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CHAPTER VI

Agricultural Experiments

The unfortunate history of agricultural experiments in Penang in the years 1805-1819 was due more to political events in Europe than to any lack of effort on the part of the local government and planters. Penang was obliged to observe the frequently changing instructions of the Court of Directors, under the threat of reprimand in the event of disobedience. Because of the shutting off of Continental markets by Napoleon's decrees of Berlin (1806) and Milan (1807), stocks of pepper, spices and coffee accumulated in the London warehouses, and Penang was unable to dispose of its pepper produce, which was to have provided revenue for the island. Production of this commodity therefore gradually declined. On directions from London, a short lived series of experiments were made with coffee, cotton and hemp, but these too met with little success.<sup>1</sup> Only spices, which had declined somewhat after 1805, showed promising signs ten years later, when the efforts of the persevering David Brown of Glugor<sup>2</sup> to cultivate them were finally rewarded.

1. Cowan (1950), 5-6.

2. See Davies, "The Browns of Glugor", Straits Times Annual for 1961.

Some fifteen years after its introduction in 1790, pepper was regarded as the "principle staple" of the island, and the plantations were thriving.<sup>3</sup> In November 1805 the pepper yield of the island was estimated at about 2,000 tons, of which 1,500 tons was considered fit for the European market at a price from \$10/- to \$12/- per picul. Imports of foreign pepper to Penang were also considerable, and seemed likely to increase. The Penang Government, in an effort to interest the Directors in purchasing the island's pepper, stated that the cultivators were willing to receive one-quarter of their contract price [of \$11/- per picul] in marine stores, cloth and iron. Mention was made also of the fact that agents from Bencoolen had been to Penang to purchase pepper, the price of which<sup>4</sup> was less than that bought in Malabar by Company agents.

The efforts of Penang to induce the home government to invest in local pepper were of no avail however, and in the next few years pepper cultivation rapidly declined, because the imposition of the Continental system deprived the Company of its European markets. In March 1806 large quantities of pepper were accumulating on the island, and

3. See Chapter I, 23-4.

4. Penang to London 12 November 1805, SSR (SNL) B1, 15-16, Cowan (1950), 24. See Bastin (1960), 53-2, for discussion of Penang pepper trade. See also Saw Ghee Leng, Spice Cultivation in Early Penang (Academic Exercise, University of Malaya 1957).

there was little demand for it even though the price had fallen to \$9/- per picul.<sup>5</sup> In the following February, Penang was advised that no pepper was required in London because of the large stocks already there, and because the Penang cost price of \$11/- per picul was much too high, the London price being only 7<sup>6</sup>d. per pound. No pepper could therefore be sent unless produced at a price lower than \$7/- per picul.<sup>7</sup> The Penang Government replied that the price of good quality pepper could not be fixed at less than \$8/- to \$9/- per picul, but still hoped that its pepper might be exported to Europe or China on account of the Company.<sup>8</sup> Its hopes were futile, and because of conditions in Europe, the Directors continually repeated that no pepper from Penang was required in London. In 1810 for instance, there were nearly 17,000,000 lbs. of pepper in the Company warehouse, and in September 1809 no sales had been made at the price of 7<sup>9</sup>d. per pound.

5. Penang to London 20 March 1806, SSR (SNL) B1, 93; Cowan (1950), 26-7.
6. Quoted in London to Penang 30 August 1809, Penang Consultations 17 May 1810, SSR (IOL) XXVI, 690, 693-4; London to Penang 7 February 1816, para. 5, SSR (SNL) C2; Cowan (1950), 60; London to Penang 18 September 1816, SSR (SNL) C2, 445-455; Cowan (1950), 66.
7. Saw Chee Leng (1957), 15.
8. Penang to London 29 January 1808, SSR (SNL) B2, 158-62; Cowan (1950), 33.
9. London to Penang 30 August 1809, Penang Consultations 17 May 1810, SSR (IOL) XXVI, 690; London to Penang 5 January 1810, SSR (SNL) C1, 8; Cowan (1950), 39; Also in Penang Consultations 18 August 1810, SSR (IOL) XXVII, 1035-6; London to Penang 10 April 1811, SSR (SNL) C1, 180; Cowan (1950), 43; London to Penang 7 February 1816, SSR (SNL) C2, para. 5; Cowan (1950), 61.

