (1958, p. 1) calls this the "coincidence of local and agnatic community".

<sup>3</sup> Information kindly supplied orally by the Registrar of Societies, Penang, March 1963.

<sup>4</sup> Transcriptions of place names in China are given in accordance with those used in the National Atlas of China, Vol. IV, 1962.—The modern name for Chiayingchou is Meihsien, for Chaochou—Chaoan, Changchou—Lunchi, Chuanchou—Anchi, Henghua—Putien.

More important for our inquiry are the "Regional and Dialect Associations", often known as "Hooi Kuan". The contents of maps 2 and 3 are based on data supplied by the constitutions of these associations. In reading these maps, the following facts should be borne in mind:

1. The membership of the associations varies approximately between 50 and 3,000. For instance, an organization relating to a complete speech group would be very large, while organizations of immigrants from certain small localities would have a much smaller membership.
2. The membership figures need not necessarily correspond to the actual number of members living in Penang. The figures are sometimes obsolete, intentionally exaggerated or underestimated. The figures may apply only to George Town or may be for the whole State of Penang or may include the rest of North Malaya.
3. The division of the places of origin into three groups, according to the size of the immigrant group in Penang therefore only indicates the approximate importance of places for the emigration to Penang. Also the position of the dots on the maps represents only the situation of the district capitals.

What can we read from these maps?

The four main emigration areas of the Cantonese, Teochew, Hakka and Hokkien speech groups stand out prominently. Hainan was left out because in Penang the only large immigrant groups are from Haikou and Chiungshan and a small one from Wanning situated on the east coast of Hainan. There are two other small immigrant groups in Penang: from Wenchow in Chekiang, and Shanghai and the Yangtze-delta.

George Town is generally known as a town in which Hokkien is used as the *lingua franca*. Indeed Hokkien is the mother tongue of almost 50 per cent of the Penang Chinese (1957 Pop. Cens. Rep. No. 3, p. 9). The predominance of Hokkien cannot be clearly traced from these maps because no further differentiation of the legend was possible. Therefore, the Cantonese speech group seems to be nearly as strong as the Hokkien group. This wrong impression may be explained by the fact (as shown in the associations' constitutions) that the Cantonese are more tightly organized according to places of origin than the Hokkien group in

which surname associations seem to play the main role, (c.f. *Vaugham's* observation, pp. 6-7, *supra*). Whether the reason for this different kind of division lies in the different size of the speech groups or has to be found in other peculiarities cannot be decided here.

The size of the dots for the Hakka and Teochew places corresponds to the importance of these immigrant groups in Penang. Nine and 12 per cent of the Chinese population respectively speak these languages (1957 Pop. Cens. Rep. No. 3, p. 9).

Regarding the distribution of the places of origin, it is obvious that (with a few exceptions in the Hakka and Hokkien areas) they are almost all situated in the coastal alluvial plains, where we also find the heavy concentrations of population. The contrast between densely populated lowlands, endangered by floods and droughts, and the sparsely populated mountain areas is clearly visible on these maps.<sup>5</sup> The most important Cantonese emigration places (which also provided most of the emigrants to America) are all situated in the Hsi Chiang and Pearl River deltas. The home areas of the Teochews are to be found in the lower Han Chiang valley, and those of the Hokkiens are concentrated in the low valleys of the Chiu Lung Chiang and Chin Chiang. The Hakkas are the only speech group whose area of origin is completely concentrated in the interior of the provinces, that is, in the upper valleys of the Tung-, Mei-, and Ting Chiang.

The division into alluvial lowlands and highlands not only explains the distribution of the population but also the isolation of the various speech groups.<sup>6</sup> The only land communication routes were the rivers, which sometimes were only periodically navigable; road connections with very few exceptions) through mountain passes were throughout history only of secondary importance in southeastern China.

Finally the maps also help us to explain the distribution of the different occupations among the speech groups. The emphasis in Cantonese economic activity is on handicrafts and constructional enterprises. This is because Cantonese immigrants came mostly from rural towns, which for centuries had already been famous for their skilled workmanship (86 per cent of all Can-

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<sup>5</sup> Compare with Roxby's maps of the population distribution for Kwangtung and Fukien (1925, pp. 9,12).

<sup>6</sup> The coincidence of river valley and distribution area for a dialect or language is a frequently observed phenomenon, e, g., in the Alps.

tonese in Penang live in George Town). The Han Chiang valley, homeland of the Teochews, is among others known as a fruit-growing area. Most of the Teochews came from small villages, and in Penang as well, as much as 40 per cent of all Teochews live in rural areas. The Hakkas who dwell in the mountainous interior of Kwangtung and Fukien, live in Penang mainly in the countryside (60 per cent of all Hakkas in Penang). Most of them are occupied with market gardening and rubber cultivation (above given percentages from 1957 Pop. Cens. Rep. No. 3, p. 9).

Owing to the large size of their community, the Hokkiens are engaged in almost every kind of economic activity. However, since the majority of them comes from coastal areas, in Penang a great number earns its living from the shipping and fishing industries.

