

BYGONE KEDAH

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By:

DATO' JAMES F. AUGUSTINE

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**KATA ALUAN Y.B. DATO' Pengerusi
LEMBAGA MUZIUM NEGERI KEDAH DARUL AMAN
UNTUK BUKU "BYGONE KEDAH"**

Pengetahuan kita mengenai Sejarah Negeri Kedah sangatlah cetek dan berselerak di sana sini. Maklumat-maklumat penting telah dikumpul dari pelbagai sumber oleh Mendiang Dato' J.F. Augustin sejak beliau mula berkhidmat di Negeri Kedah sebagai seorang pendidik. Beliau menghantar hasil penyelidikannya kepada "Straits Echo" mengenai Sejarah Negeri ini di ruangan "Bygone Kedah" muncul setiap hari Rabu buat seketika waktu.

Sebanyak 63 buah artikel yang menarik separuhnya ditulis dari pengalaman beliau sendiri dan juga dari maklumat langsung dari orang-orang yang terlibat dalam sesuatu peristiwa telah dijilidnya dalam sebuah buku.

Manuskrip buku ini telah lama siap iaitu sejak tahun 1984 lagi tetapi sekarang barulah dapat pihak Muzium Negeri Kedah menghantarnya ke percetakan. Tidak semestinya kita akur dengan semua yang ditulis oleh Dato' Augustin. Pendapat-pendapat dan bahan-bahan baru dalam penyelidikan sejarah masakini telah timbul di sana sini. Bagaimana pun kita tidak mengubah yang ditulis oleh Dato' Augustin kerana mengekalkan kepetahannya dan ciri-ciri karyanya yang bermutu tinggi, bijak dan akademik.

Tidak syak lagi harapan kita pada masa akan datang terletak di tangan belia-belia hari ini dan khususnya kepada sikap mereka terhadap pembangunan dan kemajuan yang sedang berlangsung di Negara kita.

Sejarah dapat membantu menjawab soalan-soalan mereka, menyelesaikan keraguan-keraguan dan menjelaskan perkaitan antara masa lepas dengan masa yang akan datang.

Kita amat memerlukan suatu penafsiran dan penilaian sejarah yang baru dari kaca mata masakini dengan bukan sahaja berdasarkan kepada pandangan dari Barat tetapi hendaklah juga menggunakan dapatan-dapatan tempatan dari orang-orang Melayu, Cina, India, Thai, Islam, Buddha dan lain-lain yang membentuk sejarah itu sendiri.

Dato' Augustin sebenarnya menempuh segelintir sahaja dari Sejarah Negeri ini dan saya mencabar ahli-ahli sejarah dan penulis-penulis sekarang untuk meneruskan jejak langkah yang telah dimulakan oleh Dato' Augustin.

Saya juga mengucapkan penghargaan istimewa kepada Dato' Seri Syed Nahar Shahabuddin, bekas Menteri Besar Kedah Darul Aman kerana berusaha mendapatkan rencana-rencana ini juga persetujuan dari Dato' Augustin untuk diterbitkan.

Buku ini diharapkan akan dapat membantu sedikit sebanyak dalam usaha kita memupuk minat yang lebih luas dan mendalam terhadap sejarah negeri-negeri di Malaysia di kalangan cerdik pandai dan peminat-peminat sejarah Negara.

(DATO' HAJI AZIZAN BIN HAJI TAIB)

DSDK., SMS., BKM., PPN., PJK.

Pengerusi,

Lembaga Muzium Negeri Kedah Darul Aman.

BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF THE AUTHOR:

Dato' James Frederick Augustin, DSDK., AMN., PJK., JP., KCCS., BM. by Ismail bin Saleh.

James Frederick Augustin was born on 13th. September, 1898 in Pulau Pinang. He received his early education at the Taiping Convent, after which he went to the King Edward VII School, Taiping and later to the St. Xaviers Institution, Pulau Pinang.

Dato' James Frederick Augustin began his teaching career at the St. Xaviers Institution, Pulau Pinang, when he was just 17 years old. After having taught for two years at the St. Xaviers Institution, he moved over to Alor Setar in the year 1917 to become a teacher at the then Government English School, Alor Setar, which was later renamed as the Sultan Abdul Hamid College and presently known as Kolej Sultan Abdul Hamid. In addition to completing his Normal Class Training in Pulau Pinang, Dato' Augustin also passed the examination of the College of Preceptors in London. He worked at the Sultan Abdul Hamid College till 1941 when the second World War broke out.

During the Japanese occupation of Malaya, Dato' Augustin was mainly self-employed but for a time during this period he served as the General Manager of Jabi Estate which was one of the few rubber estates allowed to function as usual by the Japanese administration. After this he became the Assistant Custodian of Enemy Property. When the British returned to Malaysia Dato' Augustin was given the task of reorganising and reopening the Sultan Abdul Hamid College. Because of this exemplary service he was promoted to become the Headmaster of the Ibrahim Secondary School, Sungai Petani, from the year 1946 to 1953. After this he was given yet another promotion and was made the Assistant Superintendent of Education, Kedah & Perlis, and was transferred to the State Education Department, Alor Setar where he worked till his retirement. Even after his retirement Dato' Augustin served as the Senior Lecturer in the Teacher Training Classes for Teachers of English Schools as well as for teachers of English in Vernacular Schools in Kedah & Perlis till 1961.

In the year 1954, Dato' James Frederick Augustin was appointed as a member of the Federal Legislative Council representing the Eurasian Community. Apart from this, Dato' Augustin was also well known in Kedah for his tremendous services and dedicated interest in the Scout movement and the St. Johns Ambulance Brigade both of which he had served with distinction.

In 1954, he was responsible for starting the Kuala Muda Co-operative Society. He had also contributed some of the most informative articles of great historical value to the magazine of the Kedah Historical Society and the Straits Echo under the legendary heading of "Bygone Kedah". As a member of the Kedah Hockey Association and the Malaysian Cricket Association, Dato' Augustin, in spite of his busy schedule academically and socially, found the time and energy to attend their meetings regularly.

In 1978, His Highness the Sultan of Kedah bestowed upon him a Dato' ship and in 1979, Dato' Augustin was chosen as the 'Tokoh Guru' of Kedah and the following year he enjoyed a similar recognition at the National level.

Dato' J.F. Augustin and Datin Adriene had 10 children, all of whom were boys. Together they could form a cricket team and this earned them mention in the Wisden's "The Cricketers Bible".

To the Eurasians, Dato' James Frederick Augustin was a "Grand Old Dad" — loved and deeply revered. It was therefore most fitting that in 1953 The Pope honoured Dato' Augustin with the most cherished Bene Merenti Medal in the Vatican City. Also in 1959, Dato' Augustin was bestowed with the Knight Grand Cross of the Order of St. Sylvester. This was Dato' Augustin's crowning glory.

He passed away peacefully on October 16th, 1985 at a ripe old age of 87

CONTENTS

CHAPTER ONE	— Early History Mythical Tales And Legends	1
CHAPTER TWO	— The Mahawangsa Kings	4
CHAPTER THREE	— The Genealogical Tree Of The Sultans	6
CHAPTER FOUR	— Influences Of Foreign Culture	8
CHAPTER FIVE	— Port Queda In The 17th Century	11
CHAPTER SIX	— The Pepper Traders	13
CHAPTER SEVEN	— A Sea Battle Off Kedah	15
CHAPTER EIGHT	— Bitter Rivalry	17
CHAPTER NINE	— The Dutch In Kedah	19
CHAPTER TEN	— Matalief Leaves Kedah	21
CHAPTER ELEVEN	— The English Appear On The Scene	23
CHAPTER TWELVE	— English Overtures	26
CHAPTER THIRTEEN	— Kedah Cedes Penang	28
CHAPTER FOURTEEN	— Light's Tussles With The Sultan	30
CHAPTER FIFTEEN	— Forty Years Of Strife	34
CHAPTER SIXTEEN	— Kedah — Siamese Relations	36
CHAPTER SEVENTEEN	— The Siamese Invasion	38
CHAPTER EIGHTEEN	— The Kuala Kedah Fort	40
CHAPTER NINETEEN	— Battles Around Kuala Kedah Fort	41
CHAPTER TWENTY	— The Battle For Kedah — I	43
CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE	— In Hot Pursuit To Langkawi	45
CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO	— The Battle For Kedah — II	47
CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE	— Division Of Kedah By Siamese	49
CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR	— Sultan Zainul Rashid	51
CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE	— The Remarkable Wan Mat Saman	53
CHAPTER TWENTY-SIX	— The Titles That Lapsed	56
CHAPTER TWENTY-SEVEN	— Old Buildings In Kedah	59
CHAPTER TWENTY-EIGHT	— Enforcement Of Law And Order	61
CHAPTER TWENTY-NINE	— Postal Services	63
CHAPTER THIRTY	— Changing Capitals Of Kedah	65
CHAPTER THIRTY-ONE	— Siamese Dominance	67
CHAPTER THIRTY-TWO	— Alor Star In The 1880s	70
CHAPTER THIRTY-THREE	— The First British Adviser	73
CHAPTER THIRTY-FOUR	— Fixing The Boundaries	75

CHAPTER THIRTY-FIVE	— The Coming Of The British	77
CHAPTER THIRTY-SIX	— The Beginning Of Formal Education	79
CHAPTER THIRTY-SEVEN	— The First English School	81
CHAPTER THIRTY-EIGHT	— The Spread Of Education	83
CHAPTER THIRTY-NINE	— Education Of Girls	85
CHAPTER FORTY	— Kedah Becomes Rubber-Conscious	87
CHAPTER FORTY-ONE	— The Rice Store Of Malaysia	89
CHAPTER FORTY-TWO	— Hospitals And Prisons	91
CHAPTER FORTY-THREE	— Buffaloes For Farming And Fighting	93
CHAPTER FORTY-FOUR	— Horse Racing	96
CHAPTER FORTY-FIVE	— Transportation In The Early Days	98
CHAPTER FORTY-SIX	— Sungei Patani	100
CHAPTER FORTY-SEVEN	— Sporting Organisations	102
CHAPTER FORTY-EIGHT	— World War Two Breaks Out	104
CHAPTER FORTY-NINE	— Japanese Advance Into Malaya	106
CHAPTER FIFTY	— The Rail Withdrawal	108
CHAPTER FIFTY-ONE	— Confusion In Alor Star	110
CHAPTER FIFTY-TWO	— The Collapse Of The Jitra Line	112
CHAPTER FIFTY-THREE	— The Tunku Kidnaps His Father	114
CHAPTER FIFTY-FOUR	— The Battle At Gurun	116
CHAPTER FIFTY-FIVE	— Early Days Of The Japanese Occupation	118
CHAPTER FIFTY-SIX	— Recruitment For The Ina And The Death Railway	120
CHAPTER FIFTY-SEVEN	— The Dreaded Kempetais	122
CHAPTER FIFTY-EIGHT	— Adjusting To The Occupation	124
CHAPTER FIFTY-NINE	— Day Of Deliverance	126
CHAPTER SIXTY	— MPAJA Takeover Foiled	128
CHAPTER SIXTY-ONE	— Hoarding And Profiteering	130
CHAPTER SIXTY-TWO	— The Sultan Abdul Hamid College Resumes	132
CHAPTER SIXTY-THREE	— The ILL Fated Malayan Union	134

CHAPTER ONE

EARLY HISTORY MYTHICAL TALES AND LEGENDS

Like all other peoples and countries in the world the Malays and Malay States have mythical tales and legends which attempt to trace their origins. Kedah Darulaman is no exception to this practice. The "Hikayat Merong Mahawangsa", or "Kedah Annals", in the beginning speaks of gods and demi-gods who were endowed with supernatural powers.

One of these was a garuda, a Hindu demi-god, part man and part bird, who lived alone on Pulau Langkawi after a Pyrrhic war between Sri Rama, Vishnu and Hanuman, the monkey-god, who had devastated the biggest island of the group.

One day an eagle arrived and told the garuda that the Prince of Rum (a place either in the Byzantine Empire or India) was about to sail for China, there to be married to a daughter of the Emperor. He had received this news from a cockatoo who also told him that the Raja of Rum was sending an imposing fleet to escort the bridegroom.

When the garuda heard this he swore that he would do everything in his power to prevent the marriage; but before he took action he would seek an audience with the Prophet Solomon.

In audience he told the Prophet that the marriage must not take place because the Prince and the Princess were from countries far apart. Solomon replied that if they were fated to marry, no power on earth could keep them apart.

Leaving the Prophet's presence after promising to return and tell him the outcome of his venture, the garuda flew to China, seized the Princess, her duenna and her maid in his talons, and carried them to Langkawi where he kept them captive in a palace.

In the meantime the grand fleet escorting the Prince of Rum to China, set sail under the command of Raja Merong Mahawangsa. His father was an "Indera", a descendant of a minor deity, and his mother was a gergasi, daughter of an ogre.

While the fleet was at sea the garuda attacked it; but every time he tried to destroy the ships Merong Mahawangsa changed his magic bow and arrow into a "jentayu" — a powerful fabulous bird — and repelled him. But when Merong Mahawangsa's ship stopped at an island for water and was separated from the other ships the garuda succeeded in his design and sank all the vessels. Almost everyone was drowned.

The garuda believed that the Prince was drowned too. He did not know that the Prince had clung to a plank and that the current had borne him to the shores of Langkawi. Here he met the duenna of the Princess who took him to her ward. The garuda was unaware of this meeting because the Prince hid in a cave nearby.

Believing that the Prince had perished, the garuda returned to Solomon and boasted that he had captured the Princess of China, her duenna and her maid; destroyed the fleet of Rum; and killed the Prince.

Solomon knew better, however, and when he heard the garuda's boastful words, he commanded the Raja of the Jinn, Harman Shah by name, to dispatch his vizier with one hundred jinn, to bring the Prince and Princess and the two maids into his presence. The vizier duly returned with the four.



The Cave of Tales

Deeply incensed by his failure to prevent the marriage, the garuda left the earth in self-banishment.

Then Solomon commanded the vizier to take the young couple to China and get them married there in accordance with the ceremonies and traditions of the imperial court.

In the meantime Raja Merong Mahawangsa who had given up the Prince of Rum as lost, entered the Merbok estuary (according to Claud Ptolemy, on lat.5.35 degrees N.)

The "Kedah Annals" relate how he kept along the coast and eventually arrived at a bay and a point of land where an old navigator on board with him, told him, "The large island we have reached is now becoming attached to the mainland. Its name is Pulo Srai. (Ptolemy shows it on lat.5.50 degrees N.) That small island is named Pulo Jumbul, and the other more inshore is Pulo Lada."

Merong Mahawangsa then decided to go ashore; and when the ship had been moored in the east of the bay, near to or at a point of land on the main shore, accompanied by all his chiefs and followers, he landed.

In a short while he was visited by great numbers of very big men belonging to the tribe of the gergasi. He knew the caste of these men and he spoke to them in a friendly manner.

Although the gergasi were apprehensive — they had never seen civilised men before — they re-acted favourably when he said,

“I have put in at this place, and if it is convenient to you I wish to remain until I am able to obtain intelligence of the Prince of Rum — whether he be alive or dead?”

The gergasi saluted Merong Mahawangsa respectfully and said,

“All your servants are overjoyed at your Lordship’s request because we have not established a raja over this place. Therefore your Lordship may select a site to reside.”

Merong Mahawangsa accordingly walked about, followed by his retinue and the gergasi, and eventually pitched upon a delightful and convenient site for his residence.

Disembarking from his ship, he built a fort (stockade) with a ditch around it and a spacious hall of audience in a palace which he named “Lankasuka” because it was built in the midst of all kinds of rejoicing and festivities, and because objects of field-sport were abundant — from the chasing of the deer, the roe, the mouse-deer and the wild ox, to the snaring and catching of numerous species of birds, all of which loaded the feasts and gladdened the hearts of the people.

When all preparations had been completed Merong Mahawangsa took up residence in the palace along with his wife. He had all his belongings carried from the ship to the palace, and all the Ministers of State (“Menteri”) and the bodyguard (“hulubalang”) and the warriors (“para penggawa”) erected dwellings in the gardens around the palace and the fort, and daily paid their respects to him.

When report of the foundation of his settlement went abroad, traders and foreigners came to trade in large numbers; and the good sense and conciliatory demeanour of the Raja towards his chiefs and his ryot enabled them to live in peace and plenty. Numbers of people came from other countries with their families to live under his rule. From month to month, from year to year, the population increased. Thus Raja Merong Mahawangsa became secure on his throne; and his prudence and liberality, his wisdom and justice, increased his fame.

CHAPTER TWO

THE MAHAWANGSA KINGS

Merong Mahawangsa appears to have lived from 1218 to 1286 A.D., and the settlement that he founded, in a short time extended on both sides of Kedah Peak.

Here he remained in self-imposed exile because he was afraid to return to Rum with the news that his ward, the Prince of Rum, had perished in the tempest. He did not know that the King's son had escaped drowning and had married the daughter of the Emperor of China as his father had originally planned.

Twenty years later, however, he heard the good news when envoys whom he sent to the court of Achin by chance met envoys of the King of Rum who had been sent to look for him and take him back to Rum. He thereupon installed his son, Merong Mahapodisat, as ruler of Kedah, and returned to Rum.

Merong Mahapodisat was a devout Hindu, a keen scholar and an expert hunter. He brought skilled craftsman from India, and built temples and shrines to Siva. In his time many people came from India to trade and to settle. On his death his son, Sri Mahawangsa, succeeded him.

In the reign of Sri Mahawangsa, the third king, Indian influence increased but was resented by the natives. To strengthen his position he married the daughter of a Malay chieftain. Nevertheless he suspected the loyalty of his subjects and did not allow anyone except Indians to live around his fort at Lankasuka. Later he removed his capital to Kuala Muda, near the Sungai Mas, because Lankasuka was too far away from the sea.

He called the new capital Srukam (collecting-station) because he collected customs duties there and thereby increased his revenue.

The fourth Raja was Sri Maha Inderawangsa. Against the wishes of his father he married a descendant of a gergasi. He did not reign for long, and was succeeded by his son, Ong Maha Perita Deria alias Raja Bersiong.

Ong Maha Perita Deria was a despot and a tyrant. He rid himself of his four Ministers of State, his counsellors, and abandoned the fort his grandfather had built near the Sungai Mas, in favour of a new one at Kota Aur (Tikam Batu). To meet the cost he levied a tax which proved to be most unpopular.

He also indulged in bloodthirsty jungle sport and big game hunting. For this purpose he turned Gunong Geriang and Tunjang into big-game reserves and threatened to cut off the heads of anyone who trespassed therein.

In the hunt he delighted in cutting animals into two with one sweep of his sword, and lusted in sight of blood that gushed forth from the body of a slaughtered animal.

Day by day his temper grew more and more uncontrollable. He disdained the counsel of his wife who was as benevolent as he was malevolent. In his fits of rage he gnashed his teeth and threatened to tear his enemies into pieces with them. He terrified the natives but the Indians thought him mad and nicknamed him "bersiong" ("he of the tusks") probably because his maternal progenitors, the gergasi, wore two boar-tusks round the necks as a sign of manhood.

Eventually his subjects could bear his tyranny and cruelty no longer. They grumbled. The King arrested the grumblers and executed them.

Distress and discontent burgeoned. The people appealed to the Queen. This so incensed the King that he persecuted them all the more. The people could stand it no longer. They revolted and besieged the ruler in his fort.

Greatly alarmed, the Queen secretly summoned a conference of chiefs who told her that they wanted the King to abdicate. She then volunteered to get him out of the way without bloodshed. To this end she ordered the soldiers in the fort to use gunpowder without shot.

The siege went on for seven days and seven nights. The King expected casualties on the opposing side to be heavy, and he was astounded when he was told that the enemy were scaling the walls. He realised that there had been treachery, lost courage and fled into the jungle by a small door on the eastern side of the fort as the attacking force entered by the western gate.

A few days later, against her wishes the chieftains proclaimed the Queen ruler.

Her first act was to form a council of elders to advise her. She disbursed large sums of money in reparation for the misdeeds of her husband, built shelters, dug wells and repaired temples.

The strain, however, proved too great for a woman to bear and she expressed the desire to retire. When the council asked her to recommend a successor she suggested that they should select one from the family of Merong Mahawangsa. Envoys were therefore sent to the King of Siam whose dynasty had been founded by the eldest son of the second King, Merong Mahapodisat.

They returned with Raja Bersiong's son, Phra Ong Mahapodisat, by the wife whom he had married in Siam.

Phra Ong Mahapodisat began his reign under the most auspicious circumstances. He was the last Hindu King and the first Muslim of Kedah.

He was able, energetic and wise. At his accession he announced that he would allow freedom of worship, freedom of person, and freedom of trade to everyone without exception. He looked to Siam for advice and assistance.

