

CHINESE INFORMAL SECTOR:  
AN EXPLORATORY STUDY ON PASAR MALAM  
IN KUALA LUMPUR

Oleh  
No. Matrik 37203

Latihan Ilmiah  
Bagi Memenuhi Sebahagian  
Daripada Syarat-Syarat Untuk  
Ijazah Sarjana Muda Sastera

JABATAN ANTROPOLOGI DAN SOSIOLOGI  
UNIVERSITI MALAYA  
KUALA LUMPUR

SESSI 1982/83

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
LIST OF TABLES	i
SINOPSIS	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	vii
 CHAPTER I - INTRODUCTION	
1.1 Purpose of the Study	3
1.2 Significance of the Study	4
1.3 Research Methodology	5
1.3.1 Sample Selection	5
1.3.2 Interview Schedule	5
1.3.3 The Interview	6
1.3.4 Participant Observation	7
1.3.5 Non-directed Indepth Interview	8
1.3.6 Analysis of Data	8
1.3.7 Problems of Study	8
1.4 Literature Review	11
 CHAPTER II - CONCEPTS AND DEFINATIONS	
2.1 Background of Informal Sector	18
2.2 Delineation of the Informal Sector	20
2.3 Hawkers	26
2.3.1 Definition of Hawker	26
2.3.2 Hawker Legislation	27

	Page
2.3.3 Types of Hawkers	27
2.4 A Brief Review of Pasar-Malam	29
CHAPTER III - BACKGROUND OF KUALA LUMPUR	33
3.1 Hawkers - A Major Occupational Group in Kuala Lumpur	35
3.2 The Personal Features of Pasar-Malam Hawkers	38
3.2.1 Age and Sex	39
3.2.2 Education	41
3.2.3 Origin of the hawkers	43
3.2.4 Reasons for Entering Hawking	45
3.2.5 Attitudes of Hawkers Towards Hawking in Pasar-Malam	47
3.2.6 Aspirations of Hawkers for Themselves and Their Children	48
3.3 The Social Aspect of Pasar-Malam Hawkers	50
3.3.1 The Racial Composition	50
3.3.2 Mobility of Hawkers	52
3.3.3 Hawkers' Associations	54
3.4 Network of Interrelationship between Hawkers Themselves and Their Customers	55
CHAPTER IV - THE ECONOMIC ASPECTS OF PASAR-MALAM HAWKERS	58
4.1 Ownerships of Business	58
4.2 Hawkers' Average Monthly Income	59
4.2.1 Time of Year When Business is Good	63
4.2.2 Pricing of Goods	64

	Page
4.2.3 The Choice of Sites	66
4.3 The Paying of Goods	66
4.4 The Dual Roles of Pasar-Malam Hawkers	68
4.4.1 Employment in Hawking	68
4.4.2 Means of Transport	70
4.4.3 Types of Houses of Pasar Malam Hawkers	72
CHAPTER V - FUNCTIONS OF PASAR-MALAM	74
5.1.1 The Social Functions of Pasar-Malam	74
5.1.2 The Economic Function of Pasar-Malam	74
5.1.3 The Legal Aspect of Pasar-Malam	76
5.2 Pasar-Malam - Substitutes for Markets	77
5.3 Differences between pasar-malam and day-hawking	79
CONCLUSION	82
APPENDIX I	87
APPENDIX II	88
APPENDIX III - QUESTIONNAIRE	89
BIBLIOGRAPHY	99



## LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
1 Urban Growth, Peninsular Malaysia, 1911 - 1980.	2
2 Characteristics of the Informal and Formal Sector	22
3.1 Expansion of Kuala Lumpur in terms of Area and Population, 1901 - 1980	34
3.2 Hawkers in Federal Territory, 1970 - 1979	37
3.3 Distribution of Hawkers in Federal Territory, by Ethnicity, 1970 - 1979	39
3.4 Age Groups of Hawkers in Pasar-Malam	40
3.5 Number of Years of Formal Education of Hawkers	42
3.6 Percentage of Hawkers With Education in English or Chinese Language	42
3.7 Percentage of the Origin of Hawkers	45
3.8 Length of Residence of Migrants in Kuala Lumpur	45
3.9 Reasons for Entering Hawking	47
3.10 Attitudes of Hawkers Towards Hawking	47
3.11 Responses to "Do You Want To Be A Hawker All Your Life ?"	49
3.12 Responses to "Will You Allow Your Children To Be A Hawker ?"	50
3.13 Variation in Articles of Sale	53
3.14 The Mobility of Pasar-Malam Hawkers	54
3.15 Percentage of Hawkers Who Joined Hawkers' Association	55
3.16 Percentage of Pasar-Malam Hawkers Who Have Regular Customers	56

Table	Page
4.1 Ownership of Business	59
4.2 Percentage of Pasar-Malam Hawkers' Monthly Income	60
4.3 Distribution of Hawkers' Income (With Reference to <u>Table 4.2</u> )	62
4.4 Fluctuations in Income	64
4.5 Occupations of Pasar-Malam Hawkers During the Day	69
4.6 Types of Membership in Hawking	70
4.7 Mode of Transport Used by Pasar-Malam Hawkers	71
4.8 Distance from Hawkers' House to the Chosen Pasar-Malam Sites	72
4.9 Types of Pasar-Malam Hawkers' Housing	73
Map 1	36



## SINOPSIS

Kajian "exploratory" ini bertumpu kepada fungsi-fungsi struktur informal. Responden-responden adalah terdiri daripada penjaja-penjaja pasar-malam disekitar kawasan Kuala Lumpur. Data yang dikumpulkan adalah hasil dari satu kajian soalselidik. Kajian ini cuba mencari sebab-sebab pertumbuhan pasar-malam yang giat pada kebelakangan ini dan juga fungsi-fungsinya kepada masyarakat dari segi statusnya sebagai "informal sector".

Bab 1 membentangkan kepentingan kajian, isu-isu methodologi, satu penjelasan tentang bagaimana kajian dijalankan dan masaalah-masaalah yang dihadapi semasa menjalankan kajian.

Bab 2 pula meninjau secara ringkas definasi-definasi sektor informal, penjaja-penjaja dan juga kajian-kajian lalu yang ada berkaitan dengan kajian ini.

Bab 3 menghuraikan aspek-aspek peribadi dan sosial penjaja, dari segi perhubungan mereka dengan penjaja lain dan juga pembeli-pembeli. Sikap mereka terhadap pekerjaan mereka juga dianalisisakan.

Bab 4 pula menghuraikan aspek-aspek ekonomi penjaja-penjaja dipasar-malam. Perkara-perkara seperti pendapatan mereka dan masa bila perniagaan akan bertambah baik dibincangkan. Cara mereka "bargain" dan penetapan harga juga dianalisisakan.

Bab 5 menyentuhkan fungsi-fungsi pasar-malam dari segi sosial, ekonomi dan undang-undang kecil penjaja. Ciri-ciri persamaan dan

perbedaan antara penjaja-penjaja pasar-malam dan penjaja-penjaja biasa juga dikemukakan.

Bab terakhir pula membandingkan hasil-hasil yang terdapat dalam kajian ini dengan kajian-kajian tentang penjaja-penjaja yang lain. Satu gambaran tentang jenis penjaja pasar-malam telah dikemukakan. Sebagai kesimpulan, beberapa cadangan mengenai keperluan pasar-malam kepada masyarakat di Kuala Lumpur diberikan dan juga harapan bahawa Dewan Bandaraya akan menilaikan sumbangan-sumbangan dari sektor ini.



## SYNOPSIS

The focus of this exploratory survey is on the functions of the Informal Sector. The writer's respondents comprise wholly of pasar-malam hawkers from all around Kuala Lumpur. The data is collected through an interviewing schedule. This survey intends to find out the growth of pasar-malam and also its function to the Society from its status as an informal sector.

Chapter 1 deals with the importance of the study, issue of methodology, an explanation of how the survey was conducted and the problems encountered during the survey.

Chapter 2 likewise touches upon the definitions of "Informal Sector", hawker and also a literature survey that has connections with the study at hand.

Chapter 3 analyses the personal features and the social aspects of hawkers, their relationship with each other and also with their customers. Their attitudes and aspirations towards their work are also considered.

Chapter 4 analyses the economic aspects of the hawkers in pasar-malam, their income and the time of year when business is good. The way bargaining is conducted and the stabilization of prices are also noted.

Chapter 5 touches on the social, economic and legal functions of pasar-malam. It also deals with the differences and similarities

between pasar-malam hawkers and the usual hawkers.

The last chapter compares the result of this study with those obtained from other related studies. A picture of the type of pasar-malam hawkers is also put forward. This chapter concludes by giving a few suggestions on why pasar-malam is important to the community in Kuala Lumpur. And it is also hope that City Hall will appreciate the contributions from this sector.

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

Runaway population growth and massive rural exodus continue to fuel the meteoric increase in the urban population of the Third World, which is expected to spiral unabated <sup>to</sup> reach over 2,000 million human beings by the turn of the century. This means that one of every 3 people in the world will be living in a third world metropolis in the year 2000 - up from the 1975 figures of one in every five. Within the next two decades, the number of megacities in developing countries with over 1 million inhabitants each will have mushroomed to 300 as compared with only 90 in 1975 (Development Forum, 1981).

Malaysia as one of the Third World countries, is also experiencing a rapid growth of urban population. A notable feature of Peninsular Malaysia's population in the decade of the seventies was that a greater proportion had become urbanised. Continuing urbanisation meant that in 1980, about 35.1 percent of the population lived in urban areas, compared with only 28.7 percent in 1970. In absolute term, urban population increased from 2.6 million in 1970 to about 4.1 million in 1980 with growth rates averaging 4.6 percent per annum as shown in Table 1.



Table 1: Urban Growth, Peninsular Malaysia, 1911 - 1980

Census Year	Total Population	Percentage of Urban to Total Population	Number of Urban Centres
1911	2,339,000	10.7	8
1921	2,907,000	14.0	14
1931	3,788,000	15.1	16
1947	4,908,000	15.9	20
1957	6,279,000	26.5	36
1970	8,810,000	28.7	49
1980	11,822,000	35.1	72

*Cited in*  
Source: Mohd Razali Agus, 'Problems of Squatters in Malaysia', M. Soc Sc Dissertation, Department of Sociology, University of Birmingham, 1981.

These waves of humanity bring with them additional social, economic, environmental and political problems, but finding a job is always an immediate and crucial worry. It is not surprising that despite the considerable expansion of industries, services and government-related activities in urban centres of developing countries, these sectors have failed to <sup>absorb</sup> ~~absorb~~ the ever-swelling army of job-seekers. And yet, open urban unemployment has increased very little, considering the massive addition to the labour market. One explanation, however, is very simple and highly visible. The urban poor cannot afford to remain idle if they



are to survive so they do odd job on city streets and side-walks as hawkers, cigarette and newspaper vendors, as well as repairmen of watches and others. Referred to as the informal sector or simply as street-hawkers by social scientists, there are already some 150 million of these people and their numbers are growing fast, with up to 5 in every 10 out of the new entrants in the third world Urban Labour market joining their rank, according to estimates of a just published ILO Study (see S.V. Sethuraman, 1981).

### 1.1 Purpose of the study

The study intends to give a preliminary overview of a segment of Malaysia's growing urban informal sector, in the form of the travelling night-markets or more popularly known as pasar-malam<sup>1</sup> in Kuala Lumpur. In the past, the urban informal sector in Third World countries has been viewed with growing concern as it was believed then that such informal activities are a hindrance to progress. In recent years, foreign researchers working for international agencies, find that the informal sector plays an important absorptive role for labour.

The writer aims to find out whether the pasar malam acts as a safety valve for the unemployed, unskilled, semi-illiterate rural migrants to the big city, who stands a slim chance of being absorbed into the formal sector. And if it is found otherwise, then what actually is the function of the informal sector? Does it prove to be a hindrance to progress, after all? These are some of the questions that the writer hopes will be answered by this study.

In the meantime, we can visualise how the importance of the informal sector will be felt tremendously if the streets of Thirde World countries are suddenly swept clean of their milling throngs of peddlers,

handymen, repairmen and other odd-jobbers. An economic and social wave would surely shake the entire urban structure to its very foundation.

In this study, the writer has chosen the chinese pasar-malam hawkers as a medium for information concerning the Chinese urban informal sector. Kuala Lumpur city itself boasts of a popular stationary night-market in Petaling Street. The city itself also has numerous complexes and shops that are opened at nights. The writer's curiosity is thus aroused at how, despite all these facilities within reach, the pasar-malam is still so popular among the urban people.

Hence, this academic exercise gives the writer a golden opportunity to find out and understand more about the functions and organisations of the pasar-malam which, hopefully will reflect the role of the chinese urban informal sector in Malaysia.

## 1.2 Significance of the study

Only quite recently, the urban informal sector is deemed as playing an important absorptive role for labour which cannot be employed in the formal sector. It is also said to be making a much more important contribution to national economic growth than has been previously considered. Indeed, it may be the sector which offers the most opportunities for entrepreneunial endeavour, capital accumulation and work training, given the limited opportunities in the formal sector. According to a recent survey, International Labour Organisation (1981),

"The urban informal sector acts as a safety valve to the multitude of jobless and underemployed, is therefore a reality, and one which policy-makers in developing countries ought to recognise".



The Malaysian Government also holds a positive view where hawkers are concerned. It realises that hawking provides employment to a substantial portion of the unskilled and semi-skilled populations. Pertaining to the pasar-malam, the government's role has been a passive one, which is limited to the licensing of hawkers at fifty cents per night. However, owing to the fact that the cost of collection exceeds the revenue from it, even the act of collecting has been neglected. It is hoped that this study will help our policy-makers to have a better understanding of the pasar-malam in Kuala Lumpur.

### 1.3 Research Methodology

#### 1.3.1. Sample Selection

The writer has interviewed from both sides of the street, sixty chinese hawkers as respondents on the basis of one hawker per stall. The writer finds that a random selection of stalls will not be representative enough. In order to improve on this, the writer decides to interview hawkers from as many different types of trades as possible. Generally a stall is operated by a husband-wife team, where upon the husband will be made the respondent, for as the owner he provides a clearer picture of his trade. On the whole, the ration of male to female hawkers is very great, i.e., 20 : 1. This is because a female hawker working alone will have difficulty in setting up and dismantling a stall. Moreover, it is not considered safe for her to be out at night. Generally, females operate beside their husbands, boyfriends, fathers or brothers.

#### 1.3.2. Interview Schedule

In this study, a questionnaire consisting of structured (close-

ended) and unstructured (open-ended) questions is used (see Appendix III). The close-ended questions are used for collecting the personal data of the respondents. Since this is an exploratory study, the writer has to resort to quite a number of unstructured questions, as she is afraid that the alternatives offered in a structured question may bias the responses. Unstructured questions also provide a clearer picture of the respondent's attitude towards hawking, education etc. for the writer will be getting a more spontaneous and detailed answer from the respondents. According to selltize (1959), unstructured questions are effective as "we get a free, spontaneous sketch in the respondent's own language and containing his own ideas".

