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Kuching Old Bazaar is the oldest and the most crucial community in Sarawak. Apart from being a historically significant political and economic centre, it also possesses a unique cultural heritage value. Today, it is also an important tourist destination.

This proposal by the Kuching Old Bazaar Cultural Mapping Tourism Promotion Programme could not have come at a better time. What makes it more meaningful is that this project is headed by the Kuching Old Market Community Association and executed by locals who are telling the story of Old Bazaar to the world. We also see the incredible amount of talent that emerged from the Old Bazaar. am extremely happy to see all these talented people coming together to do something for the Sarawak cultural and tourism industry.

Be it culture or tourism, its promotion should not be carried out only by people in the industries. In fact, what we urgently need is community participation. Every single person should be a cultural and tourism ambassador, making an effort to get to know their own hometown, and working hard for its progress and development.

It is due to the above driving philosophy that the Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture Sarawak decided to give its unwavering support to the Kuching Old Market Community Association when they presented this project to Us. am extremely heartened by the dedication demonstrated by the Kuching Old Bazaar Cultural Mapping Tourism Promotion team. Despite all the challenges posed to them by the Covid-19 pandemic, they could still complete their mission within the limited time. Indeed, can truly feel their love and passion for their home.

In this book, Kuching Old Bazaar's history and the residents' oral records of their lives are presented in two languages. This is probably the first ever book about Kuching's way of life in the early days. The precious information in here will definitely become future references. am especially delighted that we can overcome the language barriers and read more about the stories of the Chinese community. These are all our precious heritage. truly believe that when the tourists return after the pandemic, Kuching Old Bazaar will have a different story to tell.

would like to thank all those that have worked hard for Sarawak, and also want to congratulate the Kuching Old Market Community Association on their 25th anniversary.

KAPITAN LIM CHUAN CHAN ABS

Chairman of Kuching Old Market Community Association

The Kuching Old Bazaar is not only the oldest district of Sarawak it is also our homes, the repository of our memories, the place where our ancestors left their footprints.

From its conception to realisation, the Kuching Old Bazaar Cultural Mapping Tourism Promotion Programme is indebted to a great many people. Despite obstacles posed by the Covid-19 pandemic, we were able to carry out our mission thanks to the collective effort of the people involved.

The Kuching Old Bazaar Cultural Mapping Tourism Promotion Programme is a timely opportunity to comprehensively research the history of the Old Bazaar. We have done so by conducting surveys, gathering historical datas and documenting the oral accounts of those who have lived here. The publication of this book is a major part of the project. In addition, we are producing documentaries, designing trail maps and pamphlets, installing heritage plaques, creating murals, setting up the Kuching Old Bazaar website and more. Through these efforts, it is our hope that more people vvsitors and locals alike- will be introduced to the rich history and heritage of the Old Bazaar.

am grateful to Datuk Haji Abdul Karim Rahman Hamzah and the Ministry of Tourism, Arts, Culture, Youth and Sports Sarawak for their support; to the board members of the Kuching Old Market Community Association, including Mr. J. C. Chua, deputy secretary of the Association as well as the coordinator of the programme; to the project manager and Old Bazaar culture-history writer Mr Chai Kit Siang and his team; to Dr Elena Chai Chin Fern of UNIMAS and her team; and to the local residents, media and various individuals who offered their assistance.

This is just the beginning of a year-long project. trust that as more people will be interested in the Kuching Old Bazaar and contribute to its welfare, this historical community -so full of nostalgia and cultural memories will see new vibrancy and a lively future.

## THE GOLDEN ERA OF KUCHING OLD BAZAAR

Determining exactly when Kuching started to be inhabited and when it became a place is a daunting task. There are, however, existing data and records that can be used to examine the situation in Kuching 200 years ago.

