

## SPATIAL ASPECTS OF FOOCHOW SETTLEMENT IN WEST MALAYSIA WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO SITIAWAN, PERAK, SINCE 1902

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### *Introduction*

The settlement of Chinese Christian converts in Sitiawan, Perak from 1902 was an instance of a planned attempt at the peopling of the Federated Malay States<sup>1</sup> with permanent colonies of agriculturists. The predominantly transient nature of the population of the Federated Malay States at the end of the 19th century had given rise to feelings of disquietude. The immigrant Chinese and the Indians, while accounting for the bulk of the population of these states, were definitely of a temporary nature,<sup>2</sup> and the migrational turnovers and fluctuations of these two components of the population had adversely affected many aspects of settlement of the country, for instance, the inavailability of labour for many economic undertakings, the depopulation of a host of villages and towns, the uneven distribution of population, etc. Immigrant groups of Malays from Indonesia had also arrived at this time to seek employment and eventually too, to return to their islands of origin, and they added a further dimension to the problem of a fluid population in an undeveloped country. Besides posing difficulties of control to the administrators in question, and being unable to be depended upon indefinitely to provide labour for the various economic undertakings—for instance, the introduction and planting of rubber, the prospecting and mining of tin, etc., the transients also did not help economically, in that the flow of money in the form of remittances, for example, to the settlers' homelands, meant the non-accumulation of capital in these states. The administrators increasingly were convinced that a 'back-bone'<sup>3</sup> of permanent population to form and to provide increasingly a pool of all types of labour must be established to offset both economic and human problems.

In the context of the situation outlined, many suggestions were made to the administrators to actively encourage the settlement by new

<sup>1</sup> The Federated Malay States which comprised Perak, Selangor, Negri Sembilan and Pahang came into existence in 1895.

<sup>2</sup> S.H. Khoo, "Population and Landuse Changes in Perak, 1891-1940" (Unpublished M.A. thesis, University of Malaya, 1969), pp. 30-31.

<sup>3</sup> J.C. Willis, *A Report upon Agriculture in the Federated Malay States* (Kuala Lumpur, 1904), p. 6.

immigrant agriculturalists who could form this so called 'back-bone' of the population. Such a step it was hoped would also help to transform the immigrant transients of Indonesian Malay, Chinese and Indian origins already in the states into components of this permanent population. This scheme, the administrators further hoped, would help in the settlement and development of uninhabited areas, so that settlement could be affected on a wider spatial base, not concentrated in pockets in the mining areas or ports. At the same time this development was also aimed at fostering agricultural interest so that the fortunes of mining alone would not continue to determine the economy and settlement of the country.

The introduction of a group of Foochows into the Sitiawan area in 1902 was a positive expression of the official call for the establishment of a permanent population in the Federated Malay States. Though this attempt was effected mainly through non-government agencies, in this case the Methodist Missions of the Federated Malay States and China, the administration lent its full support.

#### *Aim of Study*

The intention of this paper is to chronicle the spatial aspects of Foochow<sup>4</sup> settlement in West Malaysia<sup>5</sup> with special reference to that found in Sitiawan, Perak. As an experiment, the settlement was highly successful in that the Foochow population had increased to such an extent that Sitiawan became identified as a Foochow area. Circumstances for the growth and spread of the Foochow community into other parts of West Malaysia with distinctive causes and end-results will be examined with special emphasis on the Sitiawan area which may be designated as the 'core' as it were, of Foochow settlement in West Malaysia. It is from this core that other settlements of this dialect group in West Malaysia were formed, the settlers from this area forming the nuclei of Foochow settlement in other areas, and despite the independent movements of Foochow immigrants later into these other areas, the Sitiawan area has remained a pre-eminently Foochow area, if not in terms of numerical strength, at least in terms of association. Two points of interpretation may be introduced at this juncture. The establishment of a Chinese settlement had also meant that there was a spatial displacement of other peoples, for example, the Malays, and, this in effect caused a concentration of Foochow in Sitiawan which, as a consequence, came to be regarded as a Foochow area. Secondly, it is also possible the Malays who had originally moved out, came back to the peripheral

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<sup>4</sup> The term "Foochow" is a generic reference for several Chinese sub-dialects primarily made up of Hokchiu, Hokchiang/Hokchia, Henghwa and Kutien who originated from the Foochow Prefecture in China.

<sup>5</sup> In this article, the term "West Malaysia" is preferred to "Malaya".

areas of Foochow settlement later on, contemporaneous with the in-movement of other Chinese. This meant the constriction of space for the extension of Foochow settlement. Inevitably there began a spread or a redirection of the Foochows into other areas in West Malaysia.

### *Study Area*

The area under study is the *mukim*<sup>6</sup> of Sitiawan which covers an area of 157.5 square miles and a part of the Dindings district in Perak (Fig. 1). Until 1935, the *mukim* of Sitiawan was administered as part of Lower Perak from the district capital at Telok Anson. Since 1935, however, Lumut has been the administrative centre, with the retrocession of the Dindings district to the government of the state of Perak from the Straits Settlements. The *mukim* of Sitiawan is made up of several small settlements which include Kampong Koh, Simpang Dua, Pekan Gurney (Simpang Tiga), Simpang Empat and Ayer Tawar.<sup>7</sup> The population of the *mukim* in 1970 was 55,972 persons of which 14.4 per cent were Malays, 67 per cent Chinese and 18.7 per cent Indians and others.<sup>8</sup> The *mukim's* economy is based mainly on rubber which accounts for nearly 80 per cent of the cultivated land. This figure is no less different in 1921 when, for instance, rubber accounted for 38,675 acres of a total of 42,309 acres under commercial cultivation in the Sitiawan district.<sup>9</sup> The remaining 20 per cent of cultivated land is based on *kampong* cultivation, a mixed cultivation of fruits, vegetables and other marketing crops which are usually associated with rural settlements. The topography of the area is made up of low-lying and undulating land, interspersed with swamps and mangrove along the river banks and the coasts further to the south and west.