#### D. THE INFLUENCE OF THE VARIOUS CHINESE IMMIGRANT GROUPS ON THE SOCIAL GEOGRAPHIC PATTERN OF PENANG—

This can be demonstrated by examples. There are not as yet sufficient facts which would allow a statement valid for the whole of Penang.

Even when looking superficially on topographic maps of Penang one comes across numerous names of localities likely to have been derived from an immigrant group, such as Pantai Acheh, Kampong Batak, Kampong Perlis, Kampong Java, Kampong Burma and Kampong Siam. We find even more numerous examples of street names derived from the nationalities of the newcomers in George Town itself. Thus certain quarters of the present-day town-centre were assigned by Light to the different ethnic groups of settlers (*Cullin/Zehnder* 1905, p. 4). In the oldest part of the town we find therefore from northeast to southwest China-, Chulia-, Armenian-, Acheen-, and Malay Street. But the later development of functional districts deviated considerably from the original arrangement because the groups of the Armenian and Acheen settlers were by far too small. From the very beginning the core of the urban population was formed by Chinese and Indians. The Malays always occupied the outskirts of the town, and the constant displacement of their *kampongs* (with two exceptions) away from the centre of the city according to its outward growth is a clearly remarkable phenomenon. The predominance of the Chinese within the town is underlined by the fact that for most of the roads they even had their own street names besides the original British ones (*Purcell* 1948, p. 65). But today presumably

it is unlikely that one will be able to work out such an exact division of George Town's centre according to the different immigrant groups as has been done by *Hodder* for Singapore in 1952 (*Hodder* 1953, pp. 33-36). He could already observe in Singapore, as did McGee in Kuala Lumpur, that the separation of Asians from their traditional social organization and the integration of the various cultures into a new "Malaysian Society" has progressed mostly in the outer quarters of the town, but in the residential areas of the well-to-do families and not in the Malay *kampongs*.

However one will probably find evidence of the strongest links to speech group and area of origin in the older parts of the inner town, predominantly occupied by the lower classes of the Chinese and Indian population.

Two examples for this presumption are:

1. Map 4 and Plate 1 show a small section of the southern port of George Town<sup>7</sup>. The Weld Quay is on the water front and Chulia Street Ghant branches off at right-angle. Built into the shallow waters of the South Channel, one sees two groups of houses, erected on poles. These are two so-called *kampong ayer*, e.g., water villages. A plank bridge runs between the houses and the beach. The buildings have roofs of *attap*, sometimes of corrugated iron. The occupants earn their living with stevedoring work in the harbor which is done on *Tongkangs* and *sampans*. When looking at the map one notices immediately a difference between the two *kampongs*: the gables in one case are parallel to the beach, in the other they are at right-angles with it. This physiognomical difference may be explained by the fact that one *kampong* is occupied by Hokkiens all having the surname Lim, whereas in the other *kampong* (left on the map) there live Hokkiens all belonging to the Chew clan. The members of the Lim clan have the characters for "western river" above their door, those of the Chew clan the characters for "courtyard of gingkotrees".

2. On plate 2 one sees the *kongsi* house of the Khoo clan (c.f. *Vaughan's* statement on pages 6 and 7 *supra*). It serves as a temple for ancestor worship. Nearly all houses of the street block for which the *kongsi* house is the center are the property of the Khoo *Kongsi*, which is one of the richest in Penang.

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<sup>7</sup> Because permission could not be obtained, unfortunately it was not possible to include the aerial photograph which shows all these features much more clearly than the map which is based on the photograph.

As has already been mentioned in other publications, *kongsis* were an important institution for the social life of a Chinese immigrant community. As long as we could speak of a "Chinese *imperium in imperio*" (Purcell 1948, p. 65) social assistance was supplied mainly by *kongsis* to members of the same clan. Not only did the *sinkeh* from China find employment through his clan but funerals, scholarships, weddings, hospital and doctor's fees were, in cases of need, financed by the *Kongsi*. At the same time these surname associations retained connections with the home community in China.

Nowadays certain social services are already supplied by the state and the contact with relatives in China has become difficult because of the changed political situation. Thus *kongsis* have lost most of their functions. Nevertheless *kongsi* houses are still looked after and a Penang without them is unimaginable.<sup>8</sup> As Lee writes (1961):

Clan divisions were still noticeable in the twenties. The Cheahs were found along Armenian Street and Toh Aka Lane, clan signboards bearing the characters "poh soo"-precious tree, were hung above their houses there. All houses along Cannon Street and Cannon Square had the Khoo clan signboards "Sin Kang" (New River). The Lees, especially those from the village "Te Suah" were concentrated along Weld Quay and were mostly sampanmen. The Lows from "Hui Aun" village were to be found along Magazine Road and Noordin Street.

Clan organizations in Penang differ from those in South China in one essential point: while in Kwangtung and Fukien a considerable part of the cultivated land was clan property,<sup>9</sup> *kongsis* in Penang usually own only urban land, and the size of this in comparison with the land area of George Town, is not significant.