### 1.3.3 The Interview

Most of the respondents were the owners of pasar-malam stalls. They were interviewed individually by the writer. In her earlier enquiry, the writer noted that when she tried to interview a hawker at his site, others around the area would regard it as something unusual and would come to find out what was happening.

Due to the mobility of pasar-malam, the writer has to go to a different location each night, to conduct her interviews. While the survey was in progress, the writer gained in experience and knowledge of their life-styles, she also conducted her interview in the day-time at market areas, where some pasar-malam hawkers have daytime sites.

Throughout the interview, the respondents were told that the writer was a student of University of Malaya, doing an academic exercise on pasar-malam hawkers. As the questionnaires are in English, the writer translated the questions from English to Cantonese in as much a standard-



recorded the respondents' answers in Cantonese, as explicitly as possible back to English,

Most of the information gathered in this report has been obtained from the interview-schedule and also through informal interviews with people who are connected with the pasar-malam in one way or another.

#### 1.3.4. Participant Observation<sup>2</sup>

This method is essential as the writer has no knowledge of pasar-malam at all. Through observation, further details can be collected. Observation also has the further advantage of being able to test the validity of the responses obtained from the interviews. The writer has, in some cases established a close rapport with the respondents to the extent that participation in their activities was also possible. To be more explicit, the writer has the chance to gain some experience in selling things such as cassettes, children's clothes, T-shirts etc. The writer has to admit her passiveness compared to the colourful extravagant ways of the hawker in attracting customers. This, even though takes up a lot of the writer's time has further lessened whatever uneasiness and suspicion the hawkers might harbour. Participant observation leads to the acceptance of the writer's presence and therefore greater co-operation from the hawkers and more spontaneity in their responses.

Hence, participant observation also acts as a good supplement to the interview-schedule in that, it enables corrections of mis-informations and also provides further information to those that can be obtained from the interviews. For example, in spite of the fact that the hawkers are competing among themselves for business, they still manage a cordial and

co-operative relationship. During the early session of the night before the rush hours and after the shopping spree is over, the writer has observed that the hawkers indulged in casual conversation among themselves.

Borrowing and lending of smallchange and other small articles are common. Many newcomers joined in a pasar-malam without knowing any of the hawkers there. In fact, many claim that they make friends at the hawking sites and that their circles of friends widen as they ply their wares from place to place.

#### 1.3.5. Non-directed indepth interview<sup>3</sup>

The writer also makes use of this method as this research is an exploratory attempt, to enable the harvesting of more information. This method also provides a useful way to check information derived from the interview-schedule and participant observation.

#### 1.3.6. Analysis of data

Analysis of data is carried out manually. This is because as most of the questionnaire are unstructured, coding will present a great problem.

#### 1.3.7. Problems of study

The writer has to cope with the suspiciousness of the hawkers in the initial stages, especially when the survey is conducted during the election period. Suspicious of the respondents is a major stumbling block in any survey, as it will leads to hostility, misinformation and lack of co-operation. When the writer introduces herself as an University of Malaya student, exclamations of disbelief and astonishment abound as to



WHY they are being studied. The writer repetitiously assures them that she is not a government officer, which is received rather sceptically.

Some even fear that the writer might be from Income Tax Department, checking on them. There are also others who do not take the writer seriously even though the writer shows them her official-looking letter which they probably do not understand. But all these are overcome by the writer's persistence as well as the kindness of one of the hawkers who offers to bring her along to any pasar-malam sites that he goes to. This goes on until the writer becomes a familiar sight, part and parcel of the pasar-malam scene.

There are also complaints that the questionnaire is too long. They tend to get restless and gives shorter and shorter answer towards the end. In fact, the writer finds that getting information through engaging them in conversation is much more stimulating and fruitful than with the interview-schedule.

Time factor proves to be a crucial problem in this study. Generally, the pasar-malam hawkers arrive at a site around 5.45 p.m., some even later. They then proceed to spend some time chit-chatting until around 6.15 p.m. where stalls start to sprout up. The crowd begins to gather at about 6.45 p.m. and swelled to its peak from 7.30 p.m. to 9.30 p.m. At around 10.00 p.m., everything begin to quiet down and the stalls are dismantled. Hence the only suitable time for interviewing is around 5.30 p.m. to 6.15 p.m.

After that, the hawkers are too busy, doing business, keeping



an eye on their goods or advertising their wares verbally. Packing time is also not suitable as everybody is in a rush then. It is amazing how fast they pack, so much so that once the writer is left behind with her questionnaire half-answered. The writer, at the early stage has tried to interview a provision-seller while business is in full swing. She wasted around an hour for that respondent. The writer can only manage to interview an average of four respondents only.

There are also some minor problems faced at different stalls, For example, interviewing at a cassette stall is sheer tough work as the writer has to make herself heard and understood.

It is not possible for the writer to visit all the pasar-malam sites in Kuala Lumpur, as she has no mode of transport and is dependant on others. Hence, there is a possibility that the few pasar-malam sites that the writer has gone to, may not be representative enough for a general understanding of pasar-malam.

On the whole, the interviews have been quite smooth-running. There are few cases of non-cooperation, mostly among female hawkers. The writer is surprised that the menfolk are comparatively more co-operative and open.

The writer has made numerous trips to the City Hall for their help in getting some official data concerning the pasar-malam hawkers. It is at this stage, that the writer faces her most frustrating experience as she is sent on a wild goose chase most of the time. Finally after passing through all the "red-tapes", the writer is told that any data



concerning pasar-malam is confidential. City Hall is now in the process of implementing some sort of control over the pasar-malam hawkers. Before anything is finalised and gazetted, information related to pasar-malam is "official secret". Despite this disappointment, the writer manages to find out that City Hall has a favourable attitude towards pasar-malam.

Next, the writer turned to Mr Lee Lam Thye<sup>4</sup>, advisor to the Hawkers and Petty Traders Association, for his view. Mr Lee has been in Kuala Lumpur City for years and has an impressive record in bringing the grievances of hawkers to the attention of the government. According to him, pasar-malam hawkers are the same as any hawkers unless City Hall make it so. Hence he has no comment to offer at this moment.

#### 1.4 Literature Review

The writer is not surprised at the lack of written materials on pasar-malam in Malaysia, considering its relative newness in the urban scene. Following a preliminary enquiry, it is confirmed that there is practically no written literature on pasar-malam in Malaysia. But, the writer manages to find an unpublished academic exercise by Chao Syh Kwang (1962) on the origin, growth and organisation of pasar-malam in Singapore. Unlike Chao, the scope of study of the writer is more towards unearthing the economic and social functions of pasar-malam, as part of the Chinese informal sector.

The writer discovers that there are quite a number of similarities in the organisational system of the Singapore night-markets and our own pasar-malam. The Singapore night-markets are also known as pasar-malam.



Chao (1962) found that pasar-malam in Singapore came about through the ingenious Sea Hawkers who plied their goods at the dock for incoming passengers, and also through the night-hawkers who followed certain operas groups to their venues. Operas in the sixties attracted a large crowd wherever it went. This crowd inevitably serves as a potential clientele for the hawking business. Pasar-malam in Kuala Lumpur is such a spontaneous affair that it is difficult to pinpoint the exact reason.

The pasar-malam has certain similiar features with the weekly or periodical markets common to rural areas in many countries. There is quite a number of studies done on petty traders who engaged in horizontal exchange, in a system of periodic markets located outside the city. Periodic markets and fairs set in a rural environment is a common phenomenon which has been documented by Spencer (1940), Yang (1944), Skinner (1964) among others. On a planned before-hand day, rural people would congregare at the market place to sell their agricultural products, handcrafts and to buy in exchange what they need. In the rural areas of Malaysia, especially the northern part and the eastern coast, such periodic markets also exist (Manning Nash, 1974).

Articles on hawkers in general are available even though not numerous. These studies are mostly done in Singapore. Wong (1954) identifies hawking specifically as a traditional occupation which continues to persist despite rapid economic development in Singapore. The early 1970's saw an increasing demand for industrial and construction labour resulting in the issue of more than 60,000 work permits for imported labour, largely Malaysian. Hence her research was prompted by



pragmatic question of why Singapore hawkers are not transplanting themselves to these two sectors. Her findings reveal that hawking is an occupation that the old as well as the young can easily embark upon and provides employment for groups often not provided for in Singapore industrialization programmes. Moreover the demand for hawkers is constantly present. The services that they offer are nearly as wide-range as those of modern business, <sup>and</sup> are considerably cheaper.

There is also an academic exercise by Chia Cheong Fook (1954) on hawkers in Singapore. His is a detailed study of the social and economic aspects of a hawking family in Singapore. His paper deals with two distinct problems - the first of which deals with the life-style and experience of a hawker family, and the second, tours on hawking problems and government policies. According to him, the hawker family which he studies is neither a typical hawker nor an untypical one. However, the problems which he faced are possibly also faced by other hawkers. The writer feels that Chia's study is too narrow, unlike the scope of this study which is hoped to be representative enough for the understanding of the Chinese urban informal sector.

One of the earliest articles on Kuala Lumpur hawkers is a report entitled "Hawkers Problems in Kuala Lumpur". (The Selangor Alliance Hawkers Subcommittee, 1965)<sup>5</sup>. This report focuses on the hawker problems in the Federal Capital. One of the recommendations it makes to solve the hawker problems is to mark pitches for night-trading, and also to rotate this night-trading geographically according to a time schedule,



"These open-air bazaars should be near congested residential areas. The fundamental idea is to bring the market to the consumers. Consumers demand for hawker goods and services could thereby be partly channeled to purchase at night. This would somewhat relieve the demand (and therefore congestions) which are at present confined to day-purchasing in "popular areas" (1965 : 13)"

Thus the idea of pasar-malam is not new but just that it was not carried out in Kuala Lumpur until well after 1972 (Lam Thim Fook, 1973).

The real turning point for the image of hawkers came about when interest in the urban informal sector surfaced. In the Fifties where there was no research done on hawkers, hawkers were also generally touched upon in any discussion concerning urbanization in the Third World countries. They are usually seen in a negative light example, as a burden to government. As a result, much of the action taken by the government against hawkers had to be based on intuition and prevailing attitudes rather than on information. And it was against such a background that realization arose that there was a need for a research study on this specific urban feature..

Funded by the International Development Research Centre of Canada (IDRC) between 1972 and 1974, a comparative study was made for six Southeast Asian cities - Kuala Lumpur and Malacca in Malaysia, Manila and Baguio in the Philippines and Jakarta and Bandung in Indonesia. The result is the publication of "Hawkers in Southeast Asian" (1977) by McGee and Young which provided a greater understanding of hawkers in South East Asia.



A study on hawkers in Malacca and Kuala Lumpur by Lam (1973) is also part of the above joint study. The major findings of this research is that:-

- (1) Hawkers provides goods at cheaper prices than retail stores because they do not have the expensive overheads.
- (2) In cities like Manila and Singapore, hawkers provide an important outlet through which shippers and merchants may dispose of "broken cargoes".
- (3) Hawkers also provide a service to the public by seeking locations that are easily accessible to the customers.
- (4) Hawking provides employment for many of the unskilled, the less educated and others with little capital.

Then in a recent academic exercise by Chan Kek Tong (1977) the socio-economic aspects of hawkers in Kuala Lumpur was studied without touching on the pasar-malam phenomenon.

A recent International Labour Organisation survey on the informal sector gives a new insight to the hawking profession. Policy-makers are urged to strengthen the safety valve capacity of the sector through access to skills and capital. According to the survey,

"In view of the important role that skills play in shaping the structure of the informal sector, it (the study) calls for "reorientation of the existing formal and informal training facilities, upgrading the quality of training and introduction of new skills. Another major constraint is limited access to capital which after increase the vulnerability of small enterprises. The study urges a change in credit and bank policies taking into

account the needs and absorptive capacity of the sector. Furthermore, lending institutions must make an effort to reach the informal sector units and recognise the links between capital and other forms of assistance, notably training" (Development Forum, 1981).

Universiti Malaya



Footnotes:

1. I shall be referring the travelling night-markets as "pasar-malam", from now on.
2. According to Yang Hsin-Pao (1955, page 30) - participant observation is when "an outsider who temporarily becomes an insider. He thereby secures a better insight into the situation he is investigating as he is not personally involved and can remain detached while at the same time taking part in the group's activities and sharing their feelings and prejudices".
3. Pauline V Young (1956, page 211) delivered this non-directive indepth interview as this type of interview is also designated as uncontrolled or unguided and more recently as unstructured. Whatever the designation, interviewers in these types of interviews seldom ask direct or pre-determined question. Merton and his associates tell of their procedure in a non-directed interview as informants provided their own definitions of the situation to which they had responded .... reported their own foci of attention and their own responses to those items which proved significantly to them.
4. Mr Lee Lam Thye is the Member of Parliament for Kuala Lumpur City,
5. The Selangor Alliance Hawkers Subcommittee composed of Y.B. Encik Muhyuddin bin Mohd Zakaria, Y.B. Dr P T Arasu, Mr Gurdial Singh, J.P., Mr Seow Yu Boon under the chairmanship of Y.B. Mr Tan Toh Hong.

CHAPTER II  
CONCEPTS AND DEFINITIONS  
INFORMAL SECTOR

2.1 Background of Informal Sector

Though the informal sector has existed for a long time, especially in countries of the Third World, it is not until the middle of the 1960's that some attention is focused on this sector. This is largely because, economists have always concentrated their models upon the economic growth factors of the modern or formal sector at the expense of the activities of the population engaged in the informal sector. This attitude is partly a consequence of assuming that the only way for poor countries to develop is to repeat the historical experience of the developed countries. The economic activities of the modern sector are therefore conceived as growth-promoting, while the activities of the informal sector are considered a hindrance to economic growth (McGee, 1975).

This dualistic nature of the urban economy in many developing countries has been recognised by researchers for some years now. According to McGee (1973 : 138), most cities of the Third World countries can be seen as "consisting of two juxtaposed system of production - one derived from capitalist forms of production, the other from the peasant system of production". Another writer describes the two systems respectively as the "firm-centered economy" and the "bazaar-type economy" (Geertz, 1963). Hart's study on urban Ghana introduced the notion of "formal" and "informal" income opportunities (Hart, 1971).

In his study of Medjokuto, Geertz (1968) identified the dual



economic structure of the capitalist town and the subsistence countryside, which he referred to respectively as a firm-centred economic sector and the bazaar economy. In the bazaar economy,

"The total flow of commerce is fragmented into a very great number of unrelated person-to-person transactions. It is based on the independent activities of a set of highly competitive commodity traders who relate to one another mainly by means of an incredible volume of ad hoc acts of exchange. In contrast to this is the firm-centred economy "where trade occurs through a set of impersonally defined social institutions which organised a variety of specialised occupations with respect to some particular production or distributive end".

The firm-centred economy is of the capital - intensive type.

In it, labour becomes a commodity to be hired and dismissed by the enterprise. Economic units are larger, people work regular hours, capital investment is on a large scale, levels of technology and productivity are high. However, unemployment and under-employment is characterised.