### *Origins*

The settlement of Foochows in Sitiawan was set in motion early in 1902 when the Methodist Church in Singapore appointed two pastors, a German, Rev. H.L.E. Leuring, and a Foochow Chinese pastor, Rev. Ling Chin Mee, to travel to the Foochow district in China to recruit settlers for the Sitiawan area. Before this step was made, however, permission was sought from, and an agreement negotiated with, the British government administering Perak at that time.<sup>10</sup> Although official written

<sup>6</sup> The *mukim* is the smallest administrative unit in West Malaysia, the larger administrative units being the district and state in order of magnitude.

<sup>7</sup> For further details of these settlement units see K.E. Chan *et al.*, "Foochow Settlement in Sitiawan, Perak: Preliminary Investigations," *Geographica*, Vol. VI (1970).

<sup>8</sup> R. Chander, *1970 Population and Housing Census of Malaysia Community Groups* (Kuala Lumpur Statistics Department, 1972), p. 184.

<sup>9</sup> *Sitiawan District Office Files* (SDOF), 12/21, 1921.

<sup>10</sup> H.C. Belfield, *Perak: Administrative Report for the Year 1903* (Taiping, Perak: Government Publishing Office, 1904), p. 11.

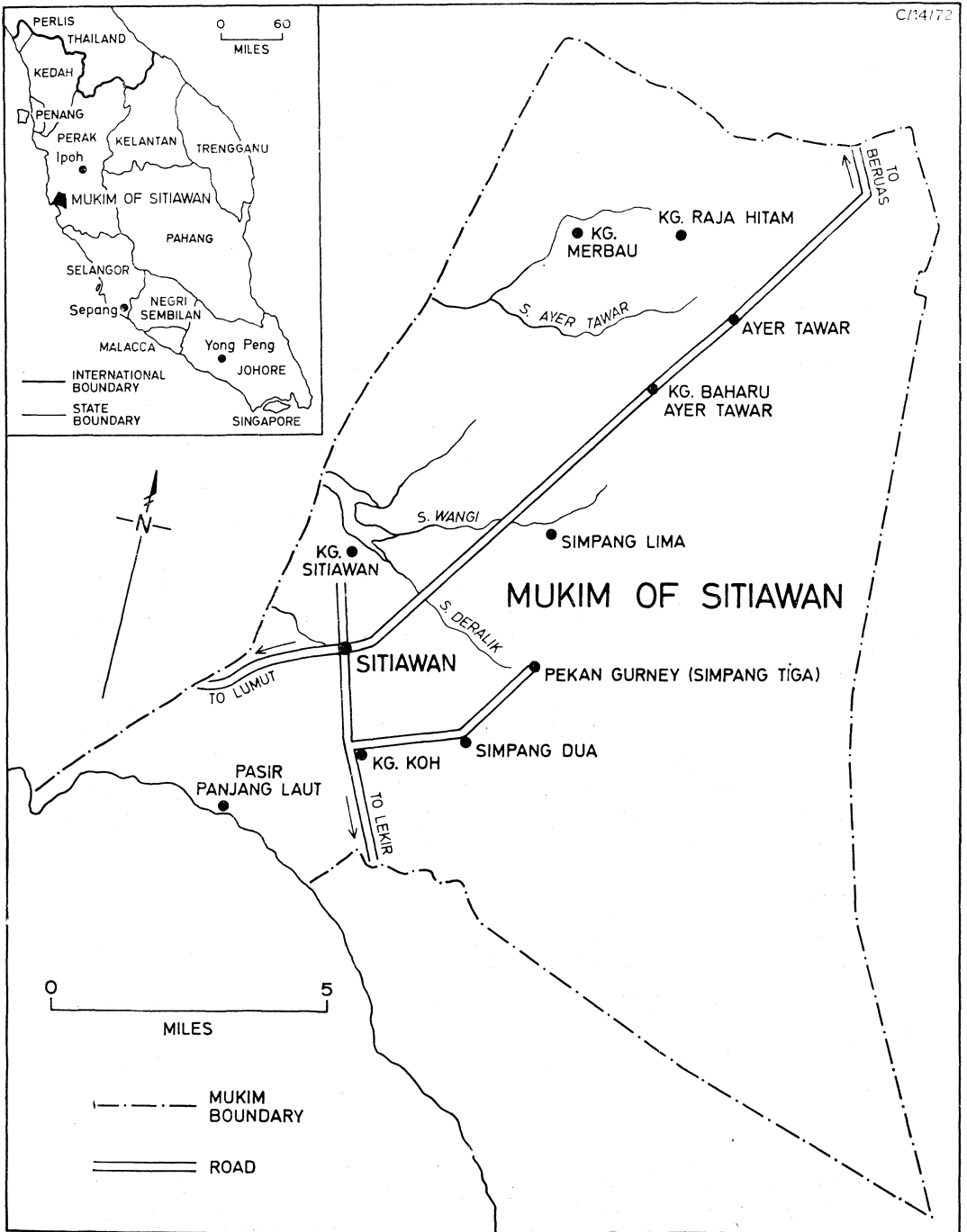


Fig. 1. *The Mukim of Sitiawan, Perak, Malaysia. (Inset: West Malaysia: Location of the Mukim of Sitiawan and the towns of Ipoh, Sepang and Yong Peng.)*

evidence pertaining to the agreement between the Methodist council and the British government has yet to be uncovered, a study of unofficial written materials has revealed that several points were agreed upon. Some of the provisions of this Agreement<sup>11</sup> included paid passage for each settler, housing and provisions for the first six months on landing; necessary agricultural goods and implements on loan and repayable in three years, interest-free; 3 acres of land, without quit rent for three years; and a strict moral stipulation that there were to be no brothels, bars or opium dens in the new settlement.<sup>12</sup>

