

Museum Volunteers, JMM

Taking the Mystery out of History

A Very Rough Guide to MANTIN

by Eric Lim

Introduction

The town of Mantin, in the state of Negeri Sembilan, sits in a valley surrounded by hills. It is about 16 km northwest of the state capital, Seremban, lying close to the Negeri Sembilan-Selangor border. The town came into prominence as a tin mining town, then shifted to agriculture and today, it is known for a variety of produce such as jackfruit, mangosteen, rambutan and, of course, the King of Fruits, Durian.

History



Setul a.k.a sentul or kecapi. Image credit:

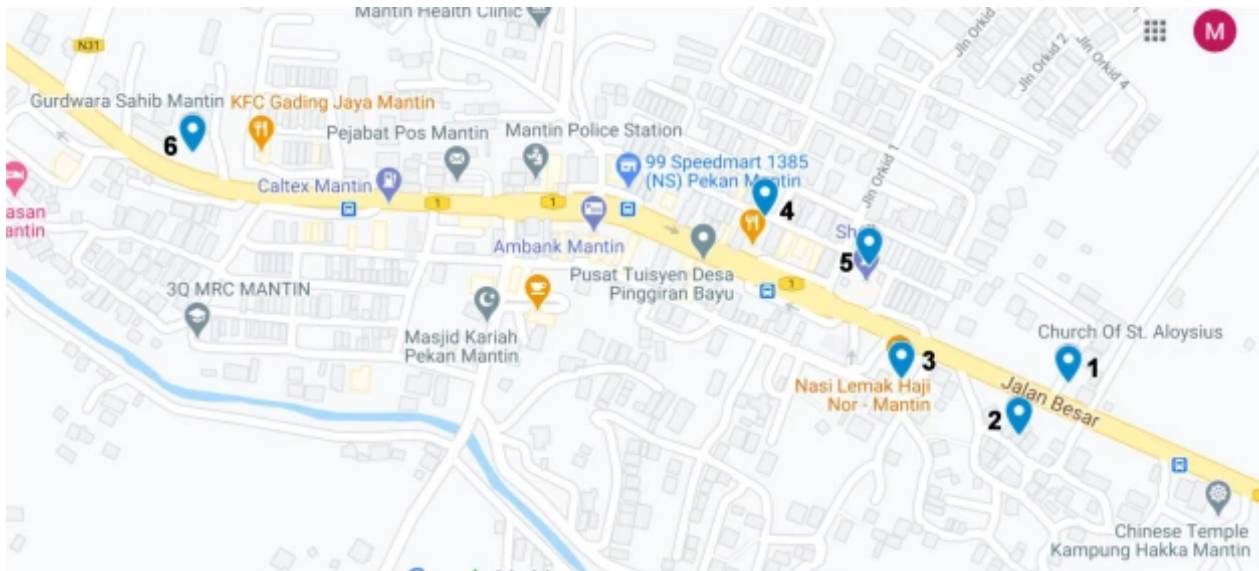
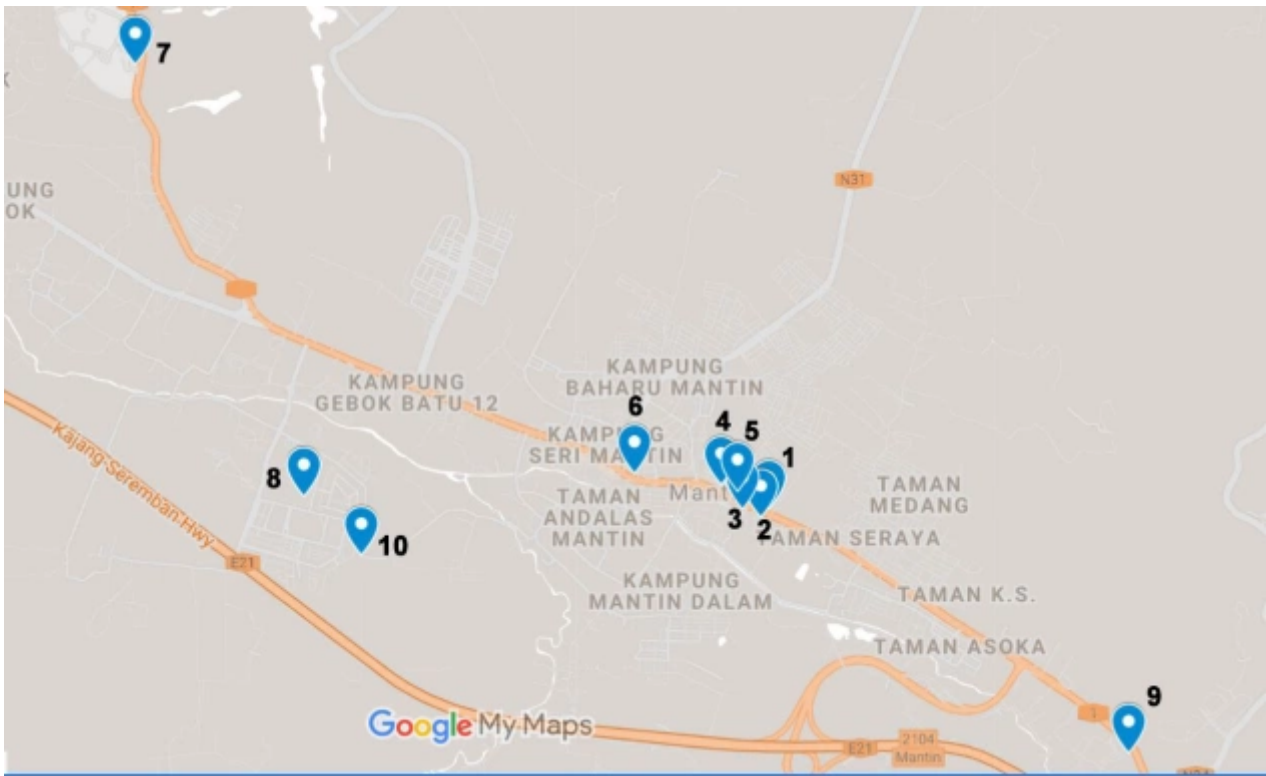
<https://www.frim.gov.my/colour-of-frim/sentul-a-nearly-forgotten-but-nutritious-fruit/>

