

PENANG, THE HAJJ, AND THE ROLE OF HAJJ SYEIKHS, 1786–1977

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ABSTRACT

The history of Penang is often highlighted from the perspective of its development and contribution as a port or centre for trading that involves international trading networks, specifically with India and China. However, these discussions have overlooked the island's role and contribution as the embarkation port for pilgrims from Malaya and the Malay Archipelago when sea travel was the primary mode of transportation to Makkah. Penang's role as the embarkation point for hajj pilgrims could have taken place before Francis Light became the Superintendent of the Prince of Wales Island in 1786, while the existence of the Light Letters proved that besides trade, hajj activities had become an important aspect that linked Penang with people from other regions. Light's good relations with the Malay rulers were a fundamental factor in sending prospective pilgrims to Makkah by sea on British trading ships. Hajj activities became more organised in the nineteenth century with the presence of more viable modes of transport and the management of hajj pilgrims under the supervision of representatives appointed by specific shipping companies. The emergence of pilgrim brokers, popularly known as hajj syeikhs among local

residents in the twentieth century, further established Penang as the departure point for hajj pilgrims. This study focuses on the management of hajj pilgrims and the roles of hajj syeikhs in relation to the services they offered. Also raised are issues arising from the provision of services to pilgrims throughout the period when Penang became the point for departure and pilgrims embarking on their journey to Makkah.

Keywords: Penang, Francis Light, pilgrim brokers (*hajj syeikh*), pilgrimage, trading ships

INTRODUCTION

Hajj or *naik haji* is the fifth tenet of Islam which prescribes that every Muslim who has the financial and physical capability (healthy) undertake it once in their lifetime. For the Muslim population in Malaya/Malaysia, *naik haji* refers to preparations made for the prospective hajj pilgrims to travel to Makkah. Literally, *naik haji* means to be raised in status to become a *Haji*. The expression *naik haji* implies the process towards attaining an elevated status of securing the title *Haji* (upon completion of the pilgrimage). As an injunction, the requirement to perform the hajj reflects the commonality of the act among Muslims worldwide. Studies on the topic of hajj were not only few but also lacked comprehensiveness. As in the case of Malaya and Southeast Asia, studies by McDonnell (1986) and Tagliacozzo (2013) remained the main source of reference on the history of hajj. McDonnell's descriptive and analytical study scrutinised the conduct of hajj pilgrims from Malaysia and its impact on the socioeconomic and political aspects of Malay society from 1860–1981. The study includes issues like diseases, sanitation, and travel and sailing between two geographical locations, namely Malaya/Malaysia and the Middle East. McDonnell also focuses on the British reaction towards the welfare of hajj pilgrims. Meanwhile, Tagliacozzo studies the history of hajj pilgrims from Southeast Asian regions, especially Indonesia, which has the largest Muslim population. These studies are important as they are among the few in-depth research relating to the hajj in this region. However, neither author provides any background history of how the hajj pilgrimage started in Malaya. Tagliacozzo relates a few stories about pilgrims from Malaysia, which were collected through interviews and oral history. Likewise, Abdullah (2015), who writes on various types of trade related to the hajj, including business by hajj *syeikhs*, did not explain how Penang became the centre for departing hajj pilgrims. Her study only mentions the beginnings of hajj activities in Penang during the nineteenth century.

Failure to investigate the emergence of Penang as the point of departure for the hajj pilgrimage indirectly led to an imbalance in the narrative about the role of Penang Port in the history of Muslim communities in the Malay Archipelago. Since much of the literature, including those written by colonial administrators, were more focused on Penang's position in the history of trade relations between China and India, its contributions to the progress and development of Islamic heritage were not highlighted despite its long involvement in hajj activities, perhaps long before the coming of Francis Light. In filling the gaps about the role of Penang, this article looks into its history as the departure point for the hajj pilgrimage, focusing on the role of pilgrim brokers or hajj *syekh*s. This role is covered in three aspects, namely the hajj pilgrimage at the end of the eighteenth century, hajj management during the nineteenth century, and the types of services provided by the hajj *syekh*s during the twentieth century. The research is chronological so as to allow readers to trace the progress and change, including issues arising from hajj *syekh*s management of pilgrims throughout the period when Penang was the departure point for hajj pilgrimage in the Malay Archipelago.

FRANCIS LIGHT, MALAY RULERS AND THE *NAIK HAJI* PHENOMENON IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

The actual date for the beginnings of hajj activities in the Malay Archipelago or even in Malaya could not be precisely determined as there was no conclusive evidence on the matter. Although Arab traders had known the maritime routes to the Malay Archipelago by the nineteenth century, they were more keen to conduct trade with China, which was far more profitable. As argued by Andaya and Andaya (2017), place names ostensibly located on the North-West and East coasts of Sumatra, the Straits of Melaka, Palembang, Johor, part of the Riau-Lingga archipelago, and Pulau Tioman were mentioned in Arab sources, but there was no evidence of any organised Arab trading in these regions until the middle of the tenth century. It is, therefore, difficult to associate the presence of Muslims in the region as proof of the acceptance of Islam by the local community. The earliest evidence of the existence of a Muslim community in the Straits of Melaka was the 1292 account by Marco Polo, which mentioned that Islam had already been adopted in Samudera-Pasai. This polity was located in northeast Sumatra. The earliest gravestone found in the area was dated AH 615 (1297 CE), while relations between Pasai and the wider Muslim world were attested through the adoption of names by

kings in the late thirteenth century, replicating those used in Egypt and Syria. A few decades later, when the Moroccan traveller Ibn Batutta mentioned the pagans of the interior of Samudera-Pasai, he differentiated them from the Muslims of the coastal areas who had adopted the Syafi'i school of Islamic jurisprudence, which was prevalent in much of southern India and the Middle East.

It would not be farfetched to say the journey to perform the hajj could have begun when Islam was accepted by the people of the Malay Archipelago. The first person to have completed one of the five pillars of Islam was not known, although oral traditions, for example, have taken note of the hajj journey by Wali Songo pilgrims (Madjid 2008). Tagliacozzo (2013) mentioned the shipment of Muslim grave memorials in fair quantities from Gujarat to Indonesia in the fifteenth century ostensibly to commemorate Hajis in North Sumatra and the coastal area of Java during this period. The existence of diplomatic relations between governments in the Malay Archipelago region and the Ottoman empire which was the centre of Islamic rule, had developed the desire among leaders in the Malay Archipelago to acquire the lawful title of "Sultan" as the acknowledged leader of their respective territories. For this purpose, envoys were despatched to Makkah. Amongst these envoys were the ruler of Banten, Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa (1638), and the ruler of Mataram, Sultan Agung (1641), who was bestowed the title "Sultan Muhammad Maulana Matarani". Abdul Qohar, the son of Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa, also did likewise, and was bestowed the title Sultan Haji (Madjid 2008). However, the earliest record of the hajj in the Malay Archipelago was secured from the Dutch who first came to the region to obtain spices. As early as 1612, Hajis were found in Banda, Moluccas, two areas that attracted early Dutch attention. In 1642, Hajis were mentioned in Dutch records in Batam, West Java (Tagliacozzo 2013). As the space for religious travel and trade, the Indian Ocean provided the opportunity for Muslim pilgrims to commute for the purpose of performing the hajj. Since there were no specific vessels for carrying hajj pilgrims, prospective pilgrims from Indonesia would travel to Singapore and Penang before changing to Arab or Indian vessels.