Rev. Leuring and Rev. Ling had intended to recruit some 1,000 Chinese Christian converts from Foochow to go over to Sitiawan in family units, each of which, possessing specific skills, (for example, building and construction, making of farm implements, medicine, etc.) could contribute to making the colony self-sufficient and, presumably, assure its permanency. Only about 500 settlers were recruited eventually owing to a lack of conviction on the viability of such an ambitious scheme and lack of information on pioneering, let alone settlement, in a foreign country. Moreover, since the colonising attempt was directed at Methodist converts in Foochow, it is possible that the more willing and enthusiastic non-converts were unable to volunteer for this scheme unless they posed as Methodist converts. There were however, "instant" converts joining the genuine converts in this pioneer attempt, mainly because of the presupposed advantages they hoped to derive from being a Methodist. The journey to Sitiawan was by a chartered steamer to Sitiawan calling at Singapore enroute. The voyage by steamer took its toll in the form of diseases and illness. The point of disembarkation was at Kampong Sitiawan and then overland on bullock-carts to the site of the present Kampong Koh where the "Mok-Su-Lau" or parsonage was subsequently built. The first batch of Foochow settlers was made up of Hokchius, Kutiens, Hokchings/Hokchias and Henghwias. Thus began an interesting and unique pioneering settlement in the Sitiawan area of Perak.

The aim and choice of location of the settlement are embodied in the following words written in 1902:

"A very interesting experiment is now in progress in the establishment of Chinese agricultural settlement, near the mouth of the Perak river, but it is too early yet to draw any conclusions. The settlers have been imported *en masse* by one of the missionary bodies, and settled upon land as far removed from the

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<sup>11</sup> Further amplification of this agreement and other details are contained in L.H. Chen, "A Glimpse of Pioneer Life," *The Loyal Pioneer*, Vol. I, No. 1 (1931); C.C.U., "A Short History of the Cultivation Activities of Sitiawan Chinese," *30th Anniversary Souvenir Magazine*, Kwok Min Primary School (1948); and Chan, *et al*, *op. cit.*

<sup>12</sup> U, *op. cit.*

temptations of the mines as far as possible. If this experiment proves successful it may very well be repeated, the new settlements being placed near the old, so as to get a fairly dense population in the district. There is also the possibility of attracting single families or individuals, in the same way as the colonies of America and Australia have attracted European settlers."<sup>13</sup>

The above statement indicates clearly the important role agriculture was expected to play in the development of the settlement. It is not unreasonable to assume that not only subsistence food-cropping was envisaged for the settlers. Rather, commercial cropping, either independently carried on or in conjunction with food-cropping, was also to be given an important place in the settlement's economy. Rubber was then emerging as the most lucrative cash-crop in the country and it was this crop more than anything else that ensured the permanence and success of the Foochow experiment, a success that generated an even more accelerated and greater volume of migrants into this area, as indeed the whole country.

Since 1903, the Foochow settlement at Sitiawan has been identified with Kampong Koh, this being the first centre of concentration of the new arrivals into the area. Intra-dialectic identifications have also been isolated for Kampong Koh.<sup>14</sup> A description of the environmental characteristics of Kampong Koh in the 1900's must include the dense jungle and wild animals in the area.<sup>15</sup> Also, the area was covered with swamps especially in the patch of land around the present-day market. To the Malays this area was then known as Bangol Acheh. Towards the north of Kampong Koh lay Kampong China, known among the Chinese as "k'ou you ti" or "the land behind the opened-up area."

When the Foochow Chinese arrived around 1902, the area was said to have been occupied by a few Malays, altogether about 2,000 in number.<sup>16</sup> Some of the Malays originated from Acheh in Sumatra.<sup>17</sup> They had settled here to seek a livelihood and then return home with their savings. There were also other settlers from such nearby and already existing settlements such as Kampong Pasir Panjang Laut, Lekir and Kampong Permatang. Both groups of Malays, either derived locally or from Sumatra, could be regarded as transients for their stay in the area which came to be known as Kampong China and Kampong Koh

<sup>13</sup> Willis, *op. cit.*, p. 36.

<sup>14</sup> See Map 1, Chan *et al.*, *op. cit.*

<sup>15</sup> *The Malaysia Message* (October 5, 1904).

<sup>16</sup> Rev. B.F. van Dyke, "Sitiawan," *The Malaysia Message*, Vol. XIII (May 1904), p. 73.