## RECORDS ABOUT OLD BAZAAR

According to Elizabeth Pollard in her book *Kuching Past and Present* (1972), some ancient Belian wood tombstones found in 1830 in the area behind the Astana provide evidence of the presence of Brunei nobles around the 1820s. The Kuching Kwong Wai Siew Association's record mentions a Cantonese pioneer Lau Chek and his compatriots arriving in Kuching around the 1820s and engaging in farming and small businesses for quite some time. Lau Chek was also officially recognised by the colonial government as the first Chinese to have arrived in Sarawak. He used to trade at the Old Bazaar and was one of the founders of Kwong Wai Siew Association.

When the British explorer James Brooke and his crew arrived in 1839, they noted that in addition to the Malay villages, there were also some 20 Chinese residing in Kuching. They also noted the existence of an old temple on the riverbank, although there was no explicit evidence regarding which old temple this was. Historians generally believe this may have been a reference to the Tua Pek Kong temple and if so, this may be the earliest written record for the Tua Pek Kong temple. However, the actual year the temple was constructed remains an unsolved mystery.

When the Anglican bishop, Reverend F. McDougall arrived in Kuching in 1848, his wife Harriette McDougall described the situation of Kuching in detail. Her impression of Kuching at that time gives an indication of its size. She reported, The town of Kuching consisted in those days of a Chinese bazaar and a Kling bazaar, both very small....

## CHINESE ARRIVAL IN KUCHING

By the time Madam Harriette arrived in Kuching, Sarawak was already under the rule of James Brooke and this also coincided with increased emigration of Chinese to Nanyang (or the South Sea). The Chinese migrants sailed from China to Singapore and upon learning about the newly established White Rajah kingdom, they crossed the South China Sea seeking new opportunities in Sarawak.

The Chinese bazaar mentioned by Mdm Harriette was undoubtedly the Old Bazaar, while the Kling bazaar was a combination of Gambier Street and India Street, which later became known as the New Bazaar.

During that time, two major Chinese settlements had formed in Sarawak. The downstream was the Kuching Chinese bazaar while the upstream was the Bau bazaar controlled by Hakka miners. In the beginning, there was peace and harmony between the Brooke government and the upstream Chinese, but the situation deteriorated in the 1850s. The culmination of the dissent ended with the eruption of the famous Bau Chinese Revolt, which ended with thousands losing their lives.

## UPSTREAM AND DOWNSTREAM CHINESE INFLUENCE

A good question is whether the two groups of Chinese, in Kuching and Bau had any historical contacts. With the limited historical records available, the relationship between upstream and downstream Chinese cannot be ascertained in much detail. However, since the Rajah maintained good relationships with Chinese traders in Kuching, it is believed the Rajah also initially forged similar relationships with Bau Chinese and this kept the relationship of the two groups of Chinese in good stead.

In relation to this there are two relatively important records unrelated to trading which are worth mentioning. These records are important as they indicate that there was some sort of relation and communication between the two groups.

In 1856, when the Kuching Tua Pek Kong temple was renovated, a contingent of Bau miners came by boat to Kuching and prayed at the temple to express their wishes for good fortune. Another record tells of a woman by the name of Ah Si Mei who suffered beatings from her husband and who subsequently fell in love with a young miner. The woman and her new lover left Bau and eloped to Kuching where they apparently settled.

Whatever the prior communications were, after the Bau Uprising, it appears there was a clear distinction made between the Kuching Chinese and the Bau Chinese. When the Rajah's forces massacred the Bau miners, the Kuching Chinese were not affected. Following this incident, the Rajah's government became more cautious when dealing with the Chinese, but still relied on them for their trading skills and diligent work attitude. Indeed, the reliance on Chinese traders and labour led to a mass migration of Chinese to Sarawak especially during the second Rajah's reign. This trade and labour was a driving force for the economic development of Sarawak.

Recognizing the contributions of the Chinese on more than one occasion, the second Rajah, Charles Brooke in 1883 publicly pointed out that, Without the Chinamen we can do nothing

by Ho

## OLD BAZAAR VS NEW BAZAAR e

The name of the Bazaar comes from the Malay term Pasar for market or bazaar. Ever-adaptable, the Chinese migrants adopted the usage of Pasar (E b sh) into daily language. The century old Kuching Old Street area was divided into the Old Bazaar and the New Bazaar with the two divided by the Old Court House.