It is noteworthy that houses of the secret societies are nearly all situated in the oldest part of George Town (Map of George Town illustrating the lands held by Chinese *Kongsis*, n.d.,)<sup>10</sup>. In

<sup>8</sup> More than ten *Kongsi* houses are even marked in the 1951 town plan of George Town.

<sup>9</sup> Chen Han Seng; "The present prospect of Chinese Emigration", *Limits of Land Settlement* Ed. by I. Bowman (New York, 1937), p. 35, gives about 30 per cent of the cultivated area in Kwangtung. On the other hand, O. Lang gives 10-90 per cent, generally 50 per cent of the cultivated area in Kwangtung and Fukien. See O. Lang, *Chinese Family and Society* (New Haven, 1946), p. 174.

<sup>10</sup> In the older Straits Settlements Factory Records (Vol. 101, 1825, pp. 1346-1347, quoted after L. Comber, *Chinese Secret Societies in Malaya* (New York, 1959), p. 41 it is stated, that most of the secret societies had their houses in Prangin Road, but most probably these were only temporarily-used buildings in the outskirts of the town.

contrast, the *Kongsis* houses of the surname associations are concentrated in the southern part of the town which developed later (*Moor*, Plan of Prince of Wales Island 1836). Probably the different situation of the two types of buildings may be explained by the fact that in the first decade after the founding of George Town clans were not yet well organized but the secret societies were. Therefore, the latter could erect their assembly halls in the oldest parts of the town, whereas the *kongsis*, consolidating themselves more slowly, could only start later, from about 1830-40 onwards, to construct their clan houses.

Besides the phenomena described above which may be explained by the Chinese principle of organization according to the extended family-clan system another effect of the different origins can be observed in the distribution of economic activities among the different groups of the Chinese.<sup>11</sup>

This phenomenon, already often mentioned in other works on this subject, was also stated first for Penang by *Vaugham* (1854, p. 3). He writes:

The natives of Quang-tung are more robust and hard working than the Fuk-kien or Chinchew and other tribes. All the carpenters, blacksmiths, shoemakers, and other laborious tradesmen are of the first; of few are goldsmiths, tailors and shopkeepers, they are excellent squatters and may be called pioneers to the Chin-chews.... Fuk-kien men are tailors, shopkeepers, merchants and owners of spice plantations.

Comparing *Vaugham's* observations of 1854 with today's situation, one may say that this distribution pattern has remained relatively unchanged. Various sources of information, collected in 1962 and 1963, give the following picture, which does not differ much from the general occupation pattern of the Chinese in the other parts of Malaysia. Goldsmiths, gold and silver merchants, barbers, carpenters, masons and photographers are still predominantly Cantonese. A large section of the Teochews are concerned with agriculture, and like the Hokkiens besides that with import-export business. Hainanese and Hokchiu specialize in hotels and restaurants. Most of the vegetable farmers are Hakka, who are also rubber planters and rattan workers; the pawn shops are under Hakka control. The majority of the trishaw drivers are Hokkiens from Huian district, who live in the Magazine-Road/Noordin Street

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<sup>11</sup> Unfortunately the population censuses do not supply us with detailed information on this matter. Only statistics for the whole State of Penang showing the distribution of professions among the different ethnic groups are available.

area. Car repairing and tire retreading are generally done by Henghuas (immigrants from Putien). Immigrants from Chekiang work in furniture shops, and those from the Shanghai and Ningpo area are mainly in dry cleaning and photo firms; some are also teachers.

Even today the concentrations of the various professions, and therefore of the different groups of immigrants, can still be clearly observed in the arrangement of the shops. The goldsmiths, gold and silver merchants supply us with an example<sup>12</sup>. Almost all of them belong to the Cantonese speech group. Within a circle of 100 yards diameter and the crossing of Campbell Street and Rope Walk in the centre out of a total of 90 shop-houses 36 are occupied by silver- and goldsmiths. Among the population of the town center the number of Cantonese seems always to have been very high. As they were mostly craftsmen and artisans they found here the most favorable working conditions. On the other hand, in Beach Street Hokkiens and Teochews are predominant and import-export and wholesale firms are concentrated here.

#### E. CHANGES IN THE SOCIAL GEOGRAPHIC STRUCTURE UNDER COLONIAL RULE

Ever since its foundation it is possible to divide the Chinese inhabitants of Penang into social groups from two points of view which are of geographic relevance. On the one hand, the division is according to their membership in an immigrant community, and on the other hand, according to the class of income they belong to.