Soon after his accession he made Alor Setar his capital and invited the chieftains to pay him homage. One of them, Raja Kelana Hitam, refused to do so on religious grounds. He repaired northwards and raised a force which occupied Kuala Kedah and captured the fort near the Sungai Mas.

Phra Ong Mahapodisat sent to Siam for assistance. He besieged the fort and when Siamese reinforcements arrived he re-took it.

In gratitude for the timely help Siam gave him he sent the King a gold flower ('bunga mas'). After this Siamese influence predominated. The people adopted Siamese customs and spoke the Siamese language.

According to an Achinese account, a Yemen Arab, Shaikh Abdullah Yamani, arrived in Kedah in 1474 A.D. and preached Islam. He impressed Phra Ong Mahapodisat so much that he became a Muslim and took the title of Sultan Mudzaffer Shah.

THE GENEALOGICAL TREE OF THE SULTANS

The genealogical tree of the Sultans of Kedah as shown in the Penang Museum, begins with Sultan Zaiyuddin Mukarram Shah who ruled from 1661 to 1687 A.D.

In another family-tree compiled by Tunku Nong Jiwa and his cousin Tunku Fariduddin Haji (both of them members of the Kedah Ruling House) ancestry is traced back to Pra Ong Mahawangsa, the last of the Hindu kings and the first Kedah ruler to embrace Islam and adopt the Muslim title, "Sultan".

It would therefore appear that since the first Sultan, and in spite of calamities and vicissitudes, Kedah has been ruled by an unbroken line of twenty four Sultans, which has remained intact for more than eight centuries.

Sultan Ma'azam Shah (1179 — 1201 A.D.) succeeded his father, Sultan Muzaffer Shah, but it was his son, the third Sultan, Mohamed Shah (1201 — 1236 A.D.) who firmly established Islam in the State. He appointed one Shaikh Abdullah to head a Council of Religion, invited Muslim teachers from India and Arabia to his court, founded religious schools and built mosques in place of Hindu temples, as at Bujang where a huge granite relic of Kali was unearthed in the mosque grounds. It is now in the grounds of the Kedah Museum in Alor Setar.

One of the results of these changes was that Arabic words were merged into the language and Kedah's Sanskrit name became an Arabic one — Kedah Darulaman, i.e. Kedah, the Abode of Peace.

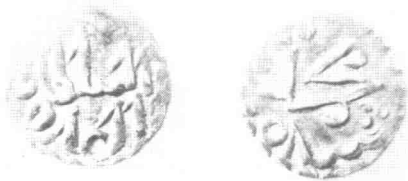
Under succeeding rulers Kedah continued to progress and the "Sejarah Melayu", or Malay Annals, records that in 1477 A.D. the Sultan of Kedah (Mohamed Jiwa Zainul Abidin) visited Sultan Mahmud of Malacca who was recognised as "Paramount Ruler", and obtained from him the "Nobat" (royal drums), insignia of royalty.

Meanwhile Port Queda prospered because it was the focal point of the main sea-route from the Persian Gulf to China, and from India southwards through the Straits of Malacca. It was better placed than either Mergui or Tenasserim on Burma's coast for the trans-isthmus trade which followed today's railway-line to Singgora.

In a manuscript dated 1516 A.D., Barbosa, a well-known Portuguese trader, described it as "a place of the Kingdom of Siam..... to this port an infinite number of ships resort, trading in all kinds of merchandise. Here come many Moorish ships from all quarters. Here, too, is grown much pepper, very good and fine, which is conveyed to Malacca and thence to China". Its reputation as a pepper-port led the great Portuguese poet, Vaz de Camoens (1524 — 1579 A.D.) to mention it in his famous epic poem, the *Lusiad*, first published in 1571 A.D., celebrating the establishment of Portuguese sway in the East Indies, in the lines,

"Behold Tawai city whence begin
Siam's dominions, reign of great extent;
Tenasser: Quedah of town the Queen
That bear the burthen of the hot piment."

The chief and most profitable product, however, was tin, not only from Kedah but also from the extensive tin-fields of Perak and north Selangor, which up to the middle of the fifteenth century were part



Silver coins inscribed with "Sultan Muhammad Shah, Sultan Kedah"

of Kedah. According to Tome Pires in his "Suma Oriental" (1513 — 1515 A.D.) Kedah at this time was bounded on one side by Trang, and on the other side by the Kingdom of Malacca and Bruas.

An interesting account of the Kedah court as it was at this time, is found in the "Peregrinations" of a Portuguese merchant-trader, Fernand Mendez Pinto, who visited Kedah in 1539 A.D.

He was on his way to Malacca from Junk Ceylon on board his barque, "Turupango", when the wind fell. He therefore anchored at Port Queda. While waiting for a breeze he went ashore to pay his respects to the Sultan, and perhaps do a little trade. Unfortunately for Pinto the Sultan was preoccupied with the obsequies of his father. So Pinto returned to his ship.

One of his companions, Coja Ali by name, who was agent of the Captain of Malacca, stayed ashore and attended a dinner given by the "Strangers' Merchant".

After dining and wining not too wisely but too well at the dinner-party he used the most outrageous language about the Sultan. Spies immediately carried the information to the Sultan who had the vilifiers arrested and executed on the spot.

Pinto was fast asleep in his cabin when all this was happening. He was terrified when he was rudely awakened by soldiers clad in cuirasses, girt with swords and armed with spears, whom the Sultan had sent to take him off his ship.

At dawn he was conducted from the outer courtyard to the inner one to meet the Sultan mounted on an elephant flanked by a fierce-looking bodyguard of more than one hundred men surrounded by a very large crowd of retainers.

Trembling with fear, he fell on his knees by the feet of the elephant, and begged the Sultan to spare his life.

The sultan allayed his fears, and said that he had executed the Agent of the Captain of Malacca because of his outrageous language. He assured Pinto that he was a great friend of the Portuguese, and had no designs on his ship or his cargo. And as a parting-gift he drew his kris out of his belt and gave it to Pinto — a signal honour.

On getting leave to withdraw from the Sultan's presence Pinto returned to his ship as hurriedly and unobtrusively as possible. When he got on board he ordered his sailors to hoist sail at once. He was so frightened and in such haste that he did not stay to haul up his anchor which he left at the bottom of the sea.

CHAPTER FOUR

INFLUENCES OF FOREIGN CULTURE

Although the "Hikayat Merong Mahawangsa", or "Kedah Annals", jumble fact with fiction it nevertheless contains a certain amount of truth. Cultural influences from outside came with Merong Mahawangsa to Kedah which like other parts of the Malay Peninsula was inhabited by nomadic hunters, cultivators and fishermen, such as the Semang and the Orang Laut who survive to this day.

It is also known (and borne out by Quaritch Wales's excavations) that before this time Pallava traders from India's Coromandel Coast began to explore the eastern coast of the Bay of Bengal in search of spices, sandalwood, ivory, gold and tin.

As the coastal regions of Burma and south Siam were sparsely populated and unable to supply their requirements they sailed southward. It was then Kedah Peak became important. It was (and still is) a landmark at the north entrance of the Straits of Malacca, which could be picked out from twenty to thirty miles out to sea. At its foot was the Merbok estuary where ships could tie up alongside dry land with abundant drinking water and food.

This favourable combination led to the founding of the Indian settlement in the Bujang Valley where before World War Two Quaritch Wales excavated the sites of 21 stone temples and shrines dating from the fifth to the twelfth centuries. The settlement had the Sanskrit name of "Kadaha" and the Pallava name of "Kadaram".

To feed the settlement and provision the ships that called there the lower reaches of the estuary were cultivated. It is also probable that the tin-mines of Semeling farther upstream were already being worked to supply the demand for tin.

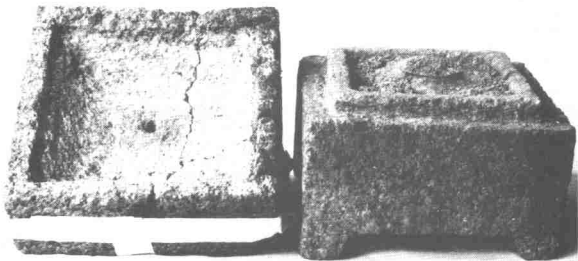
It is certain that the people were mostly Indians, Pallavas from the Coromandel Coast. The language was a colloquial form of Sanskrit with a local Pallava alphabet. The proper Pallava alphabet was used for inscriptions. The religion was Buddhist which prevailed in the seventh, eighth and ninth centuries.

Evidence to this effect has been provided by Mr. H. G. Quaritch Wales, Field Director of the Greater India Research Committee, who in 1937 and 1938 made his headquarters at Sungai Petani, and carried out excavations on the southern foothills of Kedah Peak, in the undulating land watered by the Sungai Bujang. Here he found a decayed laterite basement on which stood a stupa — a Buddhist domed reliquary.

Clearing the basement, he came across a small tablet with a piece of gold which fitted one end of the tablet. The tablet was inscribed with three verses in Sanskrit dating to about A.D. 500. He arrived at this date by comparing the inscription with similar ones which Colonel Low had discovered at the foot of Bukit Mertajam in the Province, and Bukit Meriam in Kedah.

Another revealing discovery associated with the same period, was a massive moulded laterite basement found at Bukit Choras, near Kota Sarang Semut, 10 miles south of Alor Setar. In the centre of the basement was a stone inscribed with the Buddhist credo in south Indian characters dating not later than the second half of the fourth century.

But the most convincing evidence of Buddhist influence was a bronze casket which he found in a cavity beside the doorway of one of the shrines. The casket contained unmistakable Buddhist emblems — a small gold bowl containing a pearl and a nugget of gold, a gold lotus flower, a gold lion, a silver bull, a



A casket with nine holes found in Bukit Batu Pahat, Kedah.

bronze horse, a bell, a drum, a yoke and ploughshare, precious stones (a diamond, a pearl, a sapphire, a zircon, an amethyst) and miniatures of weapons comprising a bow and arrow, a sword, a dagger, a shield, a noose and a spear.

All the artefacts were about two inches in size, and the weapons exactly resembled those depicted on the Borobudur, the ruin of the great Buddhist temple in Central Java which archaeologists believe to have been constructed in the eighth and ninth century.

On the basis of this and other excavations — he made more than twenty — Quaritch Wales advanced the theory that during this period Kedah was part of the Buddhist kingdom of Lang-ya-hsiu which had its capital at Ligor. The kingdom, it is said, was a dependency of the Fu-nan Empire.

In the middle of the 6th century waves of Pallava colonists from south India led to the break-up of the Fu-nan Empire. At this time, according to Quaritch Wales, Kedah and other States in Peninsular South-East Asia became independent. The new arrivals were Hindus, and Hindu influence spread as they consolidated their occupation of the country.

Evidence of this expansion was found by the discovery on Sungai Batu Estate, seven miles from Bedong at the foot of Kedah Peak, of the plinth of a sanctuary dedicated to Siva. Beneath the floor of the sanctuary he found two earthenware jars containing fragments of gold ornaments and gold beads.

Another interesting relic of the period was the bronze roof of a miniature Siva shrine which agreed in many details with those of Pallava shrines in south India. The wagon-roof horseshoe gable, flower-pot and cross-legged sages were similar.

Quaritch Wales's most outstanding find was the "Candi Batu Pahat" ("Shrine of Remembrance on the Hill of Chiselled Stone.")

It was built on the spur of a hill overlooking a small waterfall. Beneath the stone-pillar bases were small silver capsules, each containing one ruby and one sapphire. He also found two nine-chambered receptacles used for keeping the relics of dead Hindu kings. From these receptacles and their contents he drew the conclusion that the "candi" had been used to enshrine the ashes of the ancient Hindu kings of Kedah.

During the Japanese Occupation (1941 - 1945) most of the restoration-work by Quaritch Wales was undone because of neglect, ignorance and the ravages of the tropical climate. Little effort was made to repair the damage until the latter half of 1959 when excavation and reconstruction were directed by Dr. Alastair Lamb of the University of Malaya, and Monsieur Louis Contant who was lent to the Malayan Government by Angkor Wat in Cambodia. Six stone-masons from Kedah reconstructed the base with small granite blocks similar in shape to those with which the shrine was originally built. During this time two more receptacles were found.

In the foundations of another temple Quaritch Wales discovered a number of gold and silver discs bearing formulae of charms in south Indian characters. In a jar were two Arab coins of the 9th century. One was clearly dated 234 A.H. (848 A.D.)

These and other such like discoveries reveal that a high standard of civilisation existed in Kedah during the Hindu period when, according to tradition, the settlement was so populous that a cat could walk from the hills of Kedah Peak to the sea without touching the ground even once.

CHAPTER FIVE

PORT QUEDA IN THE 17TH CENTURY

Port Queda's position at the northern entrance to the Straits of Malacca and the crossroads of the Isthmus of Kra made it a very important strategic and commercial centre in the 17th century.

It was organised and administered on enlightened lines. By command of the Sultan in 1650 A.D. the Dato' Besar, the Orang Kaya Maharaja Indera, the Orang Kaya Sri Maharaja Khankhan and other Officers of State held consultations and framed the Kedah Port Laws to determine the duties of the Harbour Master ("Shahbandar") and the customs duties. The code was based on that of the Malacca Sultanate. A copy of the Kedah code and the maritime codes of Malacca and the Celebes are preserved by the Royal Asiatic Society in London.

The currency for trade with foreigners was mainly Patani money. It consisted of gold coins of two denominations — the dinar ("mas"), and the quarter dinar ("kupang"). For instance, under the Kedah Port Laws a foreigner paid six "kupang" for an entry permit, and one "kupang" for every buffalo exported. Export duty on one slave was one "mas". For a slave imported for sale the duty was two "kupang". Import duty on a bale of cloth was two "kupang" too. A poll-tax of one "kupang" for every two persons was collected when they left the country.

The local currency according to French sources ("L'Histoire General des Voyages, 1621 A.D.) was of little or no value. It consisted of coins minted from tin mined in the country. The coins were of two denominations. The bigger weighed 1½ ounces, about two French sou in value. The smaller coin was worth only a denier or 1/12 of a sou. It had a local market-value of 50 cowrie shells. The coins were thick at the rims but as thin as paper in the middle.

Owing to their negligible value the Port Laws explicitly prohibited the use of tin-coins in trade.

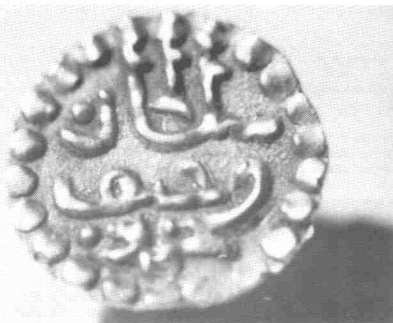
The Port Laws invested the Harbour Master with much power and great authority. Without his permission a ship could not enter port. Without informing him a captain could not buy rubber, damar, gutta-percha or mast-poles. Sales on credit had to be concluded before him in order that disputes might be avoided. If disputes did arise he held court and acted as judge.

His duties were to conduct a foreign ship into port; to marshal all merchants taking gifts to the Sultan; to inspect the market every day, to prevent gambling, cock-fighting, opium-smoking, the drinking of intoxicating liquor, illegal sales and purchase, quarrels and, for a fee, collect the debts due to a captain while his ship was in port. Debts of the Sultan and the chiefs were collected by the Warden of the State.

The Harbour Master was also empowered to arrest anyone who broke Islamic Law, and to prevent persons from walking about at night without torches. Anyone resisting arrest could be slain.

His emoluments and perquisites, as those of other Port Officers, were in kind as well as in coin. Most of the ships that frequented the port during this period came from Kalinga (South India), and Gujerat, the two greatest cloth-producing countries in the world. For every four bales the Harbour Master and his men received one roll of cloth. Another roll was added if they guarded the warehouse in which the cloth was stored. For counting one thousand bales two rolls were given to them. Besides this he received customary gifts such as three 'mas' when a ship arrived in port. The Sultan received 400 'mas' from ships from Kalinga, and 600 'mas' from Gujerati ships.

Other officers of the port were the Warden of the River Mouth ("Panglima Kuala"), the Warden of the Port ("Panglima Bandar") and the Warden of the State ("Panglima Negeri").



*A circular silver coin with inscription:
"Sultan Muhammad Jiwa Khalifatul – Rahman 1154" (A.D. 1754)*

Trade was conducted with much formality. When a ship arrived at the river-mouth it fired a gun to announce its arrival. The "Panglima Kuala" then boarded it to ascertain (i) from where it came; (ii) its tonnage; (iii) the name of the captain; and (iv) the number of the crew. For this service he was paid 10 "mas". When a ship left port he was paid 14 "mas".

After gathering all the particulars he reported them to the Harbour Master who sought the Sultan's assent for the ship to come into port. Assent given, he went down to the ship with his police and after the customary exchange of gifts took the ship into the river.

As soon as the vessel anchored off the town he directed the captain to call and pay his respects and give his gifts to the Warden of the Port, the Warden of the State and the Sultan.

The opening formalities over, the permission of the Warden of the Port was obtained for the bales to be opened. Their contents were listed and valued by a local merchant. The Sultan had first choice and could buy whatever he pleased.

Before he sailed the captain gave the Harbour Master 10 to 14 days' notice. On the eve of departure the Sultan gave him a parting gift and ordered goods from his country. If there was a reply to a despatch he had brought, the letter was escorted with all ceremony to the ship.

Before the ship sailed the Harbour Master examined it to make sure that it did not carry away any debt-slaves, accused persons and minors.

Vessels bringing official letters and bales of the "Company" (East India Company) were exempt from formalities and port dues provided the customary presents were given to the chiefs and the Sultan.

CHAPTER SIX

THE PEPPER TRADERS

Kedah in the 16th and 17th centuries was famous for its pepper. Not only did Camoens in his famous classic, the *Lusiad*, speak of

"Quedah of towns the Queen

That bear the burthen of the hot piment",

but also Duarte Barbosa, Tome Pires and Thomas Bowrey, among others, mention it as the chief centre for the production of pepper. Barbosa, in particular, said it was the place where an abundance of pepper was grown and carried to Malacca and China.

The obstruction and hostility of the Portuguese forced the Arab and Gujerati traders to resort to Aceh which aimed at securing the control of Sumatran and Malayan pepper-supplies required by Europe and China.

To this end Aceh made determined efforts to eliminate competition from the pepper-regions of the Malay Peninsula, especially those of Kedah; and in 1620 A.D. Mahkota Alam, King of Aceh, overran Kedah and destroyed the pepper-plantations so that they could not continue to rival his own.

The normal price of pepper at this time was about 16 piastres (Spanish dollars) per "bahar" (450 lbs.). Nobody was allowed to trade in it without the permission of the King who in a good season would give a trader all that he wanted for two cannon.

Most of the traders were Portuguese who lived in Malacca. They arrived in December and stayed on until February, bringing with them Gujerati cloth, salt and money which were in great demand by Chinese who lived in considerable numbers on the opposite side of the Peninsula — in Patani, a town situated opposite Port Quedah, on the same parallel and about five days overland journey away.

The pepper ripened in November and was gathered from mid-December until the end of February. It was sold by measure and not by weight. The measure was the 'naleh' which contained 16 'gantang'. Each 'gantang' contained four 'chupak', and 15 'naleh' made a 'bahar' (450 lbs.). Buyers of pepper in Kedah had the advantage over buyers in Aceh and other places where they added water and even sand and small stones and other adulterations.

In August, 1621, General Augustin de Beaulieu, in the service of King Louis XIV of France arrived in Kedah to obtain first hand information in preparation for the formation of the French East India Company which was afterwards established by Jean Baptiste Colbert in 1664 A.D.

Because of contrary currents and winds de Beaulieu was forced to call first at "Lancahui" (Langkawi). He arrived there on August 7, 1621 A.D. On the following day he sent two of his Portuguese crew to inform the "pangolou" (penghulu), or "governor of the island", of his arrival.

When the penghulu came aboard the French accorded him all possible honour and assured him that they had no other intention but to trade and make an alliance with the Sultan. In token of good faith de Beaulieu gave some presents to the penghulu.

In reply the penghulu said he could not allow the French to trade until he had apprised the Sultan of their arrival; but he had no doubt that the Sultan would grant permission. De Beaulieu thereupon promised that he would aid the Sultan with some artillery "as a sign of affection".

Two days later the penghulu presented a big ox to de Beaulieu, and advised him to get his emissaries ready to leave to find the Sultan.

De Beaulieu accordingly deputed the Sieur d'Espine to act for him. He sent his valet along with the Sieur to attend on him during the journey which, the penghulu said, would take ten or twelve days because the Sultan had retreated a three-days' journey inland for fear of the Achinese who had destroyed Port Quedah and were making a base at Perlis so that they might control both sides of the Northern entrance to the Straits of Malacca.