The original bazaar started with the Main Bazaar located along the river and then spread with the formation of other streets and alleys in the 1860s. In the 1880s, under the second Rajah, development began on the other side of the Old Court House where Indian Muslims and Javanese settlements were originally located. This is when the names of Gambier Street, India Street started to appear. The wet market was also moved to the riverbank of Gambier Street.

People started to call the area around India and Gambier Streets the New Bazaar with the area along Main Bazaar remaining as the Old Bazaar.

STREETS AND PLACES  
WITH ITS INTERESTING OLD STORIES



One has only to look at the names of the streets to get a hint about the history and industry of the old part of town. Naturally, the longer the street has been in existence, the richer the stories associated with that street. The century-old streets and alleys in the Old Bazaar developed in an ad hoc manner before the existence of proper town planning. Likewise, in the earlier years, the streets did not have uniform names. The street names often reflected a point of reference among the local folks and the official names that appeared later are all important records worthy of note. This section attempts to combine information gathered from the collective memory and oral history of early Kuching Old Bazaar dwellers and also from official records. Deciphering these stories and records was not an easy task given that there are more than 20 names for the 10 streets in Kuching Old Bazaar!

## MAIN BAZAAR T

Kuching Old Bazaar was a very typical business district where the Chinese traders, Malay, Dayak and European customers frequented. In the early years, before the development of other outlying areas, the Old Bazaar was the main trading center. This was also how the name Main Bazaar was derived. People came to this street to trade and sell. All the local barter trades as well as the import and export activities with Singapore and beyond were dependent on its wharf.

Since the earlier years Main Bazaar was equivalent to the Old Bazaar, shop owners often used Old Bazaar as their corresponding address. However, following the various Chinese dialects, the streets also had a few other names depending on the dialect group. The earlier Hokkien settlers called the area Gang Gi (7)) meaning "by the river". The Teochew used the term Soon Hong Street ( because there used to be a Soon Hong Kongsì ( belonging to the Teochew. In the first half of 20th century, some people even used the term Hai Qian Street ( thought to be an influence from Singapore or Malaya. Around the 1960s, the name Hai Chun Street ( became a rather fixed name for Main Bazaar. The word Hai Chun is believed to have originated from the Hakka meaning of "by the river".

Photo Carpenter Street I (Source: Mike Yong)

#### CARPENTER STREET I

The early name of this street was Attap Street (I generally believed to have been derived from the common use of Attap roofing (palm thatch) by most of the shops there. However, among the locals other names also existed such as Bak Kow Street ( or Bak Street ( These names were related to the Teochew Bak Kow Kongsì ( Bak Kow or Bak are pronunciations in the Teochew dialect for wood. Thus, Bak Kow Street echoes the English translation of Carpenter Street when this back lane alley was the domain of carpentry.

#### EWE HAI STREET A

Photo: Ewe Hai Street i (Source: Chai Yu

The shophouses along this street were built by Ong Ewe Hai (E in 1886. He was one of Sarawak's Hokkien pioneers and also the first president of the Hockien Kongsì ( He was also appointed the first Chinese Kapitan (community leader) of Sarawak. Ong Ewe Hai came to Sarawak from Singapore in 1864 and in the beginning, he was just a boat trader (7k of goods. As time progressed he ventured into local products trade and also import and export trade. In 1884, he managed to obtain the licence for the government's Farm Tax System and from there acquired a lot of wealth. The descendants of Ong family include Ong Tiang Swee Ek,k, Ong Kwan Hin EX Ong Kee Hui Et and Ong Tiang Swee's son-in-law, Wee Kheng Chiang who were all influential leaders in politics and trades.

## 1: E (Source: Chai Yu (

### CHINA STREET

Among the streets of Kuching Old Bazaar, China Street is also referred to as Central Street ( The reason for this is not truly known and "Central Street" most likely referred to the center position it occupies at the Old Bazaar.