On the other hand, the bazaar economy is dependent upon the utilization of the entrepreneur's family (kin). The production is labour-intensive and participants normally worked long and irregular hours. The advantage of such a system is that it can employ most numbers of people, though on a marginal or near-marginal level of living.

In Santos model (1979), the informal and formal sector are being referred to as the upper and lower circuit. The relationship of these two sectors is in the form of two interacting and interlocking circuits of economic activity. The type of economic activities found in the upper



circuit are banking, export trade, modern large industries, modern services, wholesaling and some forms of transport (airline) etc. The lower circuit consists of non-capital-intensive industries, services and trade.

Further to this and also based on the dualism model, the International Labour Organisation (1972) provided a formal-informal dichotomy which differs from the conventional modern-traditional one. The latter distinction refers to the technology employed but implies very little about the other characteristics of the enterprise. Another argument for rejecting the traditional-modern distinction is that the use of "traditional" as a term of disparagement is the product of an alien culture that sees "tradition" as being detrimental to development rather than as an integral part of a nation's culture and identity. In contrast, the formal-informal distinction is neutral, all it says is that the informal sector is not formal, i.e. that any relationship there may be between the enterprise in the informal sector and other enterprises, the government, household (in their capacity as productive units), its workers, or other institutions is an informal one (Sethuraman, 1976 : 71-72).

## 2.2 Delineation of the Informal Sector

The term "informal sector" is first used by Hart (1971) in a study in Ghana and since then it has gained considerable currency in literature on development policy in general and employment in particular. This concept is further developed by ILO (1972) and used in the Kenya Employment Mission

"The basic reason for the introduction of this term in the Kenya employment mission report followed from the now widely recognised fact that it takes a very long time for the



benefit of general development policies to trickle down to the poorest sections of the population. Effective development needs to be focused directly on a specific "target" population, and the employment mission considered that perhaps the most important such target group in urban areas was what it described as the "informal sector".

According to the above report, the informal sector has the following characteristics. It is a sector to which entry by new enterprises is comparatively easy. Enterprises in this sector rely on indigenous resources and are family-owned. They operate on a small scale, in unregulated and competitive markets and is labour-intensive supplement by simple technology. Their workers possess skills that are acquired outside the formal school system.

Another study also describes the informal sector as an "unprotected" sector (Mazumdar, 1975). It is argued that employment is protected for some individuals in the labour force in the sense that the wages and conditions enjoyed by workers in the formal sector are not available, in general, to all jobseekers in the market unless they somehow manage to overcome the barrier to entry. The protection may arise from the action of trade unions, of governments or of both acting together.

The characteristics of the formal sector are the converse of the above (see Table 2). Thus entry by new enterprises is difficult, enterprises in this sector rely frequently on overseas resources and are corporately owned; they operate on a large scale, in protected markets, using capital-intensive and often imported technology; their workers have formally acquired skills and are often expatriates.

Table 2: Characteristics of the Informal and Formal Sectors

Informal Sector	Formal Sector
a) ease of entry	a) difficult entry
b) reliance on indigenous capital	b) frequent resource or foreign capital
c) family ownership of enterprise	c) corporate ownership
d) labour-intensive and adapted technology	d) capital-intensive and often imported technology
e) skills acquired outside the formal school system	e) formally acquired skills and often expatriate
f) small scale of operation	f) large scale of operation
g) unregulated and competitive market	g) protected markets (through tariffs, quotas and trade license)
h) unregulated and irregular hours of work	h) fixed hours of work

Though these dualistic models discussed are broad, they do provide a clear definition of the informal sector, and also give an indication of the extend of the informal sector.

Davies (1979), had simplified the differences between the informal and formal sector into six compact structures:-

- (1) Ownership - The formal sector of Malaysia, as in most developing countries, is characterized by a high degree of foreign ownership and control of industry. The informal sector on the other hand is characterized by the entirely indigenous ownership of its mean of production. This situation arises out of the nature of informal



production and its techniques of production, which is not amenable to the large-scale investments which typify foreign ownership.

- (2) Barriers to Entry - In the formal sector, there are often direct and indirect barriers to outsiders. The direct barriers are often in the form of professional qualifications requirements. As in the case of lawyers, doctors and the like. The indirect barriers to entry, particularly in production enterprise include large initial capital requirements, limitations on the use of land, methods of allocating scarce resources such as in foreign exchange quotas, economies of scale (which give a competitive advantage to those already in the industry), patent rights etc.

All of these serve to protect those within an industry from competition by newcomers. But in the informal sector, these barriers do not exist. For example, to become a hawker, one does not require any formal education or certificates and degrees. Because of this, it could be expected that the level of skill in terms of certified training, of members of the informal sector will be low capital wise, entry into the informal sector does not necessarily need a large initial capital requirements.

- (3) Monopolies - The formal sector contains a large number of monopolistic and oligopolistic industries which is protected by institutional and technological factors that deterred any newcomers. In the informal sector, such going-ons are impossible. Let's take the case of fruit-sellers. There are so many of them that attempted price-fixing and control of market are difficult to come about.



- (4) Price-setting mechanism - Prices in the informal sector are generally determined through bargaining between individuals involved in the transaction. In the formal sector, they are far more likely to be determined institutionally. The difference lies in the different production and distribution relations of the two modes of production. In addition, the operator in the informal sector has a closer contact or more personal relation with his client than do most operators in the formal sector.
- (5) Scale - From the above, we should be able to gather that the scale of operations in the informal sector is smaller than those in the formal sector. The reason is because the operators in the informal sector do not have the same access to credit facilities as their formal counterparts.
- (6) Production Techniques - Operations in the informal sector are more labour-intensive than those in the formal sector.

It was only in the late 1960's that the importance of the activities in the informal sector were recognised. The reason for the shift was that there was a growing disillusionment with the fact that development was being conceived solely as "economic growth". One of the most significant disillusionment had certainly stemmed from the highly popularised ecological crisis of the "developed world" and which had caused many people to ask the question of whether the countries of the Third World could reach the same levels of energy consumption in the developed world. As a result, there has been a growing interest in the feature of the labour-intensive system of the informal sector which does not rely on the high consumption of "fossil fuels".



In the view of the neo-dualist school (Kamal Salih, 1980), the informal sector is seen as a vital and dynamic sector capable of providing employment and income opportunities for the increasing number of rural-urban migrants. This is in contrast to an earlier held linear-developmental - thesis which regarded the informal sector as parasitic on the formal counterpart, and which will eventually disappear with modernisation of the entire economy through its absorption into the formal sector.

All versions of the neo-dualistic school see the informal sector as transitional, or shows an evolutionary process of transformation with the aid of positive policies which will promote its greater linkages or integration with the formal sector. Hence in this case, the relationship of the informal sector to the formal sector ranged from a benign to a dependent one.

In contrast to this, the structuralist or dependency school find that given the prevailing relations of production in the urban sector,

"The level of capital accumulation possible was constrained by structural factors in the total socio-economic system such that small-scale activities in the urban sectors of countries with externally oriented economies can only participate in economic growth in dependent subordinate way" (Moser, 1978 : 1025).

In other words, this school of thought views that the informal sector will persists in its dependent dominated form by the formal sector, unless there is a great structural change in the peripheral economy as a whole.

Due to differences in their interpretation of the role of the informal sector, the policy emphasis, basically also differs from the



reformist and revolutionary positions concerning informal sector development.

All available case studies of the urban informal sector show that the labour situation and organisation of production in the sector are quite heterogeneous. The important point here is that the relations of production, accumulation and distribution in this sector is connected in various ways with the formal sector but is at the same time dependent on and subordinated to it.

### 2.3 Hawkers

#### 2.3.1. Definition of Hawkers

A hawker is defined as one who "sells merchandise such as fruits, vegetables, ice-cream, toys, sweets, crockery and utensils, on street or from door-to-door : loads push-carts, tricycles or motor-vehicles with merchandise for sale. He sells merchandise and receives payment. He may sell articles from a street-stand, or he may operate means of conveyance.

A hawker belonging to the prepared Food to Drink category, prepares and sells food or drinks at road-side, or street-corners or from door-to-door : loads push cart, tricycle, motor vehicle, basket or other materials for preparing and selling food and drink; pushes, pedal, drives or carries container along sales route or sets up equipment at a semi-permanent location. Calls out information, rings bell or makes other sounds to indicate type of food or drinks for sale. Light gas, oil or charcoal fire or makes other preparation to fry, heat, boil or mix food-stuff with spices or other ingredients if ordered by customers. Serves prepared foodstuff or drinks and receives payments". (Lam, 1973).



### 2.3.2 Hawker Legislation

In Kuala Lumpur, the Hawker Licencing Division, which is a section of the City Health Department, is responsible for the implementation of the hawkers' legislation and the maintenance of public markets and hawkers' emporiums. Since 1969, enforcement officers from this department have replaced the police force in controlling the activities of hawkers and to ensure cleanliness of the city. There is also a Hawker Advisory Committee (a Standing Committee of the City Hall) which has representatives from among the hawkers' association and politicians. The close rapport between the hawkers' association and City Hall, enables a considerable upward flow of hawkers' grievances to the policy-makers. Consequently it leads to the formulation of more viable policies for hawkers.

### 2.3.3 Types of Hawkers

In Kuala Lumpur, there are basically three types of hawkers which are classified according to their mode of operation and the type of licences being issued to them. They are:-

- ( i) Static Hawkers
- ( ii) Semi-static Hawkers
- (iii) Mobile/Itinerant Hawkers

#### (i) Static Hawkers

Under this category are hawkers who are issued licences by City Hall to trade on special sites provided for them in various parts of the city. Such sites are usually in a fixed location and are situated in areas where there are large concentrations of pedestrians like market areas, bus terminals etc. Recently, the Government has even constructed modern

emporiums and shopping complexes in which some floors are specially reserved for hawker stalls. The static hawker has permanent shelter and the stalls are either constructed by individual hawkers or by City Hall and rented to them. The type of business activity under this category are more varied and they include hawkers selling vegetables, fruits, cooked food, cosmetics, raw food, household utensils and crockery, textiles, clothings, books etc.

The stalls occupied are known as fixed pitch (permanent) stalls and they are either constructed of permanent materials as in the hawkers' emporium or non-permanent materials such as wood as in market places.

(ii) Semi-static Hawkers

The distinction between a static and a semi-static hawker is that though the latter also occupy a location for a fairly long period of time, it does not have a permanent shelter. Even though it may have a shelter, it is only temporary and normally at the end of the trading period it is required to remove them from the site example in car parks or in street closures. In view of the temporary nature, the stalls are termed fixed pitch (temporary) stalls.

Generally, the goods for sale are laid on the ground or on top of wooden platforms or packing cases which are easily removed at the end of the trading period.

(iii) Mobile Hawkers

As the name suggest this category of hawkers are expected to move from place to place selling their goods and wares. By nature of their licences, they are not allowed to remain stationary in any place except



when actually engaged in the sale of goods to customers. This particular group provides a very valuable service to the community especially the low-income families. As they usually operate from street to street, housewives and potential clients need not travel to the markets or shops to purchase their goods. This obviously saves them time and expense in public transport and thus helps to reduce their costs of living in the city. They usually operate their business by means of motor-driven tricycles and even motor-vans which provide them greater mobility and consequently greater coverage. Thus providing a better and more efficient services to the community.

In recent times, a new type of hawker has emerged. He is the pasar-malam hawker. Unlike the mobile hawker who normally operates independently of other hawkers during the day, the pasar-malam hawker only operates at night, together with fellow hawkers.

#### 2.4 A Brief Review on Pasar-Malam

In the urban context, there are normally enough sedentary marketing elements to discourage the existence of periodic markets. Hawkers are generally thought to be characterised by less mobility and limited periodicity of operation. Yet in recent decades, a highly articulated and regulated system of pasar-malam have evolved in Kuala Lumpur. As an urban marketing phenomenon, it is unique among the South East Asian cities, with the exception of Singapore (Chao Syk Kwang, 1962).

Pasar-malam has so entrenched itself in our way of life that many people actually look forward to the night when these nomadic traders



come to their neighbourhood. Pasar-malam is held at a specific place according to a specific night of the week. The ground-work of the testing of the markets and sites-selection is entirely left to individual hawkers, almost invariably on a trial-and-error basis. The sites under consideration normally consist of new housing estates or established residential areas in the outskirts of Kuala Lumpur. The hawkers who start gathering at a place are usually acquaintants among themselves. And as mentioned before, they do it on an exploratory basis. If the congregation meets with success, they will carry on and their group will expand week after week as in the case of the pasar-malam in Taman Cheras.

When a pasar-malam first started in Taman Cheras, there were only a few stalls consisting of a cassettes and cartridges stall, a toys stall, clothes-stall and one kuih-stall. By word of mouth, other stalls began to join in. Newcomers who came later, had to pitch their stalls in less favourable places. If a newcomer come in after the erection of stall number twenty, he will have to pitch his stall as number twenty-one. For record, he will mark the place with his car-numbers, house-numbers or other symbols, just to indicate that the place has been reserved. After he has been there for three consecutive market nights, the place is "his" for as long as he cares to do business there.

During his absence, if any newcomer chooses to fill the vacancy, he will be told that it is occupied and it is expected to be returned to the original occupant on his demand. But should the original occupant not turn up to sell his goods for three consecutive market-nights, then he automatically forfeits his right to the place. Even though, there is no written rule, each stall-keeper abides by this arrangement as he knows it is fair.



But if business turns out to be not so good or satisfactory, then the group of pioneers may either try to congregate on other nights at the same place or shift to a new place. These night-hawkers normally choose sites that are not too far away from their homes. Hawkers staying along Peel Road will look towards the housing estates that resides nearby for their hawking activities. They usually have their own mode of transport - cars, vans and tri-motorcycles which have space for additional stocks, or even borrowing a friend's car.

The system of pasar-malam is characterised by a regulated cycles of about five to eight markets per night, with the peak trading period stretching from about 6.30 p.m. to 10.30 p.m. On the same night, the various pasar-malam are never sited too close to one another, so that competition can be minimised. Although market sites vary, the markets are run by essentially the same body of hawkers. Depending on their day-time activities, some hawkers do not complete the week-long cycle. Nevertheless, the majority who trades only at the pasar-malam hawk seven nights a week.

Pasar-malam vary considerably in size and importance, depending very much on the location of business. While many pasar-malam operators are hawkers by proffession, there are also a minority of those who work in the day-time as labourers, construction workers and also some white-collared workers. It is found that Chinese hawkers dominate a considerable number of pasar-malam sites in Kuala Lumpur. This is not surprising as Chinese also constitute a high percentage of the day and night hawkers.

The people who go to the pasar-malam are usually those who

find in the pasar-malam an opportunity to go and enjoy themselves. They mostly do not have fixed ideas of what they are going to buy. But it is usual for one to pick up some tit-bits to munch, along the way. Usually those who patronise pasar-malam are very susceptible to persuasions by the hawkers. Hence the positioning of the stalls played a very important role in attracting these prospective customers. Generally stalls which are situated in the middle are the best as almost every one is sure to pass by.

