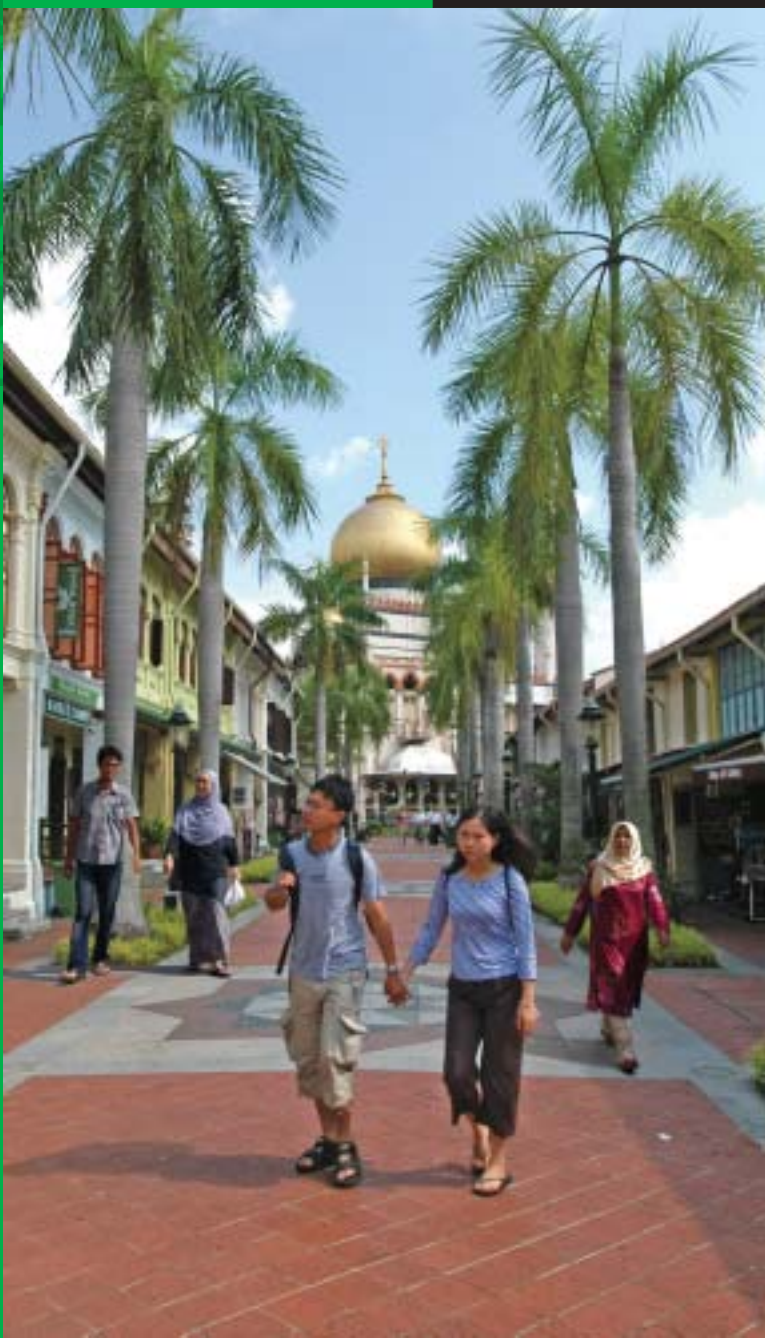


# Celebrating **THE CITY**

KAMPONG GLAM





# SELAMAT DATANG WELCOME TO KAMPONG GLAM

This Malay Historic District used to be and still is the hub of the Muslim community today. It was gazetted as a Conservation Area in 1989. Most of the buildings here are shophouses, the majority of which have remained intact over the years, retaining with them the rich culture and history of yesteryears. The shophouse is one of the most significant building types in Singapore's architectural heritage, reflecting much of the island's history and development.

