

Early History of **PENANG**

Editor
Muhammad Haji Salleh

Translators
Leelany Ayob
Ng Wai Queen

9.5113
EAR

Early History of **PENANG**

TUN DR. MAHATHIR MOHAMAD

Early History of **PENANG**

Editor

Muhammad Haji Salleh

Translators

Leelany Ayob

Ng Wai Queen

PENERBIT
USM

PENERBIT UNIVERSITI SAINS MALAYSIA
PULAU PINANG

PUSTAKA PERDANA



1010649

Distributors:

The Universiti Sains Malaysia Co-operative Bookshop Ltd.
Universiti Sains Malaysia
11800 USM Pulau Pinang
Malaysia

MPH Distributors Sdn. Bhd.

© Penerbit Universiti Sains Malaysia, 2012

Perpustakaan Negara Malaysia Cataloguing-in-Publication Data

Early history of Penang / editor Muhammad Haji Salleh; translators

Leelany Ayob, Ng Wai Queen

Includes index

Bibliography: pp. 87-94

ISBN 978-983-861-524-2

1. Pulau Pinang—History 18th century.
 2. Pulau Pinang—Politics and government.
 3. Pulau Pinang—Economic conditions 18th century. I. Muhammad Haji Salleh, 1942-. II. Leelany Ayob. III. Ng, Wai Queen.
- 959.5113 DS598.P3

Typeset in: ACaslon Regular

Penerbit Universiti Sains Malaysia
(Universiti Sains Malaysia Press)
11800 USM Pulau Pinang, Malaysia

Copy Editor: Nur Naimah Jaafar
Cover Designer: Ahmad Fitri Ramli
Proofreader: Wan Mahanum Abdullah
Typesetter: Noraini Md Isa

Printed by Sinaran Bros. Sdn. Bhd., 389 Lebu Chulia, 10200 Pulau Pinang, Malaysia

Contents

LIST OF PHOTOGRAPHS, MAPS AND TABLES	vii
TRANSLATORS' ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	ix
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	x
FOREWORD	xi
CHAPTER 1 ARCHAEOLOGY: EARLY SETTLEMENTS IN SEBERANG PERAI AND PENANG ISLAND	1
Mokhtar Saidin	
1.1 Introduction	1
1.2 Ancient Seberang Perai and Penang Island	2
1.3 Seberang Perai and Penang Island in Malaysian Archaeology	5
1.4 Archaeological Evidences in Seberang Perai and Penang Island	5
1.5 Guar Kepah Prehistoric Site	6
1.5.1 Guar Kepah's culture and dating	9
1.5.2 Early inhabitants of Guar Kepah	11
1.6 Other Archaeological Evidences in Seberang Perai and Penang Island	13
1.6.1 Cherok Tok Kun inscriptions	14
1.6.2 Buddhagupta inscriptions	15
1.7 Conclusion	16
CHAPTER 2 EARLY HISTORY: PENANG BEFORE 1786	17
Mahani Musa	
2.1 Introduction	17
2.2 The Separation of Penang from the Kedah Sultanate	17
2.3 Who Founded Penang?	20
2.4 Haji Mohammad Salleh (Nakhoda Intan), Datok Janatun and Batu Uban	24
2.5 Malay Pioneers during the Time of Francis Light	29
2.6 Conclusion	31

CHAPTER 3	EARLY HISTORY OF SEBERANG PERAI	32
	Mahani Musa	
3.1	Introduction	32
3.2	Seberang Perai Before 1800	33
3.3	“As Long as the Sun and Moon Shine” – Is Seberang Perai Ceded to the British in Perpetuity?	34
3.4	Seberang Perai and the Siamese Invasion of 1821	39
3.5	Seberang Perai After 1842	43
3.6	Leadership and Society	43
3.7	The Socioeconomic Situation	46
3.8	Conclusion	48
CHAPTER 4	MALAY LANGUAGE (BAHASA MELAYU): ITS EARLY HISTORY AND VARIATION IN PENANG	50
	Noriah Mohamed	
4.1	Introduction	50
4.2	The Population and Sociolinguistic Profile of Penang Before and After Francis Light’s Arrival	51
4.2.1	High Malay language	56
4.2.2	The pure Malay language (Penang dialect)	63
4.2.3	The Straits Settlements’ colloquial Malay language	72
4.3	Conclusion	80
END WORD		81
APPENDICES		83
BIBLIOGRAPHY		87
CONTRIBUTORS		95
INDEX		97

