

## **Chinese, Nyonya or local? Perceived food culture in Penang, Malaysia**

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Penang is an excitingly diverse city. Despite prominent gentrification projects and the sign of boutique hotels, posh shops and trendy restaurants/bars/café that adorn its streets, Georgetown remains authentic, unique and lively. The present study intends to explore Georgetown, the capital city of Penang, not only for its historically and culturally rich and intact cityscape, but also for its fabulous food culture, especially street food and the nyonya cuisine. By employing a linguistic landscape approach (Landry and Bournis 1997; Shohamy, Ben-Rafael and Barni 2010), I would like to highlight how the perceived food culture (for example, people's understanding about food – whether they are Chinese, Nyonya or local food), with reference to the signage displayed, will allow one to get a real taste of Penang's culture and sense of place. Williams and Stewart (1998) described sense of place as the “collection of meanings, beliefs, symbols, values and feelings that individuals or groups associated with a particular locality” (p. 19) which is individually and socially constructed over the years. In this regard, I argue that food (e.g., name and ingredients) not only creates common bonds and reflects individual's or collective ‘attachment’ to a place (Stedman 2002: 561)/.