## Did you know...

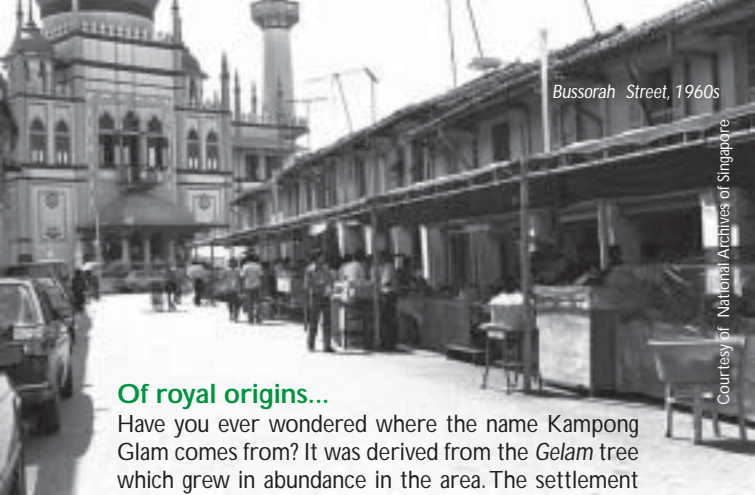
*Kampong* means village in Malay.



## Did you know...

The leaves of the *Gelam* tree when boiled and distilled were used as Cajeput Oil, a cure-all compound for rheumatism and cramps. The bark was used by the Bugis and Malays to caulk the seams of boats, while the timber was used to replace rotted hull planks and doubled as firewood. The fruit was dried, ground and used as a type of black pepper, *Mercha Bolong*.





Bussorah Street, 1960s

Courtesy of National Archives of Singapore

### Of royal origins...

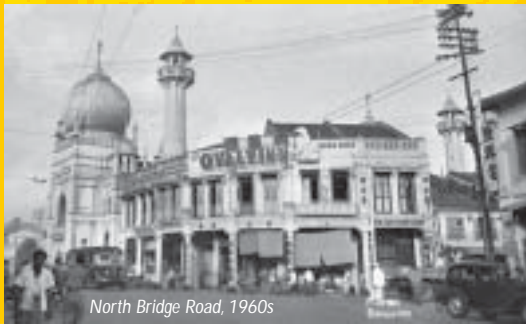
Have you ever wondered where the name Kampong Glam comes from? It was derived from the *Gelam* tree which grew in abundance in the area. The settlement of Kampong Glam is older than modern Singapore - it was already in existence at the mouth of Rochor River at the time of Sir Stamford Raffles' arrival in 1819. Indeed the area was the historic seat of Malay royalty in Singapore.

### ...and cosmopolitan beginnings

The 1822 Raffles Town Plan allocated designated areas to the various racial groups such as the Chinese and Indians. Kampong Glam was allocated to the Malays, as well as Muslim immigrants and traders from the Malay Peninsula, Java, Sumatra, Celebes Islands, Riau, India and Southern Arabia based on their prominence, social and economic status.

The second half of the 19th century saw a rapid influx of immigrants from Sumatra and later from other parts of Indonesia and Malaya. But it was the successful and influential Arab traders who left their indelible mark in the area when streets in the area were named after Arabian cities such as Arab Street, Bussorah Street, Muscat Street and Baghdad Street in the early 1910s.

On Arab Street, Muslim traders work side by side with Chinese and Indian retailers. Despite the influx of modern businesses by other ethnic groups, Kampong Glam is still very much a centre of Muslim activities today.



North Bridge Road, 1960s

Courtesy of Lim Kheng Chye Collection,  
National Archives of Singapore



Come immerse yourself in the eclectic mix of trades, activities and festivals in this district, and you will definitely be charmed. Mingle with students on school excursions, backpackers and tourists, and especially at Friday midday prayer time, with Muslim worshippers going to the mosque to listen to the Friday sermon.

Start your exploration from the former Istana Kampong Glam, which has been converted to Malay Heritage Centre.

### 1 **Plug into the historic district and immerse into the Malay culture**

• Malay Heritage Centre, Istana Kampong Glam,  
85 Sultan Gate

There is no better place to get started than at the grand Malay Heritage Centre. The former Istana used to be the palace of Malay rulers. Converted into a heritage museum, it now captures the essence of Malay history, culture and heritage. It also traces the contributions and aspirations of Singapore Malays towards nation-building. See the meticulously preserved collections and dioramas. Soak into the activities associated with the Malay history and culture through Malay dance and other art forms. Interact with the performers and experience first-hand how to play traditional musical instruments.

#### **Did you know...**

In the early 1950s and 1960s, the former Istana used to screen movies for free to the public weekly. It also provided car parking for the Muslims going to pray at Sultan Mosque nearby.