List of Photographs, Maps and Tables

PHOTOGRAPHS

Photo 1.1	Locations of the shell middens in Guar Kepah	8
Photo 1.2	Various species of shellfish at Site C	10
Photo 1.3	Shell sampling for radiocarbon dating	11
Photo 1.4	Jaws of Guar Kepah man	12
Photo 1.5	Cherok Tok Kun inscriptions	14
Photo 1.6	Buddhagupta inscriptions	15

MAPS

Map 1.1	Sea level changes around Penang	3
Map 1.2	Location of Guar Kepah	7

TABLES

Table 1.1	Archaeological evidences found in Seberang Perai and Penang Island	6
Table 3.1(a)	The number of Malays, Chinese and Indians in Penang Island, 1786–1860	40
Table 3.1(b)	The number of Malays, Chinese and Indians in Seberang Perai, 1786–1860	40
Table 4.1(a)	Total population of Penang Island according to the three main races	55
Table 4.1(b)	Total population of Seberang Perai according to the three main races	55
Table 4.2	The differences in pronunciation of /s/ in eight Malay dialects	64
Table 4.3	The equivalence of SML /s/ phoneme in PMD	67
Table 4.4	The equivalence of SML /l/ phoneme in PMD	68

Table 4.5	The equivalence of SML /r/ phoneme in PMD (i)	68
Table 4.6	The equivalence of SML /r/ phoneme in PMD (ii)	68
Table 4.7	The equivalence of SML /r/ phoneme in PMD (iii)	69
Table 4.8	Abbreviations in PMD (i)	69
Table 4.9	Abbreviations in PMD (ii)	70
Table 4.10	Abbreviations in PMD (iii)	71
Table 4.11	Samples of Arabic-influenced SML vocabulary	77

Translators' Acknowledgement

Several parties contributed significantly for the publication of this translation. We would like to take this opportunity to express our sincere thanks and gratitude to them for their help.

First and foremost, we would like to thank Professor Muhammad Salleh, the editor of the original book, and the authors of each individual chapter, for allowing us the opportunity to translate the book. We would also like to thank Penerbit USM, and particularly Nur Naimah Jaafar, for their technical assistance and final editing of the book. We would like to express our sincere gratitude to Associate Professor Dr Tengku Sepora Tengku Mahdi for her editorial assistance and to Associate Professor Dr Hasuria Che Omar for her support and encouragement. And finally, we would like to thank the Translation Unit of the School of Languages, Literacy and Translation, USM, particularly Noraini Ali, for their invaluable help as administrative coordinator of the project.

The contributions of all these parties only helped to make this a better translation. Its shortcomings are the responsibility of the translators themselves.

Acknowledgement

This is the outcome of the “Early History of Penang” project. The project ran from 1 April 2004 until November 2006, and was funded by a short-term grant from Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM). The writers would like to thank USM Research Committee for their invaluable support. The writers would also like to thank all those involved, directly or indirectly, in the project and the publication of this book.

Foreword

Penang's early history has been obscured by the passage of time and the lack of interest in its early inhabitants and population, particularly with respect to pre-British times.

Local and foreign scholars have so far been more interested in the development of the state after the British arrived and took over the state administration. As a result, it is the spirit, the times and the activities or movements of the colonials that have been given prominence.

In the post colonial times, a study which focuses on the successes and the interests of the colonial officers and traders does not only go against the grain but also against the national conscience and indeed cannot capture the truth or reality of the times. Hence, such a study would indicate an ignorance of history or a failure to seek a balanced description.

Much historical evidence may be unearthed to describe the state of affairs long before the arrival of Francis Light and his men. Prior to the time when this representative of the British East India Company landed at Tanjung Penaga, to the north of this island [east of the current site of Padang Kota (Esplanade)], there was already evidence of habitation in the form of early human settlements in Seberang Perai (Province Wellesley), especially in Guar Kepah and Cherok Tok Kun and on Penang Island (in Dato Keramat, Batu Uban, Bayan Lepas, Balik Pulau and others); some of these settlements have existed before 1786 and others, in fact, thousands of years before Francis Light's landing.