Originally, the town was known as **Setul**, the name of a fruit. This native fruit is also known locally as *sentul* or *kecapi*. Setul was located about eight miles away from Seremban. When the Kapitan Cina of Sungai Ujong, Sheng Meng Li, was killed in 1862, Chinese coolies decided to leave Sungai Ujong; many of them arrived and settled at a place slightly away from Setul, and the settlement eventually came to be known as Mantin. Local legend has it that the name 'Mantin' came from a corruption of the words 'mine tin' or 'many tin', names which the British gave to the area with reference to its rich tin deposits. Subsequently, migrants from Huizhou, located on the southern Chinese province of Guangdong, came to work in the newly established tin mines in the area. They settled at Kampung Attap, which later became known as Kampung Hakka or Hakka Village.

On 1 February 1903, the Federated Malay States Railway line was opened from **Bangi** to Batang Benar, which is near Mantin. It was later extended to Seremban on 2 April the same year. The availability of train service brought new arrivals to the town and amongst them, the Sikhs who came to work as security guards in the mines. When the police station was established in 1910, another wave of Sikhs who worked in the police force arrived. Mantin was a favourite sanctuary and hiding place for refugees and, during the Japanese Occupation, Hakka groups from Titi in the interior Jelebu district came to seek refuge.

The town's strategic location along Federal Route 1 made Mantin a key pit stop for motorists plying the North-South trunk road. The town saw a decline when the North-South Expressway was opened in the early 1980's but with the extension of LEKAS (highway connecting Kajang to Seremban) and the opening of the Mantin toll plaza on 31 December 2008, the town is regaining its glory.

Places of Interest



The Church of St. Aloysius

Located at Jalan Besar, the **Church of St. Aloysius** [1] has become the iconic landmark of Mantin. This neo-Gothic structure was erected in 1901 and it once housed a nunnery. The church is strategically located just opposite Kampung Hakka, the heartbeat of the town during its early years. Though it has been here for more than a century, the church is in good condition and is still an important place of worship for the local Catholic community. The Gereja Kebangkitan Kristus located at Kampung Belihoi, Mantin, is also under the administration of the Church. This chapel was established in 1950.