Three days after the departure of the Sieur d'Espine, de Beaulieu received letters from him in Perlis to say that he hoped to find his way to the Sultan at Quantchin.

On September 2 the valet arrived in a perahu. The Sieur had sent him to say he had not been able to meet the Sultan who feared that the Achinese were trying to trick him. He had consequently retreated deeper into the jungle.

A week later the Sieur himself arrived. He told de Beaulieu that the Sultan had very little pepper but badly needed cannon which he asked the French to sell to him by December. He would be grateful to them all his life for their assistance.

Eventually on September 20 letters arrived from the Sultan granting de Beaulieu permission to trade freely and asking for two cannons in exchange for 30 'bahar' of pepper.

Unfortunately for de Beaulieu there was so little pepper at the time of his visit that he was not able to load more than 20 'bahar'; and having heard that an Achinese fleet 70 strong had arrived at Perak, he decided that discretion was the better part of valour, and sailed away.

CHAPTER SEVEN

A SEA BATTLE OFF KEDAH

The arrival of the Portuguese in the East challenged the Achinese monopoly of the lucrative pepper-trade which led to an unsuccessful Achinese surprise-attack on Malacca in 1537 A.D.

Ten years later the Achinese launched another determined attack. The expeditionary force consisted of 60 ships manned by 5,000 men. The commander split his force into two — one half to make a surprise sally on the fort, the other half to set on fire all the shipping in the harbour.

The attack was carried out on the night of October 18 and was partially successful. The landing-party captured some geese to show their admiral that they had actually landed but this proved their undoing; for like the geese which saved the Capitol in Rome in days of yore, the birds alarmed the defenders and the attack on the fort failed.

The other part of the plan did not miscarry however. The Portuguese sailors were taken by surprise and almost all their ships were burned. Only eight escaped destruction and were beached.

To avenge this attack the great Portuguese missionary, St. Francis Xavier, prevailed upon the Governor of Malacca, Simon de Mello, to repair the damaged vessels. When the repairs were completed it was discovered that there were only 180 Portuguese to man the ships. These went on board, only to meet with disaster. The Achinese fleet was waiting outside the port, out of sight of land. In the fight that followed they sank the Portuguese flagship in the port. This done, they sailed northwards up the coast of the Peninsula.

That same evening the Portuguese in Malacca were reinforced by the arrival of two ships belonging to Diega de Mello who was sailing up the Straits of Malacca to Pegu. He had no intention of stopping at Malacca because the port-dues were heavy, but when his ships were sighted St. Francis Xavier went out in a small boat and intercepted him. The missionary succeeded in persuading the merchant to aid his countrymen; and under the command of Don Francisco Deca a fleet of eight ships sailed from Malacca in pursuit of the Achinese.

In the meantime the Achinese had sailed up the coast and sacked Kedah after which they anchored in the Perlis River (Perlis was then part of Kedah) where they lay in wait for a fleet of Portuguese merchantmen which they knew to be on its way to Pegu from Bengal.

The Portuguese failed to make contact with the Achinese until some fishermen revealed to them the whereabouts of the foe. They thereupon sailed to Kuala Perlis and took up position in comparatively calm water in a small bay to the lee of a tongue of land which ran out into the stream.

The Achinese fleet went downstream in battle-array, with much shouting and beating of drums. The admiral led the first squadron, his flagship guarded by four galleys. Behind him followed ten lines of six ships, all well armed.

As soon as the enemy appeared the Portuguese admiral advanced with three ships to meet them, at the same time commanding the other five ships to follow.

With utter lack of judgement the Achinese commenced to fire their guns before they got within effective range. This was wasteful; and when the Portuguese replied to the fire a lucky shot sunk the Achinese flagship.



A cannon at Kuala Kedah Fort called "Katak Puru" ("The Toad")

Instead of continuing the fight the four escorting galleys stopped to help their admiral and turned their ships across-stream to rescue those in the water. The six galleys following the first squadron ran upon first four. The remaining nine lines ran upon the others one after another, throwing the entire fleet into complete confusion.

The Portuguese did not fail to take advantage of the opportunity. They fired three salvos into the struggling foes. The Achinese were in too hopeless a mess to reply, and in a short time nine of their ships were sunk and many battered to bits. The number of men killed was about 4,000. Twenty-five ships were taken to Malacca and the remainder burnt; and three hundred miles to the south at that very moment, in the Church of the Assumption in Malacca, St. Francis Xavier announced to the congregation that the Portuguese had gained a great victory over the Achinese; and Malacca was saved.

Despite this and other setbacks Aceh continued to increase in wealth and power, and strove to achieve its ambition — to become another Sri Vijaya. Its ruler, Mahkota Alam, in 1618 — 1620 A.D. conquered Pahang, Perak and Johore. At the end of 1620 A.D. he attacked Kedah, destroyed all the pepper-plantations, pillaged property, and took the Sultan and his family captive to Aceh.

Subsequently, for four years running, during which the sultan's brother ruled the country, Kedah was plagued by one calamity after another. In the first year cholera carried off more than 40,000 persons.

CHAPTER EIGHT

BITTER RIVALRY

Portuguese relations with Kedah commenced in the 16th century, after the Portuguese captured Malacca in 1511 A.D. After that date, although Malacca gradually ousted Kedah as the commercial and strategic centre of the Malay Peninsula, Kedah retained its importance as the meeting-place of trade-routes from Malacca, Sumatra, Aceh, Singora and Patani.

Portuguese traders and ships frequented the port, especially to collect pepper which they carried to China and Europe. They mentioned Kedah in Description of their voyages and marked it on their charts.

As already narrated in a previous chapter, one of these navigators was a Portuguese adventurer, Fernand Mendez Pinto by name, who visited Kedah in the middle of the century. He lived in the East between 1538 and 1558, during which time he accompanied St. Francis Xavier to Japan.

He gave a long and interesting account of his dealings with the then Sultan of Kedah, and said that during his voyages he did not even once meet the Dutch whom the Portuguese regarded as "the enemies of their nation".

Unfortunately for the Portuguese this happy state of affairs did not last long. Aroused by the extraordinary prosperity of the Portuguese whose heavily-freighted galleons ploughed the high seas and took home rich cargoes which made Lisbon the most affluent port in Europe, the Dutch formed the Dutch East India Company at Rotterdam at the end of the 16th century. Then ensued bitter rivalry between Portugal and Holland for the extremely lucrative spice-trade.

In addition to lending piquancy to their diet Europeans needed spices to preserve meat during winter. They had no fodder to feed cattle and sheep in the cold season. Consequently all animals not required for stock were slaughtered, salted and spiced in early autumn.

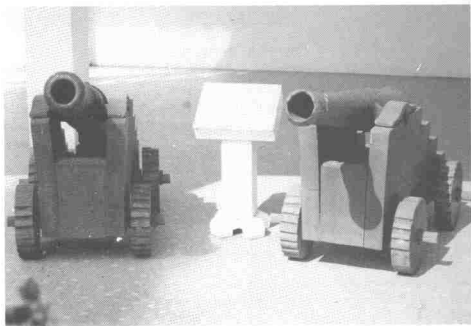
Dutch vessels began to appear in the Eastern seas. Writing after his first visit to these parts in 1595 A.D., Cornelis Houtman, the celebrated Dutch navigator, referred to Kedah as "the place which produced the most pepper".

Another Dutchman, Linfoot, wrote an account of the voyage of Jean Hugues and described how after leaving Tenasserim he coasted south-eastwards until he reached "the town and kingdom of Kedah" on latitude 6½ degrees N. The kingdom had its own king, and he found there a kind of wine (toddy) extracted from an Indian nut called coconut, and pepper.

The Dutch Admiral, Joris van Spilbergen, made a voyage to the East Indies from 1601 to 1604 A.D. At this time England and Spain were at war. On September 21, 1602 A.D. he met three English ships under Admiral Leinster at Aceh, and the English and the Dutch combined forces to attack their "common enemy", the Portuguese.

Leaving Aceh, they set sail for the Langkawi Islands where they cruised in the hope of meeting the Portuguese carrack, the "St. Thomas", which was richly laden with cargo.

As there was no sign of the carrack they sailed southwards and came across a ship's boat which they mistook for Portuguese and captured it. It turned out to be a pirogue of Johore which country was continually at war with Aceh.



Small cannon used by Malays in 1821–1842 War against Siamese aggression called "Meriam Lutung".

On the night of October 13 they perceived a ship. Fearing that it would elude them in the dark, the Dutch and English vessels spread out. At the same time van Spilbergen decided to send a well-armed longboat to keep the quarry in sight and dog it until daybreak.

He also gave the crew orders that if they were questioned by the enemy they were to say that the four ships they saw were part of the armada of Don Andraes Furtado who had come to the Straits of Malacca to capture ships of other nations.

Before van Spilbergen could put his decision into effect, however, the carrack — for it was the "St. Thomas" — drew near and cleared for action.

Van Spilbergen immediately hoisted the signal for the English ships to rally and the battle began.

He and Middleton, the captain of one of the English ships, fired broadsides into the enemy. The Portuguese retaliated with their big guns but because of the darkness of the night the fire of both sides did little damage, and for the next two hours the carrack held its own.

Then the two other English ships arrived on the scene and joined in the fight so fiercely that it was feared they might hit one another in the dark; but luck was with them and when day dawned after the night-battle, they saw the enemy holed in many places, completely unmanageable, and drifting towards an island nearby. In their predicament the Portuguese struck their colours.

CHAPTER NINE

THE DUTCH IN KEDAH

In 1605 A.D. the Dutch determined to make an all-out attempt to capture the Portuguese trade in the East Indies. So with a fleet of 11 ships and a complement of 1,100 men Admiral Cornelis Matalief the Younger set sail from Holland to confront the Portuguese armada in the waters of the Eastern Archipelago. The fleet consisted of 17 galleons, 4 galleys, a caravel and 14 yachts, manned by 3,754 European sailors and twice that number of "Indians."

Matalief arrived in the Straits of Malacca in the following year.

On April 12 his longboats captured three Kedah pirogues and took away their sails but the Admiral returned the sails to the Malay crew. By them he sent a letter to the Sultan of Kedah telling him that the Dutch would not harm his subjects in any way and that they could sail freely and go wherever they liked except to Malacca which Matalief intended to besiege.

Four weeks later he arrived at Malacca and began to besiege it. The siege lasted for seventeen weeks – until August 16. On that day the Portuguese armada commanded by Don Andraea appeared on the scene. Heavily outnumbered, Matalief decided it prudent to retreat to Johore which was an ally of Holland.

Furtado sent a part of the Portuguese fleet in pursuit of Matalief who in the ensuing battle defeated the Portuguese.

After this victory Matalief put 26 Dutchmen on board one of the ships he had captured from the Portuguese and sent them to Amboina. He then sailed for Kedah to negotiate an alliance with the Sultan who in fear of a Portuguese attack, had sent a special envoy to Matalief while he was at Johore, to ask for the protection of the Dutch East India Company.

On the way to Kedah Matalief stopped off Penang where on November 12, he detailed the "Grand Soleil" to cruise at large while he got ready to sail to Kedah on the "Petit Soleil." To prepare the way before him he sent ahead the Sultan's envoy (he who had come to him in Johore) with the Chief Commissioner of Amsterdam, Jafer Janez, and an assistant, to convey his greetings to the Sultan and to tell him that the Dutch were coming to help him chase away the Portuguese.

A week later Matalief arrived off the port Kedah, and soon afterwards the two emissaries whom he had sent ahead, came aboard with the officers of the Sultan.

The Admiral told them that he had come to aid the Sultan; that if the Sultan wished to make a treaty of friendship with the Dutch it would be necessary for him to declare war on the Portuguese; that it was necessary to give assurances that the money the Dutch advanced to him would be repaid; and that if a ship were available he should get it ready at once to patrol the mouth of the river and prevent the Portuguese in port from escaping.

The Sultan's officers who bore letters of credence from their Ruler, in answer said that when the Sultan wrote to the Admiral for assistance there was a large number of Portuguese in Kedah. Since then many had left and only a few remained; and if he declared war on the Portuguese he would expose the whole of Kedah to a Portuguese attack which would easily destroy the whole country.

Short of that he would give the Dutch as much help as possible as long as they remained off the Kedah coast and in adjacent waters. To that end he had already provided the fleet with provisions and had given orders that they were to receive everything they needed.

The Sultan's fears of the Portuguese were well-grounded; for in 1611 A.D. Furtado "destroyed the town of Kedah with fire and sword."

Although disappointed by the Sultan's refusal to declare war, Matalief dissembled his feelings and sent two emissaries to suggest to the Sultan the action he should take against the Portuguese.

The emissaries returned on November 24 to say that the Sultan would watch the river-mouth to prevent two small Portuguese pirogues which had a complement of 8 Portuguese and 32 'blacks' from leaving the port. He had posted officers there with orders to inform the Dutch immediately they saw the vessels preparing to leave.

The Admiral on his part detailed a yacht and a big galley to sentinel the river-mouth day and night. He also convened a council-of-war which among other resolutions decided to give as a present to the Sultan the slaves that had been captured in a small boat which had arrived from Negapatam.

That night Pierre van der Duffen, captain of one of the boats on sentinel-duty, went aboard the Admiral's ship with five Portuguese. They had left Malacca thirteen days before in two pirogues carrying letters to the Sultan, the Shahbandar, and the armada which they had hoped to meet off Pulau Betong, Penang or Trang.

The letters, they said, had been seized by the Malays.

The admiral then and there sent the Portuguese ashore to get back the letters. From them he learnt that in the sea-fight off Johore the Portuguese had lost six of their chief officers and 521 men. The news made Matalief all the more eager to seek out the armada and destroy it.

CHAPTER TEN

MATALIEF LEAVES KEDAH

On November 15, 1606 A.D., — the day after Matalief intercepted the letters from Malacca to Kedah, the Sultan sent word to the Admiral to say that he would have no objection if the Dutch burnt the Portuguese boats in the port.

That evening, after holding a council-of-war and without telling the Sultan what they intended to do, the Dutch sent three rowed boats and two yachts all well armed, to set fire to the Portuguese vessel and two gallots that accompanied it.

The flotilla rowed all night and at dawn drew near the gallots. When the Malay crews saw the Dutch arriving they jumped overboard to save themselves.

Then a Malay who looked like an "orang kaya" (Chieftain) pushed off from land and asked the Dutch what they wanted.

Nicolas Geritez who commanded the flotilla, with Louis Isaacksz as second-in-command, said that with the Sultan's assent, they had come to burn the Portuguese boats, and the Malays were at liberty to pillage them if they wished to do so. In any case the boats were to be burnt.

The "orang kaya" fell in with the idea. So the Dutch set fire to the ships and the Malays plundered them.

When the flotilla returned to the fleet in the evening the men took back with them two bundles of mainsail and two boxes of clothes. Matalief had expressly forbidden them to loot but the commander of the flotilla mollified him, explaining that in getting the booty they had not risked their lives in any way. The Admiral accordingly ordered that garments be divided among the crew.

That evening the Dutch noticed four small boats heading for Kedah along the coast. A galley and a yacht were sent after them. They fired on the ships but could not catch them and prevent them from entering the port.

On November 27 the Dutch ships sailed for Langkawi where they anchored the next day. Here they landed the persons whom they had taken off the boat from Negapatam. These included 108 'black' slaves whom they gave to the Sultan, 93 'black' free men, and 101 Moors — men, women and children — whom the Sultan forbade anyone to harm because they had passports from the Admiral.

In addition to these were 32 Portuguese. They had passports and permission to go wherever they pleased, but Matalief detained eight of them. One of the detainees was a "gentleman" named Don Louis Lubo who offered 6,000 ducats as ransom. The Admiral accordingly sent him to Kedah to get the money. Along with Lubo the Admiral sent the Chaplain of the Fleet, and Augustinian Prior, to make sure there was no trickery.

On the morning of December 1 the Dutch fleet arrived off Pulau Betong to intercept the Portuguese. Twelve days later the armada hove in sight from the north. Battle was joined and the Dutch were defeated.

In the engagement a Portuguese galleon which Matalief had captured on a previous occasion, was set on fire and went down in flames. Other ships surrendered leaving the Admiral with only nine vessels. He retreated to Langkawi to lick his wounds.

While at Langkawi he made up his mind to send the "Lion Blanc" and "L'Orange" to Kedah to fetch the trade-mission sent there earlier under the Chief Commissioner of Amsterdam, Jafper Janes (Jasper Jansz). He then decided that when they got back he would rest awhile at Aceh and afterwards send them back to Holland; for it was essential to send some news about the expedition. The remaining seven ships stood by at Langkawi to await the enemy's next move.

When the party returned he learnt that they had collected more than 400 bahar of pepper. He was also informed that two Gujerati vessels laden with 200 bahar of pepper were about to leave for India, and that if he wanted to get more pepper he would have to wait until the harvest at the end of January.

Matalief thereupon decided that it was not worthwhile waiting any longer. The Portuguese did not appear eager to seek him out, and the monsoon was about to break. So he sailed for Penang where he re-assessed his strength and ascertained that he had 867 men. He had set out from Holland with 1,400.

Placing 778 of them aboard six of the ships, he sent them back to Europe. The remainder he took with him in the other three ships and sailed for China, deeming the capture of Malacca impracticable.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

THE ENGLISH APPEAR ON THE SCENE

After Admiral Matalief abandoned the attempt to capture Malacca in 1606 A.D., Holland had no relations of much importance with Kedah for 35 years — until 1641 A.D. In that year the Dutch captured Malacca from the Portuguese and established their supremacy and monopoly in the Eastern seas.

Soon afterwards they sent to Kedah an emissary by the name of Hermans. He was accorded a royal reception and seized the opportunity to conclude a trade-treaty with the Sultan who agreed to sell elephants and half of Kedah's output of tin every year, and not allow ships of any other nation to enter Kedah ports without the permission of the Dutch.

The Hollanders did everything possible to gain the Sultan's goodwill, and the tin. On one occasion when he expressed his desire for an organ they not only presented him with one from Malacca but sent an organist along with it to play the instrument; but to make sure that he kept the terms of the agreement they stationed an accountant at the port to check all transactions.

Trade increased and between 1654 and 1657 A.D. the Dutch set up a factory (trading settlement) at Port Kedah under the charge of Pieter Beeytzen. He was afterwards succeeded by Arend Classon Dray.

The friendly relations did not last long, however. The Sultan did not abide by the terms of the treaty and began to trade with the Moorish and Indian merchants who called at Kedah. As a result the Dutch began to blockade the Kedah coast. The blockade continued off and on until 1676 A.D. It was only partially successful because Kedah was too far away from Malacca for effective control.

Vessels were able to evade it by running into creeks and transporting their cargoes overland by elephant and buffalo. More-over Javanese and Johore ships which took passes in Malacca, were permitted to import salt and export rice and cloth.

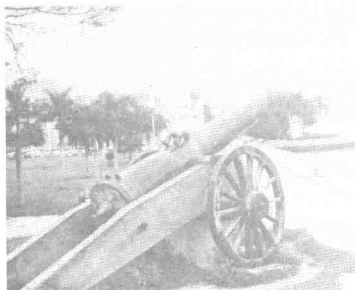
The blockade gave rise to much friction between the Dutch and Kedah. In June 1642 A.D. the old Sultan died. The new Sultan tried to restore friendly relations. He renewed the treaty and visited Batavia with presents of tin and elephants but hostility flared up again in 1652 A.D. when the Sultan captured a Dutch Commissioner, Jean Truisman, and his men.

Matters worsened in the following year when Kedah men killed some of the crew of the Dutch yacht, 'Hoors', but a peace of sorts was restored in 1668 A.D., when Raja Shah Pahlawan went to Batavia as envoy of the Sultan.

During this period an Englishman named Lock, lived and set up a warehouse in Kedah. He traded in pepper, tin gold and elephants. To'Meah, a well-known elephant-trader, kept a large herd of the pachyderms in a special kraal ready for shipment.

As England and Holland were not at war, and Batavia had ordered that English ships trading with Kedah should be free from interference, Lock traded without let or hindrance, and at times even flouted Dutch regulations.

Every February he sailed for the Coromandel coast with cargoes of tin and elephants from Kedah, and gold from Patani. Six months later he returned with cloth, mainly calico from Calicut.



Fort Cornwallis, Penang.

In addition to trade, with the aid of Kedah carpenters Lock built ships in Kedah, probably at Limbong, some miles upstream. Each ship was capable of carrying nine or ten elephants and their mahouts, and 100 bahar of tin.

He lived in Kedah until 1665 A.D. and died in 1673 A.D. during a war between Jambi and Johore. He and his ship were captured by the forces of Jambi but whether he was strangled to death by accident or by design has not been established.