As for the name China Street (()) this is often linked to the Cantonese pioneer, Lau Chek (X Lau Chek is officially recognised by the government as the first Chinese settler to have arrived in Sarawak. He and his compatriots were already actively conducting trading and farming activities in the Satok area in the 1820s. According to a photocopy of the land lease issued by the Brooke government to Lau Chek in 1866, Lau Chek operated the Ju Long Zhi Ji (E shop at present China Street. Given that the whole Old Bazaar area was predominantly Chinese, the appearance of the name "China Street" and how the name was derived, requires further study.

### TEMPLE STREET

Photo: Temple Street (Source: Chai Yu :

The original Kuching river (Sungai Kuching ) used to flow from what is now the Reservoir Park, through the Tua Pek Kong Temple and the old Chinese Chamber of Commerce and into Sarawak River. The creation of the reservoir had subsequently reduced the flow of the river and in 1928 the river was backfilled to allow development with the former river becoming a new street. The street was named Temple Street because the start of the street is where the iconic Tua Pek Kong Temple is located. The temple is one of Sarawak's oldest temples and is believed to have existed since the early 1800s. Written evidence can be found on the temple's pillars dating back to 1856.

## WAYANG STREET

Photo Wayang Street 8: (Source: Chai Yu 33)

Wayang Street, also known as Hua Xiang Street ( used to be an area dominated by the Hokkien. The Hokkien's famous Hong San Si Temple ( is located on the street and every year during the temple deity's birthday celebration, a stage was set up opposite the temple. Crowds, including nearby Malay villagers, flocked enthusiastically to watch the vibrant Hokkien opera. The name wayang could have been acquired from the Malay audience as it is a Malay word. As for the use of Hua Xiang, there are two interpretations. The first interpretation is there was a flowering tree that exudes a fragrance on the street. Another interpretation alluded to the presence of heavily perfumed and make-up women who frequented the area.

According to the inscription on one of the plaques' in the Hong San Si Temple, the street was also called Hock Soon Street (TEN A name believed to be from among the Hokkien. There was also a rather unfortunate unofficial name given to the street. In the early days due to the abundance of cow dung on the street, it was also called Cow Dung Street (

## BISHOPSGATE STREET TH

Photo Bishopgate Street B: F (Source: Chai Yu )

This small cross street forming the junction of Carpenter Street and Ewe Hai Street is also known as Little Side Street (1 or Side Street (T) The street goes from the Main Bazaar to a small gate that once led to the garden of the St. Thomas's Diocese of Kuching. The Bishop and church mission used this gate and street to come to town for meetings and to do their shopping at the bazaar. The gate was naturally called Bishop's Gate and the street took its name from this. In 1993, the government built a road behind the Bishop's gate severing the connection. The gate now serves as an alternative access to Carpenter Street and the Main Bazaar and the once prominent gate is now reduced to its Belian door frame.

### JALAN TUN ABANG HAJI OPENG S

This section of road used to be called Rock Road ( as it led past a large rock named Batu Kinyang ( located one and half miles away. The rock, which juts out of the ground, was believed to be sacred. This stretch of road was the main route used towards the outskirts of Kuching and was also the longest road at that time. When Sarawak joined in the formation of Malaysia in 1963, the first half of Rock Road was renamed after Sarawak's first Governor, Tun Abang Haji Openg.

### UPPER CHINA STREET

Upper China Street is a continuation of China Street Until 1993, this was a dead-end street with a hill slope at the end. Before the 1930s there used to be a well on the street and for this reason, the street is also called Da Jin Xiang ( meaning Big Well Street

### GREEN FU

This street is considered as the greenest or youngest among all streets in Old Bazaar. A relatively recent development the shophouses were built in the 1970s

## OTHER WELL KNOWN LOCAL PLACES

### AO BOI GANG F

#### SA KAK BO E

The street refers to an unnamed small tributary of Kuching River located behind the shophouses of Main Bazaar. In the early years there were small cargo boats plying along this tributary to allow shop owners to load and unload goods through the back doors. The meaning of Ao Boi Gang means River Behind. The river and Kuching River were backfilled to give way to development. Now it is just an unnamed lane between two main streets. Four streets namely Wayang Street, Temple street, Tabuan Road and McDougall Road meet at a traffic intersection in the shape of a triangle. Thus rendering locals to name the place as Sa Kak Bo (Triangle Ground). It was a place for the local to spend leisure time and a playground for children. For a while, a roundabout was designed at the ground and inside the roundabout there was a playground.