The first aspect has already been considered. The extent to which the new distribution of wealth has contributed to a change of the traditional social organization is now considered. Originally, Chinese and Indians occupied the densely populated quarters near the muddy South Channel Beach. Malays lived in *kampongs* and Europeans dwelt in country houses laid out on large scale along the breezy and dry sand beach of the North Channel. From the earliest time, the newly rich Chinese began to leave their big houses in inner town and erected western style bungalows at the northern beach. Thus the spacious "colonial garden town" was

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<sup>12</sup> The fact, that Penang throughout most of its history had the freeport status, explains the attractiveness of George Town for gold-smiths and -merchants. C. Lim in "Geographical Influences in Planning for Urban Penang" (Unpublished M. A. Thesis, University of Malaya, Singapore, 1955) pp. 55-56, estimates that in 1954 there were more than 1000 gold-smiths in George Town.

soon inhabited by a new class of residents which had in common a high income but were of different ethnic stock (see *McGee's* similar observations in Kuala Lumpur, 1963). The old dwellings of the town centre were then used either as godowns and business quarters or often sold to Indians. Most of the Indians, as almost in every part of Malaysia, belonged to the lowest income group of the urban population (*McGee* 1963, pp. 192, 193).

Both phenomena—the formation of a wealthy upper class, ethnically mixed, living in fashionable bungalow quarters, and the movement of a socially lower class into the abandoned houses of the rich in the inner town—have been observed in many towns of the world. It has already been noted in the old town of Djakarta, which was at first inhabited by the Dutch and later occupied by Chinese (*Helbig* 1930, p. 74) as well as in the residential quarters of “Cumballa Hill” and “Malabar Hill” in Bombay, where rich Indians and Europeans lived together.

In those quarters of George Town which are occupied by the upper and lower middle classes, a clear spatial division of the Chinese, according to the area of origin, is not possible. Even in the rural settlements of Penang which mostly consist of a densely populated nucleus of shop houses and its surroundings in which isolated farmsteads prevail, a mixing of members of the different speech groups may be observed. Only fishing settlements are almost exclusively inhabited by Hokkiens, while nearly all the vegetable farmers on the slopes of Penang Hill are Hakka. Up to the present however a mixture of dwellings of Malays, Chinese and Indians in rural areas is hardly to be found.

In conclusion one may say, that the social geographic pattern based on the new distribution of wealth is becoming more important than the pattern based on the cultural differences of the Chinese immigrant groups.

#### F. THE GENERAL STRUCTURE OF PENANG'S POPULATION

Finally a short review of the general structure of the island's population is presented in order to bring the above explanations concerning the Chinese community into a relation with the two other main ethnic groups. As it would take too long to describe the historical development of the population distribution, only the results of the 1957 Census will be considered here.

Table 1: PENANG, POPULATION IN 1957

(from 1957 *Population Census, Report No. 3, Table No. 5, p. 9*)

	George Town Municipality	Southwest District	Northeast District	Total
Chinese	171.242	21.584	36.853	299.679
Hokkiens	92.032	8.012	13.899	113.943
Teochew	16.938	4.070	8.467	29.475
Hakka	8.871	7.254	5.863	21.988
Cantonese	42.323	1.291	5.869	49.483
Hainanese	6.190	309	1.937	8.436
Hokchiu/Hokchia	3.018	319	301	3.638
Kwongsai	172	85	76	333
Henghua	307	35	36	378
other Chinese	1.391	209	405	2.005
Malaysians*	26.757	23.268	10.666	60.691
Indians	32.029	2.044	6.573	40.646
Others**	4.872	107	2.864	7.843
Total	234.903	47.003	56.960	338.866

\*Malays and immigrants from Indonesia

\*\*includes Ceylonese, Pakistanis, Europeans, Australians, etc.

As indicated on Table 1, the Chinese form the absolute majority in George Town and the North East District, which is already intensively urbanized. The Malays form 50 per cent of the population only in the South West District, in which is to be found the main *padi* growing area. Indians constitute 14 per cent of the total population of George Town (occupations mainly in the trading and services sector) and 12 per cent in the Northeast District (trading and plantation work).

Three quarters of George Town's Chinese community consist of Hokkiens and Cantonese, but Hakkas and Teochews have a greater representation in the two rural districts. The proportion of the Cantonese in the Southwest District is lowest because of its predominantly rural character.

## CONCLUSIONS

With the help of the records of the Registrar of Societies it was possible to make a relatively good reconstruction of the areas of origin and the approximate size of the individual Chinese groups from the particular places of the two South Chinese coastal provinces.

An intensive study of the development of Penang's social geographic regions still has to be done. More exact and comprehensive results can be yielded only by a detailed survey which not only considers all unpublished records but which also takes into account intensive surveys made on a house-to-house basis in George Town and in the rural districts<sup>13</sup>. It seems appropriate to arrange such a research program as a combined undertaking of sinologists, sociologists, historians and geographers. If a new university will be founded in Penang in the near future such a program could easily be organized.

Moreover, Penang is ideal for demonstrating the numerous phenomena of urban and agrarian geography which are characteristic for most of the former colonial settlements in South Asia and which in this essay could either be only touched upon or not considered at all.

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<sup>13</sup> An urban geographic survey of parts of George Town has been made recently by the Department of Geography, University of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur. However the author has not had as yet access to the results of this survey.

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#### MAPS AND PLATES

Plan of Prince of Wales Island and the Territories on the opposite shore ceded thereto called the Province of Point Wellesley, 1836, c. 1: 120,000 in Moor, J.H., *Notices of the Indian Archipelago*, (Singapore, 1837).