History claims and interprets the rights of people. History also traces roots and identifies their footprints on the beach of time. A history that is unbalanced, inclined towards colonizers and overlooks reality, is a serious transgression on these rights, identity and national pride.

The intent of this book is to correct this imbalance and laxity and to provide a more indepth and truer historical scenario. On Penang Island itself, not taking into consideration Seberang Perai, particularly the areas under Kedah's

jurisdiction, there has been evidence of human settlement before 1786; in fact, there were approximately 20 families living on the island when Francis Light landed. This number is by no means small for an island the size of Penang. As for Seberang Perai, it had been inhabited thousands of years before England had even heard of the existence and wealth of the Malay Peninsula and its strategic location on the Straits of Malacca.

This book attempts to present a part of the state's history through the contributions of three renowned scholars, which has been ignored for many decades. They are Associate Professor Mokhtar Saidin, an archaeologist who has been involved in several excavations in the northern part of the Peninsula, Associate Professor Mahani Musa, an award-winning historian on her thorough discoveries of Penang's society, and Associate Professor Noriah Mohamed, a well-known linguist.

Mokhtar Saidin begins with an introduction to prehistoric Seberang Perai and Penang Island. He shows us that the arrival of Francis Light was merely a small ripple in the ocean of history and it has been a part of the ancient state of Kedah, backing up his claims with archaeological evidence. Firstly, he refers to the shell midden excavated by G.W. Earl in Guar Kepah in northern Seberang Perai. Besides shells, the midden also contained tools, deer bones and more importantly, human skeletal remains. The site is believed to be 5,000–6,000 years old. The inhabitants are believed to have belonged to the Melanesian group and used tools made of stone. Another excavation, led by Callenfeld (1935) approximately 70 years later, revealed additional details. Over the years, 41 human skeletons have been recovered from three separate excavation sites. This discovery offers further insights into their way of life and burial rites; they can be categorized as Early Neanderthals.

They lived in the valley of Muda River (Sungai Muda) and close to the shore. They gathered their foods from the swamps, jungle, sea and shore. They also used pottery, observed certain burial rites and liked to chew betel a popular soft drug. They were taller than the inhabitants of other sites and had curly hair and dark skin, physical traits similar to those of the Australoid race.

Mokhtar concludes:

masarakat Neolitik Guar Kepah ialah suatu masyarakat yang ber sistem, mempunyai adat istiadat pengetahuan, menggunakan pinang, mengutip siput kerang, membuat bintang, menggunakan tembikar, hidup di sekitaran laut dan mendapatkan air tawar dari Sungai Muda.

[the Guar Kepah Neolithic community had a system of its own, observed burial rites, chewed betel, gathered shellfish, hunted, used pottery, lived near the sea and obtained fresh water from the Muda River.]

More sophisticated prehistoric evidence was discovered by Low around 1840s in the form of the Cherok Tok Kun inscriptions in Central Seberang Perai. Although there is still debate regarding the type of characters and language used, these inscriptions date back no later than the fourth century AD, meaning that the language of the Indian continent had entered the Malay Peninsula by then.

Yet another inscription, in Sanskrit, using the Pallava-Grantha script, brings us to a more recent era, approximately a century after the Cherok Tok Kun inscriptions. In Mohd Suppian's study, Penang is considered as being part of a larger settlement region which includes the 1,500-year-old Bujang Valley (Lembah Bujang) in the north and the 2,000-year-old Selinsing in the south. As a result of its strategic location between these two sites, Penang received influences from both.

In the meantime, Mahani surveys the events which took place before and after the arrival of the British in Penang. She stresses that even though the British "deceived" Kedah, the true story behind the treaty has not been given due attention while the generally-accepted version is biased toward the British, and against Kedah.

When the British seaman, Captain James Lancaster with his crews anchored off Pulau Rimau (to the south of the island) in 1593, he went ashore but did not come across its inhabitants, although it is not clear whether he ever reached the northern part of the island where most of the settlements are thought to have been located.