Another reason why the pasar-malam is so popular is because of the flexibility of prices and the common beliefs that one can pick up real bargains there. The hawkers normally start by demanding a high price for a commodity. This is followed by a lengthy bargaining session between the two until an agreed price is reached. Since the prices vary, it is only natural that profits also vary. Chao (1962), in his study on Singapore pasar-malam says,

"As long as they (the hawkers) think they can get a reasonable profit from the goods, they will sell them".

It certainly seems that hawkers through the ages, have developed a similiar sub-culture among themselves. Further analysis of the economic-social functions and the personal features of hawkers will be discussed in the following chapters.



### CHAPTER III

This reasearch is conducted in Kuala Lumpur, the capital of Malaysia. Kuala Lumpur covers an area of 35 square miles and has a population of 451,728. However, including those who are residing in the connurbation areas on the periphery, which later were amalgamated to become part of the Federal Territory, the population was approximately 1,036,900. With the formation of the Federal Territory in 1974, (Refer to Map 1) the city is administered by the Datuk Bandar (Mayor) who is assisted by an Advisory Board, made up of official members as well as unofficial members.

Kuala Lumpur city has retained some of the colonial features that are typical of many of the cities in Southeast Asia, which has undergone colonial rule. Originally it was a shanty town serving the Selangor Chinese tin miners in the mid-ninetieth century. It became, at the end of the century, the capital of the British administered Federated Malay States - Selangor, Perak, Pahang and Negeri Sembilan. With the development of roads and railways which link the city with Klang - Port Swettenham (now known as Port Klang) on the west, Penang in the north, Singapore in the south and the intervening towns, Kuala Lumpur became a transport focus. By virtue of its central positions in the rubber and tin belt, it became an important distribution and financial centre for much of Malaysia's trade. Thus, in colonial times, Kuala Lumpur served as an administrative-commercial centre, politically Europeans but peopled mainly by the Chinese together with a small number of Indians and Malays. When independence was achieved in 1957, the administrative and commercial functions of the city remained. Malay political power replaced that of the British. The

Table 3.1: Expansion of Kuala Lumpur in terms of Area and Population  
1901 - 1980.

Year	Area		Population	
	Absolute Figure	% Increase	Absolute Figure	% Increase
1901	8	0.0	32,381	0.0
1911	8	112.5	46,718	44.3
1921	17	0.0	80,424	72.1
1931	17	5.9	111,418	38.5
1947	18	100.0	175,961	57.9
1957	36	0.0	316,230	79.7
1970	36	161.1	451,810	42.9
1970	94	0.0	677,800	50.0
1980	94	0.0	1,036,900	53.0

Note: Between 1901 - 1980, Kuala Lumpur experienced growth both in areas as well as in population. In terms of area, Kuala Lumpur has expanded almost twelve times and in terms of population, thirty-two times.

Sources: ( i) Kuala Lumpur Master Plan Socio-Econ Survey  
( ii) Department of Statistics  
(iii) Master Plan Unit

number of Malays in the city began to increase, mainly due to migration from rural areas as well as adjoining towns. The city then took on a new role, that of an educational, as well as a commercial and industrial centre. From colonial and nationalisation formative influences, Kuala Lumpur has emerged with a socio-econ structure and a pattern of settlement which is different from those characteristics of the western



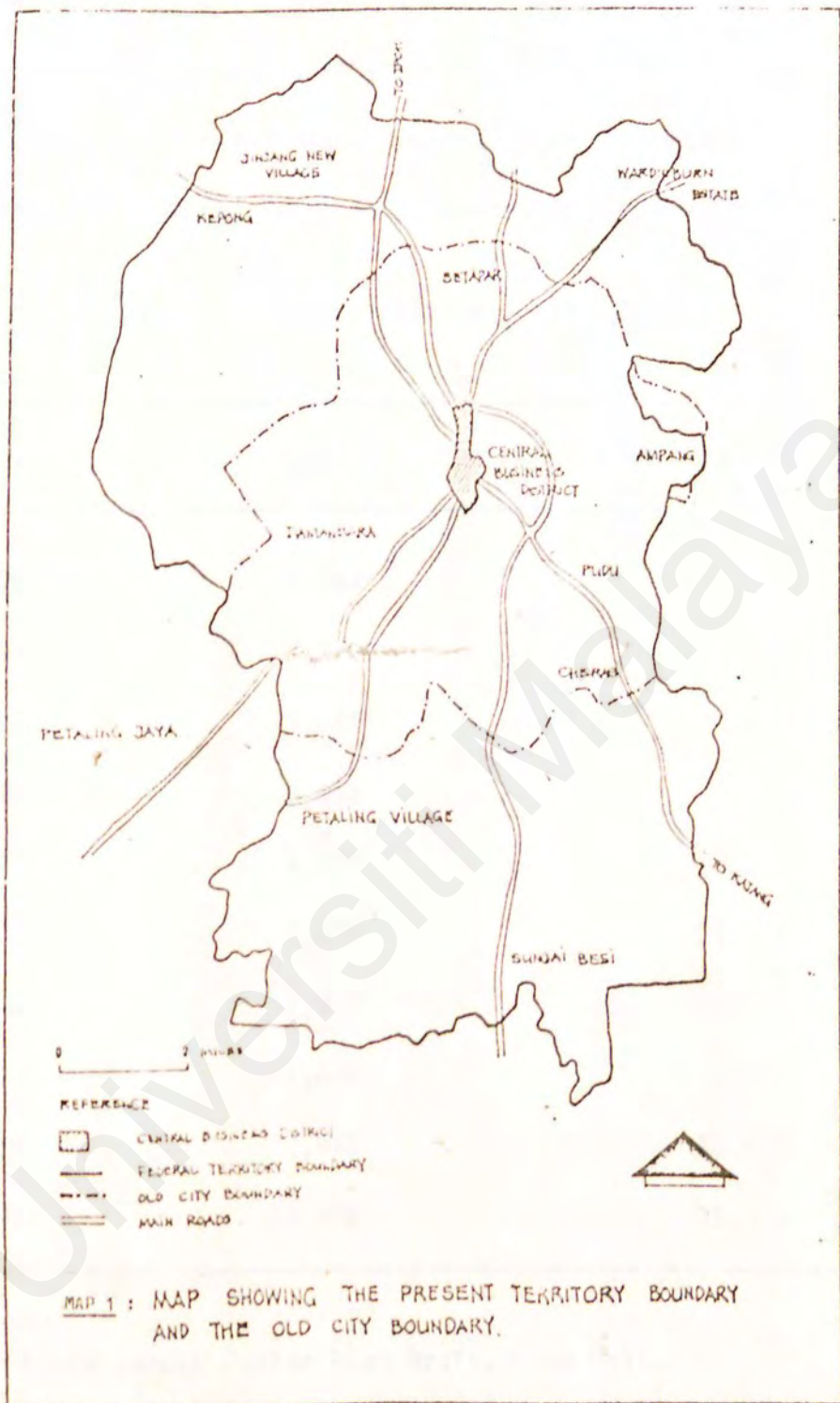
city. Thus basically, Kuala Lumpur has become a mixture of western and non-western elements.

Although in 1970, it covered only 35 square miles, its population density was approximately 13,000 persons per square mile. Most of the population were concentrated within one to two mile from the city centre. The reasons for this phenomenon are that the average number of persons per dwelling is extremely high. According to a report, (Ruddock, a United Nations Advisor, 1955), sometimes as many as a hundred people of all ages and sex are found crowded together in a single shophouse in dark and airless cubicles.

For years, the city has been trying to solve the problem of over-crowding. Satelite towns such as Petaling Jaya were bulit to divert the population of the Kuala Lumpur. Consequently, when new housing estates emerged, new needs arose. One of them was the need for markets. The lack of markets in these areas is one of the many reasons which contributes to the popularity of the pasar-malam.

### 3.1 Hawkers - A Major Occupational Group in Kuala Lumpur

Hawkers and street-vendors comprise a major occupational category of the urban informal sector in Kuala Lumpur. The characteristics and features of hawkers correspond with the conceptional framework for the informal sector. The number of persons employed in hawking can be gauged from the number of licences issued to operators for a particular year. However, no accurate number can be ascertained mainly because the spontaneous growth of hawker stalls are not accompanied by licencing. To cite an example, in 1979, the number of licences issued out was 14,172



SOURCE : MCA Research and Service Centre,  
172, Jalan Petaling  
Kuala Lumpur.



(Refer to Table 3.2). According to City Hall, the number of unlicensed hawkers was in the vicinity of 1,800. If the above two figures is added to another 1,300 of pasar-malam hawkers, then the estimated total for 1979 will be 17,300 hawkers, which is a far-cry from the registered figure.

Table 3.2: Hawkers in FEDERAL TERRITORY, 1970 - 1979.

Year	Total	Annual Increase in %
1970	5,264	-
1971	7,210	33.0 %
1972	7,661	6.3 %
1973	8,053	5.1 %
1974	8,615	7.0 %
1975	9,076	5.3 %
1976	11,257	24.0 %
1977	11,620	3.2 %
1978	12,848	10.6 %
1979	14,172	10.3 %

Source: Kuala Lumpur Master Plan Draft, City Hall.

According to the Unit Pelesenan dan Penjajaan, City Hall, there are about 14,200 licenced hawkers and petty retailers in Kuala Lumpur. But the number of persons involved in this trade has been estimated at around 20,000 persons. This figure is expected to increase to 32,400 in 1990 and 43,600 in 2000. (Master Plan, Kuala Lumpur, 1981)

The number of hawkers has increased by 107.8 percent from 1970 - 1979 (see Table 3.2). An abnormal increase of 36 percent (1970 - 1971) and 24.0 percent (1975 - 1976) was said to be due to the relatively high rate of migrants which took place in the Federal Territory during these two periods.

Comparatively, the Chinese dominate the hawking profession in the Federal Territory. (Refer to Table 3.3). However, between 1970 and 1979, the participation of Malays increased significantly. This partly indicates the increasing desire and positive changes in attitude of the Malays to participate in the urban economic activities.

### 3.2 The Personal Features of Pasar-Malam Hawkers

In this topic, the writer will focus on the myth of the stereotyped hawkers. So far, the general idea is to portray him as an unskilled and a poorly-educated migrant who has been forced from the countryside as a result of lack of economic opportunities. In the city, his lack of education and unfamiliarity with the urban way of life combine with limited employment opportunities, force him to take up hawking. After all, "hawking is an easy occupation to enter for it needs little capital and skill" (McGee, 1977).

The writer's assumption is that pasar-malam is a new urban phenomenon. This is proved correct in the survey which reveals that the respondents have less than ten years experience in pasar-malam even though most of them have a longer record in day-hawking. In fact, Lam (1972) has noted that "in Kuala Lumpur there is no pasar-malam as practised in Singapore" then.



Table 3.3: Distribution of hawkers in Federal Territory  
By Ethnicity 1970 - 1979

Year	Malays		Chinese		Indian		Total	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
1970	232	4.4	4,253	80.0	779	14.8	5,264	100
1971	476	6.6	5,958	82.5	786	10.9	7,210	100
1972	743	9.7	6,213	81.1	705	9.2	7,661	100
1973	966	12	6,354	78.9	733	9.1	8,053	100
1974	1,137	13.2	6,685	77.6	793	9.2	8,615	100
1975	1,243	13.7	6,861	75.6	971	10.7	9,076	100
1976	1,623	14.5	8,218	73	1,407	12.5	11,257	100
1977	1,870	16.1	8,692	74.8	1,057	9.1	11,620	100
1978	1,966	15.3	9,829	76.5	1,054	8.2	12,848	100
1979	2,338	16.5	10,416	73.5	1,417	10.0	14,172	100

Source: Kuala Lumpur Master Plan Draft, City Hall.

### 3.2.1 Age and Sex

Table 3.4 shows that most pasar-malam hawkers are comparatively young, with fifty-one percent who are below thirty years of age. We can also see that there is a majority of eighty-three percent of hawkers under the age of forty compared with seventeen percent of those over forty years of age. This is primarily due to the strenuous and tedious work that hawkers have to go through every night. The writer has witnessed how a plasticware hawkers has to unpack every single pot and pan to be put on

display. Less than four hours later, everything has to be packed back into their respective boxes.

Moreover, most pasar-malam hawkers also work as salaried workers or hawk at public markets in the day-time. They are more or less holding two jobs which require a great amount of strength and energy for the person concerned. The writer presumes that the amount of travelling one has to do each night also causes the pasar-malam to be dominated by the younger generation. However, the contribution of other factors like education cannot be disregarded. These factors shall be discussed later.

Table 3.4: Age-groups of Hawkers in Pasar-Malam

Age Groups	Number of Respondents	%
Less than 19 years	2	3 %
20 - 30 years	29	48 %
31 - 35 years	13	22 %
36 - 40 years	6	10 %
41 - 45 years	5	8 %
46 - 50 years	1	2 %
More than 50 years	4	7 %
Total	60	100 %

Note: (a) Respondents below the age of 40 years - 83 percent.  
(b) Respondents more than 40 years of age - 17 percent.

Pasar-malam is also more dominated by male hawkers as compared to the day-time markets. Of the sixty respondents, only two are female



hawkers working unassisted. One of them is a recent widow. The other female hawkers at the pasar-malam are assisted by their husbands, fathers, brothers or other close relatives. Some respondents attribute the predominantly male feature to the tedious night travelling from site to site which is not suitable at all for women and young girls, especially if they are unprotected. Wong (1974) says,

"..... the large proportion of widowed females who..... are hawkers. There apparently is economic pressure for females who find themselves in such situations to hawk as they have no security benefit, other than becoming dependent on their own children, i.e. if they are old enough" (1974 : 66).

Hawking therefore provides employment and also enables them to look after their own households since they themselves can determine their own working hours.

### 3.2.2 Education

As with most cases of stereotyping, there are also some elements of truth in the assertion that hawkers are generally low-educated. Table 3.5 shows that 82 percent of the respondents have less than nine years formal education while 18 percent have more than ten years. Although hawkers are generally lower-educated, they are by no means the worst-educated people in the city.

Table 3.6 indicates that 73 percent of the respondents come from Chinese schools. Wong's study (1974) has also shown that the predominant stream of education for the modern labour force as well as that of the hawkers is Chinese (71%). This high percentage of Chinese-educated persons could be the reason why there are 55 percent of hawkers with

Table 3.5: Hawkers - Number of Years of Formal Education

Number of years of education	Number	%
Number Education	1	2 %
Primary 1 - 6 years	26	43 %
Secondary 7 - 9 years (Form 1 to 3)	22	37 %
More than 10 years (Form 4 and above)	11	18 %
Total	60	100 %

Table 3.6: Percentage of Hawkers with Education in English or Chinese Language.

Medium of Instructions	1 - 6 years		7 - 9 years		> 10 years		Total	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Chinese	25	41 %	15	25 %	4	7 %	44	73 %
English	2	3 %	7	12 %	7	12 %	16	27 %
Total							60	100 %

secondary education. The writer beleives that the predominance of Chinese-educated people in hawking is due to their poor mastery of the English and national language which acts as a barrier to entry into the formal sector. According to Diana Ooi (1967),

".... an English-educated boy earns a salary four to five times that of a non-English educated person in a similiar job!"