Map of George Town illustrating the lands held by Chinese Kongsis, n.d., probably 1840-1850, c. 1: 2,650, (200 feet : 1 inch).

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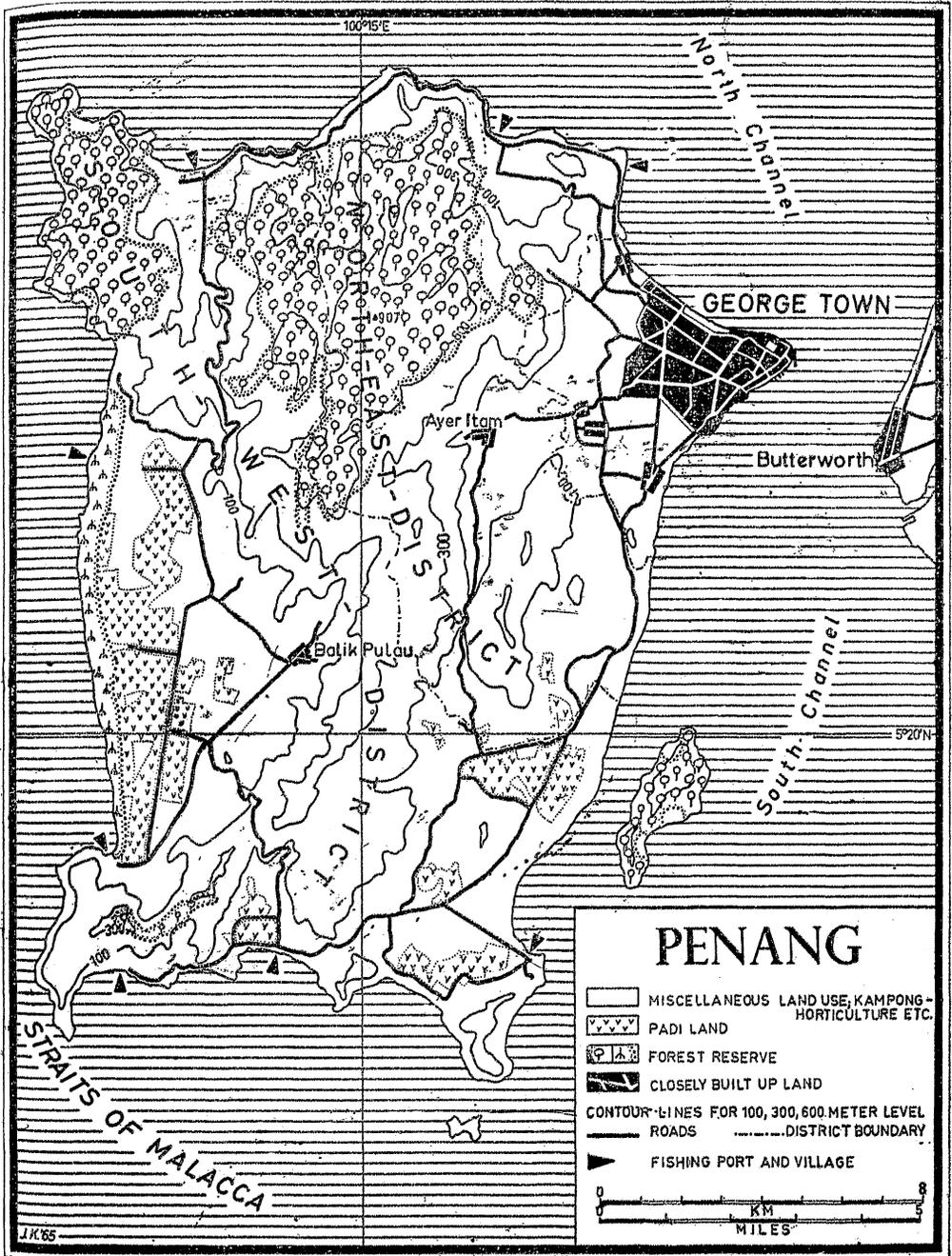
Business and Residential Areas of George Town Penang, 1952, c. 1:7,920, (8 inches : 1 mile), Survey Department, Federation of Malaya, No. 27, Kuala Lumpur.

