

PHT *newsletter*

PENANG HERITAGE TRUST * PERSATUAN WARISAN PULAU PINANG

26A Stewart Lane, 10200 Penang, Malaysia * Tel/Fax:

August 1998

WE ARE MOVING TO.....



.....26A Stewart Lane

Effective from 1 September 1998, the Penang Heritage Trust will be based in a double-storey shophouse at 26A Lorong Stewart. Originally we had applied for office space at 128 Armenian Street, but when permission to move in was a long time in coming, and we found this lovely place on Stewart Lane, the committee met and decided to take up rental of the latter premises.

Where is Stewart Lane? you might ask. Lebuhr Stewart continues from Lebuhr Muntri after the junction with Love Lane, where the Carpenters' Guild is located. Lorong Stewart is situated directly behind Penang's most popular Chinese temple, and in fact the Hokkien name for Stewart Lane is *Kuan Im Teng Aw*, meaning "Behind the Goddess of Mercy Temple".

Stewart Lane is also contiguous to the Roman Catholic church, the Cathedral of the Assumption, and before it became a Chinese neighbourhood in the late 19th century, Stewart Lane was an Eurasian Catholic neighbourhood. For that matter, the lane is believed to be named after one of the progenitors of a present-day Eurasian family in Penang, the Stewarts. Any further information on the Stewart family would be welcome.

The house itself is an old double-story shophouse, or rather it is an old residential terrace house dating from the turn-of-the-century. But it's not just any old house - it most recently served as the premises of the "Loon Gnee Hing" or "Seafarer's Lodge" for about sixty years. The *Loon Gnee Hing*

We expect to move in by mid-September. The PHT postal address will be:

**Penang Heritage Trust
26A Lorong Stewart
10200 Penang, Malaysia.**

We have to apply for a new phone. In the meantime, you can call Priscilla at her handphone 016 410 9311, fax to 604-2633970 or email perle@pc.jaring.my.

was an informal guild of Hainanese sailors and seafarers. Before the war, they rented the premises to accommodate their members, who were itinerant seafarers, and a few of their families.

When the owner of the shophouse wanted to sell it off in 1960, a group of 49 Hainanese seafarers pooled together their money to buy up the premises, and continued to use it as a lodge until recently. Now all the Hainanese seafarers have reached a ripe old age and gone into retirement. Some of their members have since passed away. When the last few families had moved out, the trustees decided to rent out the house.

We were pleased to find the house at a reasonable rent, and the retired sailors were happy to have Penang Heritage Trust as a long-term tenants. Moving into 26A Stewart Lane is a major move for

the Penang Heritage Trust. First of all, we are proud of the fact that we are moving into such a historic house. Secondly, we are pleased to be able to give this historic building a new lease of life through a low budget restoration, minor repairs and repainting. Gwyn Jenkins has helped out with her intelligent drawings while Mrs Loh-Lim has taken superb charge of the restoration work itself. Thirdly, the Penang Heritage Trust will for the first time be based in the inner city. This move reflects Penang Heritage Trust's commitment to work with the local urban community of inner city George Town before, during and after the Repeal of the Rent Control Act on 1 January 2000.

The timing couldn't be better. We are making a new home for Penang Heritage Trust just as we were gearing up towards organising the street party on Lorong Love nearby, at the end of September. By that time, we would already have moved in, and will be most delighted to show off our new premises by holding an open house for all members and visitors.

If you want to lend a hand to paint up the premises or help us move in, or if you have anything to donate to the Penang Heritage Trust office, please call Priscilla at 016 410 9311. -KSN

HERITAGE FUNDRAISING '98

The Penang Heritage Trust (PHT), Penang International Hotels Association (PIHA), Skai Club of Penang, Penang Tourist Guides Association (PTGA) as well as the Malaysian Food and Beverage Executives Association (MFBEA) will be jointly organising Heritage

Fund-raising '98 in aid of the Carpenters' Guild called the Loo Pun Hong, at Love Lane in the city of George Town, Penang.

Proceeds from the Heritage Fundraising event will also go to wards educational funds to promote Penang's heritage and heritage issues. While the Loo Pun Hong is the inaugural project, Heritage Fundraising is expected to become an annual event. In subsequent projects, other buildings of historical value will be identified to benefit from the fundraising efforts.