## 2 Hungry for authentic Malay cuisine in exquisite setting?

• *Gedung Kuning, 73 Sultan Gate (Malay Heritage Centre)*

You cannot miss this distinctive bungalow located just next to Malay Heritage Centre, thanks to its bright yellow exterior. It is believed that the bungalow was painted yellow to reflect its connections with Malay royalty. Hence, it is also known as the “Yellow Villa or Mansion”. Built originally for the grandson of Tengku Ali, this house of the former Bendahara (or Prime Minister) has now been converted into a restaurant serving authentic Malay cuisine.





3

## Step right into the religious and social heart of the area

• *Masjid Sultan*



Located in the heart of Kampong Glam, the grand *Masjid Sultan* (Sultan Mosque) crowned by its golden dome, is the pride of the local Muslim community. It draws Muslims from all over the island as well as tourists, especially on Fridays, *Hari Raya Puasa* and *Aidil Adha*. During Ramadan, the month of fasting, the square in front of the mosque, as well as the nearby streets, is lined with hundreds of stalls selling curries, cakes and candy; at dusk, Muslims break their day's fast in this square.

The original *Masjid Sultan* was built in 1824 by Sultan Hussein and served the Muslim community for almost 100 years. The present building, designed by architect Swan & MacLaren, dates from 1924. It was designed in Islamic Saracenic architecture, a blend of Persian, Turkish, Moorish and Indian elements. Among the characteristic features of this architecture are onion-shaped domes and arches. It was gazetted as a National Monument by Preservation of Monuments Board in 1975. If you wish to enter the mosque, wear sleeved blouses/shirts (long-sleeves for ladies) and long skirts or pants.

### Did you know...

Below the dome of *Masjid Sultan* lies hundreds of brown drink bottles, stacked neck in first between the dome and base. These bottles were donated by the poor who wanted to contribute towards the mosque's construction.





Early style shophouse



Late style shophouse

4

## **Jalan jalan (stroll) your way into handicraft and curio shops**

• Various shops and cafes along Bussorah Mall

Lying in the shadow of *Masjid Sultan* and well-shaded by two rows of palm trees, Bussorah Mall has been converted into a pedestrian zone since 1992. It is flanked by a row of simple Early style shophouses on one side and, on the other, by Late style shophouses with elaborate façade ornamentations. These shophouses have been beautifully restored to their original charm. Today, they house interesting shops and restaurants offering a variety of products. Thirteen of them - the only ones left in Singapore - have retained original window shutters that can be swung out into the five-foot-way to display goods (eg. No 41)

You can easily while away an afternoon admiring the wide array of keris on display at **Malay Art Gallery** (No 31); the impressive trove of old toys, coca cola bottles and cans, vinyl discs, antique telephone sets and other collectibles at **Grandfather's Collection** (No 42); and other shops offering gifts, souvenirs, handicraft, paintings, sculptures and ceramics. For those in the mood for a little indulgence, especially after a day's walk, pamper yourself at **Wayan Retreat Balinese Spa** (No 61). The hungry can get filled on Arab and Mediterranean fare offered at the cafes.







Bussorah Mall



### Did you know...

A keris is a unique dagger carried by warriors in Malaysia and Indonesia in the past. It is particularly useful in fighting in confined spaces such as inside buildings or in the jungle.



### Did you know...

The Bussorah Mall area used to be called Kampong Kaji. Its residents arranged transport and provided food and lodgings for Muslims from Indonesia and Malaysia transiting in Singapore en route to Mecca for the Hajj pilgrimage in the 1960s and 1970s.







5

## Soak in the sights, sounds and smells of bazaar-style shopping

• Various shops along Arab Street

Since Arab immigrants first came to Singapore in the early 19th century and were invited by Raffles to settle along this street, this has been where the buzz and action in the area are focused. Many shops still reflect the Muslim and Arab influences, selling prayer rugs, skull caps and anything needed for making the Islamic pilgrimage, the *hajj*, to Mecca. One of the wealthy, prominent pioneer Arab families that settled here were the Aljunieds. Syed Omar bin Ali Aljunied built the first mosque in Singapore, *Masjid Omar* (Omar Kampong Malacca Mosque at Havelock Road), in 1820.

Check out the vibrant and charming cluster of wholesale and retail shops selling a wide range of brightly coloured textiles, basketware and rattanware, batik, sarongs, beads, carpets, rugs, lace, scarves, brassware, synthetic gems, perfumes of Arabia, Malay scents, spices, dates and confections. Many of these shops have been here for three to four generations. In the 1960s, Kampong Glam was also the literary hub for Islamic books in Singapore, with several printing presses and bookshops specialising in Islamic literature. **Haji Hashim** bookshop (134, Arab Street) testifies to this slice of the area's history.