According to Mahani, the British arrived at a time when the British East India Company and Dutch were in their glory era, while the Sultan of Kedah was looking for an ally who could protect him from Siam as well as his royal kinsmen. It was with this intention that the early island treaties and the eventual occupation of the British took place. However, the British did not keep their promise to protect Kedah and to pay the agreed compensation. The Sultan reacted by blockading their vessels and launching an unsuccessful attack against the British. This defeat has considerably weakened Kedah's position. Unfortunately, hardly any study has been conducted to follow up on Bonney's claim that Penang was taken from Kedah by force.

Mahani continues by asking the question “Who founded Penang?” and describes the arrival of various groups originating from the islands of Nusantara. However, these arrivals are not mentioned by British historians and others who seemed not to describe its inhabitants and acknowledge their presence prior to Francis Light’s arrival.

Although it cannot be denied that Francis Light established the port of Penang and brought progress to the state, it remains doubtful whether the island was uninhabited at the time as claimed by several historians. At the time of Francis Light’s landing, he came across a group of about 30 people in Tanjung Penaga. One of them was Nakhoda Kechil who was probably the leader of the group. This was the group which was employed, together with several Kedahans, to clear the jungle and swamps.

In the description of the island’s residents, people from Sumatra were referred to as the early migrants, to the island which was then also known as Pulau Kesatu. Kedahans referred to the northeastern area and the cape as Tanjung Penaga. This was also the name used by the Malays and eventually by the Company administrator until 1800.

Mahani goes on to refer to the journals of Macalister in which he acknowledged that the Malays were the first people on the island and that there were already several fishermen living on the island at the time. A large burial ground on the east coast side serves as additional evidence of early settlements in Batu Uban, Datok Keramat and Jelutong, which were set up by groups originating from Sumatra. The important settlement of Batu Uban was opened by Haji Mohammad Salleh (Raja Nan Intan Ibni Almarhum Tengku Pateh Sebatang) and his men, probably between 1710 and 1734. They explored and developed this area all the way to Tanjung Penaga. According to Mahani, Francis Light landed on a territory belonging to Nakhoda Kechil, the younger brother of Haji Mohammad Salleh.

Another early pioneer was Datok Janatun who came with his men from Kedah and was granted 100 acres of land on the western side of Penang by the Sultan of Kedah which they cleared, about 15 years before Francis Light’s landing.

Subsequently, Malays from the south of Setul (a Malay province in the south of Siam), Batu Bara, Deli, Minangkabau and Brunei played a major role in opening up the island and setting up villages, for example, in Bayan Lepas, Permatang Damar Laut, Teluk Kumbar and Balik Pulau. These Malay communities had their own administrative systems but were still loyal to Kedah.

Mahani goes on to trace the history of Seberang Perai in Chapter 3. Seberang Perai was a part of Kedah then and after being leased to the British, came completely under British control in 1800. However, as mentioned earlier, Seberang Perai was also leased in return for Kedah's military protection against Siam. Unfortunately, that part of the treaty was not honoured. The inattention of Kedah and the cunning of the British caused Seberang Perai to fall into the hands of the British who wanted to use it to gain control of Kuala Perai, which had begun to compete with the British and to stamp out piracy.

After Kedah was invaded by Siam, there was a tremendous increase in the population of Seberang Perai, especially in the Kedahan villages which had existed there for many years. The population of Bagan Ajam Village, Telok Ayer Tawar, Penaga, Bagan Jermal, Sungai Dua, Permatang Tok Jaya and other villages increased rapidly within a few years. Meanwhile, the Kedah Malays conspired to attack Siam.

Mahani returns to the discussion of the interpretation of the treaty between Kedah and the Company. It would seem that both parties had misunderstood the terms and held on to wrong expectations. The Sultan of Kedah even wrote to the British to remind them of their unfulfilled promises.

After the war with Siam, there was peace in Kedah and Seberang Perai once again, and the people proceeded to settle down permanently. However, some of the war refugees returned to Kedah to resume their lives, but many remained on the island or the mainland.

The discussion is continued with an examination of the system of local governance and the economic situation. The Malays cleared land for paddy plantation. There was trade rivalry among the races and several measures were adopted to restore the balance.