The plan to restore the Loo Pun Hong is part of a community-based effort which will include the setting up of a permanent exhibition of the guild's antiques and temple artifacts as well as Chinese building science and traditions. The craftsmanship found at the Loo Pun Hong is a classic example of the nimble skills of the guild carpenters who were instrumental in constructing many of Penang's heritage buildings.

The events that will take place during the Heritage Fundraising '98 include a street party, a silent auction cum cocktail party and an antique and collectibles fair.

The street party will be held on Friday September 25 1998 at Love Lane. There will be hawker stalls, performances and handicraft stalls. Among the highlights are a martial arts demonstration, a lion dance, opera-style face painting, Chinese opera and acrobats. Traditional crafts will also be demonstrated - these include dough doll-making, clog making and noodle making. Tickets are priced at RM10 nett per booklet.

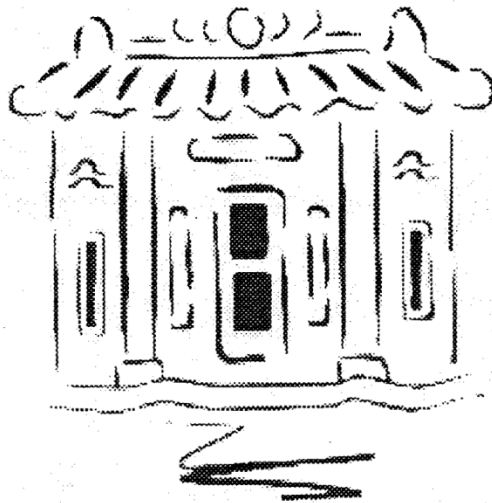
The street party is jointly participated by the Penang Hawker's Association, Soon Tuck Association, Shih Chung Old Students Association and the School of Humanities, Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM).

There will be an exhibition on the historical background of Loo Pun Hong at the guild's premises from

25 to 26 September 1998.

A silent auction and cocktail party will take place on Saturday 26 September in the courtyard of Loo Pun Hong at Love Lane from 6.00 pm to 11.00 pm. Exquisite antiques will be put up for sale. Cash or credit cards will be accepted. Tickets are priced at RM50 nett each and will include *hors d'oeuvres* and drinks.

For the silent auction, the organising committee is appealing for antiques and *objet d'art*. We wish to appeal to all generous



Malaysians to come forward and donate antiques, collectibles and memorabilia. Every item will contribute to the success of the event. Cash and cheque donations are also welcome.

The Antiques and Collectibles Fair '98 will take place simultaneously at Dewan Sri Pinang from September 25-27. Opening times are from 10.00 am to 7.00 pm.

Stephanie Lee

LOO PUN HONG - A Carpenter's Legacy

There are islands drenched with sunlight, cocktails and pristine jungles, but these islands are void of culture, oral history, hidden passageways and narrow backlanes waiting to be discovered. Penang is a place festooned in history, with hidden enclaves full of rare architecture within a whisper from one another.

Many Penangnites are proud of their cultural diversity and rich history, and passionate about keeping the buildings of their ancestors away from curious eyes. There is an intimate, almost irrational jealousy when it comes to one's ancestral home. Nevertheless, many a jewel coloured pre-war building or mansion have fallen to the hammer of the auctioneer and the wrecking ball for financial gain.

The Penang Heritage Trust (PHT), together with the Penang International Hotels Association (PIHA), the Penang Tourist Guides Association (PTGA), the Skai Club and the Loo Pun Hong (Carpenters' Guild Association) are launching a concerted effort to raise funds to restore the temple guild and premises.

The 19th century building was constructed in the style of South Chinese temples. Nursing secrets, it is tucked away in a narrow lane full of shops, traditional signs, bespoke tailors and Chinese lodging houses. The street where the guild is located has a rather apt name of

Love Lane, named after a certain British officer (or so it is claimed) or rather more likely a tribute to love itself, be it illicit or reverential. In Hokkien or Fujian, it is called "Ai Cheng Hang" which translates as "lover" or "sweetheart" and "hang" means "street". The older generation say that rich businessmen living in the adjacent Muntri Street used to visit their mistresses on this lane.