<sup>17</sup> Interview with Pak Din Hokchui at Kampong Serdang, Sitiawan, on 30th, July, 1970.

was only temporary, returning eventually to their original homes and abandoning their clearings to revert to forest or to be re-occupied. The process of land utilisation, it should be noted, might not also have involved permanent occupancy of the land. The cultivators could have opened the land from their homebases in their kampongs and the land in this area could serve as additional agricultural land for catch-cropping purposes. Protective stipulations against non-permanent usage of land, however, were being increasingly enforced. Land that could only be alienated on the condition that it was planted under some "permanent product."<sup>18</sup>

The economic activities of the Chinese initially included the planting of dry rice, *lada hitam* (black pepper) and *nilam* (patchouli). But the importance of these crops, especially economic, began to be overshadowed by that of rubber from about 1903.<sup>19</sup> Rising rubber prices and the ease with which rubber could be grown under local environmental conditions helped to dispel initial pessimism and doubts<sup>20</sup> concerning rubber-cultivation in the Sitiawan area. Undoubtedly, the implantation and popularity of rubber as the economic staple almost at the beginning of Foochow settlement in Sitiawan was the factor which served to perpetuate the settlement. The spread of rubber-cultivation activities by the Foochow Chinese, initially based on *getah rambong* (*ficus elastica*) and later on, *getah para* (*castillao elastica*), led to the clearance of new land-areas and to the occupancy of those areas abandoned by the Malays. Indeed out-movement of the Malays<sup>21</sup> from the area did make additional space available for newly arrived Foochow immigrants as well as those wishing to extend their rubber-areas beyond the confines of Kampong Koh into once Malay-occupied clearings.

Another circumstance important in the displacement of Malays from the area was that connected with pig-rearing, an activity carried on by the Foochows and other Chinese almost in the same areas as or adjoining the areas of Malay settlement. Pigs are taboo for religious reasons to Malays. Since these animals roamed freely, it was inevitable that they encroached onto the areas of Malay holdings. The presence of these unwelcome animals<sup>22</sup> no doubt played a significant role in

<sup>18</sup> J.C. Jackson, *Planters and Speculators* (Kuala Lumpur: University of Malaya Press, 1968), p. 235.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 224-225.

<sup>20</sup> Information based on interviews with long-established local residents in the Kampong Koh area in August 1970.

<sup>21</sup> Malay out-movement from the Sitiawan area is, to some extent, reflected in the fact that the Malays formed only 14.3 per cent of the total population of Sitiawan in 1957 and 14.4 per cent in 1970.

<sup>22</sup> A more romantic notion seems to have been expressed by Chen, *op. cit.*, p. 48 in which he says, "...for a time, it seems, the hope or faith would scatter itself into aimless confusion; for in those days, the wealth of a person was measured by the number of pigs he owned." Also cf. *Times of Malaya*, 2nd August, 1906; and *Sitiawan D.O. Files* 182/3, 1931.

the decision by some of the Malays to move away into areas in which this form of animal husbandry was absent.

A land-boom was triggered off from the time of the first rubber-boom between 1905-1908<sup>23</sup> when prices were reported to be as high as \$4 per sheet,<sup>24</sup> a princely sum by prevailing standards. The Chinese were both able and eager to pay good prices for rubber-land. With no clause to protect their holdings as that set out in the Malay Reservation Act of 1913,<sup>25</sup> it was not surprising that the Malay settlers prior to this date sold off their land-holdings to the land-hungry Chinese. A factor which undoubtedly encouraged the Malays to dispose of their holdings to the Chinese was the relative ease with which they could acquire land elsewhere in other states, such as Pahang and Negeri Sembilan.<sup>26</sup> The attraction of good prices<sup>27</sup> for their holdings and the desire to avoid a quarrel with their Chinese neighbours acted in combination with this third factor to convince the Malays to abandon their holdings in the Kampong Koh area and its environs. However, not all the Malays left for other states. Some, in fact, moved out to areas further beyond Ayer Tawar towards Bruas. The creation of Malay reservations in 1913 also encouraged some of those who had moved to Pahang to return, particularly those disappointed in their expectations of settlement outside Perak state. Such persons, however, did not move back into Kampong Koh which was becoming increasingly, and eventually mainly Chinese.<sup>28</sup>

### *Expansion*

Foochow settlement in Sitiawan was by no means confined to the immediate area and surroundings of Kampong Koh. As these areas

<sup>23</sup> cf. Jackson, *op. cit.*, pp. 226-234.

<sup>24</sup> According to long-established Sitiawan residents, four dollars in those days was a respectable sum, "capable of purchasing a bullock-cart load of provisions."

<sup>25</sup> The Malay Reservation Enactment of 1913 was promulgated to preserve the Malay ownership of land and to further Malay participation in commercial agriculture. To prevent the encroachment of Malay lands, reservations of lands for the Malays were created and the settlers on these lands were prevented from transacting their holdings to non-Malays. Refer Proceedings of the Federal Council, 25th November, 1913.

<sup>26</sup> An interview with the oldest resident of Kampong Serdang, Sitiawan, Pak Din Hokchiu on 30th July, 1970, establishes the fact that, for example, in 1924 several families in the area left for Negri Sembilan. It was also learned that even before this date, in the first few years of the twentieth century, at the time when Foochow settlement in Sitiawan was just beginning, a number of Malays had left the area for Pahang prompted by the desire to colonise new agricultural areas in that state.

<sup>27</sup> "Good" as a relative term in relation to the fact that the owners of the land were hitherto unaware of the monetary significance of their holdings. Such transactions however cannot be traced with much precision as some of the holdings could actually be occupied on unalienated land which, however, in practice could be recognised as customary reserves.

<sup>28</sup> In 1957 there were no Malays in Kampong Koh. However, in 1970, there were 71 Malays. See *1957 Population Census, State of Perak*, Report No. 8 (Kuala Lumpur Statistics Department, 1959), p. 9; Chander, *op. cit.*, p. 48.



became "saturated,"<sup>29</sup> other areas were sought for new settlements and extension of holdings even if the lots were discontinuous and physically located miles away from the main settlement of Kampong Koh in which resided the settlers concerned. One of the later settlements to be developed on this manner was Ayer Tawar. Even this and other later settlements were eventually fully in-filled by the migrants. In the case of Ayer Tawar, opportunities for land-settlement and development were limited by the fact that the lands fronting on the road linking the settlement to Ipoh were largely being alienated or held in reserve for estate development. Nor was it possible with the creation of the Malay reservations from 1913 to acquire land in these reservations from the Malays, let alone clear new holdings which were becoming increasingly scarce.