In the first decade of the eighteenth century relations between Kedah and the Dutch improved, and they re-occupied their factory at Port Kedah. Henrich Pilgron was factor in charge until Pieter du Quesne succeeded him in 1710 A.D. A few years later the Dutch abandoned the factory because the Bugis appeared in Kedah to take sides in a quarrel about the succession to the Sultanate.

The English flag first appeared in Malayan waters in 1579 A.D. when Francis Drake circumnavigated the world. There is no record to say that he landed anywhere on the Malay Peninsula, but James Lancaster who followed in his wake, in 1593 A.D. reached Penang which was a part of Kedah. He anchored off Pulau Rimau and on the island buried several of his crew who had died from scurvy.

Five years later, in January 1598 A.D., another Englishman, Benjamin Wood, reached the Straits of Malacca. He was defeated in an encounter with the Portuguese and repaired to 'Old Kedah' on the Merbok estuary, to refit.

Another Englishman who visited Kedah at this time was Samuel Bradshaw, a merchant-trader. He informed the English East India Company that much lead and tin could be found in Kedah.

Three years later the Company set up a factory at Patani on the east coast, to serve as a base for its trade with Siam. From there a ship, the 'Saint George', was sent to Kedah but it was caught in a storm and did not get farther than the Dindings.

Joseph Himmers and William Forster who sailed in a junk, were more fortunate. They returned from Kedah with cloth and other merchandise.

Port Kedah at this time was in the heyday of its glory. Moorish, English, Danish, Dutch and Portuguese ships frequented it, as did vessels from Malacca, Siam and Johore.

The English East India Company set up a factory here in 1669 A.D. but in six years' time it was closed because English 'private adventurers' carried on a large and profitable trade, which irked the Dutch. They protested in the strongest terms to the English Company but the Company declined to interfere on the ground that the 'adventurers' were not servants of the Company but free traders with whose business the Company could not interfere.

CHAPTER TWELVE

ENGLISH OVERTURES

A few years before Captain Francis Light arrived in Kedah and lived in the thin-walled 'Old Fort' there had been considerable disagreement among the Sultan's family. One faction rebelled and was banished. Its members sought and obtained asylum in Selangor where the Bugis were strongly established.

Early in 1771 A.D. the rebels instigated the Ruler of Selangor to invade Kedah. The men of Kedah manned stockades which they built on promontories of the Kedah River and offered stout resistance for two years but the Selangor forces were eventually victorious.

They sacked the capital and laid waste the land, and the Sultan withdrew to Perlis, then part of Kedah. Its chief town, then as now, was Kangar. It had one narrow street running at right angles to the river, and its shops were filled with fruits and vegetables, cotton prints, red and yellow handkerchiefs, pretty mats, jars of ghee and piles of rice.

As the Sultan's own resources were too limited to enable him to retaliate, he turned to the English East India Company for aid. The Company sent him a non-committal reply. So he turned to Light and through him, offered the English the fort and Kuala on condition that they assisted him against Selangor, declaring that he would give his country to the English rather than that the Bugis should have it, and if the English would not have it he would give it to the Dutch.

Light lost no time in forwarding the Sultan's proposals to Madras.

Three months later, as a reply had not been received, the Sultan sent a reminder to the Company, wishing to know whether his proposal was acceptable or not.

Light backed up the reminder strongly. The Sultan, he said, was prepared to entrust to the Company's care not only Kuala Kedah but the whole of the coast to Penang as well. The fort in which he lived and where he had built a redoubt to prevent surprise attack, commanded the entrance to the river. The Sultan regarded him the representative of the Company and had already granted him the monopoly of trade. He needed 15,000 Spanish dollars, partly in spice and partly in goods, to keep in hand for trade, stores and sepoy to guard the Kuala.

He went on to say that every kind of piece-goods from Bengal, Surat and the Coromandel Coast was saleable but the most profitable commodity was opium which he sold wholesale and retail, at 800 Spanish dollars per chest. There was no limit to the quantity he could sell.

To stir the Company into action, he added, there were in the port of Kedah at that time two Danish vessels from Tranquebar. They carried 40 sepoy, guns, ammunition and military stores, and a letter from their General, asking for permission to set up a factory, and offering the Sultan a force of 300 sepoy to help him recover the ships and guns which the Selangor forces had taken away.

They also gave valuable presents to the Sultan's entourage in order to gain favour but the Ruler was not prepared to alter his plans because he had already opened negotiations with the English.

After receiving the second letter the Madras authorities appointed the Hon'ble Edward Monckton to negotiate with the Sultan.

He was instructed to ask for (i) the full sea and port customs as a fund for recouping the military expenses they might have to incur on the Sultan's account; (ii) as much land as might be necessary for building a fort and quarters for their agents; and (iii) a contract to take from Kedah certain specified articles at fixed prices, and to receive tin, wax, pepper, elephant tusks and other staple articles for the China trade.

Monckton was also told that if he failed to obtain grant of the port duties in full he was to insist that the collection of the duties be left to the Company who would account for them to the Sultan after defraying the amount for military expenses.

Monckton's mission was doomed to failure from the outset. He was young and he stammered, and in the beginning he made a poor impression on the Sultan who exclaimed, "Has the Company nobody to send me but a stuttering boy!".

Above all the Sultan wanted an offensive alliance, not a defensive one. The first questions he asked Monckton when he received him at Perlis after all the ceremonial formalities, was when Monckton would set out for Selangor, and whether he had an adequate force for the purpose.

When Monckton explained that it was impossible to deviate from the Company's orders not to go against Selangor, the Sultan suggested that Monckton write to the Company for permission to go against the "Selangorians". While he waited for the permission Monckton could remain at Kuala Kedah.

Unless the Company helped him against his enemies he would make no grant nor sign any contract.

With Light's assistance Monckton obtained a draft treaty which reiterated the Sultan's demand for an offensive alliance. The Madras Council, however, refused to go beyond their original offer of a defensive alliance; whereupon the Sultan bluntly told Monckton he might as well return to India.

KEDAH CEDES PENANG

After the failure of Monckton's mission to Kedah Captain Light left Port Quedah to live in Junk Ceylon. Here, because he spoke Siamese and Malay, and adapted himself to the local customs and way of life, he grew in favour with the people and the authorities.

He was bitterly disappointed and frustrated by Monckton's failure but he did not abandon his aim to establish British influence in the Straits of Malacca. To this end, in 1780 A.D., on one of his trading voyages, he laid before Warren Hastings (1732 – 1818 A.D., first Governor-General of India) a scheme for the occupation of Penang. Warren Hastings approved of the plan in principle but the plan was shelved because war broke out between Britain and France.

In 1784 A.D., however, when the Dutch forestalled two British missions which attempted to establish settlements at Rhio and Acheen, Light decided to take time by the forelock and forestall the Dutch by approaching the Sultan of Kedah, Abdullah I, son of the Ruler, Mohamed Jiwa Mu'azzam Shah II, with whom Monckton had negotiated in 1771 A.D. Making use of the influence and interest with the Sultan and his ministers, he obtained the grant of the island of Penang on certain conditions.

In the India Office records, the Sultan's letter to the Acting Governor-General is dated 20th Shawal, 1109 A.H. (2nd March, 1786).

The English version is as follows:-

"In the name of the Most High God. This letter wrote with the purest friendship that may last while the Sun and Moon endure from Sultan Padaker Serce Sultan Abdullah Makrum Shah who presides and rules over the country of Quedah according to the commands of the God of all Nations unto our Friend the Governor-General and King of Bengal, first among the Believers in Jesus Christ, renowned for wisdom and superior knowledge in the Arts of War by Land and Sea and in every Science known upon Earth. Whereas Light Devan Raja came here and informed us that our friend requests Poolo Pinang we have instantly given to our Vakeel and Friend Captain Devan Raja to plant the Honourable Company's English Flag upon Poolo Pinang a place for Trade and Repair for your Ships of War and for refreshments, wood and water; moreover we have made known to the said Captain all our desires which being come to the knowledge of our Friend and accepted with all possible speed send people to take possession and remain on Poolo Pinang. Whatever necessities the Island does not afford shall be supplied by us from our Country of Quedah."

A summary of the "desires" alluded to in the letter were:-

1. That the East India Company should be the guardian of the seas and should treat as an enemy whatever enemy might come to attack the Sultan, the expense incurred to be borne by the Company;
2. That all vessels, junks, praus, small and big, bound for the port of Kedah, should not be stopped or hindered by the Company's agents but left to their own will either to buy or sell with Kedah or with the Company at Penang;
3. That the Company take over the trade in opium, tin and rattan which was a prerogative of the Sultan, and in return pay him 30,000 Spanish dollars a year. The Sultan feared that he would lose a large amount of revenue because these articles would be smuggled out to Penang, Prye, Krian and other places near the proposed settlement;

4. That the Sultan would not be responsible for the payment of debts contracted by his relatives, ministers, officers or rayats;
5. That an enemy of the Sultan even though he be his own son or brother, should be treated as an enemy of the Company too; and
6. That in the event of an attack on Kedah the Company would not refuse to help the Sultan with arms and ammunition, the expense for this to be borne by the Sultan.

A summary of the Acting Governor-General's replies to each of the points raised clause by clause was as follows:-

1. The Company would always keep an armed vessel guarding Penang and the adjacent coast;
2. All vessels bound for the Port of Quedah would not be hindered in trading with the Sultan or the Company;
3. The Company would take care that the Sultan did not suffer by the formation of an English settlement at Penang;
4. No claims would be made on the Sultan for the debts mentioned;
5. Enemies of the Sultan would not be protected by the English; and
6. The supply of men, arms and ammunition would be subject to the Company's approval.

The above replies were despatched to the Sultan together with the following covering letter:

"Your friendly letter containing a cession of Pulau Pinang to the British East India Company was delivered to me by Captain Francis Light, the 6th February, 1786.

Captain Light also made known to me requests of my friend and brother, which I, having the friendship and interest of my noble friend at heart, have already transmitted to England and to the British East India Company.

In the meantime I have deputed Captain Light to be Agent for the Company, and have directed him to plant the Company's colours in Pulau Pinang and to defend that island against all invaders. I have likewise ordered a ship of war for the defence of this island and protection of the coast of Quedah.

It is not my intention to subject to any duties or impediments the vessels or merchandise that may come to Pulau Pinang but to suffer everyone to go and come at their pleasure, and should it happen that my friend may become a sufferer by the British Company's settling at Pulau Pinang I will take the same into consideration and recompense my noble friend and brother.

To Captain Light I have given full instructions and hope that you, my noble friend, will have every reason to be satisfied with the friendship of the British East India Company and the good conduct of their servants."

LIGHT'S TUSSLES WITH THE SULTAN

In May, 1787, within less than a year after Sultan Abdullah granted Captain Light permission to occupy Penang on condition that the British help him against the Burmese and the Siamese, the King of Siam called upon Kedah to provide 200 perahu, arms, ammunition and food-supplies for 10,000 men.

This time, banking on the promise of assistance from the East India Company, the Sultan did not comply with the call immediately. He referred the matter to Light who wrote to Calcutta for instructions, explaining that the Sultan had continually been troubled by the Siamese and the Burmese, and sought British assistance against them.

The reply of the new Governor-General was "..... with respect to protecting the King of Quedah against the Siamese, the Governor-General-in Council has already decided against any measures that may involve the Company in military operations against any of the Eastern princes.

It follows therefore that any acts or promises, which may be construed into an obligation to the King of Quedah are to be avoided. If, however, Mr. Light can employ the countenance or the security of the King of influence of the Company for Quedah consistently with these rules, the Governor-General-in-Council has no objection to his adopting the measure, strictly guarding against any act or declaration that may involve the honour, credit or troops of the Company.....".

In the face of such a non-equivocal reply Light resorted to evasion, and the Sultan, bitterly disappointed, sent back the Siamese emissaries with presents and promises of assistance.

Six months later came another demand from the Siamese. This time it was for \$30,000, arms and food-supplies for 20,000 men.

The Sultan was desperate. He sought the help of the French at Pondicherry but they wrote back to say that they would not like to be at war with "Eastern Kings".

So the Sultan turned to the Dutch who agreed to oust the British from Penang, and drive British shipping out of the Straits of Malacca. To this end they sent a frigate to Kedah and stationed two cruisers off Penang. The Sultan laid an embargo on rice and supplies carried to Penang. But the Dutch finding that assistance to Kedah would involve them in an expensive war with Siam, on second thoughts abandoned the alliance with Kedah.

Alone and smarting under the decision of the Company not to carry out Light's promises, Sultan Abdullah made an alliance with the Sultans of Siak, Lingga, Trengganu, Rembau, Sulu, Johore, Indragiri, Kota Karang, and Siantar, all of whom had also been denied help by the British, and made preparations to eject them from Penang.

The Malay fleet consisted of 400 large and small perahu, carrying 120 guns, and manned by 8,000 men. The Kedah fleet of equal strength joined the incoming force near Penang. At the same time the Sultan laid an embargo on British merchandise worth \$30,000 lying in Port Quedah.

From this position of strength he sent an ultimatum to Light, demanding a fixed annual payment of \$10,000, British defence of the sea-coast of Kedah at their own expense, a loan of money, and a contingent of troops and stores at a fair charge to enable him to defend himself.

Light reacted peaceably. He sent the Sultan \$10,000/- and said he would write to Calcutta once more. The Sultan was pacified. He recalled the fleet, lavished gifts on his allies and sent them home.

In 1791 A.D. when no reply had been received, the Sultan resolved to take the island by force. A fleet of 20 lanun boats and 90 Kedah perahu entered the Perai River where they were joined by a land force. From here Sultan Abdullah called upon Light to accede to his demands or leave Penang.

Light had no desire to fight. He promised to write to Calcutta again and sent \$5,000 to the Sultan as compensation for the delay. The Sultan returned the money, saying the British must accept his demands or leave. He could no longer put any faith in their promises and was prepared to expel them.

In the fight that followed, the Kedah forces fought bravely but they could not withstand the artillery brought up against them; and were compelled to retreat. Light drove home the advantage and on June 1, 1791 A.D., made a treaty with the Sultan by which Kedah agreed to permit the export of food-supplies to Penang duty-free, to deliver up criminals and debtors who might take refuge in Kedah, not to allow Europeans other than British to live in Kedah, and to allow the British to use Penang as a settlement for \$6,000/- a year as long as they occupied the island.

The annuity of \$6,000/- was increased by \$4,000/- to \$10,000/- when Kedah ceded Province Wellesly. The rivers and creeks afforded shelter to pirates and the mainland continually posed a potential threat as a staging-post for attack on the Settlement.

The text of the Treaty is archaic and interesting. It begins,

"In the year of the Hegira of the Prophet (the Peace of the Most High God be upon him) 1215, the year of Hun, on the twelfth day of the Moon Mohurrim, on the day Raabu (Wednesday) corresponding to the 6th June, 1800: Whereas this day, this writing sheweth that Sir John Leith, Baronet, Lieutenant-Governor of Pulo Penang, on the part of the English, has agreed on and conclude a treaty of Friendship and Alliance with His Highness the Iang de per Tuan Raja Moodah of Purlies and Quedah, and all his Officers of State and the Chiefs of the two countries to continue on sea and land, as long as the Sun and Moon retain their motion and splendour, the Articles of which Treaty are as follows:-

Article 1

The English Company are to pay annually to His Highness the Iang de per Tuan of Purlies and Quedah ten thousand Dollars, as long as the English shall continue in possession of Pulo Penang, and the country on the opposite coast hereinafter mentioned.

Article 2.

His Highness the Iang de per Tuan agrees to give to the English Company, for ever, all that part of the sea-coast that is between Qualla Kream, and the river side of Qualla Mooda, and measuring inland from the sea side sixty Orlongs: (an Orlong is equal to 6,400 square yards or about one acre and a third, and as a lineal measure is consequently 80 yards, the square root of 6,400) the whole length above mentioned to be measured by people appointed by the Iang de per Tuan and the Company's people. The English Company are to protect this coast from all enemies, robbers and pirates that may attack by sea, from north to south.

Article 3.

His Highness the lang de per Tuan agrees, that all kinds of provisions wanted for Pulo Penang, the ships of war and the Company's ships, may be bought at Purlies and Kedah, without impediment or being subject to any duty or custom; and all boats going from Pulo Penang to Purlies and Quedah, for the purpose of purchasing provisions, are to be furnished with proper passports for that purpose, to prevent impositions.

Article 4.

All slaves running away from Purlies and Quedah to Pulo Penang, or from Pulo Penang to Purlies and Quedah, shall be returned to their owners.

Article 5.

All debtors running from their creditors from Purlies and Quedah to Pulo Penang, or from Pulo Penang to Purlies and Quedah, if they do not pay their debts, their persons should be delivered up to their creditors.

Article 6.

His Highness the lang de per Tuan shall not permit Europeans of any nation to settle in any part of his dominions.

Article 7.

The Company are not to receive any such people as may be proved to have committed rebellion or high treason against the lang de per Tuan.

Article 8.

All persons guilty of murder, running from Purlies and Quedah to Pulo Penang, or from Pulo Penang to Purlies and Quedah, shall be apprehended and returned in bonds.

Article 9.

All persons stealing chops (a Chinese word locally used meaning seal) i.e. forgery, to be given up likewise.

Article 10.

All those who are, or may become enemies of the Company, the lang de per Tuan shall not assist with provisions.

Article 11.

All persons belonging to the lang de per Tuan, bringing the produce down the river, are not to be molested or impeded by the Company's people.

Article 12.

Such articles as the Iang de per Tuan may stand in need of from Pulo Penang are to be procured by the Company's agents, and the amount deducted from the gratuity.

Article 13.

As soon as possible, after the ratification of this Treaty, the arrears of gratuity now due, agreeable to the former Treaty and Agreement, to His Highness the Iang de per Tuan of Purlies and Quedah are to be paid off.

Article 14.

On the ratification of this Treaty, all former Treaties and Agreements between the two Governments to be null and void. These fourteen articles being settled and concluded between His Highness the Iang de per Tuan and the English Company, the countries of Purlies and Quedah and Pulo Penang shall be as one country and whoever shall depart and deviate from any part of this Agreement, God will punish and destroy him: he shall not prosper.

This done and completed, and two Treaties of the same tenor and date, interchangeable given between the Iang de per Tuan and the Governor of Pulo Penang, and sealed with the seals of the State Officers immediately officiating under His Highness the Iang de per Tuan, in order to prevent disputes hereafter.

Written by Hakim Hashim Ibni (son of) Sri Rajah Moodah, by order of His Highness the Iang de per Tuan, of exalted dignity.

(a true translation)

(signed) J. Swaine,

Malay Translator.

Revised from the original by John Anderson, Malay Translator to Government.

Approved and confirmed by the Governor General in Council, November, 1802.

FORTY YEARS OF STRIFE

For 40 years after Captain Light founded Penang, Kedah was plagued by wars and rumours of war. The Sultan strove by all means possible to prevent the country from becoming a battleground.

The treaty ceding Province Wellesley to the East India Company was one-sided and far from favourable. "His Highness the *Yang di Per Tuan Rajah Moodah* of Purlies and Kedah" who concluded it, was "Bakal Raja" (Heir-Presumptive). Tunku Dza'yuddin was acting as Regent for his brother, Sultan Abdullah Mukarram Shah.

He was between the devil and the deep sea. The Company did not promise to assist him by land, from which direction attacks were expected; Siam pressed him for money and men; and the Burmese lay in wait for an opportunity to take revenge on Siam.

In the circumstances there was every likelihood that what had happened in January, 1786, would be repeated. In that month a Burmese fleet had appeared at Kuala Kedah and had demanded arms and ammunition. The Sultan was not strong enough to refuse and had been compelled to comply with their demands.

Besides this, his rulership was being challenged by Sultan Abdullah's sons one of whom, with Siamese assistance, was installed as Sultan in 1803. He took the title of Sultan Ahmad Tajudin Halimshah and ruled for 44 years.

Then Sultan Ahmad Tajudin's troubles commenced. Siam called upon him to assist in putting down an uprising in Patani. This having been done, in 1809, he was called upon to provide perahu, men and supplies for the recapture of Thalang which the Burmese had taken.

This call strained the resources of Kedah all the more but the Sultan was in no position to refuse. A force of perahu, men and food were accordingly sent to Trang.

In the campaign that followed, the Kedah force fought with great valour. The Bendahara, especially, distinguished himself by his courage and generalship. It was mainly through his efforts that the Siamese retook Thalang. In recognition of the Sultan's help the King of Siam bestowed upon him the title of "Chau Phya."

Towards the end of the year the Siamese made a third demand for perahu, men and provisions. Sultan Ahmad Tajudin's resources were at breaking point. He appealed to the Government of Penang for protection and fulfilment of the treaty that had been made with his father, but the Lieutenant-Governor turned a deaf ear to his entreaty. The Sultan was then constrained to write to the Governor-General, Lord Minto, in Calcutta. In his 2,000 word letter (a copy is in the Penang Library) he detailed the whole history of his relations with the Company, his objectives for them, and the oppression of the Siamese.