The Carpenters' Guild, better known as Loo Pun Hong, was a place for masonry maestros, fresh-off-the-boat artisans and apprentices; carpentry being one of the foremost skilled trades in Penang. The guild premises served as a community hall cum hostel.

During the 19th century, Chinese craftsmen and builders coming to Malaysia would pay a visit to the guild before proceeding to their destined workplaces. Membership followed strict regulations; a member must hail from the Sin Ling dis-

trict of Guangdong province. He must honour regulations and the order of the guild and be a qualified craftsman. Novices, barely out of their teens, would serve their masters regimentally for a period of three years before becoming artisans.

Trade guilds and kongsis (clan associations) were always related to temples as the latter served as the unifying force within dialect-speaking factions. Building craft practitioners like contractors, engineers and architects later joined the ranks of the earlier craftsmen as part of a professional association. The earlier Loo Pun Association was based in No. 5 Penang Street. The Northern City Guild was given the responsibility of building the present temple. An extensive restoration of Loo Pun Hong was carried out at the end of the 19th century during the Manchu dynasty.

The sojourners from Guangdong formed a part of the various international communities that helped to build Penang. While some of the artisans returned to China, some stayed on and assimilated with the local society and passed on their trade secrets to their Nanyang-born offspring. The guild has since then involved itself in the community, for example, taking part in the centenary celebrations of the Georgetown Municipal Council in 1956 as a lion dance troupe.

The patron saint of carpentry, Loo Pan has been attributed with many visionary, trade-related inventions. He was born Pan Gong Shu in the 5th century BC in the Shantung province of China (a contemporary of Confucius, China's most well known Chinese Philosopher) during the Warring States period. It was during the Ming Dynasty that he was posthumously conferred the title of the duke of Loo or Loo Pan due to the emperor's pleasure at the skill which he had passed on to his palace builders.

Loo Pan was also believed to have invented the set square, the compass, the ruler, the marker and thread used to draw a straight line.

He also invented the plane, the chisel, the water-wheel, the key and the saw. Another invention was a life-like bird which looked capable of flight. An engineer with a military background, he invented the warship and a collapsible ladder used to scale fortress walls.

He may have also invented the cornerstone for the framework of doorways which are ubiquitous in traditional Chinese buildings. He designed a life-sized kite for military espionage but opted for more peace loving inventions at the advice of pacifist cum philosopher, Mencius.

Heritage Fundraising '98

25-27th September 1998

Street Party

Date: Friday 25 September 1998

Venue: Love Lane

Time: 6 - 11 pm

Silent Auction

Date: Saturday 26 Sept 1998

Venue: Loo Pan Hong, Love Lane

Time: 6 - 11 pm

Antiques & Collectibles

Exhibition & Fair

Date: Friday 25 - Sunday 27

September 1998

Venue: Dewan Sri Pinang

Time: 10 am - 6 pm

Loo Pun Hong is one of the rare guilds in that the patron saint's wife is honored as an equal to the saint himself. As the legend goes, Madam Loo was reputed to have invented the collapsible umbrella made of bamboo and animal hide. She was also a brilliant lady who supported the success of her husband's career as the royal mason and carpenter *extraordinaire*. Her birthday is celebrated on the 20th day of the twelve moon of the Chinese lunar calendar.

A highlight of the guild's paraphernalia are four intricately carved, gilded sedan chairs, boasting the skills of the guild's mem-

bers. Other objects related to dukeship are parade standards and ritual weapons. Standard bearers used to wear Qing dynasty period costumes during feast days. The Penang Chinese community have preserved the origins of all the ceremony and regalia that represent their patron saint at Love Lane.

The joint effort of the fundraising project for Loo Pun Hong will bring about an extensive restoration work for the building's interior and exterior; the altar, the floor, the woodwork, furniture, roof and walls. A museum will then be established in the inner courtyard.

The Heritage Fundraising '98 hopes to raise RM500,000 through the three-day festivities. Culture vultures and heritage enthusiasts from Singapore, Indonesia, Thailand, Hong Kong, Australasia and Europe are expected to converge to celebrate Penang's rich heritage.

Come September, this quiet lane will ring with vibrancy and life, literally reenacting the romance of Love Lane, bringing to present-day Penang a tapestry of its past and creating a new twist to historic appreciation through a feast for the eye and the intellect. There will be a reenactment of traditional arts like noodle making, dough figurines, flamboyant lion dances, martial arts, clog making and face painting. Live music by a Chinese classical symphony will add to the ambience in the coolness of the courtyard at dusk.