The writer believes that this statement co-incides with the previous observation concerning the Chinese-educated people. There are not many job opportunities open to a Chinese-educated person in our highly developing city, except in Chinese firms where the pay is notoriously low. The same applies to the Tamil-educated person.

Hawking is thus found to be dominated by either illiterate or Chinese-educated people. This is a big contrast to the formal sector which is dominated by the English or Malay-educated people.

### 3.2.3 Origin of the Hawkers

It is found that the data does not fully support the assumption that the bulk of the hawker population are migrants. Table 3.7 indicates that 53 percent of the respondents are actually local residents while 47 percent are migrants. The latter figure is quite significant. It indicates that slightly less than half the respondents have their origin in other areas.

The general notion that urban in-migrants in developing countries are uneducated individuals who go to the towns from the surrounding areas to merely swell the ranks of the unemployed must be revised. Nowadays, the urban imgrants who are better qualified than the local residents probably face little difficulty in securing their niche in the urban sector.

Hence, basically there are two types of migrants. One is the unskilled labour and the other is the educated individual. According to Schultz (1971), the educated tend to be more mobile. This makes economic sense. Education reinforces the income gains from moving. In addition, education also has the effects of enhancing the potential migrant's



perception of opportunities, and also, what is not often recognised, is the increased capacity and notion of an educated individual to still learn more.

One of the reasons of migration common to both types is that they come with the expectation of more opportunities for making money.

According to Davis and Fei (1961), it is the wage differential between the town and the village that causes migration. Michael Todaro (1961), another researcher feels that it is not so much the difference in the scale of wages, but rather the greater possibility of getting a job that attracts migrants. Thus migrants can be expected to be more readily to be absorbed in either the formal sector and the informal sector. In fact, Soon Lee Yings finds that,

"The most surprising finding which emerges is that urban migrants has a lower, not a higher rate of unemployment than the native urban labour force. More remarkable is the fact that even among recent arrivals and those in their teens, the rates of unemployment are lower than the non-migrants" (1974 : 187).

Thus, because of their high expectation of more opportunities in the city, those migrants who are unskilled, may look for factory jobs rather than start on a hawking venture. Local residents who are lowly educated and with no skills will lose out in the employment scene to migrants. They can only turn to hawking to survive. Thus these account for the 53 percent of hawkers who are natives of Kuala Lumpur (see Table 3.7).

Table 3.8 reveals that out of the twenty-eight hawkers who are migrants, 53 percent has stayed in Kuala Lumpur for more than ten years. This shows the possibility whereby some migrants, after a considerably



long residence in the city and disillusioned with various jobs, turn to hawking. By then, these migrants, like their local counterparts in Kuala Lumpur, should have established the necessary contacts and knowledge needed to start them off in the hawking business.

Table 3.7: Percentage of the Origin of Hawkers.

Origin	Number	%
Migrants from other states	28	47 %
Local (Kuala Lumpur)	32	53 %
Total	60	100 %

Table 3.8: Length of Residence of Migrants in Kuala Lumpur

Length of Residence	Number	%
1 - 5 years	4	15 %
5 - 10 years	9	32 %
More than 10 years	15	53 %
Total	28	100 %

Note: Total is 28 respondents. Refer to Table 3.6 where 28 out of 60 respondents are migrants from other states.

#### 3.2.4 Reasons for Entering Hawking

Table 3.9 shows that 36.6 percent of hawkers who listed their reasons for entering hawking as "others". This high percentage of "others" is due to the writer's inexperience. The alternatives offered in the

questionnaire are too few and narrow. Hence, the writer has listed out what is meant by "others":-

- (1) One key-maker who works in the day-time remarked that he came out to pasar-malam primarily to pass time and make more friends.
- (2) Freedom is the essence for many. Hawking provides much freedom compared with working for others.
- (3) There are some hawkers who are influenced by friends or have the necessary contacts.
- (4) There are also some who decide to give the pasar-malam a try but stay on in the end.
- (5) Hawking is an innovative enterprise where if one is enterprising, one can create a lot of opportunities for making money.
- (6) There are many who work in the day-time, then work at night in pasar-malam, to supplement their main income.
- (7) It is easier and safer compared to constructions and factories work.

30 percent of the hawkers came into hawking because of the belief that it has more prospects, moneywise. Indeed it is very true for these people who are usually lowly-educated and also unskilled. To them, the pay of a factory worker is too low. Therefore, relative to their qualification, hawking appears to have a better prospect.

The reason "because of family business" is also a popular one as shown by 20 percent of the hawkers who gave the above reason. As for the 6.7 percent who think that it is a easy job, two of them are former construction workers. To them, hawking is much easier and safer than at a construction site.



Table 3.9: Reasons for Entering Hawking

Reasons	Number	%
They think it is more prospective	18	30 %
It is an easy job	4	6.7 %
Family Business	12	20.0 %
Others	22	36.6 %
No other choice	4	6.7 %
Total	60	100 %

Note: All the alternatives offered here have connections with the education background of the hawkers. As 73 percent of the hawkers are Chinese-educated, entry to better jobs are barred, except for the odd posts here and there in Chinese firms, factories or at construction sites. Compared to the above mentioned jobs, hawking then to the hawkers, is indeed more prospective and easier. In family business, it is usually the son with the least qualifications for entry into the formal sector, who took over the family business.

### 3.2.5 Attitudes of Hawkers Towards Hawking in Pasar-Malam

Table 3.10 reveals that 72 percent of the respondents genuinely enjoy their work, while only 10 percent who dislike it. The rest are fence-sitters as they did not give a definite "yes" or "no". The data is not at all surprising considering what a festive atmosphere the pasar-malam has.

Table 3.10: Attitudes of Hawkers Towards Hawking.

Responses	Number	%
Yes	43	72 %
No	6	10 %
Not sure	11	18 %

Some of the reasons given for liking their job are that being their own boss is much better than working for others. Working hours are more flexible as the privilege of freedom is theirs. Thus they can spend more time with their family. Hawking especially in pasar-malam is a good source of income if one is hardworking. Pasar-malam is also said to be an interesting place to work in as one meets many types of people.

The disadvantages of hawking, according to those who dislike it are that as hawkers, they become victims of bad weather. A week of thunderstorm everynight can result in a big loss of potential earnings as well as decrease their monthly income. Some hawkers are bored with the routine of pasar-malam like loading and unloading of goods and travelling night after night to different sites. To some, hawking is a non-prospective venture. Then there are still others who feel the burden in having to bear the risk of failure or loss in business as they are the owners of the business.

As the saying goes, "every tale has two sides to its story". The reasons given above are true to each individual's experience and opinion. Generally, hawkers do not seem to have a high level of alienation, whereby,

"work provides no satisfaction and fulfilment but is only a source of physical exhaustion and mental debasement" (Jordan, 1971 : 17).

There is little alienation for his work since he is the master of his own work, owns his own capital, controls and directs his own business.

### 3.2.6 Aspiration of hawkers for themselves and their children

The pasar-malam hawkers have high hopes for themselves as well as for their children even though they are in different directions.



Generally for themselves, most hawkers wish to make a success of their hawking career. In Table 3.11 a majority of 46.7 percent of hawkers responses in the affirmative to the question, "Do you want to be a hawker all your life?". It appears that some of them view hawking as a step towards a larger business concern with every opportunity for greater wealth. For others, hawking is the only way of life they know. Material wealth is a goal in itself as all other status symbols like education and occupation is out of their reach. The pursuit of this goal is further intensified when it is known among hawkers that there are very successful, rich hawkers in their community.

Table 3.11: Responses to "Do you want to be a hawker all your life?"

Response	Number	%
Yes	28	46.7 %
No	11	18.3 %
Not sure	21	35 %
Total	60	100 %

Only 18.3 percent give negative responses to the above question while 35 percent are "not sure". These fence-sitters do not mind being hawkers all their lives and they also show a willingness to give up their jobs if there are better opportunities offered to them.

Table 3.12 indicates a high majority of respondents (43.3%) who do not insist on their children becoming hawkers. A small minority of 6.7 percent state otherwise, and 50 percent said that it is up to the children's inclination. Some of the reasons cited for not insisting on their children becoming hawkers are:-

- (a) Hard-work
- (b) Unstable earnings
- (c) Harrassment from the enforcement unit
- (d) Low prestige
- (e) Increasing competition

Many hawkers want their children to be proffessionals like doctors or engineers and white-collared workers like clerks. They also show a preference for government white-collar jobs which are done in comparatively more comfortable surroundings.

Table 3.12: Responses to "Will you allow your children to be a hawker?"

Response	Number	%
Yes	4	6.7 %
No	26	43.3 %
Up to them	30	50 %
Total	60	100 %

### 3.3 The Social Aspect of Pasar-Malam

#### 3.3.1. The Racial Composition of Pasar-Malam Hawkers

The Chinese dominate the hawkers' scene in Kuala Lumpur due to historical circumstances, (Lam, 1972). Besides this, the proliferation of Chinese hawkers is due to the demand for their services, for example, in providing perishable as well as non-perishable goods. The Chinese also have a penchant for hawkers' food. In many families, the morning breakfast often consists of hawkers' food either eaten at the stalls or taken home. Because of the short lunch hour, nearly all workers consume hawkers' food. Dinner may be taken at home but supper or a late-night snack at a hawker



stall is extremely common among the Chinese.

The Indians also primarily a migrant population, are however not over-represented in the hawking population. This could also be due to historical factor as most of the Indians were contract estate labourers. The size of the Indian community may also explain why there are fewer Indian hawkers to serve their needs.

As for the Malays, until recently, there has been a lack of demand for their products, which is mainly hot-spicy food that is still culturally foreign to the Indians and Chinese. It was also due to the political forces interacting at that time, particularly in the colonial period which acted against the Malays going into the general field of commerce, more so hawking and vendoring. The British in creating settlements for Malays in urban areas, did so with the expressed desire "to educate the children of Malays to take part in the administration .... (Head, 1955)".

The probability that the earliest hawkers are Chinese may lead to present prevalence of Chinese in hawking activities. It was only in the last couple of years that more and more Malays have been taking to hawking.

"The New Economic Policy (NEP) outlines policies and programmes to modernise rural life, encourage a rapid and balanced growth of urban activities, provide improved education and training programmes and above all, ensure the creation of a Malay commercial and industry community in all categories and all levels of operation, in order that within one generation Malays and other indigenous people can be full partners in the economic life of the nation" (Second Malaysian Plan).

In view of the government's encouragement and policy, it is

expected that more Malay hawkers would be appearing in our urban scene, particularly in Kuala Lumpur.

This recent study shows the effectiveness of the NEP. Nowadays, the hawking scene especially pasar-malam is not so much dominated by the Chinese as it was ten years back. (See Appendix I). The Chinese housing estates attract more Chinese and the same goes for the Malays. In Kampung Air Panas (a predominantly Chinese community), out of a total of eighty-seven hawkers, there are eighty-five Chinese hawkers and two Indians. Likewise in Bandar Tun Razak where Malays make up the population, there are one hundred and sixteen Malay stalls as compared to only one Chinese stall. The number of Indians who engage in day-hawking is small but it is even smaller still in pasar-malam. Nowadays, there are also some Indonesians who ply their goods in pasar-malam.

### 3.3.2 Mobility of Hawkers

There are two forms of mobility - in the variation of articles of sale and the physical mobility of pasar-malam. Only 26.7 percent of the hawkers are presently selling things that are different from when they first started selling. 68.3 percent of the hawkers still sell the same articles (Refer to Table 3.13). A high percentage of these hawkers mostly consist of owners of clothes, cassettes stalls, etc, i.e. hawkers who have several thousands of stocks in their possessions. For those who change their articles of sale normally during festivals when they sell festive goods or when there are some cheap goods available. Some change their articles of sale example from fruits to ladies' accessories when the former items attract no business.



Table 3.13: Variation in Articles of Sale

Response	Number	%
Sell back same thing since first started	41	68.3 %
Selling different things from the first time started	16	26.7 %
* Not applicable	3	5
Total	60	100 %

Note: \* For those who are selling different things in the morning and at night.

The number of hawkers in a pasar-malam is not always the same. There is great mobility in the comings and goings of hawkers in a pasar-malam. Table 3.14 shows that as time passes on, a pasar-malam tends to grow bigger and bigger. Some hawkers might find it no longer lucrative to trade there and decide to move on. The number of processed <sup>1</sup> food hawkers has dropped from forty-one stalls to thirty-two stalls (Refer to Appendix II). After three weeks their places will be filled by others who are selling different goods altogether. In the span of three months, the pasar-malam in Setapak swells from 143 to 183 stalls.

Despite the mobility of hawkers, there can still be found organisation in such seemingly disorder, as explained in Chapter II. The hawkers, do have a list of unspoken codes and ethics where vacant lots are concerned.

Table 3.14: The Mobility of Pasar-Malam Hawkers

Hawkers by ethnicity	April, 1982		July, 1982	
	Number	%	Number	%
Malays	35	24.5 %	63	34.4 %
Chinese	106	74.1 %	116	63.4 %
Indians	1	0.7 %	4	2.2 %
Others	1	0.7 %	-	-
Total	143	100 %	183	100 %

Note: For further details, please refer to Appendix II.

### 3.3.3 Hawkers' Association

In Malaysia various associations and co-operatives have been established to look after its members and the influence each has depends on the dynamism of its members and officials. In Kuala Lumpur there are two hawkers' associations, each catering to a particular racial group. These two associations are the Kuala Lumpur Hawker & Petty Trader Association and the Persatuan-Persatuan Penjaja-Penjaja Kecil Ibu Kota. The former caters mainly for the Chinese hawkers and the latter for the Malays. Both these associations are represented on the Hawkers Advisory Committee which advises the City mayor regarding matters relating to hawking in the City.

Then there are other various association formed by hawkers in a particular area, for example, the Serdang Hawkers' Association, the Pudu Hawkers' Association, the Taman Cheras Hawkers' Association. All these associations come under the main one - Kuala Lumpur Hawker & Petty Trader Association. The fees per month is a mere \$2.00 for most of the



above mentioned associations.

Table 3.15: Percentages of Hawkers who join Hawkers' Associations

Response	Number	%
Yes	29	48.3 %
No	* 31	51.6 %
Total	60	100 %

Note: \* Out of 31 respondents who replied "no", 18 of them are blue and white-collared workers, shoes-keepers and a shoe-maker by daytime.

Table 3.15 shows that 51.6 percent of hawkers do not join any form of association. Only 48.3 percent hawkers who join hawkers' associations because they hope to get help in case of any trouble with City Hall. When the government allocate sites for hawkers, members are given priority. A hawkers' association is also a place to promote friendship among hawkers. It is a place for relaxation where hawkers gather around for some "mah-jong" sessions or conversations.

Some of the reasons given for not joining the hawkers' association range from "no time" to "not effective, does not serve the hawkers well". Out of the thirty-one respondents who reply negatively, eighteen of them are part-time hawkers. They work in the day-time as salaried workers and hawk at night to supplement their income.