Unfortunately the letter arrived after Minto had set out on the Java Expedition. The Sultan made an effort to meet him while he was in Penang but he was too greatly preoccupied with preparations for the expedition to give a definite reply. So Kedah remained tributary to Siam.

In November, 1816, there came another call from Siam. It was pursuing an expansionist policy and ordered Kedah to invade Perak whose ruler had refused to submit to Siam.



Sultan Ahmad Tajuddin Halim Shah 1804–1843

Sultan Ahmad Tajudin was on the horns of a dilemma. He had no wish to invade Perak but if he disobeyed, his loyalty would be suspect and Siam would come and attack Kedah and Perak, and his country would be ravaged by war.

He tried to get the British to intervene and persuade Perak to submit but his efforts were in vain. Matters came to a head in November, 1816, when emissaries whom he had sent to Bangkok, came back with letters from the King of Siam peremptorily ordering him to invade Perak at once.

He accordingly mobilised a force of 5,000 men under the Bendahara, and fleet of 200 vessels under the Laxamana, to invade Perak.

The campaign that followed did not end until 1818 when Perak submitted and in token of submission sent the "Bunga Emas and Perak" to Bangkok.

The wars, however, had drained the resources of Kedah, depleted its manpower, and given it only a brief respite; for three years later the Siamese came in full force to subjugate the "province", bringing with them famine, sword and fire.

KEDAH — SIAMESE RELATIONS

During the incessant wars between Burma and Siam which began in 1785 A.D., Kedah, willy-nilly, was drawn into the struggle. It was bordered on the north by Trang (lat. 7 degrees 5 minutes N.) and regarded by the Siamese as part of Siam. Sultan Abdullah (1760 — 1797 A.D.) did everything possible to keep his country out of the conflict and save it from the ravages of war but he was unable to do so. Each side exerted pressure upon him to acknowledge its suzerainty.

War continued intermittently for more than one hundred years, and in that period Phuket (Junk Ceylon) was attacked by the Burmese no less than three times.

The first time was in 1785 A.D. when the Burmese aimed at wresting Kedah and the Isthmus of Kra from the Siamese. Fortunately for mainland Kedah the Burmese were repelled. Under the determined leadership of a valiant Kedah woman, the wife of the Governor who had recently died, the people of Phuket put up such a stout resistance that in January, 1786 A.D., the Burmese were forced to leave because their supplies were exhausted.

The respite was short-lived. At the end of the same year the Burmese King, Bodawpaya (1781 — 1819 A.D.) threatened to invade Siam again. This led King Rama I (1782 — 1809 A.D.) to send orders to Sultan Abdullah that he must help to defend Phuket.

The threat did not materialise until 1802 A.D. when the Burmese attacked Phuket but did not occupy it. Sultan Ahmad Tajudin (1797 — 1843 A.D.) was then called upon by Siam to provide men, boats and provisions for the defence of Phuket from any future attack. This came in 1810 A.D. when the Burmese stormed and sacked the chief town and stayed on the island for almost a year, until a force from Kedah recaptured it.

In 1818 A.D. the Burmese launched a third attack on Phuket, the 'key' to south-west Siam which included Kedah. This time the Siamese were ready for them, and a Siamese army of 10,000 aided by a Kedah force of 2,500, repulsed them with great slaughter. In recognition of the assistance which he gave, Sultan Ahmad Tajudin was raised to the rank of Chau Phya, one of the highest Siamese nobility.

Unfortunately in the subsequent struggle for power Sultan Ahmad Tajudin, worried by the interminable requisitions of Siam, plagued by internecine family-strife, and relying on support promised by the English, got into the bad books of the Siamese who in 1821 A.D. invaded the State and divided it into four parts — Setul, Perlis, Kubang Pasu and Kedah, placing each under a separate ruler.

This kind of division was not without precedence; for in 1770 A.D. owing to old age Sultan Mohamed Jiwa had partitioned Kedah between his sons, Tunku Abdullah and Tunku Dza'yuddin. At this time Kedah extended from Trang (latitude 7 degrees 37 minutes N.) to Krian (latitude 5 degrees 18 minutes N.), a distance of about 150 miles.

To Tunku Abdullah was given the title of "Yang diPertuan Muda" with rulership from the Kedah River to the Krian River including Penang and other off-shore islands. Tunku Dza'yuddin was made Raja Muda with rulership of Setul, Perlis and Kubang Pasu. He resided at Kangar which derived its name from the "kenanga" (*Cananga odorata*), a tree with scented green flowers.

و ترونی قولی سوسه مایع
ترونی زیمی ترالایم اندام
اسمو بکنند سلطان مایع
ان سلطان محمد الدیغ خان
مغل بکنند سافه سافه
مشو و لغه انت خرمات
بساوان مود سلطان فارس
و المود ساسا ایلی تدری
اند بکنند سلطان مود
سان فون نمفت خاکر بکنند
مسار کوجان مسکوت اند
والورن قول قان فارس
بکنند سمام و کوه کسوا
مسکوت تاند فربون قول
بکنند ساهنت یمن فارس
لقای، غن فکار یمنی مسکوت
والی بند هارا فخلیم تار
تافان و یفا ساهنت فکار
کافتن ایست والی هارا
جیفا اند هارا یمن مسکوت
تار ساهنت ساهنت فکار
افتن و اعلی جادان اسل
مکلا فکار و اعلی جادان
اند و اعلی جادان ساهنت
مکلا فکار و اعلی جادان
افتن و اعلی جادان ساهنت
مکلا فکار و اعلی جادان

Syair Sultan Maulana:

Stories of the war between the Siamese and the Burmese in 1811 at Phuket told in Malay couplets.

When the Bugis attacked Kedah in 1771 A.D. and captured Alor Star, the Sultan withdrew to Kangar where he died. On his death (the exact date of which is not known) Tunku Abdullah became Sultan; and when he died in 1790 A.D. Tunku Dza'yuddin ruled as 'Bakal Raja' (Heir Presumptive).

It was as 'Raja Muda Perlis and Kedah' that in 1801 A.D. he signed the treaty with the Lieutenant-Governor of Penang, Sir George Leith, leasing Province Wellesley to the East India Company.

It is interesting to note in the preamble to the clauses that the treaty was concluded not only with the Raja Muda but also with all the 'Menteri dan Dato-Dato yang dua buah negeri', i.e. Kedah and Perlis, the latter being recognised as a separate unit although under the same ruler as Kedah.

In 1803 A.D. when Tunku Pengeran, a son of Sultan Abdullah by his second wife, Wan Mas, became Sultan as Sultan Ahmad Tajudin Halimshah, Tunku Dza'yuddin 'Bakal Raja', reverted to his former post as Ruler of Perlis.

THE SIAMESE INVASION

The Siamese invasion of Kedah on Nov. 12, 1821, may be regarded as a consequence of circumstances which went as far back as the capture of Malacca by the Portuguese in 1511. After that date Kedah which until then had looked upon Malacca as the paramount power, passed into the Siamese orbit.

The subsequent rise of Malacca shook Siamese authority over the state of the Malay Peninsula. The wars between Siam and Burma added to the disorganisation of Siam, and the Sultan of Kedah in his endeavours to keep Kedah out sought relations with the East India Company.

His treaty with the Company leasing Penang to the British incensed the Siamese who looked upon Kedah as tributary to Siam. Siam, however, was then pre-occupied with a war with Burma and was in no position to take any action against Kedah but when the war was over a Siamese fleet manned by 7,000 men under the eldest son of the Raja of Ligor, Phya Buri Suknutun, was sent to Kuala Kedah from Trang.

On the pretext that they had come to get supplies for a campaign against Burma, the Siamese fell upon the unsuspecting Malays and massacred them.

According to a Kedah version the Laxamana, as customary, went out to receive the visitors who were accorded a royal welcome and escorted them to the Audience Hall. But suddenly amidst the rejoicings, at a given signal, the Siamese attacked the hapless Malays and sacked the town.

Finding that the Sultan was away in Pulau Tiga, on the Sungei Merbok, the Siamese sent a force to capture him. The Sultan escaped to Kota Kuala Muda. The Siamese pursued him and stormed the stockade but before that he, his household and retinue, after five days of fatigue and exposure, through swamp and jungle, had reached Kota on the Pyre River where Tunku Sulaiman, his brother, lived.

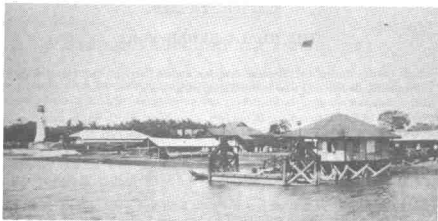
From there he sailed down-river to George Town where he was given protection. The Lieutenant-Governor, Mr. W.E. Phillips, provided him with suitable accommodation, an adequate allowance to maintain himself and his family, and a strong guard of sepoy to prevent any attempt to carry him off by force.

A few days later, hot in pursuit, the Siamese commander sent a haughty and arrogant letter to Phillips demanding that the Sultan be delivered up to him, and that the Lieutenant-Governor come to Kuala Kedah to reaffirm British and Siamese friendship and alliance.

Phillips rejected both demands. A Siamese force then entered the Province to seize the Sultan who was thought to be at Prye, but at Penaga they were routed by a force of sepoy under Captain Brooke.

When this attempt failed the Siamese sent a fleet of 100 perahu into Penang harbour. The boats sailed to within gunshot of shore and the commodore repeated the demand that the Sultan be given up; otherwise he would land and take him by force.

Phillips reply was to send the 12-gun brig "Nautilus" to Prye Point (Bagan Luar) off which the Siamese flagship was anchored. Ranging abreast it, the captain of the "Nautilus" through an interpreter, ordered the Siamese commodore to weigh anchor and leave immediately or prepare for action. The Siamese left.



Old Kuala Kedah Harbour.

Many Malay families fled the Siamese onslaught on the Sungei Kedah, Sungei Merbok and Sungei Muda villages. About 11,000 persons settled at Telok Bahang and Balik Pulau. Others went to the Province where they were given free grants of land and encouraged to plant padi.

In the meantime the Lieutenant-Governor could not assist the Sultan nor shelter him for long because Britain had signed a treaty with the Siamese which specifically prescribed British — Siamese co-operation in such an eventuality. He kept back the lease-money (10,000 Spanish dollars) and required the Sultan to stop plans to attack the Siamese and re-take Kedah.

He also refused to give the lease-money to the ruler whom the Siamese had installed over Kedah when they divided the "province" into four parts — Kedah, Kubang Pasu, Setul and Perlis, placing each under a separate ruler.

Despite the Penang Government's injunction not to attempt to re-take Kedah, the Sultan continued his activities and embarrassed Penang's neutrality. So in 1827, he was removed to Malacca.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

THE KUALA KEDAH FORT

The bloodiest battles during the Siamese invasion centred around the blood-soaked fort at Kuala Kedah (then known as Kuala Bahang) now in crumbling ruin.

The fort built in 1782 A.D. to replace an old fort, a stockade, which was in existence in 1611 A.D. In that year the Portuguese Admiral, Furtado, "destroyed the town and fort of Kedah with fire and sword."

The fort was rebuilt but destroyed a second time when Sultan Iskandar Muda of Aceh sacked Kedah in 1619 A.D., destroying its pepper-plantations so that they should not rival his own.

After the Achinese withdrew another fort was built with thin walls of brick. In its shadow, between 1654 and 1657 A.D. the Dutch possessed a factory for trade with Kedah.

In 1658 A.D. when men of Kedah killed a number of the crew of the Dutch yacht, "Hooru", and Kedah failed to abide by the terms of their trade-agreement, the Dutch blockaded the coast. The blockade continued off and on until 1710 A.D. in which year the Hollanders occupied the fort but evacuated it before a succession-dispute arose and Muhammad Jiwa with the help of the Bugis established himself as Sultan. The rival claimant had invited the help of Raja Kechil of Siak who strengthened the defences. The Bugis besieged the stronghold for two years before they were able to capture it.

In 1770 — 1771 A.D. another civil war broke out and Bugis mercenaries attacked the fort. The famous Bugis warrior, Raja Haji, descended upon Kedah and demanded payment for help rendered by his forefathers in 1724 A.D. — almost half a century before!

The Sultan rejected his demands. So Raja Haji captured the fort, proceeded upstream and sacked Alor Star.

All this time the fort which is now in ruins had not yet been built. Captain Light lived in the one which it later replaced, and which stood on the right bank of the mouth of the Kedah River. In a letter to his employers — the Madras firm of Jourdain, Sullivan and de Souza — dated November 25, 1771 A.D., he said,

"I now reside in the old fort and have built a redoubt to prevent any surprise; and if approved by you, I will build a brick one. This fort commands the entrance into the river so that not a canoe passes without being seen. All persons are obliged to stop and deliver the goods....."

The Hon'ble Edward Monckton who headed the unsuccessful mission to Kedah in the following year, in despatch to the Madras council, said this of it,

"What is called the Fort is the ruin of a thin wall built on a bog without any foundation; but I don't doubt being able to make it strong for a very small sum".

As the Fort was obviously too weak for defence the Sultan ordered one of his chieftains, Dato' Maharaja Kadzi, to build a new one. The Dato' drew up the plans and wrote to his nephew, Maula Ibrahim Shah, who was in India, asking him to bring skilled masons to construct the stronghold.

The Fort took nine years to build. Work was commenced in 1782 A.D. Double brick walls were six feet apart and the intervening space was filled with earth dug out of the ground to make a canal.

Three gates, one main gate and two smaller ones — provided access, and the whole structure was surrounded by a moat. Heavy cannon of European make were installed, among them being Portuguese guns inscribed with the crest of the House of Braganza. Today some lie derelict within the precincts. At the time of the Siamese invasion they looked formidable and pointed out menacingly from the bastions.

CHAPTER NINETEEN

BATTLES AROUND KUALA KEDAH FORT

For two decades after its capture by the Siamese in 1821 the tide of battle swirled around the battlemented walls of Kuala Kedah Fort. During this period the stronghold was continually attacked and counter-attacked.

According to Kedah sources the first attack took place in 1823, when the Siamese Viceroy was away. The Sultan's eldest son, Tunku Abdullah, and the Sultan's brother, Tunku Kudin, captured the fort with 3,000 men. Their success was short-lived for three months later the Viceroy returned with a stronger force and ejected them.

In 1825, Tunku Kudin planned another attack with Mohamed Jaafar, a nephew of the Sultan, who was living in Penang. Hassan a Chulia agreed to pay all expenses, and Frederick Ruyter, a Eurasian of German descent, volunteered to lead the attack by sea. Tunku Kudin marched to Kuala Kedah by land but when he got there Jaafar had not turned up. The authorities in Penang had got wind of the proposed attack, and had arrested the ringleaders. Tunku Kudin therefore withdrew.

The Siamese remonstrated with the British for harbouring the plotters, and as a result the Burney Treaty (1826) was signed. By it Britain undertook not to give the Sultan of Kedah any assistance of refuge if he was attacked by Siam.

In 1829, Tunku Kudin made his third attempt to retake the fort. Wearing the red uniforms of the sepoys employed by the East India Company, the Kedah force got through the enemy's out-post and took the fort by surprise.

The Siamese evacuated and withdrew to their stronghold at Alor Ganu in the mukim of Bukit Pinang where they began to regroup. In the meantime Jorasi, the brother of the King of Siam, advanced to Kuala Kedah with a force of 7,500 and a corps of elephants.

Hemmed in by sea by the British who blockaded the coast in accordance with the terms of the Burney Treaty, and besieged by the Siamese by land, Tunku Kudin held out for five months.

To conserve food he sent all non-combatants out of the fort. Eventually the Siamese erected gun-platforms and under cover of heavy cannon-fire scaled the walls and stormed the eastern gate. His ammunition expended and starvation staring him in the face, Tunku Kudin gave permission for all who wished to do so, to leave. Then he and his remnant force of 60 men stood to the last and went down fighting. In this battle Kedah lost 1,487 men. The Siamese losses were put at 700.

The Siamese occupied the fort for the next nine years; but it was an "uneasy" occupation. They were constantly harassed by the men of Kedah who never abandoned their determination to get back their land, and mounted raid after raid.

The last effort to wrest the fort from the Siamese was made in 1838 by Tunku Mohamed Saad, a brother of the Sultan. "Let all my chiefs and relatives assemble at the Merbok River!" came the call from the Sultan exiled in Malacca.

Money, arms, ammunition and stores were secretly supplied by European as well as Asian traders in Penang, and a fleet of 40 war-perahu carrying 2,000 fighting-men was fitted out at Batu Puteh near Achin in Sumatra.

The operation was admirably timed. At the height of the south-west monsoon in August when bad weather prevailed and the Siamese least expected an invasion, the fleet crossed the Straits of Malacca and assembled at Kuala Merbok. From there they pounced.

The garrison of the fort consisting of 70 Siamese and 300 Malay conscripts repulsed the first attack. The second was successful. The Malay conscripts deserted and the Siamese, outnumbered, evacuated the fort which was immediately occupied by the Malays.

At this juncture the Siamese called upon the British to fulfil the terms of the Treaty. In response to this call the Company sent Captain Warren in command of the "Hyacinth" to Kuala Kedah. Here he found the red flag of Kedah flying over the fort with Tunku Mohamed Saad in command. Tunku Abdullah was present.

In reply to Captain Warren's warning that the Company's wrath would be visited upon them, Tunku Abdullah said, "Tell the Company we have re-conquered Kedah which was, and is, ours by a right which no law can abrogate; and as long as we can wield a sword or hold a spear, we will maintain the heritage descended from our forefathers."

THE BATTLE FOR KEDAH — I

After meeting Tunku Mohamed Saad, Tunku Abdullah, Taib Itam and other chieftains in the fort at Kuala Kedah (which they had captured from the Siamese) and offering them immediate pardon if they ceased resistance, Captain Warren returned to the "Hyacinth" and went in search of the war-perahus.

Eventually, after a long and arduous search among dangerous and intricate channels and creeks, he found them ensconced at Trang on the northern boundary of Kedah.

The fleet was a formidable one. It consisted of 50 perahus armed with swivel-guns and culverins, each with a crew of 20 to 50 men. The boats lay at anchor within a carefully-stockaded harbour, the entrance to which was defended by gun-batteries.

Although Warren did not come in peace he was received with every courtesy and dignity. A guard-of-honour of 100 men marched down to receive him at the water's edge, and ceremoniously escorted him to the commander of the armada, Datuk Mohamed Ali.

The Datuk listened politely to Warren's warning that the Company regarded him as a pirate, and he even permitted the Englishman to post a proclamation calling on the "pirates" to disperse or face the wrath of the omnipotent Company.

The two leaders parted after bandying words with each other. Warren suggested that the Datuk should bring his fleet out of the harbour to fight. The Datuk riposted with the invitation that the "Hyacinth" should come in and try conclusions.

At Trang, Warren learnt that the Malay attack had been everywhere successful, and that after consolidating their position they intended to attack the enemy in such strength that they would not be able to send any force to reconquer Kedah.

In the meantime the Siamese had not been idle. In November they held a meeting with the British in Singapore and planned that as soon as the north-east monsoon broke the British should blockade the Kedah coast while a Siamese army, 80,000 strong, should march by land to retake the province.

In accordance with this plan the "Hyacinth" returned to Kuala Kedah and on Dec. 7 anchored 200 yards off the mouth. A stout stockade had been built across the entrance to the river, leaving only a narrow inlet which was well guarded.

The Siamese crossed into Kedah as planned, killing men, women and children and burning all the jungle in order to leave scorched earth between the frontier and the fort. But before they could reach the fort they were checked by a force under Tunku Mohamed Saad and Taib Itam.

The Tunku drove them back and captured their stronghold at Alor Ganu. Encouraged by his success, he advanced on Singgora, the seat of the Government of Ligor, which administered the tributary States of Patani, Kedah and Kelantan. As he swept through Patani he gained more and more adherents. Singgora was captured and sacked.

Meanwhile a Siamese force of 10,000, under the Raja of Ligor, crossed the border, outflanked the Kedah force, and cut Tunku Mohamed Saad's lines of communication. Then by forced marches and admirable generalship, in March 1839, he surprised the important military position at Alor Ganu, stormed its two batteries and killed the entire garrison of 600 under Syed Hussain.

The unfortunate force of Tunku Mohamed Saad cut off in Singgora, was destroyed piece-meal. He and some of his men managed, however, to elude the enemy and make their way back through the Siamese positions and rejoin their comrades in Kuala Kedah fort whilst the chieftains made for Kota Bahru in Kelantan where they tried to get boats to attack Singgora by sea and thereby divert the attention of the enemy. The effort was abortive; for the Siamese attacked Kota Bahru and dispersed them.