In 1919, Ayer Tawar had consisted of only about 10 houses, of which three or four were shops.<sup>30</sup> The population then numbered about 100 persons. As with Kampong Koh, the processes of settlement by the Foochows ushered in changes in land-ownership and occupation. Lands originally in the hands of the Malays came under the acquisition of the Chinese as well as parcels of hitherto unalienated land which were specifically set aside for the use of the Chinese. In the village of Ayer Tawar itself, there were a few Malays who sold their lands to the Chinese because they wanted to regroup themselves among members of their own community in specific localities.<sup>31</sup> The money derived from the sale of their land was used to purchase new holdings in the Malay Reservations, or areas earmarked for Malay settlements. There was, however, a later counter-movement of Malays back into Ayer Tawar, into areas which had been settled by the Chinese who later either moved away or returned to China.

The Malays were not the only ones displaced in the Foochow dominated settlements at Kampong Koh and Ayer Tawar. Paradoxically, some of the Foochows themselves, especially those who came to Sitiawan later, were also affected. The displacement of these Foochows was the natural outcome of the numerical growth of this com-

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<sup>29</sup> The process of "saturation" did not take long for only some 2,700 acres of land were conceded to the Foochow community in the areas of Kampong Koh and its environs (refer van Dyke, *op. cit.*, p. 73) while the Foochow population increase was quite pronounced, from only about 300 in 1904 (E.W. Birch, *Administrative Report of Perak, 1904* [Taiping, Perak: Government Publishing Office, 1905], p. 8) to 3,278 in 1921 (J.E. Nathan, *The Census of British Malaya, 1921* [London, 1922], p. 187).

<sup>30</sup> Based on an interview with Mr. Lee Boi Choon on 31st, July, 1970 at Ayer Tawar, Sitiawan.

<sup>31</sup> According to one source (interview with Mr. Ngan on 3rd, August, 1970, at Ayer Tawar, Sitiawan) there was an area in Ayer Tawar known among the Chinese as "*Melayu K'on*" where the Malays were said to have been concentrated. The land in this area was sold out prior to the enforcement of clauses relating to protection in the Malay Reservation Act of 1913 had been enforced.

munity as well as of the other Chinese dialect-groups in Sitiawan.<sup>32</sup> In 1924 alone it was reported that "thousands of Hokchius had arrived in Sitiawan,"<sup>33</sup> inspired by the success of Foochow settlement in this part of the country. The influx of the Foochows and, later on, other Chinese, was no doubt related to the success and lucrativeness of rubber-cultivation in the Sitiawan area.

The population increase would not have entailed a channelling of the migrants to other areas if there had been a corresponding increase in the opportunity to expand and develop new areas in Sitiawan. Even as early as 1905, only three years after the establishment of the settlement at Kampong Koh, there were instances of early settlers applying for additional land outside Kampong Koh to extend their agricultural operations.<sup>34</sup> As it was, the Foochow settlers were largely confined to the areas apportioned to them under the 1902 agreement<sup>35</sup> with the Perak government. With the enforcement of the Malay Reservation Act of 1913 it became no longer possible to purchase Malay-owned land. The presence of land-extensive European estates<sup>36</sup> in these areas, established before the increase in Foochow immigration, helped to aggravate the crisis of land-shortage faced by the Foochow arrivals. The problem of inadequate land was partially overcome by some Foochows who bought over land belonging to other Foochows and hence, some of the immigrants acquired more than the 3-acre lot originally allocated to each of the first batch of pioneers. While there was a likelihood for the concentration of land-ownership in the hands of a relative few, there was, at the same time, little likelihood for more Foochow Chinese to acquire land for the reasons mentioned. In fact, with the concentration of land-ownership, disposable land became less available all around. In this situation, some Foochows had to work as paid labourers or as tenants on holdings owned by other Foochows, while others were diverted from Sitiawan as it began to diminish in attraction as a centre of Foochow settlement with the diminution in land-owning opportunities.

A factor of far-reaching consequences on the occupational and distributional characteristics of the Foochows in West Malaysia was the World Depression of the 1930's. It was reported, for example, that as symptoms of the times, a number of Hokchiu rubber holdings had

<sup>32</sup> The number of Hokkiens, for example, increased from 7,643 to 11,308 between 1921 and 1931 (Nathan, *op. cit.*, p. 187; C.A. Vlieland, *British Malaya: A Report of the 1931 Census* [London, 1932], p. 180).

<sup>33</sup> It is also worth noting that by 1929, the influx of Hokchius into Sitiawan had become so pronounced that the area became even more identified as a Hokchiu settlement, the other Foochows forming only a "negligible percentage" (*Sitiawan District Office Files*, 72/79, 1929; *Perak Administration Report*, 1925, p. 5).

<sup>34</sup> *Dindings District Office Files*, 8/05, 1905.