The Church of St. Aloysius. Image credit: Eric Lim

Kampung Hakka/Hakka Village

Just across the Church of St. Aloysius stand **Kampung Hakka / Hakka Village** [2]. It was the settlement of the pioneering Chinese coolies and, at its peak, Kampung Hakka was home to more than 300 families. It is situated along the banks of Sungai Setul and close to the heart of the mining activity. As the village grew, a school and a temple were added. The village was alienated to Majlis Perbadanan Nilai who later awarded the development of a new township to a private housing developer. Some of the villagers accepted compensation, abandoned their homes and left. Others decided to take their case to court. In 2013, the High Court ruled in favour of the developers but the villagers managed to obtain a stay order. The legal tussle is still going on and the villagers are awaiting clarifications from the state government. Kong Sook Koon, who at 93 could very well be the oldest resident, is determined not to be forced out. *'Kampung Hakka is everything that matters'*. Kampung Hakka is one of the oldest Hakka villages in our country.



Kampung Hakka. Image credit: Eric Lim



Kong Sook Koon / Photo source :

<https://www.freemalaysiatoday.com/category/nation/2019/02/03/court-backed-developers-loom-over-tin-mining-village-in-negeri-sembilan/>

Mantin Chinese Methodist Church (CAC)

Just next to Kampung Hakka' entrance is the location of the **Mantin Chinese Methodist Church (CAC)** [3]. This church was built in 1925 and the cost of the building was raised almost in full by the local congregation. As part of their expansion plan, the church also runs a kindergarten, Tadika Methodist Mantin, at nearby Taman Setul.