The capture of Alor Ganu was a serious setback for the forces of Kedah but a great victory for the Siamese who until then had been without cannon. They now had big guns and advanced to Elephant Hill (Gunong Geriang). From there they sent advance parties with field-pieces to probe the defence. Contact was made with the Kedah outposts and every night during the next few weeks heavy fire was exchanged between the opposing forces.

The Siamese had no intention of launching a frontal attack until they were certain of sufficient strength. The defenders, on the other hand, were confident that if they held out long enough the bad weather would force the attackers to retreat.

At daybreak the cannonade ceased and the Siamese returned to Elephant Hill to come back at sunset and resume their bombardment.

To keep their men on the alert, the Siamese used castanets made of pieces of bamboo which they rattled continually. The sound began on a low pitch and gradually rose to a loud and long crescendo. The Malay sentries from time to time shouted "Jaga!" The cry was taken up by other sentries and above the din of gunfire rose the mingled rattle of castanets and shouts of the sentries as they kept a watchful eye on the movements of the enemy.

IN HOT PURSUIT TO LANGKAWI

After the pre-arranged meeting with Tunku Mohamed Saad, Tunku Abdullah and Taib Itam at the Jerlun River following their escape from Kuala Kedah fort, Datuk Mohamed Ali decided to run the British blockade and make for the Langkawis. So under cover of darkness and at ebb tide his long low canoe of 20 oars, accompanied by two perahus laden with fugitives, slipped out of the river.

To enforce the blockade Captain Warren had created a mosquito fleet of three gun-boats, a pinnace and a cutter, with the "Hyacinth" as baseship.

When day dawned the signalman at the "Hyacinth" 's masthead noticed the Datuk's boat at the distance heading for the Langkawis. He raised the alarm. Captain Warren despatched his five-oared gig in pursuit but although it dogged the canoe it could not catch up with the 20 - oared boat; and when the canoe reached the labyrinth of islands the gig was compelled to give up the chase. The canoe disappeared suddenly like magic, the labyrinth of islands, inlets and channels affording for a thousand perahus.

That night the "Hyacinth" and the other vessels of the mosquito fleet assembled off the Langkawis and mapped out a plan to wipe out the Kedah fleet which was known to be in Langkawi waters.

At cockcrow the next morning the steamer "Diana" which had joined the fleet, took the gunboats in tow. Near shore the steamer could not go close to land because of the shallow water. The gunboats therefore cast off and pulled in towards the land. They had hoped to find a squadron of seven war-perahus but found nothing because the perahus had left towards the north. The gun-boats rowed northwards in the heat of the day.

They passed between Pulau Terutau and the main island at dusk, and after skirting coastal cliffs came to a bay. They searched it but found nothing but on rounding a rocky headland they saw lights on boats and on land.

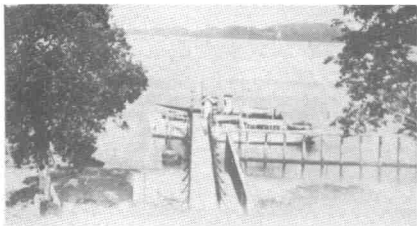
They thereupon muffled their oars, concealed their lights, cleared their guns for action and waited for the "Hyacinth" and the "Diana" which had sailed southwards with the intention of afterwards joining the gunboats off Kampong Melaka.

About midnight there was a thunderstorm and by the flashes of lightning the crew of the waiting gunboats counted a considerable fleet of perahus.

At daybreak the "Hyacinth" and the "Diana" appeared in the south and joined the gunboats which all the while had watched the unsuspecting perahus. It was then possible to assess the strength of the Kedah fleet.

It consisted of two schooners each armed with 10 small guns. One of the boats carried a 12 - pounder as well. The other was equipped with three - pounders and six-pounders. Three large and handsome perahus and a tope constituted the remainder of the fleet.

The tope carried a 32 - pounder cannonade. The perahus had three - pounder guns.



*Landing Place at Kuah,
Langkawi Island,*

On shore an eight-gun battery was sited on the top of a small conical hill at the entrance of the bay. It covered the vessels. Some years before it had repelled an attack by a Siamese brig.

There was much excitement on shore when the British boats were noticed. Armed men passed and repassed rapidly among the coconut trees that fringed the beach. Small boats paddled to and fro.

When he joined the smaller units of his mosquito fleet Captain Warren inspected the boats to see that everything was ready. After that he sent an ultimatum to the men guarding the fort, calling them to surrender within five minutes.

Completely surprised by the superior force of the British, the defenders abandoned their boats and evacuated the fort. The British pulled in towards the shore and boarded the perahus, threw the guns overboard, and set the vessels on fire. The guns of the fort were spiked.

In a small creek nearby they discovered two perahus just off the stocks and a couple of large nine-pounders. The defenders had already left for Sumatra.

On the mainland the Malays waged a guerilla war against the Siamese. Night and day they harassed the enemy and attacked Alor Ganu from where Phya Nuchit, the son of the Raja of Ligor, governed the country.

The unremitting attacks exerted so great a strain upon Governor Phya Nuchit that he asked his father to be relieved of the post. The British too were unhappy over developments because their trade was adversely affected.

Realising that the position was untenable, the Raja of Ligor offered the governorship to Tunku Anum who was living at Ligor. He at first declined the post but when it was offered to him a second time a month or so later he accepted it on condition that his only obligation would be to send the "Bunga Mas dan Perak" to Bangkok once in three years.

Amid great rejoicing Tunku Anum returned to Kedah to take over the governorship from Phya Nuchit who returned to Ligor.

Tunku Anum then sent envoys to Sultan Ahmad Tajudin in Malacca, to tell him of his success in regaining Kedah and requesting him to return and rule.

The Sultan at first refused to do so but sent home his younger son, Tunku Zainul Rashid, who was proclaimed Regent. In 1842, however, Sultan Ahmad Tajudin was persuaded to return.

THE BATTLE FOR KEDAH — II

As the Siamese forces came closer and closer to the fort at Kuala Kedah streams of refugees from up-river fled in boats downstream; and as their presence would make resistance impossible Tunku Mohamed Saad sent an envoy to Captain Warren to ask that the British take unarmed fugitives in safety to Penang.

Warren acceded to the request. A junk, a tope, five large perahus and 115 smaller boats then assembled around the "Hyacinth" and a gunboat of the Navy convoyed them to Penang. Over 3,000 persons — two-thirds of them women, children and decrepit men — were thus evacuated.

Meanwhile Datuk Mohamed Ali operating from Perlis, tried to turn the Siamese flank. His attempt failed, and a large quantity of arms and ammunition was lost. The Siamese were better armed and had no difficulty in beating off the attack.

On March 16, 1839, the main body of the Siamese army reached the mouth of the Jerlun River. It was 15,000 strong, well armed with muskets bought by the Siamese from the East India Company, and supported by elephants.

The following day they launched an attack in force. The outposts of the defenders kept up a heavy and continuous fire but outgunned and outnumbered, they were forced to fall back. As they retreated the enemy's guns found range and began to pound the walls of the fort. The 18 - pounders on the ramparts replied fiercely and defiantly.

The defenders outside the walls suffered heavy casualties. They were on open ground whilst the Siamese were sheltered and concealed by the jungle. But for a fascine-battery mounted on a platform, the defence would have been overrun. The swivel-gun commanded the approaches and despite hails of musket-shot it kept on firing. As soon as one man was killed or wounded another took his place.

At last a lucky shot hit the battery and put it out of action. The defenders thereupon retreated into the fort, carrying their wounded with them. Although they were in a hopeless position they continued to battle bravely.

Cheering wildly and rattling their castanets, the attackers rushed forward but the guns of the fort slashed them with grape-shot and forced them to halt and retreat.

In the afternoon gunfire ceased. That evening the last perahu and last batch of women and children were evacuated, leaving 200 fighting men under Tunku Mohamed Saad and Taib Itam to hold the fort.

On the morrow the Siamese advanced again. Taking advantage of every bit of cover they could find, they got sufficiently close to scale the walls and occupy part of the stronghold; but towards dusk the Malays rallied and with war-cries drove the enemy out.

Flames and clouds of black smoke rose over burning houses. Fighting waxed fast and furious until Siamese reinforcements arrived and drove the defenders back to the fort with heavy loss.

That night and the next day exchanges of gunfire continued but the enemy's six-pounders could not breach the walls.



*A cannon found at Padang Mat Sirat,
Langkawi, in 1975.*

Two nights before the end Tunku Mohamed Saad, Tunku Abdullah and Taib Itam secretly left the fort with several selected men. The party walked along the low-water mark on the sea-shore and made their way to the Jerlun River. Here they were met by Datuk Mohamed Ali and Haji Long who had come with some elephants to help them to escape so that they might "live to fight another day".

To cover their escape an intrepid chieftain whose name is not disclosed, volunteered to hold the fort for 48 hours. This he did. After one last desperate sortie he and his men plunged into the river and swam across it to the south bank, leaving 15 sepoy to hold on for the next two hours.

The sepoy faithfully carried out the task assigned them, and finally firing their last volleys, jumped into the river; but not being good swimmers they were swept down by the current upon the stockade where they were drowned. Thus ended the bloody battle for Kuala Kedah Fort.

Almost to the day, 103 years later history repeated itself. Warren arrived off Kuala Kedah to blockade the coast on Dec. 7, 1738; the Japanese landed in Singgora to attack towards Kedah on Dec. 8, 1941. They advanced from the same direction as the Siamese had done a century before.

Like the Siamese who had pounded Kuala Kedah Fort from dusk to dawn to cover night attacks, they bombarded the Jitra Line after darkness descended, and stopped cannonading when day broke. Withdrawals on both occasions were covered by Indian soldiers — Rajpoots in 1839, and Punjabis in 1941.

And in 1944 when the Japanese transferred Kedah (and Perlis, Kelantan and Trengganu) to the Siamese (they gave Kedah its old name of Syburi) occupying troops for the third time entered the State from the same direction.

DIVISION OF KEDAH BY SIAMESE

When the Siamese occupied Kedah in 1821 they divided it into four parts — Setul, Perlis, Kubang Pasu and Kedah, placing each under a separate ruler.

This kind of division was not new for in 1770, owing to old age, Sultan Mohamed Jiwa had partitioned Kedah between his sons Tunku Abdullah and Tunku Dza'yuddin.

At this time Kedah extended from Trang in latitude 7 degrees 37'N. to Krian in latitude 5 degrees 18'N., a distance of about 150 miles.

To Tunku Abdullah was given the title of "Yang diPertuan Muda" with rulership from the Kedah River to the Krian River including Penang and the other off-shore islands.

Tunku Dza'yuddin was made Raja Muda with rulership of Setul, Perlis and Kubang Pasu. He resided at Kangar which got its name from the "kenanga", a tree with scented green flowers.

When the Bugis attacked Kedah in 1771 and captured Alor Star the Sultan withdrew to Kangar where he died. On his death (the exact date of which was not known) Tunku Abdullah became Sultan; and when he died in 1790 Tunku Dza'yuddin, it will be remembered, ruled as "Bakal Raja" (Heir-Presumptive).

It is interesting to note in the preamble to the clauses, that the Treaty was concluded not only with the Raja Muda but also with all the "Menteri dan Dato-Dato yang dua buah negeri." i.e. Kedah and Perlis which was recognised as a separate unit although under the same ruler as Kedah.

In 1803 when Tunku Pengeran, a son of Sultan Abdullah by his second wife, Wan Mas, became Sultan Ahmad Tajudin Halimshah, Tunku Dza'yuddin "Bakal Raja" reverted to his former post as Ruler of Perlis.

According to the Kedah Ruler's Genealogical Tree compiled by Tunku Fariduddin (until recently District Officer, Kuala Muda) Tunku Dza'yuddin's daughter, Tunku Sopiah, married Syed Abu Bakar who was also known as Syed Harun Jamalullail, who had come to Perlis from Palembang and settled at Arau. His son, Syed Hussain, was one of the leaders of the resistance movement during the Siamese occupation.

At the Restoration, when Sultan Ahmad Tajudin returned, he was appointed Ruler of "Kayangan" (Paradise), the ancient name of modern Perlis. Some Chinese still call Perlis "Kayangan" in the same manner as many Chinese refer to Alor Star as "Kedah".

Today, Kayang, as the capital was called, is a derelict village on the Perlis River about five miles from Kuala Perlis.

In its heyday it was a prosperous river-port trading with adjoining countries. Its prosperity appears to have aroused the cupidity and enmity of the Siamese who attacked it without success on the first occasion.

This setback only incensed the enemy and made the King of Siam more determined to capture the town. To this end, he mobilised a large army so well-armed and formidable that the capture of Kota Kayang was inevitable.

Although the attack was to be kept a closely-guarded secret, one of the King's ministers let the cat out of the bag.

When he learnt of the impending attack the Raja of Kayang, Raja Marhum Tua, ordered an immediate and total evacuation of Kota Kayang. Consequently when the Siamese forces reached the place two days later they found the whole town deserted, without a single sign of life. They then set fire to every house and razed the town leaving nothing to indicate that Kota Kayang had ever existed.

Some years later, when Raja Marhum died from old age, at his own expressed wish he was buried at the foot of Bukit Kayang on the outskirts of the town.

After the destruction of Kota Kayang the centre of population gradually moved to Kangar which Captain Light described as being four or five miles from the mouth of a deep narrow river (the Sungai Perlis) in a valley a mile and a half in circumference. At the river-entrance was a small sandy island on which stood a fishing-village protected by a few cannon. The bar of the river was very long with only 10 feet of water at springtide.

The town had one narrow street running at right angles to the river, and the shops were filled with fruits and vegetables, cotton prints, red and yellow handkerchiefs, pretty mats, piles of rice and jars of ghee.

It was here that Light had come with the Hon'ble Edward Monckton in 1772 to sign an agreement with Sultan Mohamed Jiwa whereby the Sultan agreed to give Kuala Bahang (Kuala Kedah) to the East India Company on condition that the Company helped him to recover the ships and guns which the Bugis mercenaries of Selangor had taken away.

It was here too that Sultan Sulaiman (1602 – 1625) came a century and a half before, when the Achinese captured Kuala Kedah and sacked Alor Star.

SULTAN ZAINUL RASHID

Sultan Ahmad Tajudin Halimshah (1797 – 1843) returned to Kedah devastated and impoverished by war. He made Kota Kuala Muda his capital but when he died, his son, Sultan Zainul Rashid, moved to Alor Star.

Sultan Zainul Rashid (1843 – 1854) did a great deal to improve the country. He constructed roads and canals. He himself supervised the projects. Labour was obtained by "kerah", or forced labour. Revenue was derived from taxes on land which was grown with padi.

At this time the inhabitants of Kedah were broadly divided into two classes – the privileged and the unprivileged – in a ratio of 1 to 50.

The privileged were Malay chiefs, Siamese, Europeans and Indian traders. They were wealthy and paid only a few taxes.

The non-privileged paid many taxes and were liable to be called up for domestic or national service. They were peasants of two types, viz.:

- (i) Those who held land under a document known as a "surat putus", or grant. They paid "hasil tanah", or land-tax.
- (ii) Those who leased land from the lord of the 'mukim' upon whom the Sultan had bestowed land. They paid the lessor, "sewa tanah", or land-rent.

Both categories were liable for "kerah". When conscripted for war each man had to carry 10 gantangs of rice along with him.

Sultan Zainul Rashid enjoyed the friendship and trust of the Siamese. When he was Regent, before his father returned to re-assume the reins of government he had journeyed to Bangkok and successfully asked the King of Siam to reinstate Sultan Ahmad. When he succeeded to the throne he followed Siamese advice so faithfully that they allowed him a great deal of initiative, and interfered with him as little as possible.

His son, Sultan Ahmad Tajudin Al-Mukarram Shah (1853 – 1879), continued to maintain good relations with the Siamese. He sought counsel of them and never abused the powers they gave him. As a result he was allowed to carry out a great number of reforms and make many innovations.

One was a regulation dealing with uniforms for officials. They were to wear short, loose white coats and long baggy black trousers with a broad cloth waistband. Court dress was European and consisted of black trousers, frock coats and fez caps.

In Alor Star he built a wooden bridge over the Kedah River and introduced the use of Straits currency; and when Siam called upon him to put down uprising of Chinese miners in tin-rich Tongkah, he raised an army of 1,000 by "kerah". The force led by Tunku Ya'acob (the Sultan's brother), Wan Awang (the Harbour Master) and Wan Taib bin Wan Musa (the Datuk Temenggong), restored law and order within three months.

Sultan Ahmad Tajudin was also an advocate of private enterprise. Realising that trade is "the greatest meliorator of the world", he had a three-masted barque built to order in Europe and named it "Gratitude". His agents in Penang were Messrs. Nevins and de Luz. The captain was an Englishman named Fowler.

Although the Sultan, as owner, gave strict orders that the vessel should be restricted to trade between India and Singapore, the agents disregarded instructions and sent it to China because more cargo and greater profit could be obtained from the China coast.

The "Gratitude" therefore coasted between Amoy, Foochow and Swatow where it collected cargo. Freight with a rich cargo of China goods and 300 Chinese emigrants between decks, it called at Macao and prepared for the voyage home.

The day before departure, however, the seamen noticed that something was amiss. The figurehead of the barque — a woman with a nude breast, holding a flaming torch — seemed to them to presage disaster. Her face was sad and one breast was missing.

In the days of sail, seamen were exceedingly superstitious and set a great store by the figurehead. The English captain refused to sail and members of the crew who could get away, deserted. It was with the utmost difficulty that a Spaniard was engaged to skipper the ship.

True enough, off the coast of Cochine-China (Vietnam) near a rock which the Portuguese sailors called "Pedra Branca", the "Gratitude" was caught in a typhoon. First one mast and then another went down. Eventually the third went by the board. Finally the ship broke in two and foundered.

Sultan Ahmad Tajudin subsequently brought a claim for damage against the agents for the loss of the barque. The result of the suit, if not lost during the Japanese Occupation, may probably be in the archives of the Penang Court.

THE REMARKABLE WAN MAT SAMAN

Sultan Zainul Rashid (1843 — 1854) was succeeded by his son, Sultan Ahmad Tajudin Mukarram Shah (1854 — 1877).

As already narrated, the "Forty Bloody Years" of war impoverished Kedah. Alor Star was almost covered with jungle and rehabilitation had to commence from scratch.

During the next few decades revenue for public works — roads, bridges and canals — was raised by "hasil tanah" (land tax) or "sewa tanah" (land rent). Labour was obtained by "kerah" (compulsory labour).

One of the first roads was built in 1859, from Alor Star to Anak Bukit. Seven years latter, in 1866, it was improved and extended to Kepala Batas.

A bridge across the Kedah River, the predecessor of the present Sultan Badlishah Bridge, was constructed in 1870 to connect the town and Seberang Perak. It was named Wan Mat Saman Bridge, after Wan Mat Saman, an uncle of the Sultan by his mother's side, and "Perdana Menteri" (Prime Minister).

Wan Mat Saman was a remarkable man. He also built the Wan Mat Saman Canal from Alor Setar to the foot of Kedah Peak. He was not an engineer but he had a great deal of common sense. His countrymen were sceptical and his labourers absconded, but he persevered and overcame all difficulties. He had no instruments for surveying but he ensured correct alignment by placing men at intervals in a straight line, each of them holding aloft a damar torch. He thus took his bearings, and the Canal eventually joined the Kedah River at the point where a monument has been erected to his memory.

The successful completion of the Canal led to the construction of other canals. This increased the area of land available for planting padi; and by the time Siam transferred suzerainty to Britain in 1909 Kedah was every year supplying more than one million bushels of rice to Penang.

Wan Mat Saman was also responsible for the arrest of Raja Ismail of Perak after the assassination of James Birch, the first British Resident of Perak, in 1875.

After the murder the Raja retreated to Kupang in Baling District, Kedah, with a force of 300 men and 30 elephants. As it was Kedah territory the British requested the Sultan of Kedah to help arrest him. The Sultan accordingly sent Wan Mat Saman and Penghulu Abdul Rahman of Kupang to meet the Raja.

He at first would not receive the Kedah officers. Later, however, Wan Mat Saman persuaded him to follow them to Padang Gias to meet the Sultan who prevailed upon him to go to Kuala Muda. Here he lived for six months and then, again on the advice of the Sultan, he gave himself up to the British.

In his endeavours to rehabilitate his country Sultan Zainul Rashid worked hard. He personally supervised the construction of roads and canals. When he died Sultan Ahmad Tajudin Mukarram Shah followed in his father's footsteps. He followed Siamese counsel faithfully and assiduously, and gained the confidence of the Siamese King who trusted him implicitly and did not interfere in Kedah's internal affairs. Siamese influence was predominant and the law was based on the Siamese code.