The Penang planters tried two methods of saving themselves and their crops from ruin. The first method was to send their surplus pepper to China. This remedy was tried initially in July 1807, when five ships sailed from Penang for Canton with 12,484 piculs of pepper which

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yielded \$87,394. Part of the 1808 crops was similarly disposed of in June 1809, when it was conveyed to Canton

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by three 1,200 ton Indiamen. The Directors, replying

to a proposal from Penang that pepper be sent regularly to China on Company ships, warned the government that this method of disposal was unreliable, not only because the ships touched at Penang irregularly, but because it was more profitable for them to carry cargoes of cotton

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than pepper. This was a setback from which pepper cultivation showed signs of recovering only when the end of the Napoleonic wars briefly raised the planters' hopes of increased markets.

The second method used by the pepper planters was to petition the Penang Government for financial assistance.

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In December 1808 a Committee representing the planters

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10. Saw Chee Leng (1957), 16 (from Penang Consultations 24 February 1807).
  11. Saw Chee Leng (1957), 18; Penang Consultations, 17 August 1809, SSR (IOL) XXIII, 756-7.
  12. London to Penang 30 August 1809, Penang Consultations 17 May 1810, SSR (IOL) XXVI, 696.
  13. The Committee of Pepper Planters included David Brown, Thomas McGhee, Syed Karroo, Lowe Amnee and Che Ean.

requested governmental aid in enabling them to continue  
 14 cultivation. The government, recognizing the importance  
 of pepper cultivation to the revenue and prosperity of  
 Penang, and fearing that without aid much of the cultivated  
 lands would revert to jungle and that many of its most  
 desirable inhabitants would emigrate, nevertheless felt  
 unauthorized to make a final decision without referring to

15 the Supreme Government. The planters made two proposi-  
 tions. The first was the purchase by government of the  
 current crop at \$7½ per picul. The second called for  
 an advance of \$5 per picul on the quantity of pepper in  
 Company warehouses, the provision of tonnage to China for  
 surplus pepper, and exemption from the 2½% export duty  
 on pepper shipped. Government preferred the second  
 arrangement because it felt that the first would involve  
 the Company in an undesirable commercial speculation. It  
 was suggested that if a loan of \$5/- per picul were made,  
 the planters might mortgage their pepper as security, and  
 pay interest on the amount of the advance until repaid,  
 and hope for the opportunity of forwarding their pepper to

16 China. A second appeal of the planters, secured, as

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- 14. Penang Consultations 8 December 1808, Pepper Planters to Government 30 November 1808, SSR (IOL) IX, 1400-13. This, presumably, was the letter to which Cowan refers as being "entered, not in the Proceedings, but in a separate series, which unfortunately seems to have been lost." Cowan (1950), 35, footnote 1.
  - 15. Penang Consultations 15 December 1808, SSR (IOL) IX, 1453-5, and also SSR (SNL) A5, 50-2; Cowan (1950), 35.
  - 16. Penang Consultations 15 December 1808, SSR (IOL) IX, 1455-8; Saw Chee Leng (1957), 16-17.

requested, an advance of \$20,000, which represented the cost of \$5/- per picul on the quantity of 4,000 piculs of pepper. The conditions of mortgage were laid down in detail, and the planters were to repay the advance, with the 8% per annum interest, before 30 November 1809.

Otherwise the pepper would be forfeited to the Company. <sup>17</sup>

The offer and its conditions were duly accepted by them. <sup>18</sup>

The Governor-General was informed of the difficulties of the pepper planters, and of the assistance given to them by the Penang Government. Penang also requested confirmation that the China bound ships were directed to touch at Penang in the forthcoming season, and asked whether the vacant tonnage, usually left at the disposal of the Captains, might be utilized to convey Penang pepper for consignment to Canton. <sup>19</sup> Bengal rejected the purchase of pepper on the Company account on the ground that if the bad market was a permanent rather than a temporary feature, government aid would simply encourage continued over-production. In view of the depressed state of the market, the Penang Government was urged to discourage the growth of pepper. The only solution suggested by the Governor-

17. Committee of Pepper Planters to Raffles 20 December 1808, Penang Consultations 22 December 1808, SSR (IOL) XI, 1489-94; Penang Consultations 22 December 1808, SSR (IOL) XI, 1495-8.
18. Committee of Pepper Planters to Raffles 31 December 1808, Penang Consultations 5 January 1809, SSR (IOL) XII, 27-30.
19. Penang to Bengal 5 January 1809, SSR (IOL) XII, 31-8.

their warehouses over twenty million pounds of pepper for which no market could be found. They had therefore suspended their investment on the coast of Malabar, failed to renew the contract for pepper with the Rajah of Travancore, and also stopped bringing home pepper from Bencoolen.

