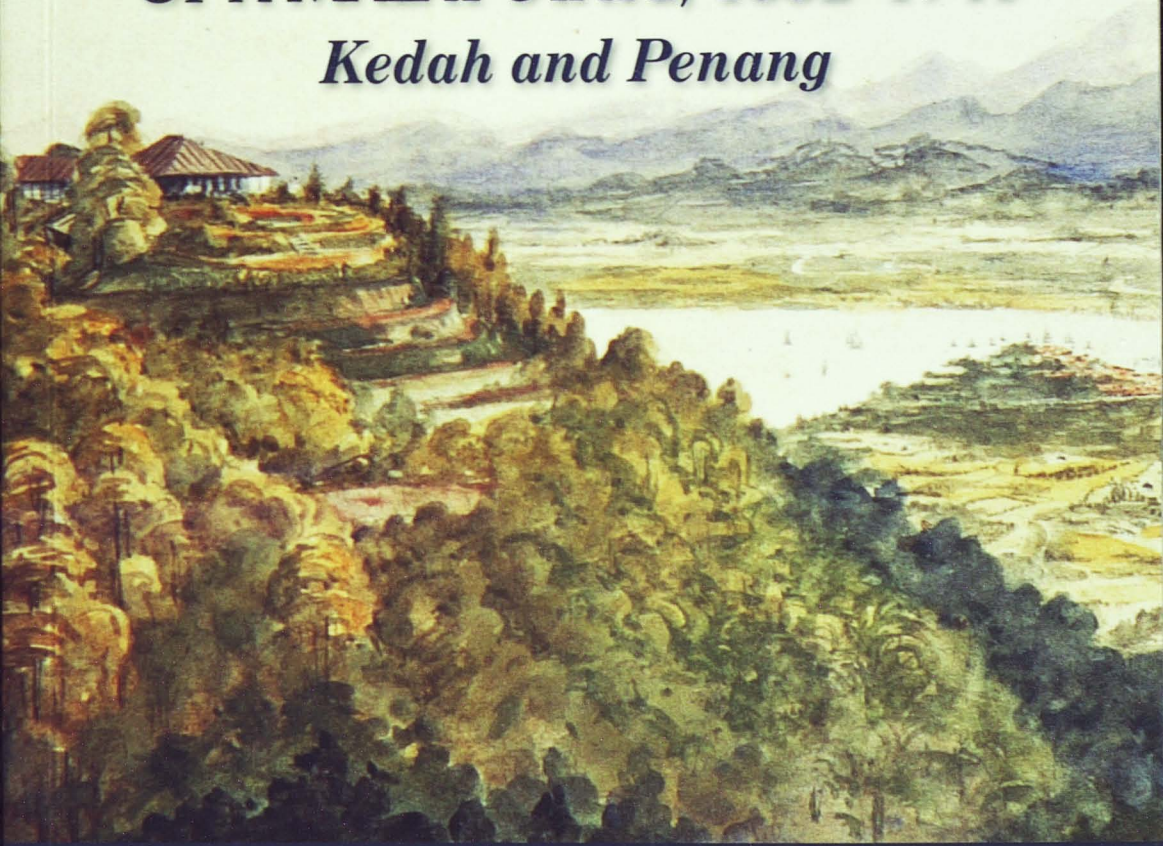


WU XIAO AN

CHINESE BUSINESS IN THE MAKING  
OF A MALAY STATE, 1882-1941

*Kedah and Penang*



NEW EDITION



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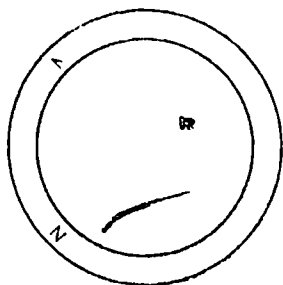
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*Wu Xiao An*



PUSTAKA PERDANA



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NUS PRESS  
SINGAPORE

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First published in 2003 by RoutledgeCurzon  
Revised edition published in 2010 by:

NUS Press  
National University of Singapore  
AS3-01-02, 3 Arts Link  
Singapore 117569

Fax: 65 6774-0652  
E-mail: nusbooks@nus.edu.sg  
Website: <http://www.nus.edu.sg/nuspress>

ISBN 978-9971-69-496-8 (Paper)

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**National Library Board Singapore Cataloguing in Publication Data**

Wu, Xiao An, 1965–

Chinese business in the making of a Malay state, 1882 1941 Kedah and Penang / Wu Xiao An. New ed Singapore NUS Press, c2010 p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN-13: 978-9971-69-496-8 (pbk.)