### QI ZANG SENG M

From the 1900 geographical perspective, Padang Merdeka was then the backwater area where not many would frequent. It was not too far away from the Chinese cemetery. Around 1870s, the second Rajah developed the area for the purpose of building Kuching Recreational Ground. This place became Kuching's first public garden. There were seven old ficus trees in the ground where the local Chinese called the place as Qi Zang Seng. Hokkien (ficus) and 'M2'

and Teochew dialects pronounce the (Pine) as Seng which gave the place a transliterated name, Qi Zang Seng or Seven Pines. Some shops located opposite the Post Office on Old Rock Road used to write their address as shop number xx, Qi Zang Seng and the postal office recognised the rightful address. Padang Merdeka were also called as Council Square and Central Padang (Central Square) in the past.

### PEK KONG NIA 122

The Tua Pek Kong temple is located on the slope of Bukit Mata Kuching, overlooking the Sarawak River and facing Gunung Serapi in the west. In the earlier years, there was a small trail by the side of the temple slope known as Pek Kong Nia (Pek Kong Hill). Under the second Rajah, the hill was opened up for development to connect to Padungan Road. When the development of the hill was announced, a commotion erupted among the local Chinese because they fear the Rajah had intentionally aim to destroy the feng shui of the temple, which could ruin the luck and prosperity of the Kuching Chinese community.

THE FOUR INSTITUTIONS OF CHINESE SOCIETY  
TEMPLES, ASSOCIATIONS, COMMERCE AND SCHOOLS



Upon arrival in Nanyang, it was a common custom for Chinese migrants to set up small altars to honour the deities of their hometowns. Prayers were dedicated to express their gratefulness for the safe voyage. Thereafter, blessings and protections were continuously sought after to help with success with their new life in the foreign land.

Over the years, the old temples in Kuching Old Bazaar were set up by the various dialect groups. These include the Hong San Si Temple ( by the Hokkien, the Hiang Thian Siang Ti Temple ( by the Teochew, the Hin Ho Bio Temple ( by the Hainanese, and the Kuan Ti Temple ( by the Cantonese. All these temples were built in the mid-19th century. Another temple under the management of the five association clans known as Kuching Chinese Community Charitable Trust Board is the Tua Pek Kong temple )E.. The Tua Pek Kong temple is the oldest temple in Sarawak and possibly dates back to as early as 1820. Apart from the Kuan Ti Temple which had moved together with its affiliated Kuching Kwong Wai Siew Association all the other temples remain at the Old Bazaar.

Temples were the place of gathering for migrants of all dialect groups. As the number of migrants increased, associations became a necessity. These associations adopted the model of the Chinese village communities to manage and handle the affairs of migrants from the same hometown. By the early 20th century, some of these associations had even set up learning centres within their buildings, and one could hear students reciting their lines amidst the hustle and bustle at Carpenter Street.

ESTABLISHMENT  
SCHOOL  
YEAR OF  
SCHOOL  
FOUNDING

TEMPLE

VENUE

NAME

FORMER

YEAR

FOUNDING

THE SIX CENTENARY CHINESE ASSOCIATIONS OF KUCHING OLD BAZAAR

Yik Kuan School

Kuan Ti Temple

Carpenter Street

ASSOCIATION

KWONG WAI SIEW

1918

1854

Min Teck School

Hiang Thian Siang Ti Temple L m

Soon Hong Kongsig [T]