As in Indonesia, the specific date of the beginnings of hajj services in Malaya was unclear. However, Kuala Perai and Tanjung Penaga on the island had become stop-by places for pilgrims returning from Makkah while waiting for their ships to their respective destinations, since Penang was still under the control of the Kedah sultan. Haji Brunei (also known as Haji Mohammad Salleh) who was responsible for opening up Bayan Lepas, for instance, had

stopped at Kuala Perai while waiting for ships sailing to Brunei at the time when Light was opening up the island. Later he cancelled his plan to return home and took part in cutting down the jungle to build a port at Tanjong Penaga (Musa 2008). Penang's role in the hajj history became much clearer in the Francis Light letters. These letters described the beginnings of the Light administration from 1768 until his death in 1794. Close scrutiny of these letters, revealed that Penang was the departure port for hajj pilgrims based on the good relationship between the Malay rulers and Light. The Light letters highlight the amicable relationships between Light and the Malay Rulers, dignitaries, and traders from Kedah, Selangor, Terengganu, Kelantan, Perak, Johor, Sumatera, Aceh, Brunei, Sambas, and other areas with trade and diplomatic needs. From one perspective, the contents of the letters reflected Light's dependence on the rulers, officials, dignitaries, and Malay traders to develop the settlement and its trade in Penang. These can be seen in the *cit* letters, which were letters or brief notes for the order of goods or notification of goods received between Light and the King's Merchant (*Saudagar Raja*)¹ and the nobility. These letters attest to Light's involvement with the *Saudagar Raja* and the Kedah chiefs.

Bonney (1971) and Merican and Mohamed Amin (2021) explain that although the occupation of Penang in 1786 was not valid and without any formal agreements between the parties involved, for economic reasons, both the British East India Company (henceforth EIC) and the government of Kedah maintained a good trade relationship. In this context, Kedah was of considerable importance to the EIC due to its close location to Penang, thereby providing fast delivery of goods like rice, cattle, chicken, ducks, and building materials. It was said that almost every week, Light would order goods from Kedah (Halimi 2006). Volume 10 of the Light letters contained many *cit* letters from Kedah to Francis Light to acknowledge receipt of payment from the latter.² Relations with other states, such as Selangor and Terengganu, were on a good footing. For example, Light and the Sultan of Selangor were dabbling in opium, tin, textiles, and rifles.³ In fact, the wife of the Selangor Crown Prince had also established trade relations (textiles, tin, and rice) with Light.⁴

Besides economic benefits, good relations that were established between the rulers of the Malay states and Light was an advantage to the former with regards to the "sending" of hajj pilgrims to Makkah. Here lies, perhaps, the beginnings of the history of hajj services in Penang and Malaya as a whole. Light became the unofficial "agent" for such services, especially

when he was sought after by the Malay rulers to assist them in sending hajj pilgrims from their respective states. His *modus operandi* was: the small group of village folks who wished to *naik haji* (between 2–6 people) would be sent by the Malay rulers through their representatives who were also local traders; they would bring these intending pilgrims to Penang. In Penang, the Malay rulers would seek Light's assistance to manage their trips to the Holy Land. These pilgrims were then arranged to board English vessels anchored at the Penang Port, which later sailed for India. Upon reaching India, the hajj pilgrims would transfer to English or other trade vessels that were on their way to Makkah. To provide some comfort to these intending pilgrims and also to ensure their safety, the Malay rulers requested Light to provide every pilgrim with "endorsed letters" (*surat cap*). These letters are a form of surety that Light had endorsed their trips, and the vessels involved were expected to assist these pilgrims during their journey to Makkah. In cases of adversities, pilgrims could use Light's endorsed letters in dealing with authorities in other countries en-route to Makkah.

The Sultan of Selangor was one of the regular Malay rulers who despatched hajj pilgrims to Penang through Light as the middleman and to arrange their journey using English trading vessels. In 1787, for example, the Sultan of Selangor sent a letter to Light to assist with travel arrangement of hajj pilgrims from Selangor to undertake the journey on vessels from China or other vessels that were travelling to Bengal. In case of delay in reaching the port in Penang, the Sultan of Selangor advised Light to ask the pilgrims to return to Selangor.⁵ In 1792, the Sultan of Selangor sent two siblings, Hasan and Ganti, who wished to *naik haji* through Light and to arrange for their travel on any ship that was heading to Surat, Mumbai or Cochin.⁶ In his letter, the Sultan of Selangor requested Light to provide the two brothers with an "endorsed letter" that could be used to ease matters when they needed to sail on any English or Indian vessels.⁷ Besides Selangor, rulers from other states like Terengganu, Kedah and the *Raja Muda* (crown prince) of Perlis also had secured Light's assistance in matters regarding hajj arrangements. On 4 November 1790, the *Raja Muda* of Perlis sent a letter to Light seeking assistance for one Lebai Bugis, who wished to *naik haji* on the condition that no payments be imposed because the man was poor.⁸ In a letter from Sultan Abdullah Mukarram Shah of Kedah (reigned 1778–1798) dated 20 *Jamadir Awal* (no year mentioned) to Light, matters relating to the journey of intending hajj pilgrims to Makkah were disclosed.⁹ In this letter, Sultan Abdullah states:

That in this year, many poor folks who wished to travel to the Arab land, had come from all over and gathered in my state because they wished to travel on the Malabari vessel. However, the Malabari vessel did not arrive, and due to that, everyone who wished to travel to the Arab Land was worried.

The phrase “from all over” shows that undertaking the hajj was done in a personal capacity. On their own initiative, a number of individuals would cooperate among themselves to start the journey to Makkah by boarding trading vessels. It was possible these individuals came from Kedah, Perlis, or Aceh as well as others who had travelled from other parts of the Malay Archipelago through trading vessels and who were later stranded in Kedah. In sympathy with these poor folks, Sultan Abdullah provided his own vessel under the stewardship of Saudagar Mirangkandu (probably a *Saudagar Raja*) to bring these poor folks¹⁰ to Makkah to fulfil their wishes to perform the hajj. Since the ship needed to make a stopover in Cochin, Sultan Abdullah directed Mirangkandu to dispose of tin in Cochin for the travel expenses to Makkah. Prior to sailing to Cochin, Sultan Abdullah directed Mirangkandu to stop over in Penang to collect trading goods which Light anticipated to be in demand in Cochin. Light was asked to supply quality anchoring ropes as replacements for any possible breakdown in the long journey. Light’s assistance was also sought to keep the excess belongings of Sultan Abdullah, which would be transferred onto trading vessels from India that had stopped over in Penang. In return for the favour, Sultan Abdullah agreed to sell him tin and other goods that Light needed.⁹

Interestingly, a scrutiny of the Light letters failed to uncover any reply by Light in his communication with the Malay rulers in relation to their various requests with regard to the intending pilgrims. This was due to pilgrims having already arrived in Penang armed with accompanying letters that were probably sent through Malay traders or the rulers’ representatives. As such, there was no necessity for Light to reply to these letters other than to look into the management of pilgrims as requested by the Malay rulers. There was no information in these letters to indicate Light’s inability to manage the needs of these intending pilgrims and their subsequent repatriation to the Malay rulers.

Based on the above discussions, it could be surmised that there were two important factors that enabled Penang to emerge as the departure point for hajj pilgrims not only from the Malay states but also from other places in

the Malay Archipelago. First, Penang's location as a trading port for intra-Asian and regional trade enabled it to become a stopping station for ships and trading vessels from East and West. The history of Penang as a harbour city was a continuation along the lines of past patterns of development in the maritime world. Since setting foot as Superintendent of the Prince of Wales Island in 1786, Light had developed trade relations with Indian ports scattered in Bengal, Bombay, Madras, and Nagore. Vessels from India frequented the harbour to trade, besides the presence of other vessels from Burma and Thailand, Pegu, and Junk Ceylon, and from nearby Aceh, Pedir, and Melaka (Loh 2009). As explained earlier, Indian ports had become points of stopover for hajj pilgrims who sailed on English trading vessels. The second factor that made the port central for hajj pilgrims was Light's good relations with the Malay rulers. As Superintendent of the Prince of Wales Island, Light's endorsed letters became the guarantee for ease of travel during hajj journeys to Makkah, especially when intending pilgrims were required to transit in various countries along the way. The letters enabled intending pilgrims to travel on vessels other than English ones. Although Light's replies to letters relating to locals needing to travel were not found, it could be reasonably assumed that the arrangement had proceeded well as there were many letters from the Malay rulers relating to hajj travel found among the Light letters. This explains why Penang remained the departure point for the Malay states in the following decades until 1977, when sea transport ceased to be the main mode of transportation for hajj pilgrims (Abd. Wahid et al. 1993).