Noriah Mohamed, a linguist, does a diachronic analysis of Malay used in Penang at the early time. Although the diachronic profile is probably similar to the synchronic profile, there are some differences which came about due to the different backgrounds of the early immigrants and those who came after them.

Penang's early linguistic profile is difficult to trace due to the lack of data, which is why Penang is usually put into the same group as Kedah and northern Peninsular Malaysia. Furthermore, the majority of Penang's inhabitants originated from Kedah or further afield, especially Sumatra. There are pockets of Kedah dialect speakers in Penang, but through the passage of time, the Kedah

Malay dialect spoken in Penang acquired qualities a little different from that spoken in Kedah.

The pattern of language use in Penang became more varied with the arrival of immigrants. Noriah refers to Shellaher's observations on language usage in her analysis of the three types of Malay used in Penang, namely High Malay, pure Malay (which is the language or dialect used by the Malays to communicate among themselves) and the colloquial Malay of the Straits Settlements, which is the language or dialect used by the different races when communicating with each other.

Noriah concludes that there were many variations of the language in Penang during the 18th and 19th centuries, which are partly due to the different linguistic backgrounds of the people as well as the way they communicated. In many places, a hybrid language was created and was used in conjunction with pure Malay. This pattern reflects the diversity of languages in the past that may be found to this very day.

Thus, these are three aspects of Penang's early history which are given special focus in this book. Based on archaeological and historical evidence, all these three prove that Malays were the early settlers in both Seberang Perai dan Penang Island, who had inhabited it long before 1786.

Muhammad Haji Salleh
November 2007

Chapter 1



Archaeology: Early Settlements in Seberang Perai and Penang Island

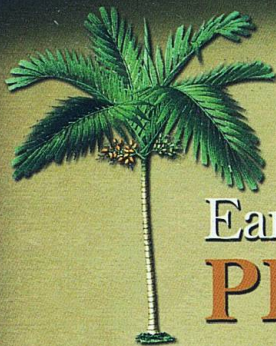
Mokhtar Saidin

1.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter examines the archaeology of Penang Island and Seberang Perai to present evidence of the existence and activities of Penang's early inhabitants. The results of survey and excavation of important sites were analysed. The state of Penang, comprising Penang Island and Seberang Perai on the mainland, has important archaeological evidence that reveals an interesting and unique early history.

Although it is often said that 200 years ago, on 17 July 1786, Francis Light and his men established the first settlement in Penang, however, almost all written historical records regarding the arrival of the British East India Company reveal that there were already some Malay villages on the island at the time, for example at Pinang River, Teluk Kumbar, Sungai Gelugor and Tanjung Tokong.

Evidence of the state's prehistory was first discovered in 1860 by Earl in the form of shell middens at Guar Kepah in Seberang Perai. The middens contained human skeletal remains, stone tools, food remnants, beads and potsherd. Earl did not date the site. However, an initial study of Guar Kepah by this writer yielded a date of 5,700 +/-50 B.P. (Beta-217436) which suggests that Seberang Perai had already been inhabited by man 5,000–6,000 years ago. In other words, there is evidence, both archaeological and historical, that the state of Penang had been inhabited long before 17 July 1786.



Early History of **PENANG**

History states and defines rights. A history that is one-sided, that tends to be on the side of the colonizers and disregards the actual truths is an erred discourse, which nullifies the rights, self-identity and pride of a nation.

This book aims to correct the lopsidedness and neglect. Penang and Seberang Perai have kept ancient proofs of population long before the arrival of Francis Light.

For the sake of uncovering a history that reaches further in the past and unearths more truths, this book presents three scholars and well-known experts who reveal these early proofs. They are Dr Mokhtar Saidin, an archaeologist, Dr Mahani Musa, a historian and Dr Noriah Mohamed, a linguist. Their researches begin from the early proofs and lead us to the earlier decade of the arrival of East India Company.

ISBN 978-983-861-524-2



9 789838 615242



PENERBIT UNIVERSITI SAINS MALAYSIA
Website: <http://www.penerbit.usm.my>
E-mail: penerbit@usm.my