Mantin Chinese Methodist Church. Image credit: Eric Lim

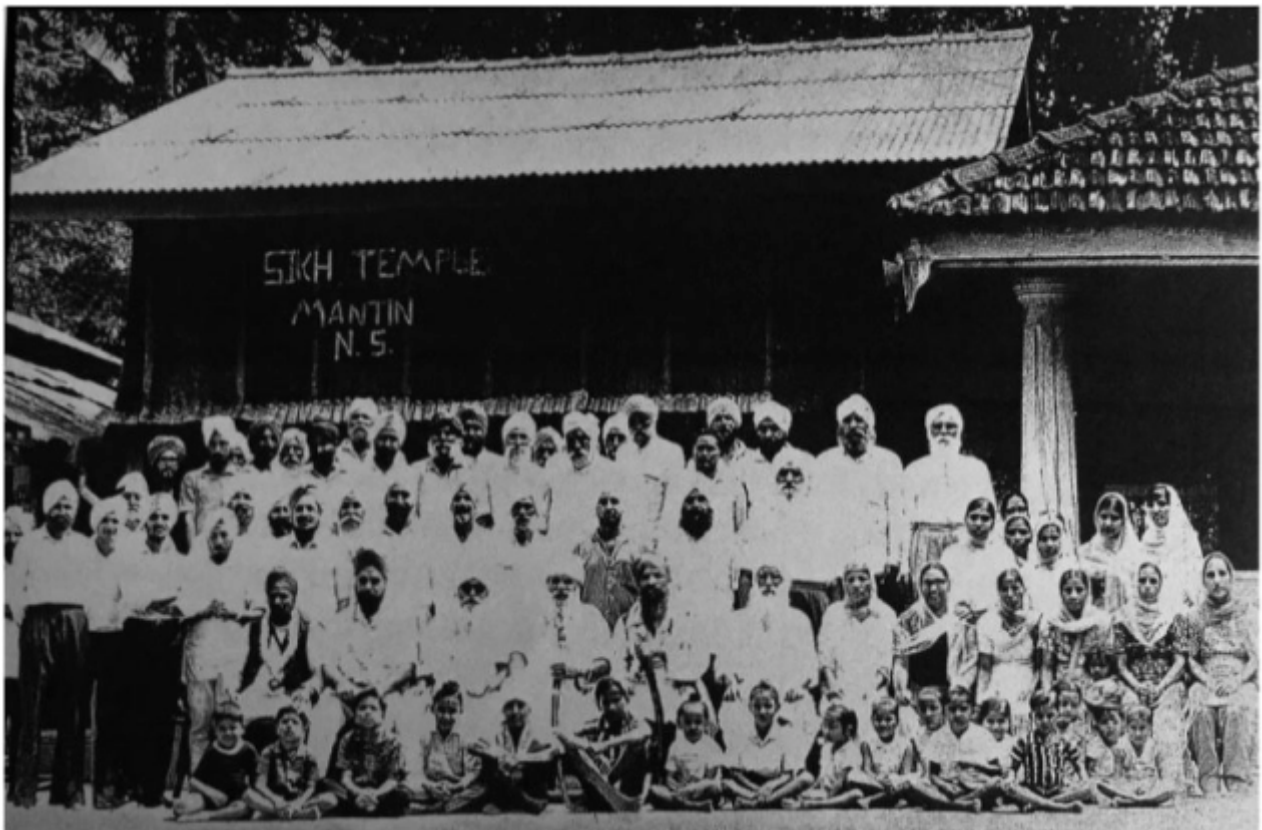
Cinemas

If cinemas are used as an indication of a town's success, then this small town can be rated as successful. There were two cinemas in Mantin, the first cinema was called **Thai Wah** [4] and later came **Universal Theater** [5], which was completed in 1961. The former was located at the current Old Mantin Hawker Centre while the latter was located between the hawker centre and the adjacent two rows of shophouses, both along Jalan Besar.

Gurdwara Sahib Mantin

Still on the subject of places of worship, situated on elevated ground near the town's T-junction is the **Gurdwara Sahib Mantin** [6]. Likely built in the early 1890's, it is the oldest Sikh Gurdwara in Negeri Sembilan. The early Sikhs in the Mantin area were either employed as security guards in the various tin mines or they were policemen. A few of them raised cattle for their milk and owned bullock carts. The first temple building was made of wooden planks with an *attap* roof and

later changed to zinc. In 1989, it was repaired and a new dining hall, kitchen and rooms were built to accommodate the Sikh *sangat* (congregation). A new single storey building was built at the back of the Gurdwara Sahib in July 2002. Mr Bagwan Singh mentioned an old discarded well on the premises, which was repaired and brought back to use again. He also said that the water from this well is believed to possess healing properties that could cure many ailments. The Gurdwara Sahib serves free food to its members and the public at its dining hall.



The first building with a zinc roof. Photo source: Saran Singh Sidhu – Gurdwara Sahib Mantin – Sikh Gurdwaras in Malaysia & Singapore. An Illustrated History 1873 – 2003 – Published by Sikh Naujawan Sabha Malaysia – First edition 2003 – pp 112 to 114.



(L) Gurdwara Sahib Mantin. (R) Mr Bagwan Singh at the well. Image credit: Eric Lim

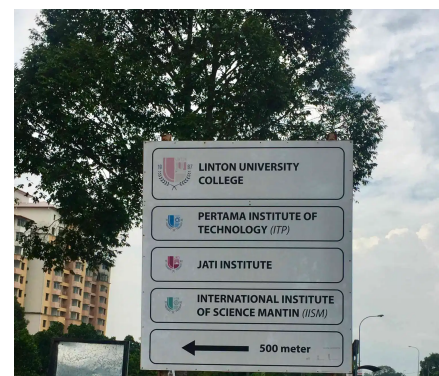
Educational Institutions

Taking advantage of the conduciveness of the surrounding environment, many institutions of higher learning have set up bases in Mantin. The first to do so is **Kolej Tuanku Jaafar** [7], a co-educational international boarding school established in 1991. The school caters to pupils aged 3 to 19 and it has a diverse population of students from over 22 different countries. KTJ is spread across an 80-acre site just outside of Mantin.



(L) Entrance to KTJ, image credit: Eric Lim – (R) KTJ, photo source : <https://www.ktj.edu.my/>

Next was **Linton University College** [8]. It was originally established in 1987 in Ipoh, Perak, and was known as Linton College. In 2005, Linton College was acquired by the KTG Education Group and the campus was relocated to the current location in Mantin. In March 2010, it attained university college status and was consequently renamed Linton University College. It provides programmes in Engineering, Built Environment, Information Technology, Business & Accounting and Applied & Visual Art. Today, the campus is also home to three of its affiliated institutes – **Pertama Institute of Technology**, **Jati Institute** and **International Institute of Science Mantin**. All four institutions provide programmes from Foundation right up to Masters.





Linton University College & Sign board pointing to Linton University College. Image credit: Eric Lim

On the other end of the town, located at the 8 ½ Mile, Jalan Seremban-Mantin is the **Negeri Sembilan Skills Development Centre (NSSDC) [9]**. This skill centre is a joint project initiated by the state government and a group of private industries in Negeri Sembilan.