HAJJ MANAGEMENT IN PENANG DURING THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

Hajj management in Penang improved considerably during the nineteenth century with the introduction of steamships in the 1840s, and following the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869. These developments not only shortened the hajj journey to Makkah but also brought about the appearance of agents for steamships which further made it easier for pilgrims to conduct hajj matters through them and to book ships for travel to the Holy Land. During this period, there were also various private agents who took advantage of the presence of international voyages that utilised portages in Singapore, India, and Jeddah. Some of these companies include Borneo Company Limited, De Lloyd, Gellatly Henkey Sewell & Co., Aliste & Co., Knowles & Co., Herlots Jawa & Co., and Al-Segaff & Co., which were based in Singapore (Madjid 2008).

The situation was different in the case of the Dutch East Indies as the Dutch had interfered in hajj matters since the 1820s due to the fear of Pan-Islamism from Turkey that might have influenced hajj pilgrims from the archipelago. In the Malay states, at least until the mid-nineteenth, hajj management was still individualistic and personal in nature, without any interference from the colonial administration.¹¹ This enabled travelling agents to become the main players in the hajj travel sector during this period.

In Malaya, according to Loh (2009), the replacement sailing vessels by steamships confirmed the secondary position of Penang after Singapore, as the latter was the most preferred port of call for the discharge of outward cargoes and collection of inward cargoes by international shipping companies. Singapore became the most important embarkation point where pilgrims from the Philippines, Malaya (West Malaysia), Sabah, Sarawak, and Indonesia would gather before boarding the ships, although this does not mean Penang was dropped out of the shipping itinerary. In this context, Penang continued to be important in terms of inter-settlement trade between her and Singapore. This enabled Penang harbour to continue as one of the main ports in sending hajj pilgrims from the Malay states before the emergence of another embarkation point for hajj pilgrimage in 1928 at Port Swettenham.¹²

In fact, long before the emergence of steamships, Penang was already included in the list of embarkation points for Arab vessels that took hajj pilgrims to Makkah. The *Tuhfat al-Nafis*, for instance, had mentioned the voyage of Raja Ahmad, the fourth son of Raja Haji, The Yamtuan Muda Bugis in Riau Lingga, to Makkah for *naik haji*. He reached Makkah on 5 March 1828 by travelling on Arab vessels. His itinerary was as follows: from Riau, Raja Ahmad travelled to Singapore (no mention of the vessel's name) before sailing to Penang on an Arab trading vessel by the name of *Syed Hasyim* helmed by Captain Hasan Badui. From Penang, Raja Ahmad boarded the *Feluka*, which was a Turkish vessel for the journey to Jeddah. On his return journey to Penang, he boarded another Turkish ship under Captain Syed Muhammad Ali. On reaching Penang, he received news of the political turmoil in Riau and hastened to the latter. He then sailed on an Arab vessel that was under the command of Captain Buazir. On the way to Riau, the ship had drifted at sea due to the lack of wind. To continue their journey, Raja Ahmad and ten members of his entourage were offered a ride on a schooner owned by a Melaka resident of Bugis descent and continued the journey to Penyengat. *Tuhfat al-Nafis* mentioned Raja Ahmad was the first child of the Raja of Riau and Lingga to have performed the hajj (Hooker 1991).

Besides *Tuhfat al-Nafis*, the text *Kisah Pelayaran Abdullah ke Kelantan dan ke Juddah* by Abdullah Munsyi, also mentioned the role of Penang as the departure point for hajj pilgrims from Malaya and other nearby countries for Jeddah. Abdullah had noted on 30 January 1857, the ship *Subulus Salam* which was owned by an Arab named Syeikh Abdul Karim, had arrived in Penang harbour. The ship was said to have left Singapore, sailing towards Melaka on its way to Makkah and stopped over in Penang (Ahmad 1981). Based on these two writings, it can be concluded that during this time, travels to Makkah still involved boarding Arab vessels through the initiatives of the pilgrims themselves.

When steamship operations expanded, travel agents began to come to the fore to provide myriad services. Their function was to collect information relating to the names of pilgrims and to collect payments from prospective pilgrims who planned to board steamships that would call at Penang Port. Unfortunately, nothing is known about the activities of these travel agents except for records found, like personal diaries that documented their activities. One such diary belonged to Sheikh Omar Basheer, who was a respected and distinguished religious figure in the nineteenth century, not only among the Muslim community in Penang but also among the British colonial administrators. During the 1867 riots (Penang riots), which were caused by secret society clashes, Sheikh Omar was asked by the British to order the Malays in Penang to take an oath before him and declare they were not members of any of the Malay secret societies in existence then: the Red Flag and White Flag societies. Besides being a religious leader, namely the *imam* of the Acheen Street Malay Mosque and leader of the Naqsyabandiah Sufi group in Penang, Sheikh Omar was also active in various trading activities. His diary contains a list of passengers on ships that had arrived at the port. From this information, it could be assumed that Sheikh Omar was a travel agent actively seeking ships that carried hajj pilgrims to Makkah (Musa 1995). As an agent, he collected the names of pilgrims and then communicated with shipping companies to take intending the pilgrims to the Holy Land. In his diary, Sheikh Omar recorded the names of vessels that departed from Penang to Jeddah and those that had called at the port. For example, he recorded on 15 *Syaaban* 1280 (25 January 1864), Sayyid Safi set sail from Penang on a small boat after he took over the captaincy upon the demise of Mohd Ismail in Jeddah. The diary also took note of travelling time. The arrival of the Arab

vessel from Jeddah, which was owned by Sayyid Safi, was noted at 3.00 p.m. 6 *Rabiulakhir* 1281 (8 September 1864). The voyage from Jeddah to Penang took 32 days.¹³

A survey of Sheik Omar's diary indicates the hustle and bustle of Penang during the pilgrimage season. The Penang harbour was frequented not only by local ships but also by Indonesian and Arab vessels. These vessels would first make their transit in Penang before leaving for Jeddah or making a stop at the harbour to allow hajj pilgrims to disembark and continue the hajj journey on other ships docked in the harbour. One example is the ship owned by one Abdul Manan which carried 300 intending pilgrims from Surabaya. The ship anchored at the Penang harbour on 22 *Jamadilakhir* 1281 (22 November 1864) for transit. In 1866, Sheikh Omar recorded the arrival of a number of vessels at the harbour, including an Arab vessel named *Fatah al-Karim* and another ship named *Air Tawar*, which was owned by Saiyid Mohsin al-Jafri. These vessels brought hajj pilgrims from Semarang, the Dutch East Indies. Besides ship cargoes, Sheikh Omar also recorded the fares that were charged to prospective hajj pilgrims. Generally, the passenger fare from Penang to Jeddah in the 1860s was around \$14.00 (Musa et al. 2018). These records, however, did not state the company with which Sheikh Omar was working, but the management of hajj travel services was continued by his son, Sheikh Zachariah, who became the agent for Mansfield, a shipping company that provided vessels for passengers to Jeddah and other Arabian port (Directory of Malaya 1931).

