

for exclusive British finance of the southern railway, and Siam agreed to let no foreign power establish a military presence on Siamese territory on the Malay Peninsula. For Khaw family business interests, however, the guarantees afforded by the 1909 treaty reduced the strategic role played by the family's mercantile connections with Penang. After Khaw Simbee's death in 1913, the family businesses no longer enjoyed such advantage.

From being a run-down mining town in the 1890s, Phuket became the second most developed town in Siam after Bangkok under Khaw Simbee. Infrastructure included new dock facilities, new roads in Phuket town such as Thanon Dibuk and Thanon Montri, an improved road to



*Thanon Yaowarat in the 1920s*

Kathu, a new road to Tha Maphrao in the north of the island (near the present day Yacht Haven), as well as new roads in the other districts in the mainland territory of the Monthon. By 1913, when Khaw Simbee died, there was a hospital staffed by missionary doctors (to become the Vachira Hospital in 1917), three Chinese schools, a girl's school (*Rongrian Satri Phuket*) and a boy's school (*Rongrian Tua Yang Monthon Phuket*), a new provincial hall, post office, jail and courthouse.

\*3 This estimate is from *Chinese Society in Thailand: an analytical history* by G.W. Skinner, Cornell University Press, 1957

How many people came to Phuket in the early decades of the 20th century is hard to say, but the numbers must have kept growing as emigration from China remained strong in the 1920s. A census taken in 1904 records a Chinese population of 32,400 in Phuket, but this is not thought to have been accurate due to unreliable determination as to who was Chinese, and again because the latter did not cooperate with census takers, who were also responsible for the triennial head tax on Chinese. Approximately 5–10% of the 47,000 who migrated annually to Penang between 1881 and 1915 probably ended up in Southern Thailand, with many coming to Phuket<sup>13</sup>.

### **The Development of Modern Phuket**

With regular steam traffic linking all the ports of the western coast to Phuket, with buoyant tin prices and production increasing through the