The evening will transport all present back to a time when builders of diverse nationalities converged in Penang and contributed their skills to build up the city's rich legacy. It will be a fitting honour to Penang's traditional builders.

by Stephanie Lee & Swee Lin Yeoh

Extracts from :

- "Restoration of Loo Pun Hong" by Khoo Salma Nasution

- "Resuscitating a guild" by Dr. Khoo Joo Ee

- Interview with Mr. Loo Wee Kwong, past president of Loo Pun Hong

Letters

The following letter was written by Arthur Percival, honorary director of the Fleur de Lis Heritage Centre, Faversham, U.K.

PICTURE POSTCARDS

I endorse everything that Ken Taylor and Raphael Surin have to say about these in the July Newsletter. I forget when the Faversham Society published its first picture postcard, but it was many years ago and in black and white, as we couldn't afford colour.

We had four points in mind :

- 1. To promote pride and interest among local people, some of whom were then oblivious of the treasures on their doorstep.*
- 2. To meet visitors' needs - as in Penang, there were just one or two cards of hackneyed subjects and they did not capture the true spirit of the town.*
- 3. To publicise the area through visitors' purchases.*
- 4. If possible, to make a little bit of money and plough it back for our work for the care and conservation of the area.*

We now have a range of about 100, which we have built up over the years, as funds permitted. This is probably the biggest for any place of the size (only 18,000 people) in the UK, and we have been congratulated on it. Some cards are still in black and white, and there is still a good market for these, but most new cards are in colour.

For most of the cards, we are the only outlet and, though sales are good, an accountant would probably say we would have done better to invest the capital we have invested in a high-interest deposit account. Perhaps yes, in strict financial terms, but then we would not have reaped the benefit of much enhanced pride and interest. The cards are really a kind of insurance policy, to make sure no one can forget what a fine town this is and that it would be ruined if its character weren't lovingly conserved. I enclose six sample cards.

For whatever reason the one of Preston Street is our best-seller. It's not an especially good photograph (buildings on the left in the shade), and it's rather short of historic buildings by Faversham standards, but people evidently like it.

The one of the Corporation Regalia is one of two we have just published. We produced it at the request of the Town Council. All our cards are straightforward views - no 'arty' ones, as people don't seem to go for these. We have found a firm (whose name is not on the cards) who will print 1,000 cards for less than £100. this means we

Cheong Fatt Tze Mansion Tours

14 Leith Street, Penang

Penang's foremost restoration project.

*Fully-guided restoration tours
every Monday, Wednesday, Friday
& Saturday - starts 11am sharp.*

*RM10 per person - tickets at the door.
Students / School tours may be
arranged at discounted rates.*

*Enquiries: call 2610076
or 017-475 1227*

don't have to invest too much at a time. We sell at 20p each, a generous mark-up.

Penang is one of the most photogenic places I know and the heritage inner city of George Town cries out for a range of views. Apart from anything else, these would serve as a free form of visitor promotion. Sent all over the world, they would encourage people to see Penang and enjoy it for themselves.

You have the subjects, you have the photographers, you have the printers and I hope you have the money at least to make a start. If you don't, let me know and I'll send you £50 (of my own money) towards your first card! Best wishes - ARTHUR PERCIVAL

Dear Arthur,

You've all convinced me! I have decided to invest in making postcards of Penang's heritage which the Penang Heritage Trust can sell. Hope to get them out and send you a set soon. - KSN

The Cheong Fatt Tze Mansion is now open for viewing

The Mansion is the most favoured home of Cheong Fatt Tze (1840-1916), a rags-to-riches Hakka entrepreneur, widely regarded as one of the most historic personalities in the East. A Chinese Mandarin of the Highest Order, a Consul-General of the Qing Government, a director of China's first modern bank and first railway, and Special Trade Commissioner for Southeast Asia, Cheong's importance was acknowledged by flags flown at half-mast by Dutch and British Governments when he died. The Mansion depicts the paradigmatic Chinese courtyard house, the entire complex incorporating 38 rooms, 5 courtyards, 7 staircases and 220 windows. It is unique for its eclectic combination of dramatic Art Nouveau stained glass windows, Venetian shutters and Victorian cast iron work together with gold-leafed timber lattice work and Chinese ceramic shard decorations on roofs, gables and verandahs, all crafted by imported artisans. The principles of geomancy feature prominently in all aspects of the mansion, meant to ensure harmony and success for the owner. The five shophouses opposite were the domestic annexe.