Another travel agent worthy of mention is Haji Pa'wan Abdul Kadir, who was the first person from Penang to be appointed a travel agent by the Blue Funnel shipping company. Haji Pa'wan Abdul Kadir was a descendant of Cauder Mohideen, the founder of the Kapitan Keling Mosque. Haji Pa'wan himself was an official of the mosque. After the Second World War, Haji Pa'wan's business was taken over by Muhammad Ma'som bin Shaikh Abdul Manan, who was a *hajj syeikh* of Mandailing ancestry. Muhammad Ma'som, more popularly known as Pak Ma'som among the locals, became the manager, while Sheikh Zachariah's son-in-law, Syed Ahmad bin Omar al Mashoor, became Pak Ma'som's assistant (Md Adnan 2012).

In tandem with the progress in management and shipping, Table 1 shows the statistics on the total number of pilgrims from Malaya traceable to 1885.

Table 1: Number of hajj pilgrims from Malaya, 1885–1899

Year	Total number of hajj pilgrims
1885	3,685
1886	2,889
1887	2,524
1888	2,659
1889	2,361
1890	3,532
1891	4,120
1892	3,160
1893	5,764
1894	2,209
1895	2,678
1896	2,837
1897	4,635
1898	2,528
1899	3,090

Sources: McDonnell (1986) and Roff (1982).

The large number of pilgrims for the years 1891, 1893, and 1897 was possibly related to the increase in rubber prices and higher profits accrued to the Malays from the cultivation of paddy, vegetables, fruits, and coconuts. Lim (1977) highlights the reference to land and agriculture in the official reports for Kuala Pilah and Tampin districts, where the majority of the people were Malays, for instance, providing a striking contrast to other districts in Negeri Sembilan, with the paddy reports particularly optimistic and buoyant. Elsewhere, Pakiam (2019) indicates there was increased planting of coconut and copra production at the end of the nineteenth century, especially in Johor, where the Malays also planted sugar cane, banana, and tubers. Income earned by the Malays from these agricultural activities was probably saved for the purpose of *naik haji*.

HAJJ SYEIKH ACTIVITIES IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

The role and responsibilities of hajj *syeikhs* became evident during the twentieth century when the British began to refine the role and responsibilities of brokers through the following ordinance (2006/0001274, Ordinance of The Straits Settlement 1906–1907, No. XVII, 1906: 55):

1. Any person who is concerned in bringing into the owner agents or master of the ships by which such pilgrims are brought into the Colony;
2. Any person other than the owner or agent of a ship who buys and resells or sells on commission or negotiates, or takes any reward for the purchase or sale of passage tickets for pilgrims;
3. Any person who supplies or offers to supply loading or board or any house accommodation to a pilgrim; and
4. Any person who directly or indirectly for reward gain or expectation thereof advises or influences or attempts to influence any pilgrim on any matter relating to his pilgrimage.

As argued by Harper (1999), the crisis in Asia following the First World War had raised British concerns about the political influence brought by returning students and hajjis, which were viewed as dangerous. As a result, close observations were put in place not only over the hajjis but also hajj *syekh*s who might bring in similar influences. In fact, the management of hajj pilgrims in the Malay states since the 1920s and until the outbreak of the Second World War was subsequently brought under the control of the Political Intelligence Bureau, which was formed in 1922 with its headquarters in Singapore. Following this move, licensed hajj *syekh*s were required to submit reports about hajj pilgrims to the Director of the Political Intelligence Bureau during the first month of the hajj season.

Besides pilgrim brokers or hajj *syekh*s, another category of personnel that were important in the management of hajj pilgrims were the *badal haji* (runners) who usually served the hajj *syekh*s (SUK Kelantan 191/1950). Their duties were to assist the hajj *syekh*s in scouting for hajj pilgrims in the villages. Runners were usually individuals who were close to the villagers, such as village heads, district officers, and village clerics. Hajj *syekh*s would go into the villages looking for runners who had previously worked with them. The runners would then bring hajj *syekh*s to the house of those who wished to undertake the journey to Makkah. The role of village heads was to register fellow villagers who wished to use the services of particular *syekh*s (Oral History Documentation Project on Hajj Heritage 2017).

The selection of the hajj *syekh* was an important part of the early preparation that had to be undertaken by the prospective pilgrim. Once completed, the prospective pilgrim must prepare all the necessities that were to be taken to Makkah. Goods like pestle and mortar, stove, coconuts that

have been shaved off their skin, and various types of food were placed in a trunk (known as *peti sahara*). At this stage, the role of the runner was important. Using lorries, the runner would go into the village to collect trunks and mattresses that would be used by the pilgrims. These were transported to a warehouse in Penang Port where each hajj *syekh* was given their specific space.

The departure of intending pilgrims from their homes to the port was much awaited by the local Malays. Before departure, a thanksgiving ceremony was held with prayer for a safe journey (Baharudin 2009). Usually, there were only one or two pilgrims from a single village, but the entourage sometimes filled one or two buses. Before the introduction of hajj shipping services, intending pilgrims have to wait for cargo ships in Singapore and Penang between two to four weeks due to the inconsistency of sailing time and the poor communication at the time. With the advent of hajj ships, pilgrims only waited for two to three days at the Penang Port before departure (Baharudin 2009).

Before departure, most of the Malays filled their time by shopping as the Penang Port then was a tax-free one. As was often the case, the number of those accompanying pilgrims was more than the latter. This caused much congestion in George Town. Similar congestion was also experienced by the ferry services as those returning to north Perak, Kedah, and Perlis often depart at the same time (Baharudin 2016). Runners were also responsible for providing assistance to pilgrims and their entourage in using the ferry services (Baharudin 2009).

Research on Acheen Street by Md Adnan (2012), who examined the memories of this particular community, has made it possible to undertake the mapping of areas and buildings area that were connected with the history of *naik haji* in Penang. Although not a trained historian, Md Adnan made efforts to interview many descendants of families who were active in Acheen Street, including in hajj management. Since Acheen Street was the focal point for hajj pilgrims and their families during the hajj season, many of its buildings had connections with hajj matters, either as ticketing offices, offices of hajj *syekhs*, or lodging facilities, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Locations in Acheen Street and Lumut Lane that were once connected to hajj services

Address and owner of building	Function of building during pilgrimage season
No. 55 Acheen Street <i>Maktabah</i> (bookshop), Haji Abdullah bin Haji Mohd Noordin Arrawi.	This bookshop doubled as the Penang office of Hajj Sheikh Haji Ariffin bin Mohd Salleh Rawa.
No. 53 Acheen Street, formerly inhabited by Syed Abdul Rahman, the imam of Acheen Street Mosque (1933–1944).	The office of hajj <i>syekh</i> Shaikh Ahmad Ismail before he moved to No. 81 Acheen Street.
No. 75B Acheen was owned by Tunku Syed Hussain. ¹⁴	Rented to pilgrim brokers.
No. 81, Acheen Street, a succession of bookshops. ¹⁵	Office for Sheikh Ahmad Ismail, a pilgrimage agent from Kebun Sireh, Bukit Mertajam.
81 F, Acheen Street	Office of hajj <i>syekhs</i> Shaikh Haji Khither bin Haji Ali and Shaikh Haji Nori bin Haji Salleh, both from Kuala Kurau. They also shared the space with another broker, Haji Hussain bin Haji Mohamad of Pondok Haji Majid, Guar Chempedak in Kedah.
No. 87 Acheen Street	The location of Jeddah Pilgrim Ticket Office, agent for the Mansfield Blue Tunnel Line, and was responsible in chartering ships to transport pilgrims to Makkah.
No. 2 Lumut Lane	Until the mid-1970s, this house was used as temporary quarters for Makkah-bound pilgrims and their families who came to accompany them.
No. 4 Lumut Lane	Office of hajj <i>syekh</i> , Sheikh Abdullah Mansoor and also served as the Penang Office for pilgrim broker Shaikh Haji Mohd Pati bin Itam from Kampung Gajah, Perak.
No. 6 Lumut Lane	Office of Sheikh Zachariah Basheer, who was also involved in the import and export business. Sheikh Zachariah was also involved in the hajj trade. In later years, this premise became the office of a hajj <i>syekh</i> , the partnership of Syed Ali al-Mufathal and Haji Ismail. In 1950s, the building was no longer inhabited but was used to accommodate pilgrims during the hajj season. ¹⁶

Source: Md Adnan (2012).