The uselessness of forcing cultivation by means of loans was therefore evident, and the Penang Government was ordered not to make advances on Company funds again, especially as no reliance could be placed on Company ships for the disposal of pepper. The Directors repeated an earlier suggestion that other crops for export should be cultivated, such as coffee and cotton wool. <sup>22</sup> The failure of pepper as a profitable export commodity therefore stimulated experiments in other crops, but the Directors' interest in their cultivation was largely determined by the fluctuations in demand arising from the political situation in Europe.

## II

The Directors' first suggestion, the cultivation of coffee, had been already anticipated by the planters who had begun cultivating it when pepper prices fell. In consequence, coffee plants had been grown at Penang on a

22. London to Penang 30 August 1809, Penang Consultations 17 May 1810, SSR (IOL) XXVI, 689-697.

small scale some years previously. Two European planters, John Dunbar and Thomas McGee, had begun a plantation of coffee and cloves in 1808, and by 1810 there were about 12,000 coffee plants on their plantation. Chinese planters also began cultivating coffee, but <sup>soon</sup> abandoned the speculation, fearing that it could not be successfully cultivated in Penang. Dunbar, on the contrary, was optimistic that coffee would grow as well in Penang as it did in India, and that experiments on a more extensive scale were prevented only by the high price of labour.

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By January 1808 there were an estimated 25,000 flourishing coffee plants on the island, a good proportion bearing, with over 200,000 young plants ready to be transplanted in the following months. Production was expected to reach 2,500 piculs by 1811 and 25,000 piculs by 1815. The latter figure was estimated as equivalent to the anticipated output of pepper, and it was hoped that the government would purchase the coffee production on behalf of the Company.

<sup>24</sup> This tone of optimism did not long continue, however, because by 1810 the Penang Government was regretting that the state of the market in Europe had

<sup>25</sup> proved no more advantageous for coffee than for pepper.

23. Dunbar to Raffles 7 February 1810, Penang Consultations 8 February 1810, SSR (IOL) XXVI, 228-9.
24. Penang to London 29 January 1808, SSR (SNL) B2, 158-62; Cowan (1950), 33.
25. Penang to London 15 March 1810, SSR (SNL) B2, 411-12; Cowan (1950), 42; also SSR (IOL) XXVI, 442-3.



In and after 1812 the market for coffee continued to be unfavourable. <sup>26</sup> Low, writing two decades later, commented that several years previously, large tracts of mountain land had been cleared and planted with coffee which produced good crops, but its price had fluctuated so much that its cultivation for exportation had been abandoned. Nevertheless a few thousand plants remained on the hill plantations, which had been given over to spices. <sup>27</sup>

### III

The fluctuations in the Directors' policy regarding the cultivation of cotton in Penang clearly reflected the swing of political events both in Europe, and in America. In 1809 the suggestion that cotton should be cultivated was made owing to the deterioration of relations with America. Early in 1810 the Penang Government, though conceding that the soil and the climate of the island appeared to be suitable, was wary in estimating its likely success until further progress had been made in its cultivation. <sup>28</sup> At the same time, two prominent landholders, David Brown and John Dunbar, were confident of

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26. London to Penang 21 October 1812, SSR (SNL) C1, 366; Cowan (1950), 46; London to Penang 7 February 1816, para. 5, SSR (SNL) C2; Cowan (1950), 59.

27. Low (1836), 68.

28. Penang to London 15 March 1810, SSR (IOL) XKVI, 442-3; also SSR (SNL) B2, 411-12; Cowan (1950), 41; London to Penang 27 November 1811, SSR (SNL) C1, 238-40; Cowan (1950), 44.

the success of coffee and other crops.<sup>29</sup> Late in 1811 the Directors informed Penang of a change of policy, a hint of which had been first apparent earlier in that year when they stated that cotton wool might not be required. By that time relations with America had improved, and cotton could be again imported from there. Consequently Indian cotton, an unproductive burden on the Company, was not to be sent to England on the Company's account but<sup>was</sup> to be sent instead to China.<sup>30</sup> The Directors' policy

concerning cotton cultivation in Penang was again reversed during the American War of 1812 [June 1812 - December 1814].<sup>31</sup> In October 1812 the Directors stressed the necessity of improving the quality of cotton produced in India, since there was little demand for inferior quality cotton by British manufacturers, and they planned to consign a quantity of America cotton seed to India as soon as possible. In the meantime Penang was to request the governments of the other Presidencies to send seeds of the best kinds<sup>32</sup> of cotton available there to the island.