ASSOCIATION

TEDCHEW

Main Bazaar

1916

1863

Hong San Si Temple LL

HOCKIEN

Hockien School

Wayang Street C 2-1

Hockien Kongsig HEE a

ASSOCIATION

1912

1871

KAYIN COMMUNITY

Gong Min School

Carpenter Street at

ASSOCIATION

Jin Foh Guan AV FntE

1874

1918

Kheng Kiaw School

Hin Ho Bio Temple

Carpenter Street

T8 4

ASSOCIATION

HAINAN

Kheng Chew Association

1885

1930

4

ASSOCIATION

TAI POO

Tai Tung School

Carpenter Street

Puyi Gong Suo

1916

1923

The table above lists the six main centenary Chinese associations in Kuching and their respective temples and schools. The associations also helped to handle matters pertaining to their members' incoming and return journeys care and lodging for the needy either at the association building or subsidiary buildings. Each associations also had their own cemetery, known as Kongsu Sua ( Kongsu means association and Sua means hill or mountain. The association served as a form of welfare and security support for the village folks.

Significantly, after the World War II, the Chinese associations began to centralise the organisation of the schools. This was the beginning of the Kuching Chung Hua Primary and Secondary Schools.

There were also other dialect associations at the Old Bazaar. The Lui Chiu Association, established in 1940 and formerly known as the Lui Yang Association was located at Carpenter Street. Although there were not many Lui Chiu people in Kuching, they dominated the charcoal industry from the early days. Other associations such as the Foochow Association and the Chao Ann Association were also located at Old Bazaar in the past.

The trade related associations only emerged later. Among the earliest of the trade associations was the Kuching Hairdressers' Association at Bishopsgate Street formed in 1934; the Chinese Grocers' Association at Main Bazaar was formed in 1937, and the United Merchants' Association formed in 1940. More trade associations appeared after the war, including the Kuching Coffee Shops' Union, Kuching Wharf Labourers' Union, Kuching United Hawkers' Association, Kuching Shoemakers' Union, Kuching Tinsmiths' Union, Sarawak Dental Association, etc.

In 1897, the Chinese traders in Kuching established the Kuching Chinese Chamber of Commerce, which operated for about 20 years until the emergence of the Chinese General Chamber of Commerce in 1930.

As the earliest and only business district in Kuching back then, the Old Bazaar produced many prominent traders. The influence played by the various dialect groups in expanding the economy has been enormous since the 19th century. This influence extended from the establishment of the living environment to the trading areas. The Hokkien and Teochew being the largest group at that time probably yielded the most influence and were instrumental in progressively driving the economy and the development of the city since the Old Bazaar era.

## TRADE ACTIVITIES AT KUCHING OLD BAZAAR 1

The historical Kuching Old Bazaar was the center of trading and the start of a flourishing Sarawak. From the earlier Malay kampungs to a place where the Chinese conducted sporadic trade activities, to a busy market center, Kuching developed from a village to a town and to a city. The two hundred years of trade activities that started in the Old Bazaar propelled economic development over time.

The Old Bazaar was also a multi-ethnic place where different groups co-existed and lived. The Malay and Dayak also had close business relationships with shopkeepers of the Old Bazaar. In the early days, even though the shops of Old Bazaar included shops from all dialect groups, the Hokkien and Teochew were the most numerous. These two dialect groups were responsible for considerable economical strength and influence in the historical past of the Old Bazaar.

To better understand how the economy functioned it is necessary to examine several of the trade models employed at the Old Bazaar. These models provide some insights on how the towkays (bosses) of different generations and backgrounds established their trade foundations and wealth.

## BOAT TRADE AAR

In Singapore 1846, 16-year-old Ong Ewe Hai, whose ancestry hailed from Tong Ann, Fujian, heard of the newly instituted White Rajah of Sarawak and his efforts to build up the young nation. He set out across the South China Sea to Kuching in search of new opportunities. With his partners, the young man rowed his sampan along the Sarawak River at dawn, buying local jungle produce from the natives to sell in Singapore. From Singapore he returned to Kuching with other products for sale and trade. From this simple beginning, Ong Ewe Hai's family later became one of Sarawak's three most prominent families.

Ong Ewe Hai was not the first to profit from the boat trade business. There were other Chinese boat traders who were already actively involved in ferrying goods between Kuching and Singapore. The boat traders also functioned as mail delivery men a profitable business during that time. With the growth of business volume, boat traders like Ong Ewe Hai chose Kuching to be their base and opened up shops from which to run their expanding trade activities.