Hajj *syekhs* who were based in Malaya/Malaysia either worked independently or with Makkah *syekhs*. However, there were also hajj *syekhs* who came directly from Makkah to manage the pilgrims under their supervision. In such cases, these hajj *syekhs* had acquaintances in Malaya/Malaysia that enabled them to gather prospective hajj pilgrims with ease. One example is Sheikh Hassan Jabir, who was a hajj *syekh* based in Makkah but, in the 1950s, became a *syekh* in Malaya. A few months before the hajj season, he would come to Malaya to gather the pilgrims. He would travel to the northern states of Kedah and Perak in search of prospective pilgrims. With his Arabic accent, his Malay was not easily understood by the village folks. As such, the promotion of his hajj packages had to be undertaken by his wife, Sekha (popularly known as Umi Sekha), who later became a well-known caterer in Penang (Oral History Documentation Project on Hajj Heritage 2015). As a local born, Sekha would plan her promotion to the villages by highlighting the advantages of choosing her husband's pilgrimage package. This package included lodging, with pilgrims given a choice to include or exclude meals. These meals came from Sekha's own cooking, and she was assisted by workers who were mostly Arabs. These meal services were the start of her catering service, which still survives until the present day.

Hajj *syekhs* were responsible for arranging travel plans/process of hajj pilgrims from Malaya, which began with transporting their luggage from the villages, usually 10 days prior to the commencement of the pilgrims' journey. The logistics involved in preparation for their journey were: storage of pilgrims' belongings and goods in the warehouses (go downs) before their transfer to ships they would be boarding, securing travelling tickets and passports. After securing the necessary tickets, the passports must be sent to the Pilgrimage Control Officer in Penang or sent to the Federation Pilgrim Officer in Singapore or the Inspector of Immigration in Port Swettenham 15 days before departure (Abdullah 2015). It was also the responsibility of hajj *syekhs* to inform hajj pilgrims about the fares and departure dates and to provide lodging whenever required. The lodging was not only for the intending pilgrims but also for family members who were sending them off, as well as upon their return to Penang. Due to Penang Port being the embarkation point for hajj pilgrims from the Malay states, demand for lodging houses would increase at short notice during the hajj season. Local inhabitants who lived in the surrounding area and adjacent to the port, especially the Acheen Street community, would rent out their houses to hajj *syekhs* to be used as accommodation for hajj pilgrims and their families. For locals who rented their houses to hajj *syekhs* as accommodation for pilgrims, this was an

opportunity for income generation. Most hotels in the vicinity and as far as Tanjong Bungah became the foci of hajj *syekh*s in providing accommodation for clients.

The Acheen Street area became the location for temporary residence for intending pilgrims and their entourage, which became a bustling trading centre. It became the focal point of the hajj *syekh*s' operation and was known as the "Second Jeddah" as it was the place where intending pilgrims congregated before boarding the ship to Jeddah. Various trading activities mushroomed, including food preparation, religious books, cloth such as *pulicat* and *batik*, and a myriad of other pilgrim requirements. The transporting of trunks from the villages to the port was a profitable business, with companies like Siang Poh or Sampo renting their lorries to hajj *syekh*s (Abdullah 2015).

In carrying out the duties of arranging pilgrim travels, the hajj *syekh*s were usually paid a token from the shipping agents or even received a paid trip to accompany their hajj pilgrims to Makkah. On arrival in Makkah, these hajj *syekh*s from Malaya/Malaysia would pass over their pilgrims to the highest bidding Makkah *syekh* or hajj *syekh* with whom they had already made prior arrangements. Itinerant recruiters also operated from Singapore throughout the peninsula and the Malay Archipelago. Roff (1980) observed that the pilgrimage business was predominantly in the hands of Malayan Arabs with local knowledge and contacts in the Hejaz. In the Arab land, hajj *syekh*s were referred to as *mutawwif*, who were mostly local Arabs. *Mutawwif*s were responsible for the management of hajj pilgrims the moment the latter disembarked from their ships. This includes providing accommodation, meals, health care, and handling immigration matters (passport) and currency exchange.

In the context of local hajj *syekh*s, their appointment had to be selective and licensed by the police if they were working as individuals. Hence, hajj *syekh*s activities were monitored, to prevent possible misconduct and to ensure hajj pilgrims were not wronged or taken advantage of (SUK Kedah 1663/1346). Police authorities routinely checked the background information of applicants for positions as hajj *syekh*s to ensure they were qualified and did not have any criminal records (Abdullah 2015). The choice of hajj *syekh* by intending pilgrims, in reality, was dependent on their fame and calibre. Quite often, the choice was suggested by relatives and friends who had completed their hajj earlier by recommending the person who had given them satisfactory services. According to Maafor (2011), there were a number of religious teachers in Malaya who were also hajj *syekh*s, such as Syekh Tahir Jalaludin, who had studied in Makkah in 1887. In 1890, he had brought pilgrims to Makkah.

To avoid competition in the recruitment of clients among hajj *syekh*s and ensure the smooth arrangement of accommodation bookings, there was an unwritten understanding among hajj *syekh*s that clients were allocated between them based on the states that they came from. In this way, all hajj *syekh*s received a fair share of clientele. Hajj *syekh*s became popular in Penang around the 1950s through the services of Syed Ali bin Syed Abdullah al-Mufathal (popularly known as Syed Ali al-Mufathal), who managed hajj pilgrims from Kelantan and South Thailand. Many intending pilgrims came with Tuan Guru Haji Yusoff from the Machang district and Tuan Guru Haji Mat from the Pasir Mas district. *Pondok* teachers also played a role in selecting hajj *syekh*s for their students. Syekh Ali al-Mufathal, for instance, accepted many intending pilgrims from Kelantan who were recommended by Tuan Guru Haji Yusoff and Tuan Guru Haji Mat. Syed Ali al-Mufathal was educated at the Dar Al-Ulum, Makkah and was fluent in Arabic. He used to serve as a teacher at Sekolah Agama Al-Mashoor (Al-Mashoor religious school) before he was offered by his father-in-law, Syed Ahmad Al-Mashoor, to become a hajj *syekh* (interview with Syed Salim bin Syed Ali Al-Mufathal on 19 September 2021). Since 1951, his name was listed as a hajj *syekh* in the Annual Hajj Report (608/1370, Pilgrimage Shipping Arrangements for 1951 Pilgrimage).