29. Brown to Raffles 6 February 1810, Dunbar to Raffles 7 February 1810, Penang Consultations 8 February 1810, SSR (IOL) XXVI, 222-7.

30. London to Penang 10 April 1811, SSR (SNL) C1, 180; Cowan (1950), 43; London to Penang 27 November 1811, SSR (SNL) C1, 238-40; Cowan (1950), 44.

31. Cowan (1950), 44 (footnote 1).

32. London to Penang 21 October 1812, SSR (IOL) C1, 364-6; Cowan (1950), 46.

In 1814 the Penang Government confirmed that this request had been made,<sup>33</sup> and certain inducements were held out to encourage the cultivation of the cotton seed sent from Bombay. Government agreed to portion out lots of unoccupied land for its cultivation, and to purchase cleaned cotton at \$13 per picul for a period of five years, or allow its export free of duty. As an additional incentive, advances on reasonable security would be made for the cultivation of the plant. It was hoped that planters who had suffered from the fall in pepper prices would experiment with cotton, a market for which could be found in China.<sup>34</sup> Certain Penang planters quickly accepted the offer of aid. David Brown requested an advance of \$5,000 for the proposed planting of cotton on 400 orlongs of his ground, while John Dunbar requested \$1,000 for 100 orlongs of land.<sup>35</sup> Suitable securities were offered by them and by other applicants. In September 1814 it was reported to the Directors that advances of \$6,000 had been made to "suitable individuals" at the rate of \$10 for every orlong to be cleared and planted with cotton. Since it was thought that the

33. Penang to London 21 September 1814, SSR (IOL) B5, 319; Cowan (1950), 53.

34. Minute by Petrie 22 June 1814, Government Advertisement 25 June 1814, Penang Consultations 25 June 1814, SSR (IOL) XLIV, 1412-16, 1447-8.

35. Penang Consultations 23 July, 30 July 1814, Dunbar to Clubley, Brown to Clubley, SSR (IOL) XLIV, 1559-60, 1606-10.

Company could not loose on the speculation, it was anticipated that government encouragement would continue for five years.<sup>36</sup> This scheme for the encouragement of cotton cultivation was hailed by Petrie, and to a lesser extent by Phillips, as contributing to Penang's revenue, providing a source of employment, and as being highly suitable to Penang's soil and climate.<sup>37</sup>

In practice these optimistic expectations proved to be unjustified. By 1816, a report from Penang showed that the experiment in the cultivation of cotton had not been very successful, the seeds from Madras and Bombay failing entirely, and those from Bengal demanding great care and effort. One of the difficulties encountered was that of separating the cotton from the seed.<sup>38</sup> Some of the cotton planters, already indebted to the Company, were severely affected by the failure of their crops, and were unable to pay back their loans.<sup>39</sup> Presumably these experiments died a natural death when the end of the American War removed the stoppage on American cotton and when interest in pepper and spices was renewed. Low,

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36. Penang to London 21 September 1814, SSR (IOL) B3, 319; Cowan (1950), 53.
37. Penang Consultations 25 June 1814, Minutes by Petrie and Phillips, SSR (IOL) XLIV, 1416-18, 1421-3.
38. Penang to London 8 July 1816, SSR (IOL) B4, 233-5; Cowan (1950), 65.
39. For example, see Duff to Clubley 14 October 1817, (enclosure, Cosh American to Duff, 11 October 1817), Penang Consultations 23 October 1817, SSR (IOL) LXII, 467-9.

writing some years later, said that cotton had long been introduced at Penang, but though it was of a superior quality it had never been extensively cultivated there.

The chief obstacles were the "sudden vicissitudes of climate from dry to wet" which injured the pod, and the high price of labour.