### Did you know...

Muslims are forbidden from consuming alcohol in any form, including wearing of alcohol-based perfumes. They can only use oil-based perfumes which re-create designer scents plus other floral and wood creations. Take a whiff or two of the large assortment of natural fragrance and essential oils at **Aljunied Brothers**, 91 Arab Street, or **Jamal Kazura Aromatics**, Baghdad Street.





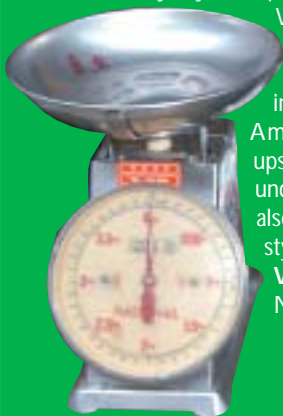
6

## Check out Singapore's narrowest street

• Haji Lane

Take a little well-worth detour down a small unmarked lane halfway down Arab Street, and you will arrive at this quaint little street. It is barely the width of two cars! Tucked in this sleepy street in squat-looking Early style shophouses are a small handful of cafes.

What stands out is an independent records shop (**Straits Records Shop**, No 43) whose façade is decked in bright blue, white and red of the American Union Jack flag (painted upside down), selling local and foreign underground records and CDs. There is also another interesting shop selling old-style weighing scales (**Shin Sin Sweden Weights and Daching Service**, No 59) further down the lane.







# STRAITS RECORD



7

## Experience sultry Arabian nights

• Baghdad and Pahang Street

At least half a dozen Arabic cafes along these two streets offer Middle Eastern food and drinks. Baghdad Street is also a favourite haunt of taxi drivers who throng a hole-in-the-wall, nondescript, unnamed sarabat stall for reputedly Singapore's best and cheapest *teh tarik* (sweet tea with evaporated milk and sugar, served with a thick, bubbly froth created by pouring the piping hot tea from a mug into a serving glass with outstretched hands).

### Did you know...

There is a reason behind the unusual method of serving the *teh tarik* (which literally means pull tea). It is believed that the technique of stretching the tea helps it to mix well with another essential ingredient, the evaporated milk. This thus brings out the strong aroma and subtle taste of the tea. The tea also cools faster this way.





8

## Feast your eyes on beautiful architecture

• Kandahar Street

Here you will find exceptionally ornate Late style pre-war shophouses, decorated with attractive architectural details and features like string courses, dentils and bouquets. These buildings exhibit a harmonious mix of Malay and Chinese architectural influences. You can easily spot No 20, the only unit in the area with a special, pop-out balcony.

Kandahar Street is the perfect place for a pit stop at lunch time. The restaurants along this row of shophouses serve mouth-watering Indonesian and Thai food. Old eateries established since the 1970s, **Rumah Makan Minang** (No 18 & 18A) and **Sabar Menanti** (No 48) are well-known for their *nasi padang* (Indonesian meal with rice and a variety of dishes).



A blacksmith in a pink shirt is working at a large, primitive furnace in a traditional blacksmith shop. The shop is filled with various iron tools and equipment hanging from the ceiling.

9

## Witness a unique traditional trade that has survived the times

• Lee Loy Hin blacksmith shop,  
39 Sultan Gate

Occupying the ground floor of a shophouse that is yet to be restored, this blacksmith shop started business about 80 years ago and is one of the few remnant trades in the area. See the simple primitive furnace used for forging ironworks. Originally, the blacksmith trade thrived in and around Beach Road and Sultan Gate, making ship paraphernalia such as anchors, hooks, pulleys, serving the shipyard and boat repair areas nearby. The trade has now evolved with the times to include other hardware.

### Did you know...

Sultan Gate used to be called *da tie jie* (blacksmith street in Chinese) by the locals for its concentration of blacksmith shops.



Late-style conservation shophouses at Kandahar Street



## 10 Peek into the multi-ethnic in Kampong Glam

- Former Chong Cheng & Chong Pun Schools,  
28-32 Aliwal Street

These former Chinese schools were built in 1938 with the support of Haw Par Brothers. They were popular with the Chinese community during the olden days. Today, those looking for fancy party costumes can rent one from the costume outlet, **No 1 Costume Costume** (No 32).