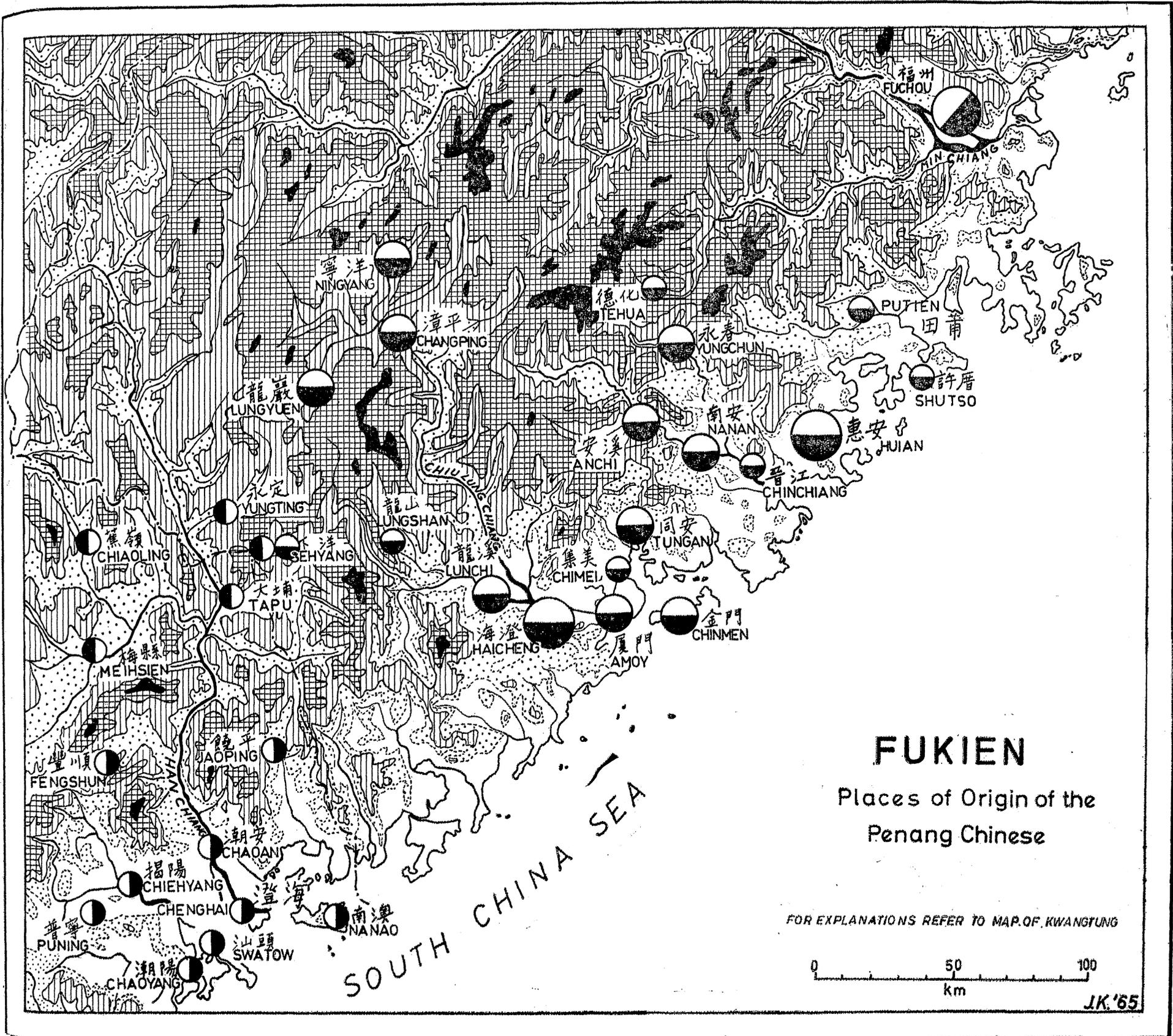
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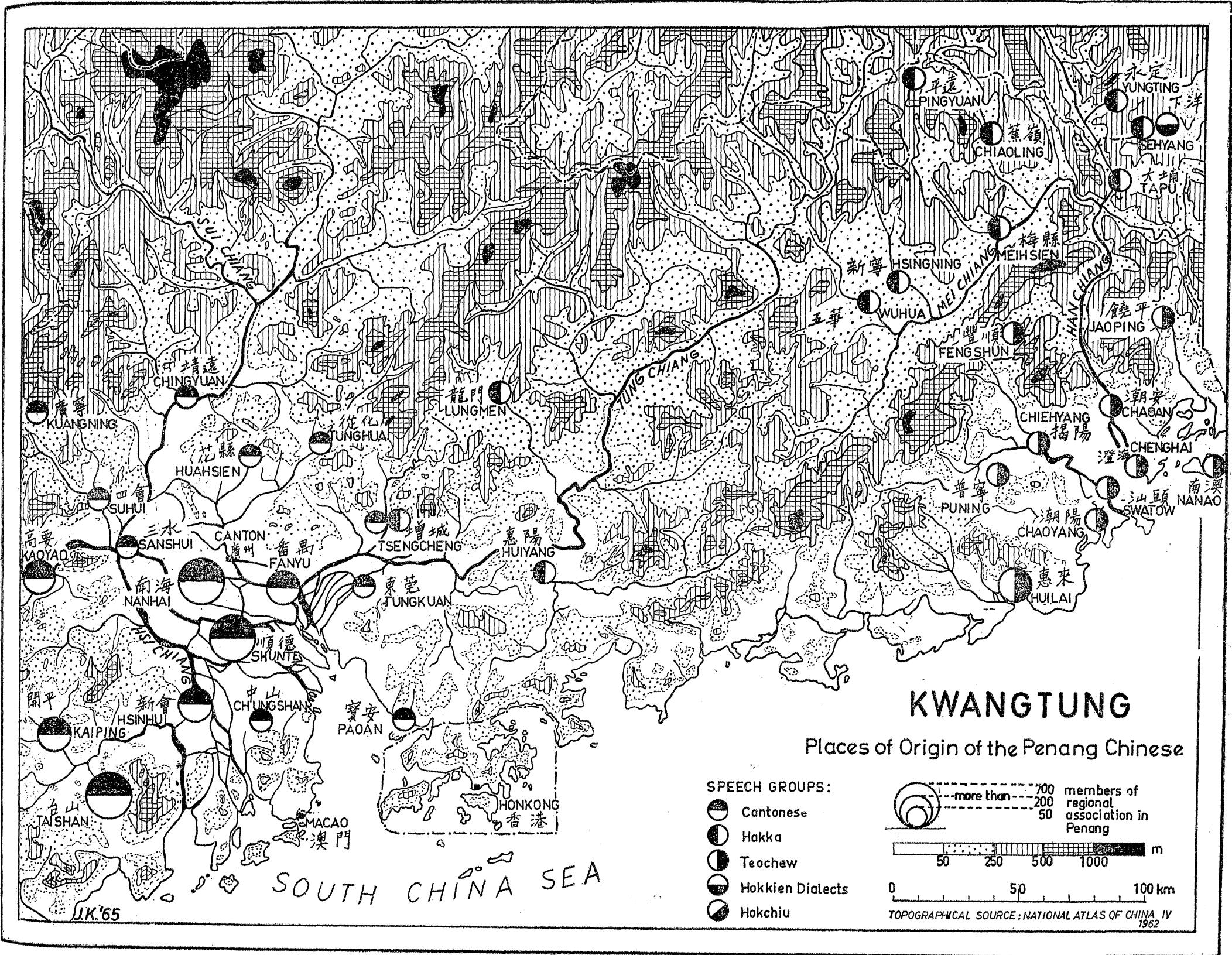
Penang Island and Butterworth, 1962, Malaya 1: 63,360 (1 inch : 1 mile), sheet 28, Survey Department, Federation of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur.