#### 3.4 Relationship between Hawkers themselves and their customers.

The close network of relationship among hawkers contribute to their occupational satisfaction. Despite the existence of competition, they still are helpful towards one another's problems and find the time

to joke among themselves. This is relatively similiar to the concept of proffessional ethics among workers in the modern industrial or commercial sector.

This network is also extended to the customers. 73.3 percent of the pasar-malam hawkers have regular customers as compared to 26.6 percent who do not have (see Table 3.16). This is contrasted with Geertz's description of pasar-traders,

"The pasar-trader is perpetually looking for a chance to make a samll or larger killing, not attempting to build up a stable clientele on a steadily growing business" (1963 : 35).

Regular customers are treated to certain benefits, for example, a housewife who is a regular customer may be given some chillies free of charge when buying vegetables.

Hawkers despite their low level of education are extremely adept at picking up dialects and languages. The survival of their business requires multi-lingualism in order to comprehend what their customers require, to haggle with them and to persuade potential customers to buy their merchandise. Pasar-malam hawkers in Kuala Lumpur more often use Cantonese in their daily transactions.

Table 3.16: Percentage of Pasar-Malam Hawkets Who Have Regular Customers.

Response	Number	%
Yes	44	73.3 %
No	16	26.6 %
Total	60	100 %



Hawkers also face problems pertaining to their customers like fussiness, stinginess and dishonesty. The types of customers most dislike by hawkers are termed as "blue lanterns" literally. They are those who browse around, argue over prices, ask to be shown various articles than go off without buying a single thing. As one hawker puts it, "the world is full of weird people and that is what makes hawking so interesting".

---

Footnotes:

1. In this study,

processed food refer to food that needs to be cooked and prepared before selling to customers. It is also known as prepared food.

unprocessed food refer to vegetables, meat, fruits that are sold in their original form without going through any sort of cooking preparation.

non-food refer to items that is not food like clothing, textiles, furnitures, toys, shorts, household appliances etc.

services shoes-repairer, key-maker.

## CHAPTER IV

### The Economic Aspects of Pasar-Malam Hawkers

The economic aspect of pasar-malam hawkers especially pertaining to income, is one that is most difficult to gauge. When asked about their average daily profits, the responses range from "there are no profits" to "I earn a very little only", even though they may be doing a roaring business. As most of them also hawk in the day-time, it is difficult to trace incomes from solely the pasar-malam as most of the respondents make no distinction between incomes that is earned during the day and incomes that is earned at night.

#### 4.1 Ownerships of Business

A high majority (73.3%) of the hawker unit are sole proprietorship while 23.3 percent of them are family partnership. The remaining 4 percent are agents, the income of which are obtained through commissions for retailing their day-time employer's stock in the pasar-malam (see Table 4.1).

A family partnership provides several advantages to the hawker, for there are no overhead expenses such as wages. Depending upon the size of the family, it is possible to increase the number of people working at a stall at peak periods. Another factor of some importance is that members of the family may be left to look after a stall while the head operative goes to purchase goods or to attend to other matters (McGee, 1970 : 27). In cases of sole proprietorship, where family help cannot be mobilised, workers may be employed. Partnerships, renting and other forms are not found to exist. Renting does not exist because licences of hawkers are



by law not transferable. There is also no necessity for the forming of partnership due to the smallness generally of the nature of pasar-malam hawking.

Table 4.1: Ownership of Business

Types	Number	%
Family	14	23.3 %
Sole ownership	44	73.3 %
Others	2	4
Total	60	100 %

Note: Others include pasar-malam hawkers who are given commission for retailing their day-time employer's stocks in the pasar-malam.

The characteristics of pasar-malam hawking allow easy entry. This is because a pasar-malam hawker needs only a small capital to purchase his goods, for credit can be easily obtained. The processed or prepared food hawking, for example, requires very little capital, for its success or failure depends on skill and service rather than capital. Anyone can enter hawking without fear of being barred. No fussy requirements or qualifications are needed. All a person requires is a little capital and a desire to earn money as sites in pasar-malam are open to anybody.

#### 4.2 Hawkers' Average Income Per Month

Table 4.2 shows that only 5.4 percent get profit that is below \$500.00. These hawkers represent a minority of inconsistent pasar-malam participators. They are the people who need the money but only manage the

time for pasar-malam that occurs in their residential place. In other words, these people represent those who stay nearby and become pasar-malam hawkers only once a week when the pasar-malam comes to their place.

Table 4.2: Percentage of Pasar-Malam Hawkers' Monthly Income

Gross <sup>1</sup> Profit	Number of persons	In % (Percentage)
\$ 100 - \$ 599	3	5.4 %
\$ 600 - \$1,099	20	36 %
\$1,100 - \$1,599	15	27.2 %
\$1,600 - \$2,099	9	16.3 %
\$2,100 - \$2,599	2	3.6 %
\$2,600 - \$3,099	4	7.2 %
More than \$3,099	2	3.6 %
Total	<sup>2</sup> 55	100 %

Note: 1 - The profits estimated here have not minus the cost of transportation, meals, ordering of new stocks and other odds and ends that go with the business.

2 - 5 out of the 60 respondents refused to reveal anything concerning their sales, incomes and value of stocks.

The majority of the hawkers' monthly income are in the vicinity of \$600.00 to \$2,099.00 (79.5%) with 36 percent in the income group of \$600.00 to \$1,099 and 44 percent - \$1,100.00 to \$2,099.00. As income increases, the proportion of hawkers drop. There is about 10.8 percent earning between \$2,100.00 to \$3,099.00 while another 3.6 percent earning over \$3,099.00 per month. These respondents who are doing "considerably well" in their business comprise of these who either work or hawk in the



day-time. The figures presented here include both their day and night earnings.

This great variation in profits is due to two important factors: the type of goods sold and the value of stocks.

In Table 4.3, it is shown that the sale of non-food items such as clothes, cassettes, toys can fetch a higher profit than sale of processed food, unprocessed food and "others". About 13 percent of the non-food hawkers earn between \$2,100.00 and \$3,099.00 per month as compared with the 2 percent in the prepared food section. The "others" and the unprocessed food section do not even touch \$2,100.00. This difference is due to the smaller margin of profit that can be obtained from the sale of unprocessed food. McGee (1970 : 31) noted that,

"Most authorities in the cities visited, agreed that it is the vegetable-sellers who are thought to have the lowest income between \$2.00 and \$3.00 (US) per day ...."

A sundry goods seller estimated that generally, most of the items he sells bring in only 5 - 10 percent profit of the selling prices. This is low when compared with the non-food seller, who may get away with a 20 - 50 percent profit. Generally prepared-food sellers have a higher rate of profit ranging from 60 percent to 100 percent in some cases. Moreover, it is a popular item in pasar-malam, be it kueh, pickled fruits, biscuits and other edibles. \* But, their profit will not be as high as the non-food hawkers (see Table 4.3) because usually their input of capital is low.

---

\* For example, a candy-floss seller needs only a daily capital of \$20.00 to \$30.00. So, if he sells his candy-floss at 40 cents each when the cost price is 20 cents, then his profit will amount to 100 percent of the selling price.

Table 4.3: Distribution of Hawkers' Income (With Reference to Table 4.2)

s of goods sold	GROSS PROFIT													
	\$100 - 599		\$600 - 1099		\$1100 - 1599		\$1600 - 2099		\$2100 - 2599		\$2600 - 3099		> \$3099	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Unprocessed food Sundries, Chinese medicine, vegetable, etc)	3	4%	2	4%										
Prepared food (Mini steam- boat, kueh- mueh, buah assam)			4	7%	1	2%	1	2%	1	2%				
Non-food (Cassettes, Ladies' Wear, Toys, textiles etc)			9	16%	11	20%	8	15%	1	2%	4	7%	2	4%
Others - plants and shrubs, pray- ing articles, hardwares, plasticwares, services, etc.			5	9%	3	5%								
Total	3	4%	20	36%	15	27%	9	17%	2	4%	4	7%	2	4%



It was found that the non-food hawkers carry the largest daily stock, for example, a cassette stall's daily stock is around \$7,000.00 to \$8,000.00. As stated above, a prepared food hawker needs the least capital and his value of stock is normally below \$100.00.

Thus we can safely conclude that the hawkers' earnings can also be predicted by the value of the stock. The greater the value of stock as in clothing and cassette stall, the higher will be the monthly gross income.

It is difficult to evaluate how badly-off or well-off a hawker is without making some comparisons with other occupations. Since the qualifications of a factory worker is the same of that of a hawker's, it is appropriate to compare their income with those in this sector. Choong Chooi Lian (1979) found that workers in most factories are paid a basic salary of \$205.00 plus \$30.00 per month. This figure is way below that of a hawker. In fact, this low income is the main reason given by most of the respondents for not going into hawking.

#### 4.2.1 Time of year when business is good

One important characteristic of hawkers is that the gross profit mentioned are not fixed. The income from hawking varies, depending on the time of the year, the location of business and also the weather.

Table 4.4 indicates that 73.3 percent of the hawkers experience fluctuations in income throughout the year. When cross-tabulated with articles for sale, it is found that the 73.3 percent constitute of non-food hawkers such as those dealing in textiles, shoes, clothes, cassettes, household products etc. Festive seasons like Chinese New Year, Deepavali, Hari Raya and Christmas record higher sales. The explanation given is that during these festivals, it is auspicious to have new household products in



the house, new clothes, new shoes etc.

Table 4.4: Fluctuations in Income

	Number	%
Positive response	44	73.3 %
Negative response	16	26.7 %
Total	60	100 %

The 26.7 percent negative response for fluctuation in income come from processed-food hawkers and unprocessed-food hawkers. Where processed food are concerned, consumption pattern is relatively unchanged and hence account for the non-fluctuation in sales and therefore in income.

According to the hawkers, business also fluctuates according to the time of the month. Generally at the beginning of each month, business is good. It recedes as the month near to an end. Sometimes business performance improves during the middle of the month. This is because many people who receive their half-month pay are able to make their purchases.

Many of the respondents are concerned about the weather as it has important bearing on business. No customers will come out to pasar-malam on a wet-night. As a pasar-malam kueh-seller once remarked jokingly, "If it rains tonight, my family will have Kueh for breakfast, lunch as well as dinner tomorrow."

Owing to the increase in income during festive seasons, hawkers generally look forward to these occasions.

#### 4.2.2 Pricing of goods

Like any other type of bazaars, the pasar-malam is commonly viewed as the market which offers cheap goods for sale. However, low prices



are only possible through excessive haggling. Geertz (1963 : 33) believes that the condition of the bazaar system is characterised by aggressive bargaining and inadequate knowledge of "reasonable prices". He has this to say,

"..... pricing is much more a matter of estimates in a situation where highly specific comparative and historical data are simply not available; instead of exactly calculated prices one finds a setting of broad limits within which buyer and seller explore together the finer details of the matter for a system of offer and counter-offer".

Bargaining is indeed common throughout all of the Asian cities and the hawker's ability to have a "businessman's mouth" is an important part of his economic skill. Manning Nash notes that in peasant or primitive markets,

" .... haggling and bargaining are characteristic; they are the means of establishing the going price, the way of setting price information where price is not posted or advertised" (1968 : 70).

Usually the hawker opens with a much higher price, the customer cuts that by some 30 percent and the compromise is reached at around 15 percent. The businessman is happy, by offering an initially high price, he manages to get a reasonable price after some haggling.

In Malaysia, despite inflation and greater knowledge over market prices, bargaining still persists. It is a mutual anticipation, established through experience. The hawkers expect the customers to bargain, therefore they quote higher prices. The customer on the other hand, expect the prices to be inflated, so they bargain. It has become a norm to us, Malaysians to bargain where hawkers are concerned.

However, there are also some exceptions Belshaw (1960) reports

that in Fiji,

"..... prices are normally fixed without  
haggling for manufactured items .....  
which find their way into the markets  
....For farm products, haggling is normal".

Among the hawkers in pasar-malam, there are also variations across different items sold. Usually hawkers of cooked food and drinks do not allow haggling as prices are already fixed. Market products generally only allow a small degree of bargaining. But, bargaining is clearly an accepted pattern of trade by non-food hawkers selling toys, ladies' wears, shoes etc.

#### 4.2.3 The choice of sites

Each hawker has his own definite view on which site to go to, to ply their wares at night. Some prefer new housing estates where there are yet no shops or markets. These hawkers are the ones who deal in vegetables and household necessities. However, some hawkers prefer the older established housing estates which they feel can provide them with more customers. Residents in housing estates of ten years of age should have paid all the mortgages on houses, cars etc. They, therefore should have more money to spend on clothes, cosmetics and other luxury items. Despite such distinctions, the hawkers in both these areas seem to be doing well.

#### 4.3 The payment of goods

Normally, hawkers get their goods from wholesalers. When they buy in bulk, they normally get discount. Hawking is also retail trade on a small scale. Hawkers buy wares from the middlemen or the wholesalers to sell to the consumers so as to earn some profits. Hawkers in pasar-malam are not all "pure" hawkers as noted earlier. A few of them do full time



work as shopkeepers and distributors of certain goods and some of them even own cottage industries. Their business at night is only an extension of their normal day-time trade. They do not have to worry about getting their supplies from others as they either sell their home-made products or goods from their own shops. One respondent, in fact, helps his father to sell cassettes (wholesale) during the day and retails them at night at the pasar-malam.

For those who do not enjoy such privileges, they usually make their purchases two or three times a week. Some hawkers however have to replenish their stock everyday while others, only once a month. Frequency in ordering of new stocks depends on the nature of the goods and also the time of the year. Hawkers who sell cassettes have to update their stock frequently as compared to those who sell plasticwares. On the whole, these pasar-malam hawkers do not have a fixed credit arrangement. Their supply of goods is obtained either by cash payments or on credit. It is also not uncommon for them to pay only part of the bill, crediting balance on his account. It all depends on the amount of cash they have in hand and the quantity of goods they have purchased. The relationship between the hawker and the wholesaler is also important. Normally when the relationship is new, the motto is "cash on delivery". As the relationship becomes more established, the wholesaler may let a hawker take the goods first and then pay for them later.

It is a different matter altogether where the payment of goods is concerned between the hawker and his customers. Even though, 73.3 percent of the hawkers have regular customers in these housing estates, none of them entertain payment by credit (Refer back to Table 3.16). This is because as pasar-malam hawkers, they move around a lot and there is no means



whereby they can get back their money owing to them.

#### 4.4 The Dual Roles of Pasar-Malam Hawkers

In Table 4.5, 68 percent of the pasar-malam hawkers hawk in the morning whether on a legal or illegal basis. The remaining 32 percent comprise of shop-owners and blue and white-collared workers. Lam (1973) finds that the peak period for hawking is in the morning before 11.00 a.m. and at night after 6.00 p.m. In Kuala Lumpur, there are a few fixed pasar-malam in Jalan Chow Kit, Jalan Petaling and Jalan Pudu. Among the 68 percent morning hawkers, many could not get places in these areas so they have to join the rotating pasar-malam.

The 32 percent mentioned previously consist mostly of salaried workers. The blue-collared workers either work as a fitter, a mechanic, a construction worker, a shoes-maker, a furniture maker, a tailor or even as a shop assistant during the day. The two white-collared workers work as clerk and a laboratory assistant in a paint factory. All of them take up hawking at night so as to supplement their meagre income<sup>1</sup>. Some shop assistants of large textile shops act as agents for their employers in return for some commission.