Believed to date before 1860, the Main Bazaar was the nucleus of the Old Bazaar. No clear records exist about the Chinese shops at that time, however due to the sparse population during that time, it can be speculated that what was available was sold. Thus grocery shops became the earliest and most common trade.

The early grocery shops offered a mlang of goods as well as services like money changing and letter writing. However, the major source of income remained the trading of jungle and agricultural products. During the 19th and early 20th centuries. these products included cash crops like gambier, pepper and sago as well as a variety of jungle products like agarwood, camphor, rattan. engkabang, wild ox hide, horns of hornbills and jelutong. Around World War II, products like coconut, gula apong. garam apong and rubber also rose to popularity. More niche products like belacan, cincalok and a plant material used for hair care known as nang ngin khak were also stocked.

In addition to supplies from larger scale plantation investments, the jungle and agricultural products were also supplied by the Malay and Dayak from the surrounding villages. These dealings helped to foster strong and lasting friendships between the indigenous communities and the Chinese towkays. A common trading workflow was the Malay and Dayak from the outskirts or coastal areas paddle their sampan loaded with products collected from the jungle or their farms to Kuching Old Bazaar. The products were either sold to the towkays or barter traded for needed daily items stocked in the shops. At the same time, intermediary traders regularly visited the grocery shops to purchase higher value jungle products such as rubber sheets, pepper, gula apong, jelutong etc. for export to Singapore. The Hokkien traders excelled in this form of export trade and reaped economic benefits during the peak time. The success in trade consolidated the overall economic strength of the Hokkien.

In a study conducted by historian Dr Tien Ju-K'ang, on the Chinese of Kuching in 11144 1948 and 1949, it was estimated that over 70 of grocery shops were owned by Teochew and Hokklen. From the 1965 Kuching Trade Yearbook, the records show that there were some 58 grocery shops on Kuching Old Bazaar, spread across Main Bazaar, Carpenter Street, China Street, Wayang Street and Ewe Hai Street.

In terms of numbers, the Teochew owned slightly more grocery shops than the Hokkien. The Teochew called such shops as Kim Kuei Tiam (in Teochew) written officially as "R".. Their trade association was known as The Chinese Grocers' Assocation (75 M but the origin on the usage of " is unknown. According to Johor writer, Lu Su Bo (fil 1Ea) in his Johor Bahru's downtown and its disappearing Teochew traders (BTLL 10 700 vi) the origin of the term "T was searched through all resources but to no avail. It could possibly be a Teochew term.

The main cash crops valued by Chinese traders were as follows:

CASH CROPS !

PERIOD

GAMBIER

Mid 19th To Early 20th Century

SAGO

Mid 19th To Mid 20th Century

PEPPER

Mid 19th To Early 20th Century 10

RUBBER

Early To Mid-20th Century

20



## CRAFTSMANSHIP TRADE ITTY

In addition to the grocery shops, craftsmanship trade also occupied a significant position at the Old Bazaar. For example, Carpenter Street, as its name indicates, was a place occupied by numerous carpentry shops. Spreading across China Street and Bishopsgate Street were the Tai Poo Hakka with their tinsmith shops. There were about 20 of such shops in operation since the early 20th century. During the same span of time, there were also a number of dental clinics, which mainly carried out tooth extractions and the fabrication of dentures.

Before World War II, there were also a number of other skilled trade shops operating including: wooden clog shops, shoe shops, watch shops, tailor shops, weighing scale shops, sauce making shops etc. Wary of the saying hunger breeds discontentment, numerous coffee shops owned by Hainanese were also all over the streets of Old Bazaar ensuring that discontentment was kept to a minimum.

## FARM SYSTEM FF!

Kuching Old Bazaar produced many tycoons who were not only skilful in trading but also management and their fortunes were also closely related to the Farm Tax system. This system, under license from the Rajah's Government, largely monopolised the opium, liquor, gambling and pawn trades.