## 11 Stroll along where the beach used to be

- Many fishing accessory shops along Beach Road

Running parallel to the seashore, Beach Road was a fashionable residential area until the 1870s and 1880s when the smaller streets in the area were laid out. Land was later reclaimed to build Nicoll Highway and later further reclaimed for East Coast Parkway, Marina Square and Suntec City. Today, the concentration of fishing accessory shops here is a haunt for fishing enthusiasts and harks back to its history.

### Did you know...

From the very year that Singapore was founded, Beach Road was famous for the annual fleet of Bugis Macassar schooners. It was a wonderful sight to watch as many as 300 boats sail in before the monsoon in September and October. The Bugis traders brought cargos of coffee, gold dust, pearls, spices and tortoise shell. The forest of masts stretched from Plaza ParkRoyal Hotel to the Kallang River mouth.







Alsagoff Arab School

## 12 Drop by Singapore's oldest Islamic school

• Alsagoff Arab School

Built in 1912, the school was named after Syed Ahmad Alsagoff, a wealthy Arab merchant and philanthropist who was very influential in Singapore's early colonial days. It was the island's first Muslim school.

## 13 Tuck into more yummy Malay delights

• North Bridge Road

North of Elgin Bridge built over Singapore River, the area around this road is also called *sio poh* in Hokkien (a Chinese dialect) by the early Chinese, meaning small town. Today, popular Muslim restaurants litter this street, including **Zam Zam Restaurant** (No 699) at the junction of North Bridge Road and Arab Street. Long queues are a common sight, as customers patiently wait to sink their teeth into the *murtabak* (Indian prata with meat filling) and *nasi beriyani* (fragrant yellow rice) that it has been dishing out since 1908. Further down at No 738 at the junction with Kandahar Street, **Warong Nasi Pariaman** is well-known for its *nasi padang*.



### Did you know...

The small lanes on the side of North Bridge Road opposite *Masjid Sultan* are interestingly named after the Malay names of different types of fruits. For example, *Jalan Kledek* (sweet potato), *Jalan Klapa* (coconut), *Jalan Pisang* (banana) and *Jalan Pinang* (areca nut).

Check out other delightful gems off the beaten track...

14

**Drop by a unique, square-shaped mosque**

• *Masjid Hajjah Fatimah, 4001 Beach Road*

Also known popularly as “Rochor Mosque”, this elegant mosque was founded by Hajjah Fatimah, a wealthy Malaccan Malay lady who married a Bugis merchant trader. To orientate it towards Mecca, it sits with a square building footprint at a skewed angle within a rectangular site. The mosque has a single prominent octagonal minaret shaped like a tower that was gazetted as a National Monument on 6 July 1973.



*Masjid Hajjah Fatimah*



## 15 Visit the other mosque with a golden dome

• Masjid Malabar Muslim Jamaah, 471 Victoria Street

*Masjid Malabar*, also known as Golden Dome Mosque, occupies the prominent corner site between Victoria Street and Jalan Sultan. This is the only mosque in Singapore which is fully managed by the Malabar Muslim community who originally came from Malabar Coast in the southern state of Kerala, India. This is the place where all Malabar Muslims gather on Fridays, *Aidil Fitri*, *Aidil Adha* or any other major functions.



## Inside the Shophouse

Shophouses are a distinct part of Kampong Glam's identity and are an important building type in Singapore's architectural heritage. They form the majority of conservation buildings in Singapore.

Shophouses share a basic generic design, with a narrow frontage, typically four to six metres, and a depth of at least two to three times the width. They are simple buildings of two or three storeys. While some were used solely as residences, a shophouse can have business premises on the lower floor and a residential dwelling above, making it ideal for small-scale family businesses.

Broadly, there are six styles of shophouses: Early (1840 - 1900), First Transitional (early 1900s), Late (1900 - 1940), Second Transitional, Art Deco (1930 - 1960) and Modern (after 1950) styles. They reflect the technology of their times, and the tastes and cultures of the owners. Shophouses with the Early, First Transitional, Late and Art Deco style façades can be found in Kampong Glam. Can you spot them?

## Shophouse styles in Kampong Glam



Early style



First Transitional style



Late style



Art Deco style



## Party walls

Shophouses are separated from one another by party walls which are load-bearing and support the floors and the roofs. The party walls rise above the walls and roof to prevent the spread of fire.