*Wan Muhammad Saman bin Wan Ismail, Prime Minister of Kedah
1870 — 1898*

In a civil suit the plaintiff presented his case in writing. This was neatly copied by the clerk of the court who afterwards read it to the plaintiff to make sure that there was no inaccuracy. If the plaintiff signified that the document so read was true copy of the original it was folded and sealed with little wax or soft mud on which he impressed his thumbprint.

A summary of the plaint was then sent to the defendant who answered also in writing which was similarly copied, read and sealed.

A day before the hearing the litigants were called together with a view to settling the suit. If efforts to do so proved unsuccessful the depositions were read before a subordinate judge who after considering the case gave his verdict in writing. The verdict was then sent to the Chief Judge who pronounced judgement.

According to one of my old pupils, the late Encik Mustafa bin Tam, who came from Siam and who was well-versed in matters Siamese a long and terrible oath was administered, in Siamese. It ran as follows:-

"I (name) who have been brought here to give evidence in this matter, do solemnly declare that I am entirely unprejudiced against either party and uninfluenced in any way by the opinion and advice of others, and that no prospects of pecuniary advantage or advancement in office have been held out to me."

"I also solemnly declare that I have not received any bribes on this occasion and if what I now speak be false, and if in my statements I should colour or prevent the truth so as to lead judgement astray, may I be punished."

"If I say that I have seen what I have not seen, and if I say that I know what I do not know, may I also be punished. May I be encompassed by dangers wherever I go, and may lightning cut me in twain so that my crime may be made manifest to the people."

The following classes of persons were precluded from giving evidence in any case:-

"Drunkards, opium smokers, vagabonds, shoemakers, beggars, women who had been married three times, unfaithful children, slaves, friends of either party, enemies of either party."

"Physical defects excluded unmarried pregnant women, the blind and the deaf, people more than 70 years old and children under seven, and persons suffering from any loathsome disease."

"Intellectual defects excluded those who could not count up to ten."

"Special attention was paid to the testimony of men of learning and of good character."

THE TITLES THAT LAPSED

The bestowal of honours and decorations on the birthday of H.R.H. the Sultan of Kedah recently, recalls to mind that in the reign of Sultan Ahmad Tajuddin Mukarram Shah (1853 – 1879) it was decided that all titles except those of "Tunku" and "Raja Muda" should be allowed to lapse. In accordance with this decision the principal posts Bendahara, Menteri and Temenggong – and a host of others (about 100) were not refilled when the incumbents died.

According to one Kedah source, titles before this time were of three classes viz. (A) Royal titles; (B) titles of senior ministers; and (C) titles of junior ministers.

The chief Royal titles were:

1. "Permaisuri" – Consort of the Ruler. The last holder was Wan Hajar, mother of Sultan Abdul Hamid, after whom Telok Wan Jah is named.
2. "Raja Muda" – younger brother of the Ruler whose function in the words of Mr. W. G. Maxwell, "was to govern the country in the name of the Sultan, from off whose shoulders he was expected to take the drudgery of routine administration..... The Raja Muda was merely the Sultan's Deputy, and the Sultan never hesitated to reverse or modify any order given by the Raja Muda with which he did not agree."
3. "Bakal Raja" – Heir Apparent. The last holder of this title was Tunku Zainul Rashid who duly succeeded his father, Sultan Ahmad Tajuddin in 1879 and ruled until his death in 1881.
4. "Seri Paduka Maharaja Adinda" – the second younger brother.

Senior ministers included the "Perdana Mentri" – the Prime Minister. The last holder of this title was Wan Mohamed Saman who built the Wan Mat Saman Canal which is now silting up and passing into disuse because there is a modern and extensive system of irrigation more suited to the developments of today.

At one period, in the reign of Sultan Ahmad Tajuddin Halimshah, (1804 – 1843) this post appears to have been filled by a member of the ruling house who was styled "Paduka Seri Perdana Mentri". He acted for the ruler in his absence or in the interval between the death of one ruler and the accession of another.

The "Bendahara Ikhrar Wazir Adzam" and, The "Paduka Maharaja Mentri Tunggal" both of whom were counsellors. The function of the former was to arrange people in the Hall of the Audience and when the Sultan was travelling. In this he had the assistance of the "bentara" or court marshal.

The "Laksamana Paduka Seri Raja" – the Admiral of the Fleet. At sea he took the place of the Sultan and could sentence and slay whom he would.

The "Temenggong Paduka Maharaja" – the General of the Army. His duties were:-

- (i) to maintain law and order – to build prisons and to arrest thieves, robbers, smugglers, opium-smokers, cock-fighters and gamblers,

- (ii) to appoint watch-men (he had a force of 60 at a time,) 20 guarded the jail and the prisoners and to have gongs beaten to prevent people wandering at night without a light and committing felony under cover of darkness.

He had the right to kill any wayfarer who did not carry a light and slay him if he resisted arrest, even if he happened to be a "Tunku".

- (iii) to carry out the sentence of a judge; and

- (iv) to compel defendants to come to court. For this he was paid a travelling-allowance dependent on the distance travelled.

Among Junior Ministers were:-

The "Seri Paduka Tuan: Mentri-Mentri yang menjaga di-dalam Negeri (dua-belas orang)". They were District Officers, 12 in number;

The "Paduka Seri Wangsa Hakim Besar" — the Chief Justice;

The "Paduka Raja Mentri yang menjaga Kazanah Kerajaan" — the State Financial Officer;

The "Maharaja Lela, Ketua yang menjaga Kota Istana" — the Comptroller of the Royal Household;

The "Raja Pahlawan Hulubalang Laut" — the Commodore of the Navy;

The "Raja Lela Mahkota Shahbandar" — the Mayor;

The "Raja Lela Usaha yang memerintah kanaikan laut" — the captain of a naval vessel;

The "Raja Jaya Indra yang memerintah kenaikan darat" — the Brigadier;

The "Maharaja Kadzi" — the Chief Registrar of Marriages and Divorces. He was "king" in questions relating to religious law;

The "Seri Indra Membang Negara" — the Administrator of the adjacent Islands; and

The "Seri Raja di-Raja Imam" — the Chaplain to the Sultan.

There were no roads in those days and the river was the highway. When the Sultan travelled by boat he had a choice of three flags — yellow, black and red. If he flew a yellow flag, the minister-in-attendance flew a black one with red borders at the top and bottom.

When he flew a black flag, the vizier's was red with white borders; and if the Sultan's flag was red and black the flag of the vizier was white with red borders.

Flags of captains were of five colours — white, black, red, green and purple, without borders.

When the Sultan travelled to the mouth of the river the "Shahbandar" preceded him with a drawn sword, somewhat as the Sovereign's escort with drawn swords escort the Yang Dipertuan Agong on State occasions today.

When the "Laksamana" went out to sea by command of the Sultan he flew a red and black flag but as soon as he re-entered the river he hauled it down and flew a plain red one instead.



*H.R.H. Sultan Abdul Hamid Halim Shah
Ibni Almarhum Sultan Ahmad Tajuddin
Mukarram Shah, 1881-1943*



*Wan Hajar binti Wan Ismail, Wife of Sultan
Ahmad Tajuddin Mukarram Shah*

OLD BUILDINGS IN KEDAH

The official opening in January 1973 of the \$200,000 ornamental fountain to commemorate the installation of His Majesty Tuanku Abdul Halim Mu'adzam Shah ibni Almarhum Sultan Badlishah as the 5th Yang di-Pertuan Agong of Malaysia focussed attention on some of the most ancient public buildings in Kedah's capital.

Reference has already been made to the Balai Nobat. The exact date of its erection is not known but it is on record that in the reign of Sultan Zainul Rashid (1877 — 1879) the 40 foot high attap-tower was repaired, as was the attap-roofed State Mosque near it, where the Supreme Court now stands.

That it was in existence at the beginning of this century is evinced by mention of it by Mr. W.W. Skeat who led the University of Cambridge Expedition to the North-Eastern Malay States and Upper Perak in 1899.

In December that year, Skeat was in Alor Star. He arrived at Kuala Kedah by boat from Penang on Dec. 27 at about 4 p.m. and from there proceeded to Alor Star by a "broken-down Kling Gharry". In Alor Star he stayed at the rest house, now occupied by the Police C.I.D.

As a special favour, the Sultan's Malay story-teller ("Pengahibor Lara") was detailed to attend on him as a translator.

The next morning, passing beyond the Balai Besar, he heard music emanating from a turret-like building. He walked over to it, ascended a steep flight of steps (now replaced by a spiral staircase) and found himself in a loft-like room. There with the players, were the instruments of the Sultan's regalia, the "Nobat". The name was derived from the Persian word "Naubat" meaning "nine" and given to the band because it consisted of nine instruments — a kind of stick known as "maha guru" a tabor or "negara", two Indian pipes and drums and two Javanese gongs.

Skeat interviewed the players on the history and significance of the regalia and was then invited to partake of curry and "nasi kunyit" (saffron rice).

The building of the State Mosque — one of the most symmetrical and beautiful in South-East Asia — was begun in March, 1912, from plans drawn by the then Government Architect, Mr. C.G. Boucher. He modelled it on the lines of the mosque in Langkat, Sumatra, which he visited before putting his plans on the drawing-board. It took three years to build, and when it was completed in 1915 Sultan Abdul Hamid officially opened it, performed the duties of "Imam" himself, and led the congregation in prayer.

A Frenchman who visited Alor Star in 1890, described the old mosque as built on a raised floor of brick, square in shape, with walls of plank and roof of attap.

The Balai Besar which is much older than the Mosque, was probably built at the same time as the Balai Nobat. A group photograph taken in front of it on the occasion of the visit of the Siamese prince to Kedah in 1895, shows that it was built of timber.

Its attap roof (now replaced by shingle) was supported by a large number of wooden pillars. It looked very much as it is now but the upper floor was lower. Two wooden staircases led to the hall upstairs.



The Royal Audience Hall, or "Balai Besar" at Alor Setar.

It was built to take the place of an older Hall of Audience, described by a French missionary who visited Kedah in 1822, as "an immense hall with 62 wooden pillars" in Siamese style.

For more than a century the Balai Besar has served as a hall of audience and the centre of State functions. It was used as such at the time of the marriage of Sultan Abdul Hamid's eldest son, Tunku Ibrahim ("Tunku Sulong") in 1903. The King of Siam came to the wedding with a large retinue and stayed at the old Istana Anak Bukit which was built by Sultan Ahmad Tajuddin Muazzam Shah (1853).

After the transfer of suzerainty the Istana was unoccupied and gradually decayed through desuetude. The present building was constructed in 1927 to take its place. The Istana is to be extended in the near future and the "magnificent cemented pond framed in an ornamented wall of cemented lacework, where enormous fish gambol on the surface and swallow flowers thrown to them by visitors" is to be demolished and will be no more.

CHAPTER TWENTY-EIGHT

ENFORCEMENT OF LAW AND ORDER

For the preservation of order and enforcement of law in the second half of the 17th century, Kedah had a written code dated 1650 A.D. At that time Kuala Kedah had become an important port because of its strategic position at the northern entrance to the Straits of Malacca and because it produced plenty of excellent pepper.

"To it," wrote Barbosa, a Portuguese, in 1516 A.D., "an infinite number of ships resort, trading in all kinds of merchandise. Here come many Moorish ships from all quarters. Here, too, is grown much pepper, very good and fine, which is conveyed to Malacca and thence to China."

In addition to his duties as Harbour Master described in a previous article the "shahbandar" policed the town. In the daytime he and his men policed the market to prevent gambling, cock-fighting, opium-smoking, liquor-drinking, quarrels and illegal sales and purchases.

At night, with the warders of the Warden of the Port, they patrolled the town to ensure that people who walked about, carried torches and did not have weapons.

The law provided safeguards against arbitrary exercise of power. The "shahbandar" for instance, was not allowed to make a stroke off his own bat. He had to consult the marshal ("bentara") of the Warden of the Port before he could arrest anyone who violated Mohammedan law, or confiscate property unlawfully acquired.

Sentence, however, was reserved to the Raja. A buffalo-thief had the head of the buffalo hung from his neck. He was taken round the town by a crier with a gong, crying out "I am a buffalo-thief! Behold me!"

In the fasting month whoever broke the fast was forced to eat grass in front of the court or suffer a beating in public.

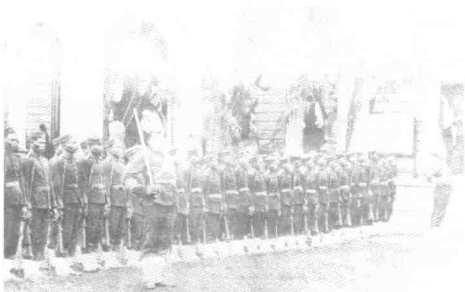
At village-level the headman kept law and order with the assistance of the village elders. They were required to report to him thieves, robbers, cock-fighters, opium-smokers, opium-smugglers, gamblers, drunkards and worshippers of trees and rocks.

Generally speaking, the authorities were able to maintain law and order but occasionally, as in the case of a notorious bandit named Sang Sema Devi, it was necessary to seek Siamese assistance.

Sang Sema Devi was the leader of a gang of robbers who terrorised the inhabitants of Alor Star in the middle of the 19th century. He lived in the middle of the marshes on the southern side of the Kedah River. Time and again he and his men crossed the river to pillage and loot the town. There was no force strong enough to arrest him.

Eventually his atrocities became so unbearable that the Sultan asked the King of Siam for help. A force of 200 Siamese soldiers was sent to capture him but he forestalled their attack by laying an ambush at the bend of the river opposite Tanjong Charlie where the wharf now is.

The Siamese crossed the river in boats but when they came within range of the muskets of the terrorists they were all killed.



Kedah Police Force 1900

The success of the ambush increased the fear of the people but fortunately for them a year later Sang Sema Devi died from sickness and his gang dispersed.

In after-years Kedah was plagued by several other bandits who invariably got away by crossing the border into Siam where they could not be arrested. One of the most notorious who did not get away, was Nayan who went to the gallows in Alor Star Prison, cursing the Gaoler for not giving him enough liquor!

By this time the Police had been organised. It was composed mainly of Malay constables and Malay inspectors, under a Superintendent of Police.

Some years later, when Tunku Bahadur, a brother-in-law of the Sultan, was appointed Superintendent, a Sikh contingent was raised with Mr. Ben Mitchell in charge. It was a para military unit, 200 strong. It was disbanded when suzerainty was transferred but a few men re-joined the new force.

The first police station was a shophouse in Jalan Pekan Melayu near where the P.W.D. Office is today. A sub-station was built opposite the British Adviser's Residence at Bakar Bata but it was demolished in 1910 when the Prison was removed to its present position near the hospital and the police station was built on its site.

In the early stages, police uniforms were shabby and the men slovenly. A constable was paid \$10 a month (the purchasing-power of the dollar was then very, very much higher). A corporal got \$15. There was no traffic to control and the policemen mainly did beat duty. Their arms were bought in Penang but they did not receive any training in firing them until the rifle range at Junun was made 60 years ago.

After the transfer of suzerainty the force was re-organised. Mr. N. A. M. Griffin took charge of it and from Penang came Irish officers like W.E. Speers, D. Hillary and P. Joyce, and Malay officers like Ali Baba and Abusman.

But the Kedah State Police remained separate from the Federated Malay States Police and developed on its own lines until it was merged with the Malaysian Police after World War II.

POSTAL SERVICES

Among the innovations and improvements introduced into Kedah during the reign of Sultan Abdul Hamid Halimshah was the telephone-line from Alor Star to Kuala Kedah. This connection, about seven miles long, was completed in 1887. It was of great importance because Kuala Kedah was the principal point of entry into the State and almost all the trade of the country passed through it.

Twelve years later, in 1899, with assistance of Siam, a post office was opened in Alor Star. The Postmaster was Haji Arshad (not to be confused with Haji Mohamed Arshad bin Osman who was appointed Superintendent of Posts and Telegraphs in 1925). Siamese postage-stamps were used.

Later on sub-post offices were opened at Kota Kuala Muda, Kulim and Bandar Bahru. Mail to Penang was sent by a small steamer but letters to other parts of Kedah were carried by relays of postmen by canal-boat, on foot or on bicycle.

Even Sultan Abdul Hamid rode a bicycle. A European who visited Alor Star at this time, remarked "I saw the Sultan flash past mounted on a bicycle and closely followed by an attendant."

In those days one travelled on the Wan Mat Saman Canal if the tide was up, covered the distance to Guar Chempedak without delay. From here a path followed the Gurun River, through orchards. Two miles beyond Gurun it branched off, passing behind Bukit Ayer Nasi to Semeling. From Semeling the journey was continued by boat down the Merbok River and through the Sungei Trus to Kota Kuala Muda. At Permatang Bendahari, on the other side of the river, the Province road started.

Although biting dogs posed no danger to postman in those days, the men were exposed to far greater perils.

One man in particular had a hair-raising experience. As he trudged the foothills of Kedah Peak with his bag of mail slung over his shoulder, he heard a frightful roar and saw a tiger rushing towards him.

With great presence of mind he suddenly opened the umbrella he was carrying, in the face of the tiger which was so startled that it leapt into the jungle alongside the path. It was fully a quarter of an hour before the man could muster enough courage, go down on his knees to thank God for his providential escape, and proceed to Semeling.

When Britain took over administration from Siam in 1909, Mr. W. G. Maxwell, the first British Adviser, selected Mr. S. Asirvadarn from Penang, to be Postmaster. The post was later upgraded, and Asirvadarn became the first Superintendent of Posts and Telegraphs. In the discharge of his duties and in carrying out the spadework he had the assistance of Postmaster M. Thambusamy and efficient clerks like Abishegam.

After the transfer of suzerainty, stamps of the Straits Settlements were used. They remained in use until 1912 in which year Kedah issued its own stamps for the first time.

They were of three designs. The lowest denominations — 1, 3, 4, 5 and 8 cent, depicted a sheaf of padi with the Jawi script "Kedah" on the top and its romanised equivalent at the bottom. On the left and right sides respectively were the words "Post and Revenue".



*Kedah Stamp Issued
In 1912*



*The old post office
at Alor Setar*

The 10, 20, 30, 40 and 50 cent stamps had the picture of a Malay padi-planter. He was dressed in a baju, seluar and sarong, and wore a hat made of nipah-leaf. He was shown ploughing with two oxen. Today only one ox is used to pull the plough.

The man was Penghulu Mat Jaafar of Anak Bukit. The original photograph was taken by Mr. Bodom who had a wellknown studio in Northam Road, Penang, in the early 1900s.

When Mr. Maxwell relinquished the post of British Adviser and said good-bye to Penghulu Mat Jaafar he assured him that he would remember him as long as there was a Kedah stamp.

The highest denominations — \$1, \$2, \$3 and \$5 — bore the picture of the Balai Besar. The portrait of Sultan Abdul Hamid did not appear on the stamps until 1937 because there was an objection that the used stamps were likely to be unwittingly trod upon, and thrown on the ground and thereby be regarded as an insult to the Ruler.

In 1919 owing to a dearth of Kedah stamps Straits Settlements stamps were used. Some philatelists at that time alleged that when the stamps were overprinted with the word "Kedah" by a firm in Penang, an opportunist turned one sheet upside down. The tale, if true, would give the stamps in that particular sheet high value.

The General Post Office of those days was a timbered two-storey building beside the Kedah River, between the present Sultan Badlishah Bridge and the Magistrate's Court.

With the completion of the branch railway line to Alor Star in 1915 the transport of mail was expedited and the Kedah Postal System entered upon a new era.

CHAPTER THIRTY

CHANGING CAPITALS OF KEDAH

The capital of Kedah has been changed no less than six times.

According to the "Hikayat Merong Mahawangsa" or "Kedah Annals", in which fact and fancy are mixed, Merong Mahawangsa, the first Hindu King, established his capital on the banks of the Bujang river, a tributary of the Merbok river.

That there was a big town there is substantiated by archaeological evidence, but whoever made his capital there must have been influenced by navigational and physiographical factors. The land was sufficiently high to be flood-free, water-supply was adequate, adjoining land was suitable for padi-cultivation, the river was navigable, and timber and stone for building were plentiful.

Above all it was strategically well-placed. The Bujang snaked its way through marshy land. It was the only route by which the settlement could be approached and it was thus easy to defend. Its security led many people from India to settle there and the town prospered as entrepot. It became so populous that people living in the kampung south of Kedah Peak said that the area was so thick with houses that a cat could walk from the foothills to the sea without once touching the ground.

The prosperity enjoyed by "Langkasuka" as the capital was called, was gradually undermined and dissipated after the death of Merong Mahawangsa. His youngest son, Raja Merong Mahapodisat, succeeded him on the throne. He had been Regent during his father's absence in Timor, but his right to succession was disputed by his elder brothers and his sister. Raja Marong Mahapodisat was able to placate them but his son, Raja Seri Mahawangsa, was not as fortunate. Most of his subjects were Malays who regarded him as an alien. To pacify them he married a Malay, but decided to build his fort at Kuala Muda because Langkasuka was too far from the sea.