Another well-known hajj *syekh* during the same period was Haji Ismail bin Haji Hashim, who provided services to pilgrims from Kedah especially from the Pendang district. Upon arrival in Makkah, these intending pilgrims were passed to one Sheikh Hassan Jabir (Oral History Documentation Project on Hajj Heritage 2017). Although there was an understanding with regards to the distribution of hajj clients among the *syekh*s, there were still dissatisfactions among these *syekh*s. One such case took place in 1928, when Syed Salleh bin Syed Hashim Alshagoff, who resided in No. 196 Burma Road, Penang, made a request to the Kedah Secretary of State to acknowledge him as the broker for hajj pilgrims from the state who would start their journey to Makkah from Penang. His reason for doing so was to simplify the process of hajj preparation for intending pilgrims from Kedah in terms of ticket purchase and other matters relating to their travel plans. With the approval, Syed Salleh was able to place an agent for clients in Kedah, thus providing his services through his agent who was located in Pekan Melayu (Alor Setar), Kedah. With such services, hajj pilgrims were able to save time and expenses. Although Syed Salleh's application was successful, there were protests from the Jeddah Pilgrim Brokers, which had all this while managed tickets and hajj travel for hajj clients from Kedah, Perlis, Setul, and neighbouring states. A letter from

the Jeddah Pilgrim Brokers, Acheen Street, to the British Adviser of Kedah dated 6 February 1929 had taken note of complaints of Kedah hajj pilgrims that they could not purchase tickets from Jeddah Pilgrim Brokers because they were hounded by Kedah officers who would not provide hajj passports to any hajj pilgrims who had booked tickets with anyone other than Syed Salleh Alsagoff. Their passports were also held by Syed Salleh, who, according to the instructions given by the Kedah officials should be the only agent to book passages to Makkah for those from Kedah. The Jeddah Pilgrim Brokers regretted the alleged intimidation and had requested an investigation into the matter (1663/1343-1957/040173, Applies for a pilgrim broker's licence).

Another issue related to the hajj travel season was the unruly arrival of intending pilgrims and their family members at the train station which led to public complaints. A letter of complaint dated 17 March 1924 was received from a family member of a hajj pilgrim addressed to the Assistant District Officer, Ulu Langat. He related an untoward and disturbing situation he had experienced while accompanying his mother-in-law from Kajang to Singapore. He was with four other family members and sixteen other hajj pilgrims. Upon arrival at the Tank Road train station in Singapore on 22 February 1924, the supposed hajj *syekh* who should receive and manage the group of pilgrims travelling with his mother-in-law was nowhere to be seen. On noticing this, another hajj *syekh*, Sheikh Haji Hussain insisted his mother-in-law and her group accept him as their broker. When the complainant refused, he was harshly rebuked by the hajj *syekh*. The complainant was later grabbed by two men the moment the group left the station. He was strangled and punched because he refused to accept the replacement hajj *syekh* (Selangor Secretariat Sel. Sec: 1410/1924).

Exploitation by hajj *syekh* was not a new issue. It was a common legal matter during the early years. *The Singapore Free Press and Merchantile Advertiser* (18 October 1906), for example, had covered the allegation against two hajj *syekhs*, Haji Abdul Ghani and Haji Abdul Rahman who had deceived hajj pilgrims. Their cases were the first of their kind to be brought to court after the introduction of the Pilgrim Brokers Ordinance 1906. Both were charged, subsequently found guilty of operating as hajj *syekh* without a license and fined \$500. In their case, a hajj pilgrim had accused Haji Abdul Ghani of deceiving him by charging \$100 instead of \$90 because he was illiterate and could not understand what was written on the ticket. He had also bought a second ticket from Haji Abdul Rahman, who claimed that it was cheaper to sail through Colombo. This incident was later reported in the newspaper *Chahaya Pulau Pinang* (27 October 1906).

Misconduct by hajj *syekhs* not only existed at home but was also reported in Makkah. In his report, Abdul Majid Zainuddin, who was the first Hajj Officer of the Malay States, had raised issues related to questionable financial arrangements by hajj *syekhs* on Malay hajj pilgrims. He considered the one-time payment by hajj pilgrims to hajj *syekhs* as an unwise arrangement (FO 371/12248, Report of the Hajj of 1345AH 1927). In 1935, five Malay hajj pilgrims in Singapore paid £18 of gold to Sheikh Abdullah Rawa, a Makkah *syekh*. The *syekh*, however, was not present in the Hejaz during the hajj season. In addition, his representative in Makkah failed to provide the draft payment that was supposed to be given to the affected pilgrim. Although the hajj *syekh* was later imprisoned by the Saudi government, the hajj pilgrim involved was unable to visit Madinah as stipulated in the agreement. The pilgrim's luggage chest containing food supplies was stranded in Jeddah because no arrangement was made to deliver them to Makkah. Hajj pilgrims who could not afford or failed to make advance payments, would be prevented by the hajj *syekhs* from boarding the ships as scheduled for a number of weeks (FO 371/17932, Report on the Hajj of 1352AH 1934).

Misappropriation or corrupt practices by hajj *syekhs* occurred even in later years. In the 1970s, for instance, Syekh Ahmad Dosal was indicted when he placed twenty hajj pilgrims from Temerloh, Pahang, under a bridge because of his failure to erect their camps in Mina. Following a report against him by the Malaysian Hajj Chief in 1977, Syekh Ahmad Dosal was arrested, and his title of hajj *syekh* was stripped. All payments that he had collected for expenses in Mina were returned to the affected hajj pilgrims (Laporan Ketua Rombongan Haji 1977).

Although there were many reports of wrongful behaviour among hajj *syekhs*, it was undeniable that most of them had fulfilled their responsibilities to the best of their ability and were accorded trust by the pilgrims. It is not surprising that Salleh (1979), for instance, regarded these hajj *syekhs* as trustworthy individuals, and pilgrims even entrusted their finances to them. This was supported by Roff (1975), who writes, "On the other hand, one's shaykh was a necessary guide, philosopher, and even friend, and like many other indispensable institutions was by no means always as exploitative as common tale made out" (107).

In handling the exploitation of Malay hajj pilgrims by hajj *syekhs*, the British government of the Malay States, together with the government of the Dutch East Indies, had produced a list of blacklisted hajj *syekhs* so that their visas to the Malay Archipelago would be blocked. The first list was produced in 1930, consisting of twenty hajj *syekhs* from the Dutch East Indies

who were sailing through Singapore. An additional list was produced later with the names of two hajj *syekh*s: Sheikh Ishak bin Abdullah and Sheikh Mohamed Nasir. Both were prevented from leaving the Hejaz. Until 1950, the Hajj Commissioner for the Malay States suggested the blacklist be retained to block the provision of visas to involved hajj *syekh*s (Baharudin 2009). It seems that when the hajj services were continued after the Second World War, hajj *syekh*s, especially those from Makkah, and local pilgrim brokers, were monitored by the government of the Federated Malay States. For instance, the immigration authorities of the Federation of Malaya and Singapore were required to report to the Officer-in-Charge of pilgrim affairs in the respective territories, the arrival of any *syekh* from Makkah or his agent for the purpose of recruiting pilgrims. Makkah *syekh*s and local *syekh*s were required to obtain a Pilgrim Brokers' License from the Government of Singapore and the Federation of Malaya in Singapore and Penang, respectively. Hajj *syekh*s were also required to report to the District Officer in whichever area they were operating (Selangor Secretariat Sel. Sec: 2753/1949-1957/0298429). These monitoring measures were necessary following the increased number of hajj pilgrims from Malaya after the end of the Second World War; in 1946, there were only 138 pilgrims, but by 1950, the number had increased to 3,886. There were also more *syekh*s appearing on the scene and getting involved in the management of hajj pilgrims, as shown in Table 3.