#### IV

A third experiment attempted by the Penang Government at this time was the production of hemp. As early as 1808 the Court of Directors had expressed interest in the cost of production of the calore, a plant from Sumatra, which was said to produce material for cordage of as good quality as hemp from Europe. The Directors ordered its experimental cultivation, and samples were to be sent to them. In 1810 the attention of the members of the Penang Council was drawn to the possibilities of the production of hemp at Penang, since the normal supplies were cut off from Britain because of the situation in Europe. Several hemp producing plants had been imported from Manila, and it was found that a similar plant, the abaca, grew wild on the island. A quantity

40. Low (1836), 68.

41. London to Penang 14 September 1808, Enclosure in Brown to Clukey, Penang Consultations 6 July 1810, SSR (IOL) XXVII, 897-900.

of hemp and a specimen of cordage from the wild abaca plant ~~was~~<sup>42</sup> prepared, and forwarded for the opinion of the Directors.

The subject soon occasioned a letter from the energetic David Brown, who spoke of the interest of Sir Thomas Troubridge when he was stationed in Penang, in the strong fishing nets and lines made by the Malays from a local plant called ramee, which was the same as the calore of Bencoolen. Brown had already begun planting the ramee plant and was confident that the experiment would be successful, if the high cost of labour could be overcome by a loan of some convicts, and if government would purchase the produce when ready. Council declined to become involved in Brown's "laudable agricultural experiments" but granted the request for convicts.

This "interesting speculation" was in turn referred to the Court of Directors.<sup>43</sup>

The Directors showed considerable interest in the subject in 1811, and recommended the production of a large quantity of hemp from the plaintain tree and from the ramee, for use in England, provided the cost of production was low. It was felt by the Directors that

42. Penang Consultations 1 March 1810, Minute by Governor, SSR (IOL) XXVI, 265-7; Penang to London 15 March 1810, SSR (IOL) XXVI, 452.

43. Brown to Clubley 12 June 1810, Penang Consultations 29 June 1810, SSR (IOL) XXVII, 858-62; Penang to London 7 September 1810, SSR (IOL) XXVII, 1206-7.

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this development of locally grown hemp would be advantageous to India and especially <sup>to</sup> Penang, by increasing land values, giving more employment, and providing extra tonnage for shipping: all rather optimistic expectations. 44

In answer, the Penang Government spoke favourably of the luxuriantly thriving ramee plant, the only disadvantage being the expense of cultivation because of the high costs of labour. Regarding another plant with strong fibres, the gamooty, <sup>an</sup> application had been made by the Penang Government to the Resident at the Moluccas for a quantity of seeds, so that its cultivation in Penang could be begun. 45

As nothing further was heard from London, no doubt the Directors' interest in the production of hemp rapidly declined when supplies from the Continent became available once more.

V

After years of forbidding the sending of Penang pepper to London, <sup>46</sup> a change was brought about in the Directors' attitude by the end of the Napoleonic wars.

In Penang the pepper production had declined from an average of 30,000 piculs of about 20,000 piculs in 1810, 47

44. London to Penang 10 April 1811, SSR (SNL) C1, 180; Cowan (1950), 43.

45. Penang to London 23 May 1812, SSR (IOL) XXXIV, 595-7.

46. See footnote 9.

47. Penang to London 15 March 1810, SSR (SNL) B2, 411; Cowan (1950), 41; also SSR (IOL) XVI, 442.

and by 1815 it had further decreased to 12,000 or 14,000 piculs.<sup>48</sup> But with the end of the war the demand for

pepper was increased, and the sudden rise in prices in London [In 1815 as high as \$9<sup>1</sup> to \$10 per picul, or \$11 if garbled], brought about a renewed interest in pepper

cultivation in Penang. The island no longer had an "improvised" appearance, and the pepper gardens were resuming their former state of cultivation.<sup>49</sup> The Penang

Government therefore inquired whether the Directors were agreeable to making a regular investment of pepper at an invoice price of about \$10 per picul.<sup>50</sup>

With awaiting approval, the Penang Government accepted tentatively a tender offered by David Brown, who contracted to supply the Company for ten years with an annual quantity of 500-1500 tons of pepper at \$10 per picul [or \$11 if garbled] for the first three years, after which it would be lowered to \$9 [or \$10 garbled].<sup>51</sup> The arrangement was referred both to Bengal and to the Court of Directors. Bengal expressed its disapproval of the proposed