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MAP No. 1: PENANG ISLAND







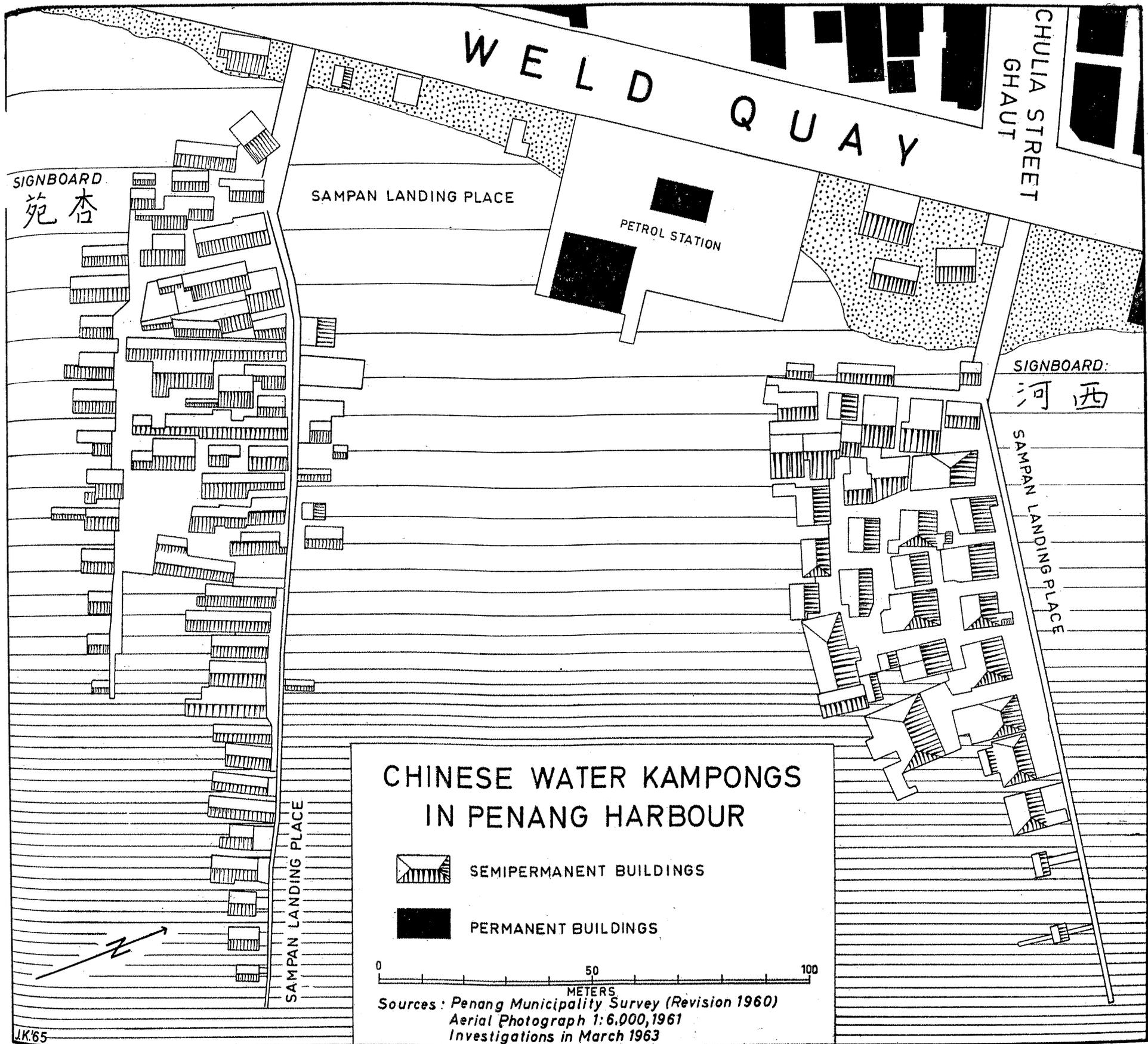