Table 3: 1955 – Pilgrim brokers of the Federation of Malaya licensed by the police authorities

Name	Address
1. Hj Osman b. Hj Bodin	Kampung Tengah, Parit, Tronoh (Perak)
2. Ibrahim b. Long	Pekan Lama, Pekan (Pahang)
3. Hj Abdul Hamid b. Hj Majid	3846, Mengkuang Rd., B'worth (Penang)
4. Hj Osman b. Jusoh	13, Dindings Road (Penang)
5. Hj Ahmad b. Hj Yunus	426, Penang Road (Penang)
6. Hj Ahmad b. Hj Yahaya	303L, Seremban Lane (Penang)
7. Syed Shaikh b. S. Ahmad Almashoor	198, Burmah Road (Penang)
8. Hj Ahmad b. Hj Ibrahim	373, East Jelutong (Penang)
9. Hj Mohd Sirah b. Hj Daud	35-D, Pitt Street (Penang)
10. Hj Tajuddin b. Md. Amin	12, Lumut Lane (Penang)
11. Hj Ishah b. Ismail	1-F, Penang Street (Penang)
12. Abdullah b. Marak	14, Aboo Sittee Lane (Penang)
13. Syed Abbas A. R. Alhabshee	210A, Burmah Road (Penang)
14. Hj Abdul Kader b. Hj A. Raof	48, Bagan Jermal (Penang)
15. Hj Akil b. Abdul Raoff	73, Patani Road (Penang)

(continued on next page)

Table 3: (continued)

Name	Address
16. Ibrahim b. Hj Abdullah	81-B, Acheen Street (Penang)
17. Kassim b. Hj Akil	69, Patani Road (Penang)
18. Syed Ally b. S. A. Almnfashal	67, Acheen Street (Penang)
19. Ahmad b. Ismail	332, Kebun Sirah, BM (Penang)
20. Abdul Rahman b. Noor	54, Acheen Street (Penang)
21. Hj Arshad b. Hj Salleh	92, Pitt Street (Penang)
22. Abdullah b. Shaik Manor	4, Lumut Lane (Penang)
23. Hj. Ismail b. Hj Hashim	6, Lumut Lane (Penang)
24. Hj Khither b. Hj Ali	52, Burmah Road (Penang)
25. Hj Abdul Halim Sakir	597, Pengkalan Machang, Sg. Dua, P. W. (Penang)
26. Hj Mohd Kassim	136A, Tupai Road (Taiping)
27. Hj Ariffin b. Hj Salleh	114, York Road (Penang)
28. Abdul Rahman b. Mansor	2, Lumut Lane (Penang)
29. Hj Abdul Hamid b. Hj Abd. Majid	3846, Mengkuang Road (B'w)
30. Hj Osman b. Hj Jusoh	95 Mk. 20, Kubang Semang (Bt. Mertajam)

Source: *Senarai Nama Sheikh Haji Persekutuan Tanah Melayu 1955*.

Table 3 shows that many hajj *syekhs* who served in Penang were locals from the island or from Sungai Dua, Butterworth, and Bukit Mertajam on the mainland. During this period, the hajj *syekhs* focused in Acheen Street and Lumut Lane. This situation continued until 1977. According to the list of hajj *syekhs*, only two were from Perak, one from Pahang, and none from the other states.

FORMATION OF *LEMBAGA URUSAN DAN TABUNG HAJI* AND THE DEMISE OF *HAJJ SYEIKHS*

Lembaga Tabung Haji, or the Malayan Muslim Pilgrims Saving Corporation, was formed under Parliament Act No. 34, 1962, following its passage in the Senate and the House of Representatives and endorsement of the Yang di-Pertuan Agong on 7 September 1962. At the *Lembaga*'s first meeting, it was agreed that its name be changed to the Prospective Hajj Pilgrims Saving Corporation or *Tabung Haji* in short. Under this name, it was officially launched on 30 September 1963 (Baharudin 2009).

Tabung Haji had formed close cooperation with *Pejabat Kawalan Haji* (Pilgrimage Control Office), Penang, and was responsible for the collection, saving, and investment of all monies collected from prospective hajj pilgrims.

Pejabat Kawalan Haji was placed under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and was responsible for overseeing the welfare and facilities of hajj pilgrims beginning from the initial travel process, while in Makkah, and until their return. Names of eligible hajj pilgrims were submitted to *Pejabat Kawalan Haji*, Penang, for the issuance of hajj passes, air tickets, facilities during travel, and throughout their stay in the Holy Land. Cooperation between the two bodies was vital to encourage more Malays to perform the hajj, and at the same time, they would not have to endure financial burden that would affect their economic standing. Although their cooperation showed success, there were difficulties and weaknesses relating to the division of tasks, management, and coordination, as both were placed under different ministries located in two different states (Penang and Kuala Lumpur). To overcome issues in management and to improve hajj services, the then Deputy Prime Minister and also Minister of National and Rural Development, Tun Abdul Razak bin Dato' Hussein, had set up a committee to study the merger of *Tabung Haji* and *Pejabat Kawalan Haji*. This merger not only would improve services and facilities for hajj pilgrims, but also lead to the economic uplift of a significant section of the Malay community, especially those in the rural areas. On 13 February 1969, the House of Representatives passed the bill called *Lembaga Urusan dan Tabung Haji Act, 1969*. Both the earlier bodies were merged on 8 August 1969 and became known as *Lembaga Urusan dan Tabung Haji* (henceforth LUTH) (Baharudin 2009).

Since its formation, LUTH has continued to establish close cooperation with hajj *syekh*s who had been in the business for a long time so as to ensure the smooth administration of hajj matters for the Malays. Indeed, in LUTH's annual report, one would find the list of licensed hajj *syekh*s who were operating in the Malay States and Singapore. These procedures and arrangements continued until the demise of sea travel in 1977. Although hajj-chartered flight services were introduced in 1970, the demand for them was still limited. However, towards 1975, demand for air travel began to increase and surpassed the number of pilgrims using sea travel (Abdullah 2015). For the first time in the history of Malaysia, all hajj pilgrims left for Makkah in 1977 through air travel with a total of twenty-two chartered flights using Boeing 747. These flights were operated under the coordination between LUTH and the Malaysian Airline System (MAS). During the initial registration, a total of 1,487 hajj pilgrims applied to travel by sea, while 1,300 other hajj pilgrims chose to travel by air. Once the number of prospective pilgrims who had booked for sea travel was identified, efforts were undertaken to seek ships from Hong Kong, Singapore, India, Indonesia, and Malaysia for hajj travel to

Jeddah (Laporan Tahunan Haji 1977). Unfortunately, due to the small demand, no offer was received except from the *Mogul Line*; this Indian company was willing to offer the ship *Nor Jehan* at a rate of not less than \$3,000,000.00, which means the fare for each hajj pilgrim would be \$6,500.00 (*Berita Harian* 1977). On the other hand, LUTH had estimated the rate for hajj travel by air in 1977 to cost only \$4,525, compared to the sea travel rate of \$4,500 for class salon A, \$4,400 for class salon B, \$4,210 for class salon C, and \$3,940 for tourists class (1990/0015165, Naik haji tahun 1976). Consequently, the 1,487 hajj pilgrims who initially registered for sea travel changed to air travel, except for 311 hajj pilgrims who insisted on travelling by sea. At the end of the registration for the hajj, including latecomers, the total number of hajj pilgrims during the 1977 hajj season was 3,361 who travelled by air through the arrangement of LUTH/MAS (Laporan Tahunan Haji 1977).