## Fascia boards and fretwork

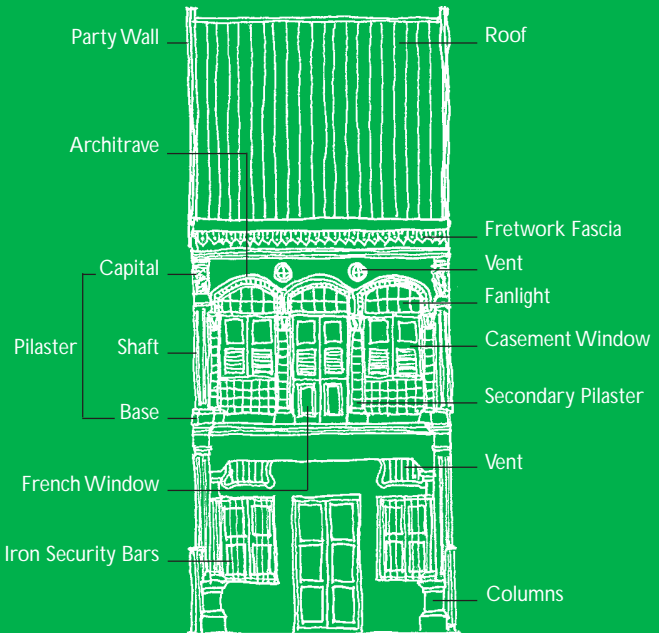
These are an influence from traditional Malay building design, where timber fascia boards and fretwork decorate the eaves of the roof.

## Facade decorations

The main face of the house is often decorated with designs in plaster and tiles.

## Five-foot-way

The five-foot-way is formed by projecting the upper floor to act as a covered passageway for pedestrians. It protects pedestrians from the sun and rain, and also serves as a sheltered space for social activities.



This walking map was produced in partnership with:



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### Getting there

#### By MRT

Bugis Station

#### By Bus

North Bridge Road  
7, 32, 51, 63, 80, 145, 197

Victoria Street  
2, 7, 12, 32, 33, 51, 63, 80, 130, 133, 145, 197

Beach Road  
10, 14, 16, 70, 100, 107, 196, 401

### Legend

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <b>1</b> Malay Heritage Centre                         | <b>9</b> Blacksmith shop at No. 39 Sultan Gate     |
| <b>2</b> Gedung Kuning                                 | <b>10</b> Former Chong Cheng & Chong Pun Schools   |
| <b>3</b> Masjid Sultan                                 | <b>11</b> Fishing accessory shops along Beach Road |
| <b>4</b> Shops and cafes along Bussorah Mall           | <b>12</b> Alsagoff Arab School                     |
| <b>5</b> Bazaar-style shopping along Arab Street       | <b>13</b> Muslim eateries along North Bridge Road  |
| <b>6</b> Haji Lane, Singapore's narrowest street       | <b>14</b> Masjid Hajjah Fatimah                    |
| <b>7</b> Baghdad and Pahang Streets' Arabic cafes      | <b>15</b> Masjid Malabar Muslim Jamaah             |
| <b>8</b> Conservation shophouses along Kandahar Street |  |



- 1** Place of interest
- 2** Landmark
- P** Car parks



## If walls could speak...

...what rich and interesting tales they would tell about the lives and times of Kampong Glam and its many residents through the ages!

“ Before the war, many people went into businesses; for example, sold clothes, cakes, rice, dishes, *epok-epok* (curry puffs) and *goreng pisang* (banana fritters), *kuh lapis* (thousand layer cake), or made *songkok* (a hat Muslim men wear for prayer) and slippers for sale. Many village children would sell food in the evening to supplement their income... There were Chinese coffee shops too in the area. ”

*Mr Mohammad Saat Bin Tamby, born in Kampong Kaji (Bussorah Street) in 1924. He studied in Kampong Glam Malay School at Arab Street, where there were about 200 students.*

*(Source: Oral History Centre, National Archives of Singapore)*

“ During the fasting month, about 100 children would play lanterns after breaking fast at night. They would walk from lane to lane and sing for about 45 minutes. They used the cannon at Sultan Mosque to indicate that it was time to break fast... During the Prophet Muhammad’s birthday every year, there would be a grand procession and normally, some well-known leaders from the Islamic community would lead it. They started the procession in the morning and walked from Bussorah Street to the end at Aljunied Islamic School. The Aljunied Islamic School was decorated with beautiful lamps and there were stages set up for lectures. ”

*Mr Aljunied Hussain Bin Haroon, who ran a shop, “Toko Aljunied”, in Kampong Glam selling books on Islam, batik cloth, perfumes, etc.*

*(Source: Oral History Centre, National Archives of Singapore)*





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