<sup>35</sup> See, for example, Chen, *op. cit.*

<sup>36</sup> Estates are legally defined as holdings of at least 100 acres.

passed into the hands of the *chettians*.<sup>37</sup> Such transactions could of course be only temporary with the former owners repurchasing these foreclosed holdings when times improved. On the other hand, the *chettians* could have subsequently sold the land they had thus obtained to other Foochows who might already have been in residence in the area or to those newly arrived Foochows or in fact any other Chinese with capital to purchase these holdings. In the meantime, a more immediate effect of the World Depression was the channelling of the interest of many Foochow settlers in Sitiawan to the cultivation of food-crops,<sup>38</sup> either on their own land or on land newly cleared on Temporary Occupation Licenses (TOL) the issuance of which was relaxed for this purpose. This in fact became a significant practice so that in the period of Japanese Occupation (1941-1945) for example, the settlers resorted to such cultivation of food-crops in the surrounding unalienated areas as a contingency measure in obtaining their food-supply. In effect, this too, helped move to anchor the persons concerned in the area. This process was also effected in other areas and cumulatively effected the "spread" of the Foochows.

Another result of the World Depression of the 30's was that applications for land leases and land grants became closed. Later arrivals were thus confronted with the non-availability of land except for those they could purchase of already established privately owned holdings or those holdings which had passed into *chettiar* possession. Thus significant numbers of Hokchius were turned away from their intended settlement in the Sitiawan area and had to seek their fortunes elsewhere. The Hokchius among others of the Foochow community moved to localities in Selangor, Johore and southern Thailand.<sup>39</sup>

Despite these developments, Foochow population in the Sitiawan area and its surroundings did appreciate by 201 per cent between 1921 and 1931 when the Foochow population grew from 7,643 to 11,693 persons respectively, and by 40.2 per cent between 1931 and 1947, the Foochow population at the last mentioned date being 16,396 persons.<sup>40</sup> Additionally, the Sitiawan area continued to remain the most important centre in which the Foochow population of West Malaysia were found: in 1921, 39.8 per cent of the total; in 1931, 41.7 per cent and in 1947, 30.1 per cent.

The Aliens Ordinance of 1933 was another outcome of the World Depression of the 1930's to have important repercussions on the distri-

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<sup>37</sup> A community of South Indians who are identified as money-lenders and dealers in currency exchange. Rubber holdings of a number of Hokchius that passed into *chettiar* hands is also mentioned in *Sitiawan District Office Files*, 861/30, 1930.

<sup>38</sup> *Sitiawan District Office Files*, 9/31, 1931.

<sup>39</sup> *Sitiawan District Office Files*, 547/31, 1931.

<sup>40</sup> Nathan, *op. cit.*, pp. 187-189; Vlieland, *op. cit.*, p. 180; M.V. del Tufo, *Malaya: A Report on the 1947 Census of Population* (London, 1949), pp. 292-293.

bution and structure of the Foochow community, as indeed of the whole Chinese population. It regulated the immigration of male Chinese labour on a quota basis and this certainly affected the growth of the Foochows in Sitiawan by net immigration. But because it did not restrict female immigrants, large numbers of the latter arrivals consisted of females thus helping to increase the number of Chinese women, especially those of marriageable age in the country. The influx of immigrant women in the post-1933 period was indeed one of the most important factors helping to stabilise the Foochow community in West Malaysia for it reduced the need to return to China either for reasons of marriage or to be with the families of the emigrants. The outbreak of the Second World War (1941-1945) further stimulated the stabilisation of the Foochow community as it led to the cessation of Chinese migration into and out of West Malaysia. Thus, the 1947 census, owing to the two developments mentioned, showed a more balanced sex-ratio of 198 Foochow males per hundred females in Sitiawan against 254 males per hundred females in 1921.<sup>41</sup> For the country as a whole, the sex-ratio of the Foochow population also showed substantial improvement between 1921 and 1947 from 310 per hundred females to 106 males per hundred females respectively.<sup>42</sup> It should be mentioned here that even without a substantial improvement in the proportion of females in the Foochow population, there were no serious problems in the availability of marriage partners for the Foochow males owing to the possibility of marrying other Chinese females of different dialect groups, a practice which is reportedly becoming more common among the Foochows in Sitiawan. Also, as descent among the Foochows is reckoned on a patrilineal basis, the children of marriages between Foochow males and other non-Foochow Chinese females continued to be regarded as Foochows. In this way, the growth of the Foochow community by "identification" was assured. These factors explain why despite the diversion of Foochows to other areas which subsequently began to acquire substantial numbers of Foochows themselves, Sitiawan still remains the main area in which the Foochows of the country are found.

Another circumstance that affected the Foochow community in Sitiawan was the eruption of Communist insurgency and the declaration of a country-wide State of Emergency in 1948. Sitiawan was one of the "hottest" areas of Communist unrest in the country and this, no doubt, caused some of the Foochows to leave the area. In addition, there were instances of youths fleeing the country to escape compulsory conscription into the armed forces, the idea of service in the armed forces being one traditionally unacceptable to the more conservative Chinese. The Emergency was, however, not as great a "push"

<sup>41</sup> del Tufo, *op. cit.*, pp. 292-293; Nathan, *op. cit.*, p. 187.

<sup>42</sup> Nathan, *op. cit.*, pp. 186-187; del Tufo, *op. cit.*, pp. 294-295.

factor as it might have been. The dispersed settlement patterns of the Chinese included among whom were the Foochows, was a feature which was officially construed as an advantage to the insurgents and this among one of the top priorities for action. The programme for re-settlement saw the concentration of these people on specific pre-chosen sites in the form of "New Villages". This, in fact, has served to reinforce the identification of the *mukim* with the Foochows in that, perforce, the Foochows were fixed to these new created settlements within the *mukim*, not in other areas as could have happened. These settlements which remain till the present time include Kampong Raja Hitam, Kampong Merbau Pekan Gurney and Simpang Lima New Village.