Widely used in colonial Southeast Asia by the British and Dutch, tax farming was an economic system in which the government contracts private individuals to collect taxes on select goods, a portion of which they are allowed to keep. This position of tax farmer, awarded through open bidding, contributed to the rise of many powerful Chinese clan leaders and created much strife among the Chinese society in the 19th century.

Recognising its efficiency and profitability, the Brooke government introduced the tax farming system to Sarawak. Ghee Soon Company under Law Kian Huat, one of the three richest men in Sarawak, and Sim Ah Nio won the first auction in 1867 and soon rose to become the largest trade corporation in Sarawak. At its height, the company controlled over a hundred trade operations across the Old Bazaar, among which opium was the most profitable. The Ghee Soon Company went into decline following the devastating 1884 Great Fire of Kuching, but its model of success was taken up by Ong Ewe Hai, who won the next tax farming bid and soon founded his own business empire. Others who benefited from the system included Yeo Guan Chow of Ban Hock Company and Khoo Hun Yeang. The tax farming system began to decline in use during the early 20th century due to postwar bans on opium and gambling by the British crown colony government.

## THE GOLDEN ERA R

The postwar economic boom signalled a new era for Old Bazaar. New modes of transport brought more customers, while advances in shipping opened Sarawak to the wider world. Cargo ships connected Kuching not only to Singapore but also Hong Kong in the 1960s and goods began to be imported from China in the 1970s, bringing more competitive prices and robust international trade.

A rapidly growing financial sector saw not only the establishment of foreign banks but also the emergence of local capital banks, predominated by the Cantonese and Hokkien. For entrepreneurs, easier financing through local banks meant more opportunities to set up and expand their businesses.

New commercial and residential areas sprung up due to the development in the construction industry. Since the 1970s, commerce in Kuching has expanded steadily outwards, from the Old to New Bazaar and further to towns, which were once on the outskirts. Today, the businesses are also following the global trend and entering the network world to expand their business territories. Looking back on the changes of trade businesses over the past century, we can describe it as an unrelenting transformation with the flow of time.

While the Old Market of present day is still home to many of the traditional trades, new shops have made their way into the Old Market such as shopping malls, cafs, western restaurants, bars, creativity shops, souvenirs shops, etc. These changes were inevitable for the old district and also a response to the introduction of tourism. In the foreseeable future, it is highly likely that the fate of the Old Bazaar will be closely tied to the development of the tourism industry.

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Francis McDougall, with his wife Harriette and others of the Borneo Mission, set out from London on the barque Mary Louisa at the end of December 1847. According to Harriette's account, during the trying six-month journey the passengers learned Malay and the Jawi script with the aid of a dictionary and a Malay Bible translated by the Dutch.

The Anglican Diocese, located behind Kuching Old Bazaar, is the oldest church in Sarawak. In 1847, the Rajah James Brooke with the help of friends in England chose Reverend Francis McDougall to lead the mission to Borneo. Born in 1817, the Anglican priest and surgeon was to leave an indelible mark on the history of Sarawak.

After their arrival in Kuching, the mission lodged at a wooden house left behind by a German missionary (on the site of the present Old Courthouse). During high tides, the river flowed under the raised house and drove swarms of ants up the posts and into the house. According to Harriette's account, this menace was fended off with kettles full of hot water.

The McDougalls soon made acquaintance of the local Malays and Dayaks and had the chance to practice their Malay language skills. They also took in from the street a few wandering children between the ages of two and a half to six years old who had been abandoned by their parents. Harriette provided care and education and these children became the foundation for future schools.

A large piece of hill land of about 40 acres behind Carpenter Street was given by James Brooke to the Anglican mission. Under the assistance of a German carpenter, the bishop's house, cathedral and school were built. The house was the first to be completed, and it was not only the residence for the McDougalls but also a clinic and a school.

Not far from the bishop's house was St Thomas's Cathedral, a lofty wooden Gothic-styled church. The present cathedral was erected in 1956 next to the old one, which was dismantled once the new building was finished.

THE CATHEDRAL AND THE BISHOP'S HOUSE E I K