The above occurrence may not be prevalent but, still they indicates that even without capital, a potential hawker is able to embark on a career in pasar-malam, as long as he is trustworthy.

##### 4.4.1 Employment in Hawking

Hawking may involve more than one person. For example, in processed-food hawking, assistants are normally required to give faster service. Shift-work is sometimes practised in day-hawking but not in night hawking as the time span is too short.



Table 4.5: Occupation of Pasar-Malam Hawkers During the Day

Activities	Number	%
Hawking in public market-places in the mornings	42	68 %
Blue-collared jobs	7	12 %
White-collared jobs	2	5 %
Working for family or own shops	9	15 %
Total	60	100 %

- Note:
1. These are full-time hawkers who either hawk legally or illegally in public market-places. Legally means that a hawker has a licence to hawk at a specific morning-market. Illegally refers to hawkers who do not have licences to hawk in public markets. Nevertheless, they will hawk every morning at different venues with the risk of being caught and fined by City Hall.
  2. Blue-collared jobs includes working as a mechanic, a fitter, a tailor, a construction worker, a shoe-maker, a furniture-maker, etc.
  3. White-collared includes the post of a clerk and a laboratory assistant.
  4. These category represent shop-owners and shop-assistants who continue their day business activities in the pasar-malam.

Table 4.6 shows that 23.3 percent of the pasar-malam hawkers are made up of husband and wife team. In most cases, the husband will hawk alone in the morning but will be joined by the wife in the night. As the pasar-malam is normally crowded and the span of trading is short, an extra pair of eyes and hands helps towards better business performance. In addition, it helps to control "stealing" as this activity is rampant in pasar-malam.

Table 4.6: Types of Membership in Hawking

Kind of Assistants	Number of Stalls	%
Husband and wife teams	14	23.3 %
Family members	16	26.6 %
Paid assistants	7	11.6 %
Friends unpaid	4	6.6 %
No assistant	19	31.6 %
Total	60	100 %

"Family members" denote those assistants who are related to the operator in one way or another. Some of these family members are also paid for their help informally. The real employees in pasar-malam are the paid assistants (11.6%). There is not a single stall that is operated solely by an employee. It is simply not worthwhile to employ someone to look after a stall, when the owner is not around. 6.6 percent of the friends who are unpaid, consist of either the boy or girl friends of the operator. They help the operator without getting any monetary gain at all. Some hawkers (31.6%) do not have any helpers because of the difficulties of getting permanent help. These hawkers frequently complain of "pinching" by customers.

#### 4.4.2 Means of Transport

Pasar-malam hawkers act as distributive and storage agents. They move commodities from one person to another, from one geographical location to another. Transportation is thus vital to his existence and also determines the number of hours he is able to put into direct retailing to



customers. This means of transport is also a way to gauge their economic standing.

Table 4.7: Mode of Transport Used by Pasar-Malam Hawkers

Types of Transport	Number	%
Push-carts	2	3.3 %
Vans	24	40.0 %
Lorries	4	6.6 %
Tri-motorcycles	15	25.0 %
Cars	12	20.0 %
Followed friend's car	3	5.0 %
Total	60	100 %

Various means of transport are used to transfer their stock to their pasar-malam sites. Wong (1974) reports that in Singapore, bicycles, buses, cars, lorries, motorcycles, trishaws, vans, tricycles, taxis, small carts and make-shift boards on wheels are used. The present survey reveals that 91.6 percent of the pasar-malam hawkers make use of such vehicles as vans, lorries, tri-motorcycles and cars to transport their goods to the place of business with a majority of 40 percent using vans alone. (See Table 4.7). Only 3.3 percent use push-carts. These two persons comprise of salaried workers who only hawk once a week in the pasar-malam that comes to their place.

The majority of the hawkers have their own vehicles because they need to travel long distances. Some even (11.7%) travelled to other states to ply their wares (Refer to Table 4.8). This is in sharp contrast to Wong's daytime hawkers where,

"proximity of the hawker stalls to their homes is further reinforced by the finding that half (51%) of the hawkers say that they take 10 minutes or less to get to their place of business. There are also some other hawkers who do not need transportation facilities at all as their hawker stalls also serves as their home" (1974 : 182).

A majority of 66.6 percent who possessed vehicles such as vans, cars and lorries seem to be a good indicator of the prospective ventures of pasar-malam.

Table 4.8: Distance from Hawkers' House to the Chosen Pasar-Malam Sites.

Distance	Number	%
Within 10 miles	37	61.6 %
More than 10 miles	16	26.7 %
Other states	7	11.7 %
Total	60	100 %

#### 4.4.3 Types of Houses of Pasar-malam Hawkers

Table 4.9 shows that 30 percent of the hawkers are house-owners in residential areas while 11.6 percent are house-tenants. Of the eleven persons (18.3%) who rent rooms, nine of them are bachelors while the remaining two comprise of nuclear families. The findings show that the economic standard of the hawkers is relatively stable compared to the "marginal poor" image of hawkers (McGee, 1977).

Another interesting finding is that 28.3 percent of the pasar-malam hawkers are from squatter areas. Adnan bin Ma'oruf (1966) found out that urban life makes its own demand on education and,



" ..... if one does not have a high education, at least one must have skills because modern production demands skills such as knowledge of machines and craftmanships. As for the squatters in Kampung Kerinchi, they have poor educated background and they also do not have skill needed in the urban life of Kuala Lumpur".

Adnan's study reveals that the squatters, most of whom are migrants, are potential participants for the informal sector, of which hawking is a part. Thus it is not surprising that many of the hawkers came from squatter areas.

Table 4.9: Types of Pasar-Malam Hawkers' Housing

Types	Number	%
Squatters	17	28.3 %
Residential areas	18	30.0 %
Renting a house	7	11.6 %
Renting a room	11	18.3 %
Low-cost housing or flats	7	11.6 %
Total	60	100 %

Footnote:

1. According to a respondent, "most of us in pasar-malam have day-time jobs also. Times are bad. Things are very expensive. How can anyone support a wife and a few kids with money from only one job". In the morning, he sells vegetables at Brickfields. At night he sells fruits. He only works three nights a week.

## CHAPTER V

### Functions of Pasar-Malam

For Malaysians, buying from hawkers has become a way of life. Everybody, rich or poor knows the attraction of bargains buys that the pasar-malam offers.

#### 5.1.1 The Social Functions of Pasar-Malam

The pasar-malam serves as a social function, where one may meet friends and neighbours. For many, the pasar-malam is a good place for a quick supper. Noodles, local cakes and nasi lemak are slightly cheaper than elsewhere. The pasar-malam is an attraction to people who have nothing to look forward to at night. It has a particular appeal of bright lights and street excitement that provides a welcome distraction from the daily mundane routined life.

In Kuala Lumpur, the creation of jobs is not parallel with the rate of increase in the unskilled labour force. Hawking provides employment, particularly to the unskilled who can easily take up the proffession with minimum capital. Also by reducing unemployment, it indirectly reduces the incidences of crime and delinquency in society. In the context of national development and the restructuring of society, hawking provides the means for a large number of people, especially the Malays, to gain practical experience and capital accumulation as well as entrepreneurial for participation in larger businesses later on.

#### 5.1.2 The Economic Functions of Pasar-Malam

Though hawking can be conceptualised as occupying mainly



activities of the lower circuit of the city's economic system (Santos, 1979), its existence also plays an important function to society. This is true for Kuala Lumpur firstly because the city favours the existence of the hawkers, in that the city's economic style reflects a distinct dualistic economy. Secondly, hawking has in fact been an inevitable part of the urban distribution system. When the city was first founded, few shops were in existence. Hawking then became the main distribution and marketing channel for goods. Up till now, it has not declined in importance. (Chan Kek Tong, 1977)

From the economic aspect, the pasar-malam serves a two-fold purpose, it provides the working class with cheaper goods and allows the petty traders and hawkers the opportunity to earn a little extra money. Many of the hawkers (68%) as mentioned already, conduct business elsewhere during the day (usually in the mornings) (Refer to Table 4.5). They have a rest in the afternoon and come evening, they are off again to scheduled pasar-malam sites.

Akin to this group are the petty traders and shop-owners. Their business is usually small and the pasar-malam provides them with an opportunity to extend their sales in the evening hour.

The factors inducing some people to hawk at night vary from individual to individual. There are some people who take up hawking because of under-employment. These people work as drivers, mechanics and at construction sites in the day-time. For instance, a shoes-seller in the pasar-malam works as a clog-maker in the day-time.

Most pasar-malam hawkers hope to supplement their sales during the day with sales at the pasar-malam. Some of the hawkers will persist in selling at other places in the evening even if the pasar-malam does not



exist, as income from the day's business alone is barely sufficient.

The pasar-malam also function as a notorious outlet for imitation and smuggled goods. Here, private cassettes, imitation Levi's and fake cosmetics are sold openly. It is amazing how some of the cassettes stall sell the latest tapes even before the legitimate companies release the albums.

From the consumer's point of view, hawkers provide goods at lower prices than elsewhere because they do not have the expenses of overheads such as high rentals or heavy mortgages. Goods also cheaper because hawkers are in intense competition and are therefore willing to cut their margin considerably. The cheap goods which hawkers provide there, contribute to keeping down the cost of living especially for the urban poor.

Pasar-malam have sprouted up all over the city especially in the outskirts, of chiefly residential areas - Serdang, Hot Spring, Jinjang etc. Residents here have found it too much of a bother to travel all the way to that famous pasar-malam in Petaling Street. As residential areas develop, more pasar-malam are set-up. Hawkers in pasar-malam thus provide a service to the public by bringing goods to the "consumers' doorstep", thereby cutting down on transportation costs. Nowadays, on any one night, there are at least three to six places where pasar-malam are held at the same time.

#### 5.1.3 The Legal Aspect of Pasar-Malam

Pasar-malam also functions as an alternative to morning hawking. The writer has come across a few instances where some unlicensed hawkers who set up their stalls illegally in some public morning markets, on the same day that checks are being conducted by City Hall. There is much



commotions as these illegal hawkers begin to flee in all directions. Some even left behind their goods that are difficult to gather, for example, fruits like bananas and oranges, which are then confiscated by City Hall. There are also those who decided to stay behind as their goods are too valuable to be left behind. These hawkers will be fined and sometimes their goods are also confiscated.

Pasar-malam provides a means for the hawkers to do their business peacefully without harrassment from the law enforcement officers. This is because the status of pasar-malam till now is an ambiguous one where legality is concerned. Compare with the morning occupational hazards, the pasar-malam is therefore gaining in popularity as a mean for earning extra income. The air is cooler, business is better and the hours are comparatively shorter.

However, because of the lack of law enforcement officers, pasar-malam have also become the targets for illegal Indonesians migrants. They usually sell cheap watches and clothes and can be easily recognised by their accented Malay. Most of them turn up at night "where it is safe" to buy necessities (Malay Mail, July 30, 1982).

## 5.2 Pasar-Malam - Substitutes for Markets

The many functions of the pasar-malam are also recognise by City Hall and Petaling Jaya Town Board. To them, the most important function of the pasar-malam is in new housing estates, where pasar-malam are substitutes for the markets the areas need, but lack. The lack of markets in new housing estates is because,

"Many of the housing estates that have come up in Kuala Lumpur recently were planned and approved before City Hall came into existence in 1972. That is why markets and some public facilities were not provided for. At the time, the housing estate plans were drawn up, the planners probably didn't foresee the need for markets" (City Hall, 1982).

City Hall has twenty-three markets in Kuala Lumpur for its population of over a million. Large markets like the Central Market are for those areas with 50,000 people and above. Medium-sized markets serve smaller population of 30,000 as in Datuk Keramat and Setapak. The small open-air markets, such as the one at 4th mile Cheras Road are for population of 10,000 and below.

For many a housewife, marketing for fresh fish and garden-fresh vegetables means a seven to twelve kilometre drive, to either the city's Central Market or one of Petaling Jaya's larger markets. In Bangsar, there are at least four big housing estates and yet there are no proper markets. The conveniently-located mini-markets and supermarkets with their styrofoam-packed meat and fish and chilled vegetables, do not always satisfy the fastidious housewife who wants only fresh food for her cooking pot. The markets in some areas of Kuala Lumpur region simply cannot deliver what she wants. Or they are too far away. It is precisely this shortage of proper market space close to consumers that is responsible for the rise of the pasar-malam.

Pasar-malam are fun but then they are also practical. In Taman Connaught and Taman Lian Seng especially, the pasar-malam are substitutes for the proper markets which the areas need but lack. The pasar-malam



offer a variety of vegetables, fish, prawns and other seafood, dried food-stuff, fruits and sundry goods. They also offer all kinds of household utensils, clothes, shoes and slippers, tools etc all at reasonable prices.

In Kuala Lumpur, at least three more markets are being planned although City Hall declined to name the areas. A massive wholesale market complex is also being developed at Selayang to replace the wholesale market, in Jalan Tun Ismail. The Selayang Complex, situate on a fifty acre site, is being built at the cost of \$60 million and is expected to be ready by the year's end.

Although there are no legal requirements for markets in housing plans at the moment, both City Hall and Petaling Jaya Town Board seem to be set on asking developers to make provisions for them.

Will the planning of more markets affect the growth of pasar-malam is a question that can only be answer in the future. In the meantime, pasar-malam do serve a function that both City Hall and Petaling Jaya Town Board are aware of. City Hall is now in the process of regulating their activities. The rise of pasar-malam in a way reflects the neglect of town-planners to provide for basic amenities such as the market.

### 5.3 Differences between pasar-malam and day-hawking

Pasar-malam may appear similar to the street-hawker concentration. But compared to day hawking where only a cluster of hawkers are found due to the stringent traffic rules, pasar-malam hawkers congregate into groups of hundreds in one particular site.

More often, the pasar-malam is distinguished from the street hawkers by the fact that they occupy places which are used for other

purposes during the day, for example, the football field.

The pasar-malam attracts a different clientele. In the mornings, the customers are the housewives, who are in a hurry to finish their marketing. But at night, many of the customers are people who go for a stroll rather than with the implicit intention of shopping. The make-up of the crowd is more vary and relax. There are less housewives and more working people, teenagers and school-children. Pasar-malam, to them are also places of entertainment unlike the morning market areas. According to McGee (1970 : 24),

"The fact that the majority of customers go to the "bazaar location" with no specific intention of purchasing appears to have an important effect upon the hawkers' selling pattern. One notices in the "bazaar" that the hawker is much more aggressive in trying to sell his goods. He usually calls out the quality and price of his goods and tries to attract customers to his pitch".

The different type of customers also causes variation between the types of goods sold. Among the hawkers surveyed, the unprocessed food-hawkers (selling vegetables, fish etc) claimed that business is better in the morning before 11.00 p.m. than at night. This is usually the time when the housewives go to the markets to purchase their vegetables, meat etc.