Another factor that could be said to have had an effect on the Foochow settlement of Sitiawan could be the fact that in the post-Second World War period, synchronous with the Emergency, there were estates in the area which were reported to have been subdivided and resold in smaller plots to the Foochows, thus easing partially the problem of land-shortage.

It was perhaps due to these stabilising factors that the 1957 and 1970 censuses showed further improvements in the sex-ratios of the Sitiawan Foochows: 104 and 100 males per hundred females respectively.<sup>43</sup> These ratios, in remarkable contrast to earlier ones mentioned, could only be due to the reduction or the elimination of international migration which was a characteristic feature of earlier periods, especially before the Second World War.<sup>44</sup> In addition, the proportion of the Foochow population in West Malaysia found in the Sitiawan area and its surroundings continued to be considerable: 36.6 per cent in 1957<sup>45</sup> and 35.4 per cent in 1970.<sup>46</sup>

While all these developments were occurring in Sitiawan, the Foochow communities elsewhere in West Malaysia had continued to increase through the infusion of immigrants directly from China as in the period before the Second World War, or through additions by in-migration from other Foochow communities already domiciled in the country. Two other states in West Malaysia which have attracted significant numbers of Foochows are Johore and Selangor — Batu Pahat district in the case of Johore and Kuala Langat district in the case of Selangor. These Foochows have been predominantly Hokchius.

In 1947, the Batu Pahat Foochows accounted for 57.9 per cent of the total Foochow population of the state, while the Kuala Langat Foochows comprised 30.8 per cent of the state total in Selangor. In 1957, the Batu Pahat Foochows still accounted for a significant propor-

<sup>43</sup> 1957 *Population Census, State of Perak*, Report No. 8 (Kuala Lumpur Statistics Department, 1959); Chander, *op. cit.*, p. 73.

<sup>44</sup> del Tufo, *op. cit.*, pp. 292-293.

<sup>45</sup> 1957 *Population Census, State of Perak*, *op. cit.*, p. 5.

<sup>46</sup> Chander, *op. cit.*, p. 48.

tion of the state's Foochow population, 42.6 per cent; and in the case of Selangor the Kuala Langat Foochows formed 20.6 per cent of the total Foochow population in the state. In 1947, the Hokchius of Batu Pahat comprised 66.2 per cent of the district's Foochows; the Hokchius of Kuala Langat district in Selangor accounted for 55.9 per cent of the district's Foochows. In 1957, 84.4 per cent of the Foochows in Batu Pahat were formed by the Hokchius while 77.9 per cent of the Foochows in Kuala Langat were Hokchius.<sup>47</sup> In 1970, the comparable figures were 81.3 per cent Hokchiu in Batu Pahat and 83.8 per cent Hokchiu in Kuala Langat.<sup>48</sup>

In both Johore and Selangor, several pockets of Foochow concentration other than those mentioned above have also emerged. These include Johore Bahru and Kuala Lumpur, capitals respectively of the two states concerned. In 1957, of the 10,143 Foochows in Johore, 2,022 or 19.9 per cent were found in Johore Bahru<sup>49</sup> while in Selangor, in the same year, of a total of 8,926 Foochows, 1,299 or 14.5 per cent were recorded in Kuala Lumpur.<sup>50</sup> Since these centres are urban, it follows that the majority of the Foochows in these places must have been engaged in urban-based and non-agricultural activities in contrast to the Foochows of Sitiawan and this itself reflects an interesting change in the nature of Foochow settlement in West Malaysia from one predominantly agrarian, clearly exhibited in the Sitiawan example, to one that was markedly non-agrarian.

It is hypothesised that many of the Hokchius in these settlements could have originated in Sitiawan. The Foochow settlement in Sitiawan was a Hokchiu originated and dominated process. Sitiawan could be regarded as the seeding ground for the growth and eventual distribution of the Hokchiu to other parts of West Malaysia for, according to informed sources in Sitiawan itself, many of their Hokchiu relatives and friends have migrated from Sitiawan to the other Foochow settlements in the country both before and after the Second World War in response to the "push" factors discussed. In addition, the fact that Chinese immigration in Post-Second World War Malaysia came to a virtual standstill makes it unlikely that the increase in the Hokchiu, or the Foochow community as a whole, in these places could have been the result of international migration. The Hokchiu figures are probably inflated by others of the Foochow community through the social prestige attached to the Hokchius in the Foochow community.

<sup>47</sup> 1957 *Population Census, State of Selangor*, Report No. 2 (Kuala Lumpur Statistics Department, 1959), p. 9; 1957 *Population Census, State of Johore*, Report No. 6 (Kuala Lumpur Statistics Department, 1959), p. 12.

<sup>48</sup> Chander, *op. cit.*, pp. 48, 78.

<sup>49</sup> 1957 *Population Census, State of Johore*, *op. cit.*, p. 12.

<sup>50</sup> 1957 *Population Census, State of Selangor*, *op. cit.*, p. 9.

Dialect considerations are said to be a particularly revealing indicator of the class of the different groups of the Foochow community, e.g. the dialects as spoken by the Hokchius and the Henghwas are said to be "rough" to the Hokchius. Occupationally, too, the Hokchius were coincidentally mainly engaged in the menial and lowly occupations.<sup>51</sup>

With the cessation of international migration to provide the recruitment of new Foochows from China, it is inevitable that the growth of the Foochow community, as indeed for the whole of the Chinese community, would depend on natural increase. Distributional changes occur however in the face of rural-urban and urban-urban movements, movements which may entail inter-district and inter-state crossings. With the inclusion of Sabah and Sarawak to the Malaysian Federation of 1963, a new perspective of movement was introduced, with numbers of the Foochows in Sarawak possibly moving into West Malaysia or vice versa. In the case of Singapore, however, the creation of the Republic did not inhibit the movement of Foochows across the causeway in both directions.