If you haven't been inside the mansion before, this is your chance! The hour-long tour is a must for every Penangite and visitor. The tours are personally guided by Mrs. Loh-Lim Lin Lee, PHT Council member, who gives detailed insights into the history and heritage of Penang, Chinese building technology and geomancy.

Penang: A City's Pruralism

The following passages are excerpts from a paper entitled, "Penang, Pluralisme Sebuah Kota" by Dr. Pratiwo, an Indonesian lecturer at the Department of Architecture, Soegijapranata Catholic University in Semarang, Indonesia. The author is a graduate of the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven in Belgium and RWTH Aachen in Germany.

Amongst other things, the author talks about the pluralistic heritage in Penang as the main resource for cultural tourism. Although the views given here are not necessarily the views of the Penang Heritage Trust, it is felt that the essay, for those who can understand Bahasa Indonesia, gives an interesting insight into how Penang is viewed by an Indonesian of Chinese descent. We hope to reproduce more excerpts like this which provide a different point of view than the usual tourism narratives which are often written from a 'Western' point of view.

"Penang: Pluralisme Sebuah Kota", oleh Pratiwo

Pendahuluan.

Kertas kerja ini ditulis berdasarkan satu penelitian yang amat singkat di kota Penang bersamaan dengan symposium internasional „Heritage and Habitat, The context of Sustainable Development in Historic City Centres" 6 - 8 April 1998. Waktu pengamatan yang demikian singkat tentu tidak dapat memberi interpretasi inahabitasi yang mendalam. Walaupun demikian penulis berusaha menyampaikan satu kajian ilmiah sebagai satu penelitian awal (preliminary research).

(Penelitian ini dipresentasikan pada Serial Diskusi Arsitektur dan Perkotaan Jurusan Arsitektur Unika Soegijapranata Semarang tanggal 13 Juni 1998.)

Suasana Kota Penang.

Pada saat Light meletakkan jalan utama pertama di akhir abad ke 18, barangkali tak pernah terpikir bahwa kota yang didirikan untuk tujuan perdagangan dan militer malah menjadi pusat pariwisata di Selat Malaka. Di sepanjang jalan di kota ini selalu dijumpai turis yang berjalan sambil memotret ke kiri dan ke kanan. Suhu udara tropis yang panas mengharuskan para turis Eropa, Amerika dan Australia ini memakai topi yang lebar.

Arus pariwisata ini di tunjang oleh adanya jembatan yang menghubungkan George Town dengan daratan Semenanjung Malaysia. Selain itu juga adanya pelabuhan udara dan laut internasional. Pelabuhan laut Penang adalah terminal yang sangat sibuk. Ditempat ini berlabuh kapal-kapal penumpang dari pelbagai penjuru dunia, terdapat terminal bis dan ferry yang menghubungkan dengan kota-kota lain di Selat Malaka termasuk Medan.

Angkutan Umum yang terutama adalah bis kota, di samping becak dan taksi. Biskotanya terdiri dari dua macam ber AC atau non AC. Bagi bis yang melayani jarak jauh, dimiliki oleh perusahaan transit link. Bis-bis ini tidak diperbolehkan berhenti disembarang tempat mengambil penumpang tetapi hanya di halte bis saja dan KOMTAR merupakan persimpangan dari seluruh jalur bis di pulau ini. Di dalam bis penumpangi sering tidak dilayani oleh kondektur, mereka membayar dengan memasukkan uang kedalam kotak di samping sopir. Sedang harga tiket tergantung jaraknya, paling murah untuk jarak terdekat adalah 70¢.