As for the non-food hawkers, the day-time business is normally slow and the peak is at night between 6.00 p.m. to 10.00 p.m. This may be due to two factors. Firstly, the weather in Kuala Lumpur is very hot during the day and hence people prefer to shop during the evening when it is much more comfortable and pleasant (Chan Kek Tong, 1977). However, the



writer feels that it is not so much the weather as the time of the day, i.e. the second factor. In the evening, practically everybody is free, either home from work or schools. Most of the housewives are also done with their housework, for the day anyway. The evenings then become the time for leisure during which they could visit the pasar-malam.

Processed food such as pickled fruit, local cakes, fried bananas etc is a big hit with the pasar-malam strollers who have all the time to munch tit-bits as they walk along. In the day, hawkers of processed food also do considerably well. But according to some processed food hawkers, business is more brisk and better than during the day.

Generally, the hawkers think that business is much better at night. They earn more in a shorter span of time as compared to what they get from day-hawking.

## CONCLUSION

Hawkers, especially the bazaar type, had in the past been viewed by policy-makers and the city authority as a problem rather than a planning issue which needed to be planned, organised and integrated with the urban economic system. To them, the presence of hawkers represented a failure in their efforts to model their city according to western concepts.

In fact, Armstrong and McGee (1971) who postulated the socio-economic model of the primate city, maintain that at the onstake of economic development, there is a active penetration of the bazaar system by the capitalist firm-centered production system. In other words, the bazaar sector of economy will lose out to the firm-centered sector where emporiums and other sophisticated marketing facilities are available. But as in the case of Kuala Lumpur, the rapid development of the city instead brings forth the revival of one of the oldest form of bazaar, the pasar-malam.

Pasar-malam in Kuala Lumpur can be considered as a spontaneous urban organisation where some enterprising businessmen gather at a place on their own free will with the sole objective of earning some extra income through plying of their wares. The economic condition and social environment in Kuala Lumpur also help to accelerate the growth and development of pasar-malam. The economic situation whereby problems of unemployment, underemployment and the lowly-salaried workers are factors which prompted many people to hawk at night.

With reference to Chao's study (1962), the writer discovers that there are many similiarities in the organisational pattern of the pasar-malam



in Singapore and the pasar-malam in Kuala Lumpur. The pasar-malam hawkers themselves are aware of it. In fact, many claim that the idea of setting up pasar-malam was prompted by the success of the pasar-malam hawkers in Singapore.

From this survey, the following picture of a typical pasar-malam hawkers emerges. He is a native born or a long-term migrant of the community with at least a primary education, little capital and few skills or alternative employment. He is comparatively young as he usually holds two jobs, one in the day-time and has to travel to different location every night in order to make a living. Most of them are happy being a pasar-malam hawker. They feel that they should be given due respect for being engaged in a honest occupation. They have work-satisfaction as they enjoy working independently, being their own boss and flexibility of the system whereby they themselves determine their working or resting day. They also have a high level of motivation of achievement, in working towards owning a shop of their own.

The fact that most of the pasar-malam hawkers are comparatively young explodes a current myth that the informal sector is primarily a source of employment for secondary earners and older persons. Similarly by a World Employment Programme Research Study (1981), findings reveal that people who head informal sector units are comparatively young : for instance in Freetown (Sierra Leone) the median age was 35 years; in Jakarta (Indonesia) 36 years and in Manila (Philippines) 42 years.

The overall emerged picture of the pasar-malam hawkers reveals many similarities with "The Little Businessmen" of Wong (1954) on Singapore

hawkers and of Chan (1977) on Kuala Lumpur hawkers. Through the ages, the life-style and business acumen of hawkers have not change much. It is found that the pasar-malam hawkers operate on a more sophisticated scale and their business is more integrated with the economic of the formal sector.

One distinctive feature is that the pasar-malam hawkers do not speak of their proffession with embarrassment. To them and the public nowadays, hawking is also a proffession to be proud of as one can go far if one is enterprising and business-minded enough. This is in sharp contrast with Wong's study where she speaks of hawkers who are ashamed of being known as a "hawker". Hawking then was considered a low-job with not much prospect.

As in the past, the hawkers of today are still branded with a few negatives characteristics eventhough the usefulness of their occupation are being recognised. They are said to cause traffic congestion by congregating at points in the cities where there are heavy flows of pedestrians and motor-traffic. Hawkers are said to pose potential health problems. They are also unsightly and give the city a bad image of disorderliness.

The writer feels that all the above accusations are not justified where pasar-malam hawkers are concerned. Pasar-malam hawkers do not cause massive traffic congestion as pasar-malam are held in residential places where the road chosen is not indispensable. Some pasar-malam are held on football-fields and other open spaces instead of roads. Moreover even if part of a road is use, it is cordons off only once a week. Not often enough to cause any inconvenience.

Where there is a market, there you will find rubbish, no doubt is very true. But this enterprising lot of night-hawking each pay a



minimal amount of 30 cents to 50 cents per night to Indian sweepers who will cleaned up after them. Considering that an average of ten stalls paying 30 cents each will come to \$30.00 to be shared by the sweepers.

As for saying that hawkers are unsightly is certainly a far cry from the very attractive and picturesque scene conveyed by a pasar-malam to any newcomer. The noise, aromas of food in the air, the glittering lights and people all added up to the attraction of a pasar-malam.

In fact, the general opinion of pasar-malam is not one of complaints but of delights and eagerness to its next coming. All in all, the writer concludes that pasar-malam has a great future ahead as it has a lot to offer and caused minimum amount of problems. Pasar-malam held once a week is more of a blessing than a nuisance, a welcoming distraction to residents. Most of the hawkers interviewed feel the same way, that is, pasar-malam will get more and more popular.

It is suggested that the spectacular growth of the pasar-malam since 1972 were mainly due to the rapid growth of housing estates and residential areas developed by the government and private investors in the past few years. The concentrated purchasing public in these newly mushroomed housing-estate in the outskirts of the city where there were few shopping centres, provided the demands for such markets. A member of parliament, in his memorandum for the Kuala Lumpur Master Plan says that,

"There is an urgent need for the authority to provide more hawker areas in residential areas. In this regard I suggest that all developers should allocate a suitable site in their housing scheme to be used for hawking. This would be made a condition in the approval of their housing schemes".

City Hall is also aware that the rapid growth of housing developments which was not furnished by any marketing facilities, might be the root which springs forth the pasar-malam. "Mobility", the distinctive feature of pasar-malam, also contributes much to its popularity and usefulness.

This study also reveal the effectiveness of the New Economic Policy (NEP) which encourages the participation of Malays in the commerce. It is quite common as demonstrated earlier to find some pasar-malam in a Malay populated area to be dominated generally by Malays.

From the findings the writer can conclude that the informal sector should be given all the help that is needed for it is also a sector of importance in the economic development of the Third World countries. It is hope that City Hall will take note of the functional aspects of pasar-malam in their intended actions towards the pasar-malam operators. Judging from the present trend of development, pasar-malam are here to stay, at least for some considerable length of time. Perhaps some of the old ones may be dissolved but this will be counter-balance by the formation of new ones. They will exist alongside the modern industrial labour force and provide a convenient and useful service that is, with no interference from the government.



## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Adnan bin Ma'aruf,  
1966 Squatter Problems in Kuala Lumpur with Special reference to Kampung Kerinchi, B.A. University of Malaya (1966).
- Behru, H & Pocock, S.,  
1967 "The Economic Effects of Rural-Urban Migration", International Labour Review, Vol 114, No. 3
- Berry, Brian  
1973 "The Human Consequences of Urbanisation". London, Macmillan paperback.
- Biblab, Dasgupta  
1973 "Calcutta's Informal Sector", Bulletin, Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex, Vol 5, No. 2/3.
- Boeke, J.H.  
1953 "Economies and economic policy of dual societies as exemplified by Indonesia" New York, United States, Institute of Pacific Relations.
- Breese, Gerald  
1966 "Urbanisation in Newly Developing Countries" Prentice-Hall Inc., Eaglewood Cliffs, New York.
- B.W. Hodder  
1961 "Rural Periodic Day Markets in Part of Ferubaland, Western Nigeria," Transactions and Papers, Institute of British Geographers, XXIX (1961), page 149-160.
- Caldwell, J.C.  
1964 "Urban Growth in Malaysia : Trends and Implications", Population Review 7 (2)
- Chan, Kek Tong  
1977 A Research Report on "Hawkers in Kuala Lumpur", Department of Town and Country Planning, University of Sydney.
- Chao, Syh-Kwang  
1962 "The phenomenon of the travelling night-markets, a study of its origin, growth and organisation" (Singapore, University of Singapore, 1962).
- Chia, Cheong-Fook  
1954 A research paper on "The place of the hawkers in community". Dip. Soc Sc., University of Singapore, 1954.

Chian-kun Yang  
1944

A North China Local Market Economy : A Summary of a  
Study of Periodic Markets in Chowping Hsien, Shangtung.  
(New York : Institute of Pacific Relations 1944)

Cyril, S. Belshaw

Traditional Exchange and Modern Markets. Prentice  
Hall, New Delhi, 1969.

Dwyer, D.J.  
1972

"The City as a Centre of Change in Asia"  
Hongkong University Press.

Edition  
1974

"The city in the Third World", Macmillan Press, London.

Edition  
1971

"Asian Urbanisation - A Hongkong Casebook"  
Hongkong University Press.

Franklin S.H.,  
1965

Systems of Production : Systems of Application,  
"Pacific Viewpoint", Vol 6.

Freidman, John & Sullivan, Flora  
1974

"The Absorption of Labour in the Urban Economy : The  
Case of Developing Countries" Economic Development  
and Cultural Change; Vol 22, No. 3.

Geertz, Clifford  
1963

"Peddlers and Princes - Social Changes and  
Modernization in Two Indonesians Towns". University  
of Chicago Press, Chicago.

Goulet, Dennis  
1971

"The Cruel Choice : A New Concept in the Theory of  
Development", New York, Atheneum.

G.W. Skinner  
1964

"Marketing and Social Structure in Rural China",  
Journal of Asian Studies, XXIV (1964), pages 3-43,  
195-228.

Hart, Keith  
1973

"Informal Income Opportunities in Urban Employment  
in Ghana". Journal of Modern African Studies II (1)  
pages 61-69.

1970

"Small scale Entrepreneur's in Ghana and Development  
Planning", The Journal of Development Studies.  
Vol 6, No. 4, pages 105-120.



- Hausar, P.M., Schnore, L.F.  
1965 "The Study of Urbanisation", John Wiley and Sons.
- H.J. Bodenhofer  
1967 "The Mobility of Labour and the Theory of Human Capital", Journal of Human Resources, Vol 11, No. 4 (Fall 1967).
- Jackson, James  
1977 "Trader Hierarchies in Third World Distribution System. The Case of Fresh Food Supplies in Kuala Lumpur". Paper presented at Seminar on : Food, Shelter and Transport in the Third World, held at the ANU on July 29, 1977.
- Jacobson L., and Prakash, V.,  
Ed 1971 "Urbanisation and the National Development, South and Southeast Asia". Urban Affairs Annual (Saga Publishers, Beverly Hills).
- J.E. Spencer  
"The Szechuan Village Fair" Economic Geography, XVI, (January, 1940), pages 48-58.
- Jordan, Z.A.  
Karl Marx : Economy, Class & Social Revolution. Michael Joseph, London.
- Lam Thim Fook, Timilthy  
1974 "Hawkers and Vendors in Malacca, Kuala Lumpur and Petaling Jaya" Report presented at Southern Asian Hawkets and Vendors Conference held Gaguao, Manila - May 1974
- 1968 The growth of the Chinese community and urbanisation in the Malay Peninsula. Kuala Lumpur Department of Geography (1968).
- Little, Kenneth  
1974 "Urbanisation as a Social Process" Routledge and Kegan Paul, London
- McGee, T.G.  
1967 "The Southeast Asian City" G Bells & Sora Ltd, London.
- 1970 "Hawkers in Selected Asian Cities", Centre for Asian Studies, University of Hong Kong.
- 1973 "Hawkers in Hong Kong : A Study of Planning and Policy in Third World City", Centre for Asian Studies, University of Hong Kong.

- 1975 "Hawkers in Selected Southeast Asian Cities, the co-operative Research Study Outlines Findings and Policy Recommendations", Unpublished report presented to a workshop on Hawkers in Southeast Asian Cities held in Baguio, Manila, May 27-31, 1974.
- McGee, T.G.  
1975 "Policies for the Urban Informal Sector of Less Developed Countries". Paper presented at Department of P & CP, University Sydney, October 1975.
- McGee, T.G. & Yeung, Y.M.  
1977 Hawkers in Southeast Asian Cities : Planning for the bazaar economy. Ottawa, IDRC, 1977.
- Moser, C.O.N.  
1978 "Informal Sector or Petty Commodity Production : Dualism or Dependence in Urban Development". World Development, Vol 6, No. 9/10, 1978, pages 1041-1064.
- Nash, Manning  
1924 Peasant Citizens : Politic, Religion and Modernization in Kelantan, Malaysia. 1974. Ohio University, Centre for International Studies - Papers in International Studies, South East Asia Series, No. 31.
- Narayana, S.  
1975 Urban In-migration and Urban Labour Absorption : A Study of Metropolitans in Urban Selangor. M. Econ Thesis, University Malaya 1975.
- Ooi, Diana  
1941 A Study of English - Speaking Chinese of Penang 1900 - 1941. (1941)
- Pryor, R.J.  
1975 "Internal Migration and Urban Sprawling" in S.H. Tan and Sendut, H. Ed., 'Aspects of Housing in Malaysia'
- R. Bromley & C. Gerry  
1979 Casual work and Poverty in Third World Cities. Chichester (Sussex) J. Wiley.
- Salih, K.  
1980 "Man and Work in the Informal Sector : Implication for Policy and Industrial Relations", paper presented to Ninth Asian Conference on Industrial Relations, Tokyo, March 16-21, 1980.



Santos, Milton  
1979

The shared space, the two circuits of the urban economy in underdeveloped countries. Adapted for publication in English by Chris Gerry. London, Methuen (1979).

Schultz, T.P.,

"Rural-Urban Migration in Colombia", Review of Economics and Statistics, Vol LIII, No. 2 (May 1971).

Sendut, Hamzah  
1965

"Structure of Kuala Lumpur". Town Planning Review, 36., July 1965.

Sethuraman, S.V.  
1976

"The Urban Informal Sector - Concept Measurement and Policy". International Labour Review, Vol 114, No. 1, July/August 1976.

Soon, Lee Ying  
1974

An economic analysis of internal migration in West Malaysia with special reference to economic imbalances and regional development. Dissertation, (M. Econs) - University Malaya.

Souza, Paula & Tokman, Victor  
1976

"The Informal Urban Sector in Latin America". International Labour Review, Vol 114, No. 3, November-December 1976.

Week, John  
1975

"Policies for expanding employment in the Informal Urban Sector of Developing Countries". International Labour Review, III, 1975

Yeung, Y.M.  
1976

"Changing South East Asian Cities : Readings on Urbanisation". Edition by Y.M. Yeung and C.P. Lo, Singapore, Oxford University Press, 1976.