A further hypothesis can be put forward at this juncture. There are indications that even though the Sitiawan area has remained the "core" of Foochow settlement in West Malaysia, the involvement of Foochows in the population shift has meant the likely emergence of Kuala Lumpur as an increasingly important centre of Foochow settlement. The Sitiawan area cannot conceivably absorb the Foochows in many occupations and those with higher qualifications have had a tendency to move out of the Sitiawan area.<sup>52</sup> Kuala Lumpur has indubitably become the focus of administrative, cultural and economic activities<sup>53</sup> and the Foochows of Sitiawan and of other areas in Malaysia have also been drawn into Kuala Lumpur in search of employment or education.

### *Conclusion*

That the experiment at permanent settlement succeeded was beyond question as demonstrated by the size of the Foochow community in not only the Sitiawan area but also in other parts of the country. Admittedly the growth in number of this group cannot be solely attributed to the increase in number of the original settlers in the missionary project, other circumstances lending their forces also to attract and to disperse the Foochows together with the other Chinese immigrants

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<sup>51</sup> cf. Nathan, *op. cit.*, p. 84.

<sup>52</sup> From personal interviews with Foochow residents in Sitiawan in August, 1970.

<sup>53</sup> T.G. McGee, *The Urbanization Process in the Third World* (London: G. Bell and Sons Ltd., 1971), pp. 149-177; M.K. Sen, "Planning Strategy of Greater Kuala Lumpur A.D. 2000," Paper presented at the Enviro 2000 Symposium, February 26, 1972.

into the Sitiawan area and into other areas of their settlement. But the establishment and the development of a prospering community in Sitiawan must still have a relevance in its beginning as an experiment which succeeded and also in the fact that despite their presence in many parts of the country, the Foochows have become associated with that first area of their colonization. The choice of the Sitiawan area could have been actuated by the administrators' desire to develop the area whose fortunes had been stated to be not particularly bright.<sup>54</sup> It has to be stated however that the choice of Sitiawan proper could also very well be fortuitous in being just the choice of a party interested in the scheme. Yet the selection of this area for the experiment has had the result of the area thus selected becoming identified as the Foochow area of West Malaysia despite the vicissitudes of subsequent events and developments.

Economic opportunities, legislation and events of national import have provided the means or the controls for the growth or containment of the Foochows in the country. From the small beginning of a few hundred to a community of several thousands the Foochows have retained their identity, and what is more remarkable an identity that is spatially designated in a manner and with a validity that cannot be claimed for any of the dialect groups that make up the Chinese population in West Malaysia.

The Second World War had meant a cessation of replacement or renewal constituents in the whole of the Chinese community. That the Foochows could preserve its identity can perhaps be explained by certain aspects of its make up, possibly in terms of close kinship, economic, territorial, social or sociological indicators that have made for the perpetuation, if not intensification, of group identification of the Foochows.

The transformation of the Foochows into a settled community of permanent inhabitants was undoubtedly caused by general factors which had also affected the Chinese population in the country as a whole with the same end-result in creating permanent settlers from what was once a basically immigrant, ephemeral and transient population. But in the case of the Foochows, it was more than the interplay of general factors, a very notable and distinct difference being the origins of Foochow settlement in this country which was the expression of a deliberate official attempt at transplanting and nurturing a community specially selected from China. Post Second World War and recent events have necessitated an outlook that is essentially self determined. With no regenerative elements from China, Foochow identification or polarization must be seen as the result of the decision of the history and characteristics of the Foochows in the country.

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<sup>54</sup> *Perak Pioneer*, January 9, 1896.



TABLE 1  
WEST MALAYSIA: DISTRIBUTION AND PERCENTAGE INCREASE OF  
FOOCHOWS, 1947-1970

STATE	1947		1957		1970		Percent increase in Foochow popu- lation 1947-1957	Percent increase in Foochow popu- lation 1957-1970
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent		
Johore	8,611	15.8	10,143	15.0	13,460	16.2	+ 17.8	+ 32.7
Kedah	2,840	5.2	3,479	5.1	3,427	4.1	+ 12.3	— 11.0
Kelantan	381	0.7	424	0.6	635	0.8	+ 11.3	+ 49.8
Malacca	1,792	3.3	2,462	3.6	3,094	3.7	+ 37.3	+ 25.7
Negri Sembilan	3,570	6.5	4,268	6.3	5,802	7.0	+ 19.6	+ 35.9
Pahang	1,504	2.8	1,513	2.2	2,880	3.5	+ 0.6	+ 90.3
Perak	24,889	45.5	31,011	45.8	35,223	42.4	+ 24.6	+ 35.8
Perlis	96	0.2	123	0.2	158	0.2	+ 28.1	+ 28.5
Penang	3,467	6.4	4,904	7.2	5,847	7.0	+ 41.2	+ 19.2
Selangor	6,915	12.7	8,926	13.2	11,821	14.2	+ 29.2	+ 32.4
Trengganu	578	1.1	523	0.7	711	8.6	— 9.1	+ 35.9
Total	54,562	100.0	67,781	100.0	83,058	100.0	+ 24.3	+ 22.5

SOURCES: Compiled from del Tufo, *op. cit.*, pp. 294-295; H. Fell, *1957 Population Census of the Federation of Malaya*, Report No. 14 (Kuala Lumpur Statistics Department, 1960), p. 57; Chander, *op. cit.*, pp. 48, 53, 58, 63, 68, 73, 78, 83.

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