Plate No. 1: Chinese Water *Kampongs* or villages in Penang Harbour

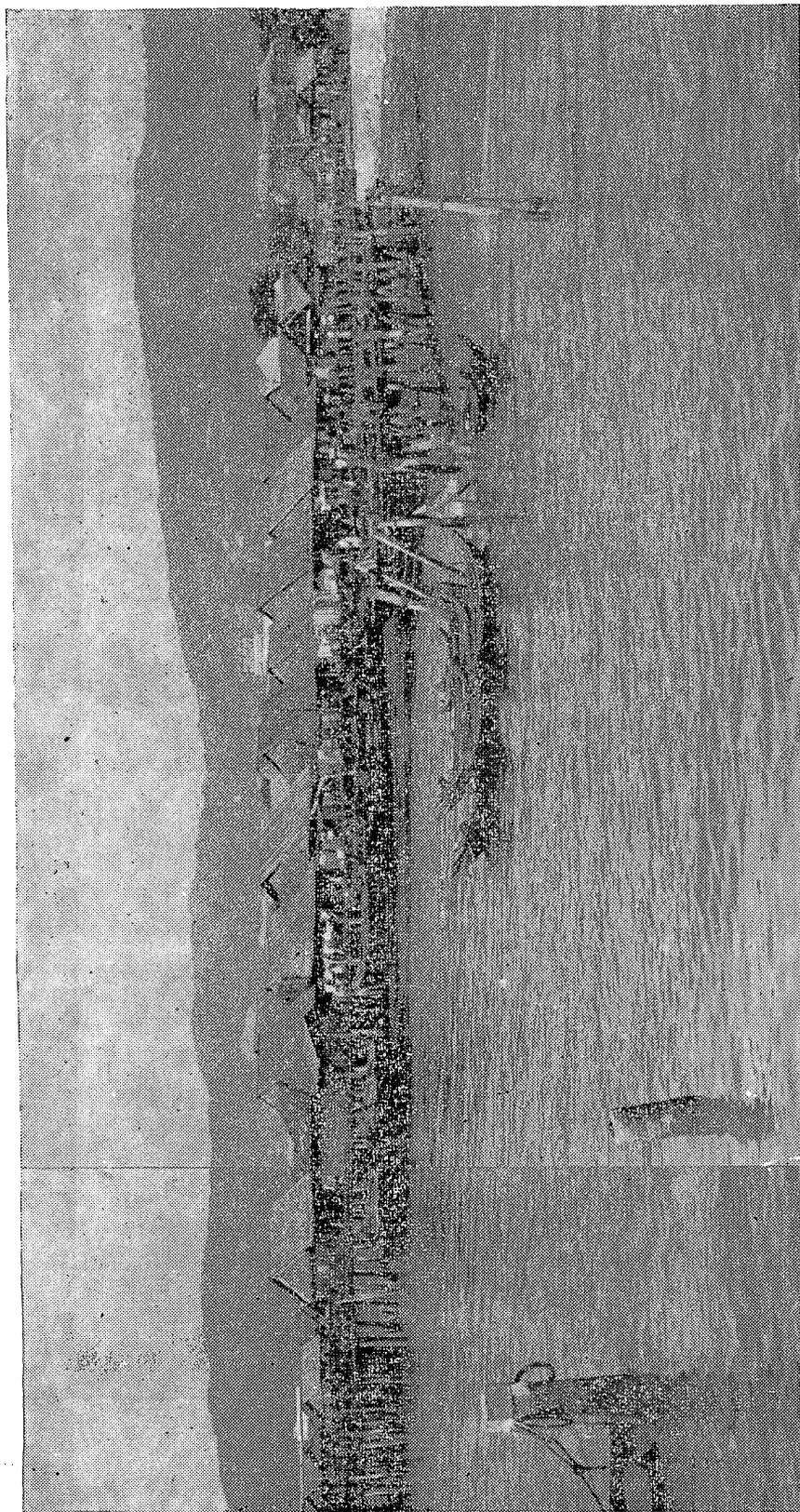


Plate No. 2: Khoo Kongsi at Cannon Square, George Town