48. Penang to London 6 May 1815, SSR (SNL) B4, 71-6; Cowan (1950), 57-8.  
49. Ibid.; Penang to London 8 July 1816, SSR (SNL) B4, 233-5; Cowan (1950), 65.  
50. Penang to London 6 May 1815, SSR (SNL) B4, 71-6; Cowan (1950), 57-8; Bastin (1960), 57.  
51. London to Penang 18 September 1816, SSR (SNL) C2, 445-6; Cowan (1950), 66; Bastin (1960), 57; Brown to Clubley 20 April 1815, Penang Consultations 21 April 1815, SSR (IOL) XLIX, 781-4; Penang Consultations 27 April 1815, SSR (IOL) XLIX, 819-21.



contract in moderate terms, but the Directors' condemnation was understandably more forceable.<sup>52</sup> London pepper prices had fallen considerably in 1815 compared with those of 1814, and at current prices, 500 tons shipped on the proposed terms to London was calculated to result in a loss of \$5,405. Furthermore, Malabar pepper was obtainable at a much cheaper rate than the pepper tendered by Brown at Penang. The Directors considered it a "great error in judgement" to have proceeded so far in such unwise negotiations, and the Penang Government was forbidden to enter into the contract.<sup>53</sup>

It was therefore obvious that Penang could expect only a limited outlet for its pepper from the Company's home investment. In fact, during this period only one shipment of Penang pepper was ever sent to London by the Company (viz. 7,444 pounds in 1806), and it resulted in a loss of £50.<sup>54</sup> In consequence, the Penang Government was faced with the old problem of disposing of its surplus pepper, and most of it was sent to China. However, in contrast with the war years, some was sent to mainland Europe and America. Britain also imported Penang pepper

52. Bengal to Penang 11 August 1815, Penang Consultations 6 January 1816, SSR (IOL) LIV.
53. London to Penang 18 September 1816, SSR (SNL) C2, 445-55; Cowan (1950), 66; Bastin (1960), 59.
54. London to Penang 7 February 1816 (Appendix No. I), SSR (SNL) C2, 386; Cowan (1950), 62; Bastin (1960), 59-60; see Appendix VI A.

intermittently thereafter, and a further difficulty arose in 1823 when the Company forbade its China bound ships to touch at Penang. The order was, however, rescinded when Penang pointed out that no additional expense was involved, and that no time was wasted by ships calling at Penang.<sup>55</sup> Owing to the uncertainty of markets, it was more or less inevitable that Penang pepper production should decline again, and this it did rapidly after the peak of production had been reached in 1817/18, which was almost as high as that in 1805. This time it did not rise again, and its prominence as a commercial crop was taken over by spices, notably nutmeg and cloves.

## VI

The Court of Directors had expressed interest in spices as early as April 1805 when they asked for information as to the state and ownership of the pepper and spice plantations.<sup>56</sup> Unfortunately the Company spice plantations had already been sold, on 20 June 1805, at twelve days' notice, on the orders of the Governor-General. The 1,625 clove plants, 5,103 nutmeg plants and 1,050 seedlings had been disposed of for only \$9,656, a sum

Saw Chee Leng (1957), 22-3.

London to Penang 14 April 1805, para. 59, JIA, VI, 28.

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not even equal to the ground they occupied. In view of the Directors' sudden interest in spices, the Penang Government regretted the sudden sale of these plantations, so soon before the arrival of the new government.

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Referring to private cultivation, Penang informed the Directors that the clove and nutmeg plants "promise well", and that several of the latter were in bearing. It also deplored the lack of knowledge of the proper methods of cultivation.

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The Penang Government's opinion on the potential value of the spice plants was still quite optimistic in the following March, when a small sample of locally produced cloves was sent to the Directors. The consignment was accompanied by comments praising the healthy and thriving state of the clove and nutmeg plants, which were likely to yield 'luxuriant crops' and reach the 'highest state of perfection'. But the cooling of interest in spices in the next few years, when attention was concentrated on pepper, was evident from the silence on the subject in both Penang and London.

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In spite of Farquhar's optimism about anticipated returns,

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57. Wright (1958), 54-5; Jackson (1961), 11; Remarks on Farquhar's Report, Penang Consultations 20 February 1806, SSR (IOL) XII, 144. See Chapter I, 25.
  58. Penang to London 12 November 1805, para. 71-2, JIA, VI, 89. For discussion of spices in Penang see Wright (1958), 54-5.
  59. Penang to London 20 March 1806, SSR (SNL) B1, 93; Cowan (1950), 26-7.
  60. See Farquhar's Report 1805 (Spice Plantations), SSR (IOL) IX; Saw Chee Leng (1957), 25-7.

the spice plantations were hampered by the cultivators' inexperience in the proper methods of cultivation and by their growing disillusionment at the difficulties involved. Only the planters David Brown, John Dunbar and Thomas McGee had the patience and the capital to persevere with experiments in spice planting on any large scale. McGee and Dunbar, for example, had in 1808 begun planting cloves, <sup>61</sup> along with coffee, and by 1810 the former were 2,000 in number.