Pusat perbelanjaan terbesar adalah KOMTAR (singkatan Kompleks Tunku Abdul Rahman) dimana dapat ditemui pelbagai pedagang perhiasan, tekstil, buku, dan barang-barang elektronik dan makanan. Jika ada turis yang mencari peta pariwisata, disinilah tempatnya sebab di lantai ke empat terdapat pusat informasi pariwisata yang

menjual buku, peta, serta aksesoris tentang Penang. Selain itu KOMTAR juga menjadi tempat bagi kantor-kantor dinas kota. Pusat-pusat perdagangan tradisional juga tetap hidup tidak terusik oleh adanya KOMTAR. Pedagang perhiasan masih banyak di Lebuh Pitt, pedagang tekstil tetap eksis di Lebuh Campbell, dan pedagang makanan ada di Lebuh Chulia. Akibat kekuatan ekonomi kota, hadirnya pusat-pusat perbelanjaan ternyata tidak menyebabkan matinya tempat-tempat perbelanjaan tradisional.

Disamping pusat perbelanjaan, Penang juga memiliki daerah perkantoran yakni di penggal utara Lebuh Pantai. Di situ terdapat banyak sekali kegiatan perkantoran baik advokasi, perusahaan dagang maupun perbankan. Jika di KOMTAR terdapat kantor-kantor pemerintahan kota, maka di Lebuh Pantai terdapat kantor-kantor berbagai dewan seperti Dewan Perniagaan Melayu. Disini pula terdapat berbagai kantor konsulat negara sahabat.

Majunya pariwisata di Penang ini demikian terasa di hotel-hotel di sekitar Chulia Street yang kamar-kamarnya hanya kosong dua jam kemudian terisi lagi. Seorang Turis Norwegia waktu itu menanyakan sebuah kamar di losmen murah untuk harga 33 Ringgit dengan AC. Karena Turis ini ingin membandingkan kamar itu dengan kamar di losmen lain maka dia pergi keliling ke beberapa losmen. Melihat losmen yang lain penuh, ia kembali lagi ke losmen semula, tapi sayang satu-satunya kamar tadi sudah ada tamunya, terpaksa dia menginap di hotel berbintang yang mahal. Losmen dengan kamar seharga 33 Ringgit atau kira-kira Rp 75 ribu merupakan losmen yang sangat sederhana dengan WC komunal dan AC yang sudah habis freyonna. Di hotel mewah, tingkat huniannya bisa mencapai 90%, bahkan pada hari-hari tertentu „fully booked“. Pesatnya industri pariwisata ini memberi banyak lapangan pekerjaan mulai dari tukang becak yang minta bayaran 5 Ringgit atau Rp 12.500 untuk jarak yang hanya satu kilometer, sampai dengan pengusaha money changer. Di kota ini, money changer ada dimana-mana termasuk

pedagang kaki lima yang membawa tulisan authorised money changer.

Rakyat kecil di Penang berpenghidupan dari menarik becak, pedagang kaki lima, berdagang buah segar, minuman es di pinggir jalan sampai dengan sopir dan kondektur bis kota. Di beberapa sudut jalan dapat ditemui pengemis yang kebanyakan invalid, tetapi tidak sebanyak kota besar di Indonesia. Pengamenpun tidak ditemui di kota ini, kalau ada pasti dalam jumlah yang sangat kecil. Dari sekumpulan tukang becak yang berjajar di perempatan antara Jalan Penang dan Lebuh Chulia, tampak wajah-wajah dari berbagai etnik yang berkomunikasi dengan bahasa Melayu. Walaupun setiap etnik di kota ini (dan bahkan di seluruh Semenanjung Malaysia) memiliki bahasa yang berbeda-beda, tetapi mereka menggunakan bahasa Melayu sebagai lingua franca. Di Malaysia terdapat berbagai surat kabar dengan bahasa yang berbeda-beda, setiap etnik memiliki surat kabarnya sendiri. Demikian pula dengan televisi, tidak hanya didominasi oleh Bahasa Melayu atau Cina. Para tukang becak tadi menunggu penumpang sambil main catur dipinggir jalan dan merokok. Bila sore tiba suasana bertambah ramai dengan munculnya beberapa pedagang makanan keliling. Jalan Penang, Lebuh Chulia dan jalan-jalan disekitarnya tidak pernah sepi. Di tengah malampun masih tetap ada warung kopi yang buka. Di malam hari, bukan hanya penuh dengan para pedagang makanan, juga di sana-sini terdapat pedagang kaki lima dengan berbagai dagangan dari tas sampai kaset dengan harga yang miring. Sebuah kaset misalnya mereka jual dengan harga 5 ringgit sedang ditoko bisa mencapai 10 Ringgit. Lebuh Chulia menjadi bertambah ramai oleh para penumpang bis yang menunggu di halte, bis kota disini selalu disiplin berhentinya.