The demise of sea travel marked the end of the festivity and the hustle and bustle of Acheen Street as the second “Jeddah”. Indirectly, this had a great impact on hajj *syekhs* and runners who no longer have related hajj activities and, therefore, could no longer participate as actively as before. In addition, the formation of Tabung Haji Transportation and Corporation Pvt. Ltd. in 1971 had taken over the management of hajj pilgrims’ flights and supplied myriad paraphernalia for the needs of hajj pilgrims. These services contributed to the decline of activities of hajj *syekhs*. Their diminishing role was further aggravated as hajj pilgrims tended to depend wholly on LUTH for all matters relating to hajj travel to Makkah, including lodging and the provision of other essentials (Abdullah 2015). Additionally, the LUTH offered better trunk and luggage facilities that were more convenient. These facilities eliminated the need for hajj pilgrims to arrange the logistics of their goods from their homes to Port Swettenham, Swettenham Pier (Penang), and Singapore. The logistics for hajj pilgrims’ baggage had become an integrated part of LUTH, which transports them to Jeddah. These arrangements by LUTH ultimately provided solutions to issues of transportation, customs, and immigration in Jeddah. Hajj pilgrims only had to make reservations for such arrangements and retrieve their trunks or luggage in Madinatul Hujjaj, Jeddah, by showing their reservation cards provided by LUTH. The price for a standard trunk was \$75, which included 10 gantangs (36 kg) of rice, 6 katis (3 kg) of sugar, 1 tin of coconut oil, 1 bottle of soy sauce, coffee, 40 packets of instant milk, 10 packets of spice powder, and others (1987/0016411, P.D.T. 9/70 Vol. 5, Naik haji tahun 1974/74).

These new developments compelled the *Persatuan Syekh-syekh Haji Pulau Pinang* (The Society of Hajj *Syekhs* of Penang) to meet LUTH to discuss the position and welfare of hajj *syekhs* who had all this while

depended on hajj activities for their livelihood. The meeting between LUTH officers and all the hajj *syekh*s in Penang was held in Tanjung Bungah on 26 Jun 1972. Among the main issues under discussion was to request LUTH to consider the absorption of hajj *syekh*s who had provided services to LUTH. Unfortunately, the discussion did not bring about any positive outcomes. In the end, these hajj *syekh*s went their own separate ways to make a living, such as owning various types of businesses. Syed Shaikh Syed Ahmad Al-Mashoor, the son of Syed Ahmad Al-Mashoor for instance, owned a cloth business, Sharikat Toko Batik Almashoor, which was located at No. 225-M, Penang Road (Penang Bazar), while Sheikh Ahmad Ismail dabbled in selling Malay traditional cap and skullcap at No. 92, Pitt Street. Another hajj *syekh*, Syed Ali al-Mufathal, sold perfume and traditional medicine from his house at Sungai Pinang (Abdullah 2015).

CONCLUSION

Penang has a long history from the perspective of hajj activities, which positioned the state as an important regional centre for Islamic development. This activity had probably taken place when Penang was still under the supervision of the Kedah sultan, but through good informal relations between Light and the Malay rulers, the Penang harbour had since continued its role both as the embarkation as well as a stopover port for prospective hajj pilgrims from the Malay Archipelago, including Peninsular Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, and Siam/Thailand. The presence of steamships in the 1840s improved hajj management through the participation of more shipping agents to transport hajj pilgrims. Together with these developments, the system of hajj management through pilgrim brokers or hajj *syekh*s became the backbone of hajj activities. Once again, Penang, as the main embarkation port for intending pilgrims from Malaya, witnessed the emergence of many hajj *syekh*s who were involved in the management of affairs of *naik haji* of the Malays. All hajj businesses from finding potential pilgrims, booking of ships and ticket purchase, accommodation in Penang, transportation of necessities and accommodation in Makkah were handled by them. Most of the hajj *syekh*s before the demise of the ship as the main mode of transport to the holy land were locals from the island itself, with a much smaller percentage from the mainland. Although the competition for profits often resulted in various problems like fighting for clients and cheating, the hajj *syekh*s were viewed by pilgrims as trustworthy individuals on whom they depended fully during the entire process of *naik haji*. In fact, there were pilgrims who even

entrusted their finances to these hajj *syekhs*. The services of hajj *syekhs* only ended with the demise of sea travel as the primary mode of transportation for hajj pilgrims in 1977. The closure of these services and the emergence of LUTH, responsible for the management of hajj pilgrims, saw the end of the role of hajj *syekhs* with regards to the performing of the hajj by locals. It also ended their businesses that were related to the hajj in Penang.

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NOTES

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- ¹ See Andaya (1978). Saudagar Raja refers to capable traders from India who were later appointed by the sultan to handle royal trade.
- ² See Light Letters: *Cit* Letter of Seri Maharaja Dewa to Francis Light (MS 40320/10, f.13) regarding the receipt of money and opium (Ahad, 2 Syaaban 1201, tahun 2 Zai/20 Mei 1787).
- ³ See Light Letters: Letter of Sultan Selangor to Francis Light (MS 40320/7, f.209), regarding the purchase of opium and tin, and the return of those who had ran away from Selangor.
- ⁴ Light Letters: Letter of wife of *Raja Muda* Selangor to Francis Light (MS 40320/1, f.4) regarding the receipt of rice and cloth by Light, regarding the receipt of rice and cloth by Lebai Abdul Khatib and the late delivery of tin (Jumaat, 28 Safar).
- ⁵ Light Letters: Letter of Sultan Selangor to Francis Light (MS 40320/3, f.72) on matters of the hajj (1201/1787).
- ⁶ Cochin or Kochi is a port located in Southwest India along the Kerala coast while Surat is located in Gujerat.
- ⁷ Light Letters: Letter of Sultan Ibrahim Selangor to Francis Light (MS 40320/4, f.48) regarding the sending of two people from Selangor to perform the hajj (Jumaat 17 Rabiul Akhir 1207, 30 November 1792).
- ⁸ Light Letters: Letter of *Raja Muda* Perlis to Francis Light (MS 40320/7, f.100) regarding one lebai Bugis who wished to go for the hajj (Khamis 25 Safar 1205 Tahun Dal Akhir/4 November 1790).

- ⁹ Light Letters: Letter of Sultan Abdullah Muazzam Shah (Kedah) to Francis Light (MS 40320/1, f.14) regarding the sending of those going for the hajj along with tin to be sold for their expenses.
- ¹⁰ “The poor” in this context refers to those potential pilgrims with insufficient financial readiness but were highly motivated to go for the hajj.
- ¹¹ Roff (1982) reiterates that although there was official correspondence between Singapore and Bengal in 1849 about the 83 deaths on a 290-tonne ship that was carrying 520 pilgrims from Jeddah to Singapore, no strict action was taken on those involved.
- ¹² The request from the Selangor Resident for Singapore-bound pilgrim ships to call at Port Swettenham to disembark pilgrims from the Federated Malay States was made as early as 1923 to the Governor of the Straits Settlement. However, the request was only realised on 1 February 1928 when the *Intaba*, one of the bigger ships of the Nemazee Steamships Line, arrived at Port Swettenham with Singapore pilgrims bound for Jeddah. In Malayan history, this was the first time the pilgrims from the coastal districts and from Negeri Sembilan had the opportunity to board their steamer at Port Swettenham. Declaration of Port Swettenham as a Pilgrim Port was done under Ordinance No. 125 (Merchant Shipping). See Selangor Secretariat Sel. Sec: 1212/1928; Selangor Secretariat Sel. Sec: 4788/1923; First Pilgrim Steamer at Port Swettenham, 1928.
- ¹³ Diary of Sheikh Omar Basheer with reference to the Penang Riot of 1867, Penang State Museum.
- ¹⁴ Tunku Syed Hussain al-Aidid was the founder of Acheen Street and the Malay Acheen Street Mosque which was built in 1808 (Khoo 1993).
- ¹⁵ In 1926, it was occupied by Maktabah Aminiyah, a bookshop owned by Haji Sulaiman Ahmad Rawa who was the founder of Persama Press (Md Adnan 2012).
- ¹⁶ The three units, Nos. 2, 4, and 6 Lumut Lane, were once inhabited by the extended Basheer Clan. Until the mid-1970s, all three units were used as temporary quarters to accommodate Makkah-bound pilgrims and family members who were accompanying them (Md Adnan 2012).

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