By 1810 when the drop in pepper prices had drawn the attention of both London and Penang to the cultivation of other crops, such as coffee, cotton and hemp, interest in spices was at the same time renewed. The Penang Government broke its four year silence on the subject in March 1810, when it drew the Directors' attention to the flourishing state of spice plantations on the island. There were 13,000 nutmeg trees on the different plantations, several hundreds of these were in bearing, and in the previous three years 20,000 young plants had been raised from the clove trees in bearing, and sold by the proprietors to cultivators in various parts of the island. <sup>62</sup> It was also explained to the Directors that previous backwardness in cultivation had

51. Dunbar to Raffles 7 February 1810, Penang Consultations 8 February 1810, SSR (IOL) XXVI, 228-9.

52. Penang to London 15 March 1810, SSR (IOL) B2, 411-12; Cowan (1950), 41; also SSR (IOL) XXVI, 444-6.

been overcome when the plants were removed to more hilly areas with rich soil and plenty of shade.<sup>63</sup>

An impetus was given to Penang's spice plantations on the restoration of the Moluccas to the Dutch Government in 1816, combined with the re-establishment of the traditional Dutch monopoly in spices. The Penang Government was encouraged in the belief that an improved market for the export of spices would result. The spice plants of the Presidency were thriving in 1816, the produce [particularly of nutmegs] was of good quality, and the cultivation of both cloves and nutmegs was

extending fast.<sup>64</sup> In 1818 there were an estimated 6,900 bearing nutmeg trees and 10,000 clove trees on Penang,<sup>65</sup> and although <sup>there were</sup> 78,900 nutmeg and 103,929 clove trees on plantations in ten districts of the island, mainly in Sungei Glugor, Ayer Itam, Telok Ayer Rajah, and Sungei

Kluang.<sup>66</sup> In September 1818 David Brown petitioned the government to request the Court of Directors to extend to Penang the protective duties passed by the British

63. On the advice of the botanist, C. Smith, who realised that the original sites of the plants, without proper shade and in poor soils, was the cause of their failure to grow well. Penang to London 15 March 1810, SSR (IOL) XXVI, 455-6.

64. Penang to London 8 July 1816, SSR (SNL) B4, 233-5; Cowan (1950), 65.

65. Low (1836), 20.

66. Report on Cultivation in Penang, Finance Committee to Cluibley 5 October 1818, Penang Consultations 7 October 1818, SSR (IOL) LXVII, 287. See Appendix VI B.

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Government on spices which were the produce of Bencoolen. In 1819 Penang was included in a tariff act passed by the British Government which protected the produce of any British colony which was entered for home consumption. By an Act of March 1820, all spices which were the produce of British territories were to be imported free of duty, into England, but the Penang planters were still not well enough advanced to compete successfully with the Dutch, whose plantations were again producing in the 1820s. <sup>68</sup>

## VII

Province Wellesley during the period 1805-1819 was undeveloped agriculturally. There were no large European landowners as on Penang island, where most of the land had been alienated before Province Wellesley was ceded to the British in 1800. The slower development of Province Wellesley was evident from the low rise in population from an estimated 1560 in 1800 to about 5000 in 1821. Most of these were Malays, although there were a few Chinese and Indians. Those who had settled on the land were engaged mainly in rice cultivation and the growing of other local products such as coconut and betelnut trees. The rate of development quickened in

67. Brown to Bannerman 30 September 1818, Penang Consultations 17 October 1818, SSR (IOL) LXVII, 435-8.

68. Saw Chee Leng (1957), 30-1.

the 1820's and '30s after the Siamese invasion of Kedah brought an influx of fleeing Malays into Province Wellesley, until by 1835 the population numbered over 46,000. From the 1820's, experiments were made mostly by Chinese in the growth of sugar cane, which was well suited to the climate and soil there. But Province Wellesley, with its fertile alluvial soil and level land, remained best suited to extensive rice growing, and it supplied this commodity to Penang island and other surrounding areas. <sup>69</sup>

9. See Low (1836), 124, 82, 44, 49-50, 126.