

The Sarkies Brothers: Pioneers of Luxury Hotels in Southeast Asia

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In the late 19th century, a young Armenian entrepreneur named Tigran Sarkies embarked on a venture that would forever change the landscape of luxury hospitality in Southeast Asia. In the **1880s**, Tigran, in his early twenties, laid the foundation of what would become a legendary hotel empire by opening the **Eastern Hotel** in Georgetown, Penang.

The Sarkies Brothers, Tigran and Martin, soon expanded their vision by opening the **Oriental Hotel**. Their synergy was evident as they complemented each other's strengths, with Tigran's ambition and Martin's keen business acumen. The Eastern Hotel flourished under the management of another brother, Aviet, while Tigran focused on extending the Oriental. The result was the grand reopening in **1889** as the **Eastern & Oriental (E&O)**, which quickly became the preferred retreat for planters and officials of the era.

The arrival of the fourth brother, Arshag, in **1891** marked another milestone. His expertise elevated the E&O's status, branding it as the finest hotel "east of Suez." The brothers' reputation for unparalleled service and opulence spread far and wide, attracting the elite and adventurers alike.

The Sarkies' influence extended beyond Penang. In 1887, Tigran and Martin ventured to Singapore, where they transformed a former boarding school into the iconic **Raffles Hotel**. With expansions in 1894 and 1899, Raffles became the largest hotel in the Far East, boasting 75 rooms and a new wing that catered to the most discerning travelers.

The legacy continued with Martin's son, Lucas, who ventured to Surabaya in 1910 to open the **Oranje Hotel** in East Java, now part of Indonesia. The hotel's prestige was such that the legendary **Charlie Chaplin** graced its opening in 1936. However, the winds of war brought change, and during the Japanese invasion, the Oranje Hotel was repurposed as Hotel Yamoto and served as barracks.

The story of the Sarkies Brothers is not just one of luxury and hospitality; it is a tale of vision, determination, and the indomitable spirit of a family that left an indelible mark on the history of Southeast Asia's hotel industry.

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Here are some authoritative sources that provide detailed information about the history of the hotels established by the Sarkies Brothers:

- For the **Eastern & Oriental Hotel** in Penang, you can refer to its Wikipedia page or the hotel's official history page.
- The history of the **Raffles Hotel** in Singapore is well-documented on its Wikipedia page.
- Regarding the **Hotel Majapahit** (formerly Oranje Hotel) in Surabaya, you can find more information on its Wikipedia page and the hotel's official history page.

These sources provide comprehensive historical insights into the legacy of the Sarkies Brothers and their contributions to the hospitality industry in Southeast Asia.