Deretan rumah-rumah, baik untuk shophouse dan terracehouse, selalu memberi nuansa religious. Di kota yang denyut jantungnya dari turis dan perdagangan ini tempat-tempat sembahyang selalu tampil ditempat paling depan. Di tiang depan

rumah keluarga Cina selalu ada nampan sembahyang untuk Dewa Bumi. Pada shophouse yang bagian depannya untuk kegiatan usaha, meja sembahyang ini kelihatan akrab dengan besi-besi las, kendaraan, gerobak dan barang-barang kelontong. Sedang di deretan terracehouse yang bersih, tempat sembahyang berwarna merah ini kelihatan sangat suci, sehingga tidak salah kalau kita katakan bahwa rumah adalah tempat beribadah yang tidak kalah pentingnya dari pada kuil.

Satu hal yang penting untuk dicatat, turis berdatangan ke kota ini bukan karena Penang memiliki keraton seperti Kota Jogja dan Solo, juga bukan karena memiliki kesenian khas seperti tari-tarian Jawa yang indah.

Demikian pula turis berdatangan bukan karena Penang memiliki wisata seks. Sejauh jalan yang penulis telusuri baik siang dan malam, tidak pernah terlihat adanya pelacur. Di diskotekpun jika disana ada wanita cantik, bukanlah pelacur tetapi memang tamu diskotek tadi dan disitu akan sulit ditemui para turis. Tetapi mengapa pariwisata di kota ini demikian maju? Jawabnya cuma satu, Penang memiliki infrastruktur pariwisata yakni kota yang kuno sebagai magnet bergulirnya bisnis ini. Jika rumah-rumah ibadat Cina dan rumah-rumah Cina tadi dibongkar untuk pembangunan hotel yang baru misalnya, yang merasa kehilangan bukan hanya warga Cinanya tetapi juga para warga Tamil yang juga hidup dari pariwisata. Demikian pula dengan Mesjid, warga Cina yang tidak beragama Islam juga merasa memilikinya karena tanpa mesjid-mesjid bersejarah tadi, berkuranglah infrastruktur pariwisata mereka.

Dengan hadirnya tamu manca negara, kota pulau ini juga ditantang untuk lebih berdisiplin didalam soal pemeliharaan sarana prasarananya. Dalam hal manajemen sampah misalnya, sudah menyerupai negara-negara di Eropa. Setiap rumah meletakkan kotak sampah di pinggir jalan yang nanti diambil truk sampah. Di kota ini tidak ada

tempat pengumpulan sampah pada satu jalan baru kemudian diambil truk, sehingga tidak ada tempat dimana sampah terkonsentrasi.

Pluralisme: Ketahanan Sebuah Kota

Di perayaan Idul Adha PM Mahathir tidak segan-segan menyatakan bahwa Islam adalah agama yang sangat pengertian terhadap agama dan kebudayaan yang berbeda. Menganut agamanya sendiri dan hidup dalam kebudayaannya sendiri merupakan hak asasi manusia yang paling hakiki. Di dalam perbedaan yang pluralistis inilah sebenarnya kehidupan modern dapat berjalan. Sehingga kota bukan lagi satu budaya tetapi merupakan satu kosmopolit yang tangguh karena ragam budayanya. Penang adalah kota Cina di negara Islam. Namun budaya Cina dipertahankan dan ethnic lainpun tidak segan-segan untuk mendukungnya.

Budaya kota yang pluralistis ini menunjukkan tingkat kebangsaan yang tinggi bahwa kebangsaan mereka bukan dibentuk oleh warna kulit yang sama tetapi oleh pengakuannya sebagai orang Malaysia. Bangsa Tamil dan Cina misalnya, mereka hidup berdampingan dengan identitas budaya masing-masing sehingga pada toko Tamil terdapat juga tulisan Cina dan sebaliknya pada toko Cina. Bangsa Tamil ini menyebut dirinya sebagai orang Malay (Melayu), bahkan rumah makan milik bangsa Tamil ini disebut sebagai rumah makan Melayu. Di kota ini tenggang rasa juga terlihat pada agamanya, antara Mesjid dan kelenteng berdiri bersebelahan tanpa ada rasa curiga. Penulis sendiri pernah menginap di sebuah losmen yang pemiliknya Cina, di sebelah losmen tadi adalah Mesjid. Ternyata loudspeaker tidak sedemikian keras sehingga tidak mengganggu tetangga disebelahnya yang ingin beristirahat.