1. Chinese Malaysia Kedah Economic conditions. 2 Chinese Malaysia Pinang Economic conditions. 3 Business and politics Malaysia Kedah History. 4 Business and politics Malaysia Pinang History. 5. Business networks Malaysia Kedah History 6. Business networks Malaysia Pinang History 7. Kedah History 8. Pinang History. I. Title.

DS595.2.C5

959.5004951 dc22

OCN501720470

Cover image: *Panoramic View of Penang* by Charles Dyce (National University of Singapore Museum Collection)

Typeset by: Scientifik Graphics Singapore Pte Ltd  
Printed by: Print Dynamics S Pte Ltd

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## *Preface to the New Edition*

AS THE TITLE SUGGESTS, THIS BOOK EXAMINES how four apparently separate thematic frameworks are combined to analyze developments in Kedah and Penang between 1882 and 1941. These obvious geographic and temporal boundaries are transcended in the emphasis on two dimensions: the role of a people, the Chinese, and family business networks. The analysis focuses on the interlocking analytical levels of family, community, ethnicity, state, and region. All these elements, actors, and relationships are integrated through an examination of the role of Chinese business, state formation and the transformation of Southeast Asia. In this preface to the paperback edition, I would like to indicate some of the relevant literature which has appeared since the book's initial publication by Routledge in 2003. The updates include works of geography, thematic subject and theoretical relevance, rather than being confined to the specific locality and fixed time frame set in my book. At least three clusters can be identified.

First, let me start from Penang and Kedah. To my best knowledge, no major monograph on the Chinese in Kedah has appeared recently, but there has been exciting progress in studies of the Penang Chinese community, notably Wong's on the big five families,<sup>1</sup> Goh's on dialect community organizations,<sup>2</sup> and Debernardi's on religion and identity.<sup>3</sup> The first two are fascinating new PhD dissertations in history, defended at the Australian National University and the National University of Singapore respectively; each complemented the other in terms of language, focus and time frame. Wong's unpublished English dissertation concentrates on the big five Hokkien families in the period of 1800s–1900s, a difficult theme given the usual lack of sources, while Goh's published

Chinese book goes beyond Wong's family approach and focuses on the significant dialect groups and cross-bang community organizations in the transition period of 1900–20, especially those of Chinese Town Hall and Chinese Chamber of Commerce. The third monograph is a long-awaited and wonderful publication by Debernardi, the result of over 30 years' research, on the very specific and significant subject of religion and identity in the Chinese community of Penang. At this point, I should add Sharon's excellent study of the Chinese community in Malaysia,<sup>4</sup> not only because of the authors' common anthropological background, but also because of their similar concern with changing culture and identity over decades.

The second cluster transcends Penang and considers the surrounding region; this I divide into two categories – the first being monographs and the second, conference proceedings. In the former, Nordin's work on Dutch Malacca and British Penang and King's study of Center and Periphery discourse in the central peninsular zone deserve mention, while in the latter, Motesano and Jory's collection examines Penang's interactions in Southern Thailand and Northern Malaya, while Yeoh *et al.*'s analyzes her function as an entrepôt.<sup>6</sup> The former two use a comparative methodology across geographical, ethnic and political boundaries, while the latter address the same region with complementary approaches. Moving beyond the Penang-centered region, Tagliacozzo's book deserves special attention; this masterly study considers contraband trade and state formation along a colonial Southeast Asian frontier.<sup>7</sup> All these are solid cross-border monographs that open new terrain in Southeast Asian history.

Thirdly, on the larger thematic subject and theoretical concerns, I should pinpoint at least three solid works of particular methodological significance and comparative relevance: White's on British business in post-colonial Malaya,<sup>8</sup> Kuhn's on Chinese emigration in modern times and Wong's on transnational and cross-disciplinary study of modern China and Nanyang Chinese.<sup>9</sup> Although White's recent research is a continuation of his own earlier project, in terms of subject matter and time frame, it also has significant comparative relevance to Chinese business in the colonial period. The other two publications, by East Asian historians Kuhn and Wong, confirm the theoretical importance and necessity of supra-regional, trans-ethnic and cross-disciplinary boundaries. Kuhn not only places Chinese emigration in terms of a long-term historical process and worldwide perspective; but also in terms of a multi-ethnic context