Orchards

When the town was facing a downturn, the locals turned to agriculture. Today, there are many durian and fruit orchards around the fringes of the town. **My Durian Orchard [10]** located on the west side of the town offers visitors the opportunity to learn and taste the different varieties of durian. It also undertakes to export unopened whole fruit and seedless pulps to major cities in China. Apart from durian, fruits such as rambutan, mangosteen, langsung, jackfruit and many others can be purchased at stalls along the main road from the north leading to the town.

Getting There

You have three options:

1) From Cheras, use the Cheras-Kajang Expressway (E7) that links to Kajang Dispersal Link Expressway / SILK (E18). Look out for Exit 1804 Kajang Perdana, then link to LEKAS (E21) and look out for the exit to Mantin.

2) Alternatively, exit Kajang Dispersal Link Expressway / SILK (E18) at Exit 1805 Kajang Prima Interchange to link to Federal Route 1 (the North-South trunk road) to Semenyih, Beranang and Mantin.

3) From KL city centre, use Jalan Sungai Besi to go to the North-South Expressway (E2). Exit at Exit 214 Nilai, and follow the sign to Pajam. You can then decide to use Federal Route 1 to Mantin (toll-free) or use LEKAS (toll road) and exit at Mantin.

References

Saran Singh Sidhu – Gurdwara Sahib Mantin – Sikh Gurdwaras in Malaysia & Singapore. An Illustrated History 1873 – 2003 – Published by Sikh Naujawan Sabha Malaysia – First edition 2003 – pp 112 to 114.

<https://www.thestar.com.my/metro/focus/2017/10/23/a-town-that-tin-built-mantin-in-negeri-sembilan-has-reinvented-itself-at-least-twice-in-the-last-200>

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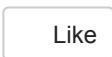
Personal communications with Mr Bagwan Singh,

Personal communications with Dato' Peter Lai, former state assemblyman of Mantin

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8 thoughts on “A Very Rough Guide to MANTIN”



Thrifty Traveller

January 27, 2021 at 12:13 am

Very interesting.



James Chen

January 27, 2021 at 10:03 am

Universal theatre was replaced by a block of two storey shoplots, between the hawker centre and Shell station. A road cut the shoplots and Shell station.



limkokkeong

January 28, 2021 at 11:14 am

Thank you for your feedback. We will make the change accordingly.



Goh Michael

January 27, 2021 at 7:44 pm

It is interesting to read about the town of Mantin and its early beginnings. It is good that effort has been made to put its history down in record for all to read, some thing which has never been done until now and I hope that the people responsible will also see to it that it is updated from time to time so that what has been written is of the latest info. I am also happy to note that with the declaration of city status, smaller towns within the fringe of Seremban district have been included in the new Seremban city boundary as satellite towns to form the greater Seremban and the town of Mantin is one such town. This move augurs well for the town of Mantin as can be seen from the influx of development that has come to Mantin in the form of institutions of higher learning, high end housing development and industries. Before all these, Mantin was just another small rural town trying to survive but all this has changed and I can foresee great development for Mantin in the years to come. Majulah Mantin!!



limkokkeong

January 28, 2021 at 11:18 am

Thank you Mr Goh for the latest information. We are already seeing the return happy days to Mantin.



K.k.tham

January 28, 2021 at 12:07 am

Mantin folks prior to the 1990s, enjoyed the good bus service provided by Foh Hup Omnibus Co then, without which many could not conveniently attend schools in seremban. At 15 minutes interval, one could reach seremban in less than 15 mins while kuala lumpur could be reached in 55 mins without major worries. Later, during the early 90s when KTM electric train service was introduced, mantin folks could enjoy leisurely rides or go to work in kl which is less than an hour away. After the LEKAS highway was opened, development gathered pace where housing estates sprouted to accomodate out of towners who decided to settle down here. A new double storey terrace house was priced at 150k

in 2007 and a similar one is now sold at 430k, a testament of the attraction that mantin holds for these new folks. Landowners here enjoy bonanza with many of them instant millionaires upon selling their holdings. An acre of land which fetched 1k prior to the 70s is now sold at a minimum of 300k! For an old timer like me, for selfish reasons, i dont want anymore development because it invites congestion. Going to the bank, post office, petrol stations in the past was a cinch. The simplicity of a small town life is fast disappearing with its quietness being threatened daily as the days roll by.



limkokkeong

January 28, 2021 at 11:21 am

Thank you Mr Tham for your input.



eunicemoss

January 29, 2021 at 11:51 am

Thanks, Eric. Once we're almost back to normal, I'll make a trip there.