Rasa kebersamaan dalam pembangunan kotanya nampak nyata pada acara pertemuan informal warga kota di sebuah hotel. Pertemuan yang mengangkat topik „Living

with our own Heritage: A future for Old Penang" dengan keynote speaker seorang arsitek terkenal Malaysia Jimmy Lim dan di moderatori En Anwar Faizal..., dihadiri oleh berbagai kalangan warga masyarakat, berbagai etnis dan agama, serta para pejabat kota. Diskusi terlihat santai dan tidak canggung-canggung mengeritik pihak dewan kotapraja yang hadir disitu. Jimmy Lim dengan ilustrasinya mencoba mengangkat keprihatinan akan kerusakan lingkungan dan heritage arsitektur yang mulai terasa akibat pembangunan yang tidak terkontrol. Diskusi yang santai ini diakui oleh para pejabat Pemerintah kota sebagai input yang akan dipakai didalam pengambilan keputusan. Mungkinkah acara seperti ini diadakan di Indonesia, khususnya di Semarang?

Sebaliknya di Indonesia, kebudayaan Cina yang masih kuat justru ditutupi dan sebisanya digusur pergi. Perayaan Sam Po Kong di Semarang misalnya adalah perayaan yang sangat potensial untuk promosi pariwisata tetapi toh tidak pernah diberitakan. Apakah acara hari ulang tahun Sam Po Kong dengan prosesi kosmologis dari kelenteng Gang Lombok ke kelenteng Gedung Batu yang menarik wisatawan ini harus enyah dari Kota ini?"

Di Penang sebuah LSM (NGO) yang berkonsentrasi terhadap konservasi bangunan kuno dan presevasi budaya dari setiap kelompok etnik dengan galak mempromosikan diri. Di Indonesia kota lama dan terutama Pecinan mengalami perusakan akibat pelebaran jalan yang sewenang-wenang. Tulisan berhuruf Cina digusur pergi dan arsitektur Cina dianggap tabu. Kegiatan ini bukan merugikan orang Cina, tetapi juga seluruh warga kota, mengapa? Bangunan kuno di Pecinan bukan hanya warisan budaya para keturunan Cina saja, tetapi juga kekayaan budaya negeri ini yang menjadi milik siapa saja yang mencintai negaranya. Satu infrastruktur pembangunan pariwisata yang menguntungkan bagi semua orang.

Kesalahan besar yang tak dapat diperbaiki dari rezim orde baru, adalah pemerkosaan kebudayaan Cina yang akhirnya melemahkan ke Bhinekaan Indonesia. Pemaksaan budaya Jawa kepada kelompok keturunan Cina dan pelarangan kebudayaan Cina, merupakan penyangkalan terhadap kecenderungan masyarakat global yang bergerak kearah kosmopolitan.

Padahal, kebudayaan Cina di pulau Jawa ini berbeda dengan kebudayaan Cina di RRC, Penang atau bahkan di Medan. Khoo Salma seorang aktivis konservasi di Penang menulis bahwa budaya material dan arsitektur pada setiap sejarah komunitas mengekspresikan asimilasi melalui identifikasi dengan masyarakat lokal. Dan pada saat yang sama terlihat perbedaan dari budaya asalnya. Akibat pemerkosaan di atas, kota mengalami kemunduran karena kehilangan daya saing yang seharusnya muncul bersama kejamakanpluralisme penduduknya.

Dalam study tentang Penang ini, konsep kosmopolitan bagi saya tidaklah bisa diukur dari jumlah penduduknya ataupun berapa jumlah etniknya. Tetapi dari seberapa jauh modernitas itu diceraup didalam pluralisme masyarakat kota, perubahan, dan pembangunan berkelanjutan sehingga tetap tahan dalam gelombang resesi seperti sekarang ini.

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