His son, Raja Ong Maha Perita Deria (Raja Bersiong) did not care to live at Kuala Muda. He thought it too close to the sea. So he built himself a fort at Kota Aur (Tikam Batu) where about 20 years ago, a team from the University of Malaya Archaeological Society excavated a large stone pedestal now known as "Raja Bersiong's Flagpole Base".

The stone is in the Alor Star Museum. In olden days it was atop a small hill which has been largely destroyed to obtain stone for the approaches to the Merdeka Bridge a mile away. Today nothing remains of Kota Aur except remnants of laterite and brick foundations at the southern edge of the clearing for the industrial site.

Because of his tyranny Raja Bersiong's subjects rebelled against him and he was forced to flee to Siam.

Then came Raja Phra Ong Mahapodisat, the last Hindu King, who was converted to Islam in 1474 A.D. He took the Muslim title of Sultan Mudzaffar Shah and lived at Kuala Muda. His son, Sultan Mohamed Shah, repaired the fort at Kuala Muda which had been greatly damaged during the rebellion, and lived there.

Kuala Muda remained the capital until the reign of Sultan Sulaiman Shah (1621 — 1628 A.D.) who moved his capital to Siputeh in Kubang Pasu, probably because Kota Kuala Muda was too much exposed to attack from the sea.



Landing place at Alor Setar, 1922

Siputeh was the seat of four Sultans, until Sultan Mahkota Alam of Aceh conquered Pahang, Perak and Johore, and destroyed the pepper plantations of Kedah so that they could sell their own. Sultan Dzaiyuddin Mukarram Shah (1681 – 1687 A.D.) moved his seat to Bukit Pinang, near the present RMAF Air Base. Bukit Pinang proved difficult of access, however. So Sultan Mohamed Jiwa Zanaulabidin Muzzam Shah (1710 – 1760 A.D.) moved to Alor Star which has been the capital ever since.

On the northern bank across the river opposite Bukit Pinang, overgrown by jungle and crumbling into ruin, is the old Kota Bukit Pinang, said to have been built by Tunku Kudin who from 1827 until his death in 1831, made heroic efforts to expell the Siamese from Kedah.

It was two-storeyed building with its back reaching right up to the steep slopes of Bukit Tinggi which protected its rear. The most conspicuous feature of the ruin is the solidity of the brickwork and the beams, in contrast to the mud and clay of which contemporary forts were built.

Here Tunku Kudin defied the Siamese until he was besieged by the Raja of Ligor with a force of 7,500 men and 300 elephants. Overpowered by numbers, Tunku Kudin died a hero's death in defending his fort; and as in the case of the great Scotch patriot, William Wallace, who led the Scottish armies against the English at the end of the 13th century, his head was sent to the conqueror's capital.

The name "Alor Setar" is said to have been derived from "alor", the channel of a river; and "setar", a kind of tree which the Malays called "pokok setar". It grew on the banks of the river-channel which is now the big drain behind the police station.

Whenever Malays from the countryside came to town they rested in the shade of the tree. And when asked where they stopped they usually answered "Kami berhenti di alor bawah pokok setar". This is how Alor Setar got its name.

It is interesting to note, however, that the name was not used by the majority of Chinese who even to this day refer to the town as "Kedah".

SIAMESE DOMINANCE

Tunku Fariduddin Haji bin Tunku Mansur Haji who compiled the Genealogical Table of the Kedah Ruling House on the occasion of Merdeka, has kindly pointed out that Jalan Telok Wan Jah in which the Coronation Fountain now stands, was named after Wan Jah binti Luang Nik Abidin, the first wife of Sultan Ahmad Tajuddin, and not after his second wife, Wan Hajar binti Wan Ismail. Wan Jah was of Siamese origin.

Siamese influence predominated Kedah during this period. On Jan. 21, 1882, King Chulalongkorn (Rama V) as overlord had confirmed Sultan Abdul Hamid's appointment as Sultan of Kedah. Shortly after this the Sultan went to Bangkok to pay his respects to the King who decorated him with the Order of the White Elephant First Class and bestowed upon him the title Chao Phya Saiburi.

Sultan Abdul Hamid enjoyed the most cordial relations and close ties of amity with the King who held him in high esteem and great affection. He later bestowed upon the Sultan another title, that of Chao Phya Riddisongkran Bakhti, and appointed him High Commissioner for Setul and Perlis.

He also sent two of the Sultan's sons, Tunku Yusuf and Tunku Badlishah (afterwards Sultan) to Europe for their education. Tunku Yusuf returned to Bangkok after qualifying and died in the service of the King of Siam. Tunku Badlishah also returned to Siam in due course, after graduating in economics at Oxford.

As the needs of Kedah were greater he came back to Kedah to enter the Kedah Civil Service. It is of interest to know that Kedah repaid Siam all the money spent on his education.

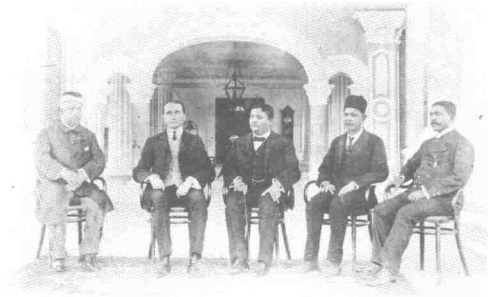
As already narrated earlier, as long as Kedah recognised Siamese suzerainty and in token thereof sent the "Bunga Mas dan Perak" to Bangkok triennially, Siam did not interfere in the internal administration of the State. In 1905, however, it was constrained to do so because Kedah borrowed \$2,500,000 and Siam stipulated that the State should accept a financial adviser as a condition for the loan.

The officer appointed was Mr. W.J.F. Williamson, a British officer in the Service of the King of Siam. King Chulalongkorn who ruled Siam for 42 years (1868 — 1910) steered his country with very great diplomatic skill through the period (1890 — 1900) when Britain and France were striving for control of the South-East Asian Peninsula.

He balanced Britain against France and accepted Western advice but not Western control. In the selection of advisers he was very careful to maintain the principle of balance. The Chief or General Adviser was always an American, the Financial and Judicial Advisers were usually British, and the Legislative Adviser was a Frenchman. A Dane headed the Gendarmerie, Germans were employed in the Railways, Posts and Telegraphs, and Italians and French worked in the Public Works.

All these foreigners were individual servants of the Siamese Government and not agents of the Western Powers. As a result Siam emerged as the only country in South-East Asia which retained its independence.

Williamson was Financial Adviser for the period of the takeover only. He was succeeded by Mr. G.C. Hart who was appointed one of the five members of a Council of State constituted by the Sultan by an Edict dated July 23, 1905, shortly after the Execution of the Siamese Loan Contract.



First Kedah State Council formed in 1905.

The Edict was implemented on July 29, 1905, in the presence of a large assembly in the Balai Besar, Alor Setar, where a letter from the King of Siam was read. This was followed by a proclamation by the Sultan, authorising the formation of a Council of State to assist him in the "administration of all public affairs".

Besides the Financial Adviser the other members of the Council were the Raja Muda (President), the Chief Judge Haji Ahmad ex officio, Syed Abdullah Shahabudin and Haji Mohamed Ariffin.

At this time Britain exercised extra-territorial powers in Siam by virtue of the Bowring Treaty, 1855. One of the clauses stipulated that a British Consul should be stationed in Bangkok and exercise civil and criminal jurisdiction over all British Consul and some difficult situations with tact.

On one occasion all the male Indian labourers (British subjects) on an estate in Jitra were arrested for rioting, tried in the Consular court and gaoled. Thereupon their womenfolk and children, more than 100 in number, swarmed into the Consulate grounds in front of the General Hospital. There, amidst much weeping and wailing they squatted and refused to budge, insisting that as the Consul had taken away their rice-winners he must feed them. The impasse was settled when the Consul allowed the prisoners to return to the estate on bail-bond.

Another incident remembered in connection with the Consulate was the exhumation of the remains of Lt. Walter Thorburn, R.N., of H.M.S. Hyacinth, who was drowned in the Kedah River in 1906 and buried in the Consulate grounds.

When Tunku Sulong bought the land to build houses for two of his sons, the remains had to be removed. Owing to the passage of time (20 years) there were hardly any recognisable remains.



*H.H. Tunku Ibrahim Ibni Sultan Abdul Hamid Halim Shah,
the Regent of Kedah, 1913–1934*

An expert Chinese grave-digger who happened to be a prisoner in the gaol, was pressed into service. Under the supervision of the Assistant British Adviser, Mr. J.S.W. Arthur, he identified the bones that had not yet completely disintegrated, collected the fragments and put them in a small box. They were then wrapped in a Union Jack and re-interred in the water-logged Christian cemetery. The Anglican Chaplain of Kedah and Province Wellesley, the Rev. John H. Smith, read the burial service.

The brass tablet to the memory of Lt. Thorburn in the east wall of St. George's Church, Penang, was removed by the Japanese for armaments during the Occupation.

Extra-territoriality — a thorn in the flesh of the Kedah Administration — automatically ended in 1909 when Mr. W. G. Maxwell took over as British Adviser. On the same day Mr. Meadows Frost assumed duty as British Adviser in Perlis. The Consulate was afterwards turned into the Kedah Club which moved into its premises in 1917.

ALOR STAR IN THE 1880s

Sultan Ahmad Tajuddin Mukarram Shah (1854–1877) was a wise and able ruler. In foreign affairs he did nothing to alienate Siam. He took Siamese counsel and did not misuse the freedom of initiative which the Siamese allowed him.

Consequently they trusted him completely and held him in such high regard that when he died they erected a beautiful and artistic marble monument over his grave. This was as much in tribute to his friendship as to his loyalty for in 1872 he had sent a Kedah force of 1,000 men to help Siam to put down a revolt of Chinese in Tongkah.

With the British he established good relations. This was especially so after he prevailed upon Raja Ismail of Perak to give himself up to the British in 1875. As a result he and the Governor of the Straits Settlements, Sir Harry Ord, were on the best of terms.

With nothing to fear from his neighbours he addressed himself to affairs at home.

As already mentioned earlier, in his reign the first road, from Alor Star to Anak Bukit, was constructed, the Kedah River bridged, and canals made. In the execution of all these projects he had the assistance and advice of his brother-in-law and Perdana Menteri, Wan Mohamed Saman.

The construction of the Wan Mat Saman Canal led to the construction of similar irrigation projects in other parts of the State. This increased the acreage for cultivation and made Kedah wealthy.

In Alor Star town itself he built a balai besar and a 40-foot tower for the nobat. Both buildings were attap-roofed.

He was also a man of culture. He opened a school for children of the ruling house in 1861, and composed a "shaer" (a long poem) describing a voyage from Kedah via the Mergui Archipelago to Lower Burma. The poem is at present being studied and translated by Professor C. Skinner, Professor of Indonesian and Malaysian Studies at Monash University in Melbourne.

Sultan Zainul Rashid (1877–1879) carried on the reforms initiated by his father but it was not until the reign of Sultan Abdul Hamid Halimshah (1879–1943) that Kedah developed into a modern state.

The following description of Alor Star by a French missionary, Father Page, who visited the town in 1883, gives a good picture of the town as it was at that time.

"We embarked at Penang at 9 a.m. and arrived at the mouth of the Kedah River at about 4 p.m. There we dropped anchor to be inspected by the customs."

"The customs examination over, we sailed upriver on the tide for an hour, and disembarked at the port of Laosta, capital of the Kingdom, where the Sultan resides."

"An Indian sent by Mr. Kus awaited us on the jetty and showed us the way. With such a guide we did not have to worry about our baggage and in five minutes we reached the house of our host. Mr. Kus was born in America but his parents are French. He is the only European living in the State."

"As soon as we arrived Mr. Kus showed us round the town, and in a quarter of an hour we had seen the six small streets. I estimate it would take scarcely two hours to visit all the inhabitants."

"On Tuesday we learnt all we could about the customs and products of the country. Our first visit would have been to the Sultan but as he was away, we called upon a Chinese (the 'kapitan china') who entertained us to tea and cigars".

"We have heard a great deal of the Sultan's country-house; so we set out on foot to see it."

"About three miles from the town we came to a narrow unkempt path on the right-hand side of the road. It was about 100 yards long and led to a park about 100 yards square, enclosed by a brick wall at least 10 feet high. A large well-built vacant house occupied the centre of the grounds, with a small flower-garden between the front door and the park-gate. The remainder of the grounds was covered with lallang."

"The walls of the house were bare. A pile of mattresses lay in a corner of a room. In the spacious saloon was a round table and upholstered chairs. (This building was afterwards used as the residence of the British Adviser)."

"On going out I met some Malays to whom I expressed my disappointment. They told me the Sultan had a more beautiful country-house farther up the same road. We immediately walked in the direction indicated and soon arrived at the gate of a garden behind an unusually high wall. We were told that it was the Regent's house."

"This park was larger than the first. Its rear, fenced with wood, abutted on the river on the banks of which stood a pretty well constructed pavilion. The land around it, however, consisted of sterile sand on which it was impossible to grow plants."

"So the Regent had beautified it by turning it into a 'forest' of flowers in huge Chinese flower-pots."

"In the evening, after Mr. Kus had given the little princes (the Sultan's brothers) their lessons, he took us to the famous country-house in the royal carriage, about five miles along the road we travelled this morning."

"After four miles we came upon an immense plain of padi-fields. Here and there clumps of trees broke monotony of the scene, and in the distance chains of high mountains formed the background of the landscape which is the most beautiful I have ever seen."

"The country-house is on an island surrounded by two tributaries of a large river. The castle crowns a small hill in the middle of the island. The building is paved with marble and the apartments are so placed as to enjoy continual coolness."

"The view from the castle takes in the whole plain but most impressive of all is the garden. Avenues of fruit-trees and flower-plants encircle the little hill. The chief fruits are oranges, mangosteens, chikus, pomeloes and many others whose names I do not know. All of them are indeed delicious."

"At the foot of the hill we admired a magnificent pond framed in an ornamented wall of cemented lace-work. In the pond are enormous fish that gambol on the surface and swallow flowers thrown to them by visitors. I do not think there is a more delightful spot in the Straits."



*Regent's palace at Alor Merah: in
"a forest of flowers in huge Chinese flower-pots".*

THE FIRST BRITISH ADVISER

After Mr. W. G. Maxwell arrived in Alor Star in 1909 to assume duty as the first British Adviser, the Sultan's house at Bakar Bata was allocated to him for his official residence. The house was demolished after World War II to make room for the Darulaman Stadium. At the time when Maxwell took it over the "Residency" was in a dilapidated condition. It had been unoccupied for a long time. A Frenchman who saw it in 1883, said:

"About three miles from the town on the royal road (it was built by Sultan Ahmad Tajudin to link the Istana Anak Bukit to the town) we found to the right a narrow path about 100 yards long, bordered by long grass as well cultivated as the thistles and thorns of France!"

"At the end of the path we entered a park about 100 yard square, enclosed by brick walls at least 10 feet high. A large well-built house occupied the centre, with a small flower-garden separating the front door from the door of the park. The remainder of the park was entirely overgrown with wild grass."

"The castle was devoid of ornaments. Its great walls were bare and a heap of mattresses were piled in one corner. In the spacious saloon there were a round table and armchairs with threadbare upholstery".

Maxwell renovated the house and grounds, "I had a beautiful house," he afterwards wrote, "and gave much attention to laying out the spacious grounds around in..... Using convict labour, I had an ornamental pond made by excavating the soil to some depth and using the material to raise the level of the surrounding ground."

"Convict labour also made a nine-hole golf course designed in such a manner as not to interfere with a race-course which was also being made round the house....."

(The ornamental pond is still there. It was deep and on two or three occasions golf-caddies had to be saved from drowning when they went into it to retrieve golf-balls of erratic golfers).

In matters of administration Maxwell had to start from scratch and overcome many prejudices. By great diplomatic skill and assiduous attention to detail ("he wants a finger in every pie") he organised the machinery of government and in two years (in 1911) he modernised the administration.

The High Court, Adviser's Office, Treasury, Audit Office and Land Office were housed in the building at present occupied by the P.W.D. and D.I.D., facing Padang Court. The gaol was as yet in Jalan Penjara Lama. The P.W.D. was in a corner of Jalan Raja and Jalan Pengkalan Kapal. Opposite it, across the road, at the northern end of the Sultan Abdul Hamid Bridge, was the Post and Telegraph Office.

The Veterinary Office and the Survey Office were in shophouses on the southern side of Jalan Langgar. The Sanitary Board Office was next to the P.W.D. In 1917 it was occupied by the Chartered Bank, the first bank to be opened in Kedah.

With a modern system of government established, Maxwell turned his attention to containing the epidemics of cholera which had plagued the people for decades. Up till now the rivers and wells had supplied the only drinking-water. The first attempt to stop the disease was made by collecting rain-water. A large area of light roofing was erected at Seberang Perak and rain-water falling on it was collected in six tanks, 80 feet long, 20 feet broad and six feet deep.

The water was given free to all who wanted to use it. The supply, however, proved insufficient. It was realised that a more plentiful supply was needed to prevent a recurrence of the disease. So work was begun in 1912 on the construction of a reservoir at Bukit Wang, nine miles from Jitra. The waterworks were completed in 1914 and water turned on to Alor Star. At first the people refused to drink it – it had no taste and no smell! They thought it was unfit to drink. After a time they were persuaded to use it and except for sporadic outbreaks, cholera epidemics did not recur.

Roads too were attended to. In this sector Maxwell had the services of Mr. J.G. Gorman who while State Engineer extended the roads and bridged rivers.

The metalled road from the town to Anak Bukit was extended to Kepala Batas where a steel bridge – “Titi Gajah” – was built across the Padang Terap River.

The official opening of the bridge was a State affair. All the dignitaries were present. After the Chief Kathi had said a prayer, Tunku Mahmud courteously turned to Maxwell and asked whether he would like to say a prayer too. The Adviser put the question by with a non-committal “belum sedia,” i.e. “not yet ready”.

In the year the bridge was completed (1911) a metalled road was under construction to Jitra from where a farther length, partly metalled, was being built to the Perlis border. Also from Jitra an extremely good earth road led to the Siamese frontier, 12 miles away. It followed the old Siamese trade route between Singgora and Port Quedah, and places on the route still retain Siamese names.

Jitra, for instance, is a version of the Siamese word “Jutra”, a stopping-place. It lay at the junction to Perlis and Changloon, and was the stopping-place for Siamese who came to Kedah from the north and the east.

Another meeting-place was Kodiang, about 10 miles from Jitra. The Siamese word is “Kok Deng”, or “red hill”, probably because of the red laterite hills in the neighbourhood.

Changloon on the Kedah-Siamese border, like Kupang in south Kedah, was a town where people kept elephants. “Chang” is the Siamese word for “elephant”, and “Len” means “fallen”. A great deal of travelling in olden days was by elephant. The Siamese named the place “Chang Len” (Changloon) because one of their elephants fell into a ditch or hole there.

CHAPTER THIRTY-FOUR

FIXING THE BOUNDARIES

The announcement on Feb. 23, 1973 that Malaysia and Thailand have agreed on the marking of the 500-mile land boundary separating the two countries, recalls to mind that the boundary-line between Kedah (and Perlis and Kelantan) and Thailand was demarcated when Siam transferred to Britain its suzerainty over the Northern Malay States in 1909.

The demarcation was carried out by a joint British and Siamese team which included some naval officers of European origin in the service of Siam. The naval officers were included in the survey-team because sea-boundaries had also to be charted.

The surveyors separated Pulau Terutau from Pulau Langkawi, and placed Pulau Adang, off Langkawi, in Siamese territory. The island is the home of the Mawken, one of the few surviving tribes of sea gypsies in the world, who speak a patois of Malay not unlike the Malay spoken by the fisherfolk of Kuala Kedah.

The land-boundary passed through Kroh in Perak where, so goes the story, Captain Berkeley, R.N. moved some boundary stones one night and added several square miles of Siam to Malaya when he was District Officer in Grik in the early 1900's and monarch of all he surveyed.

The transfer of suzerainty was the immediate result of the loan to Kedah of \$2,600,000 by Siam in 1905.

The remote cause was the expansionist policy pursued both by Britain and France on the mainland of South-East Asia.

From 1858 onwards the French had gradually extended their control over Indo-China, and at the beginning of the 20th century there existed as in Malaya, a mixed system of direct government and protectorates. The constituent members of the French "Indo-Chinese Union" were Cochin-China and Tonkin which were directly governed as French colonies; and Cambodia, Annam and Laos which were French protectorates.

In like manner the Straits Settlements were British colonies and the Federated Malay States (Perak, Selangor, Negeri Sembilan and Pahang) were British protectorates.

In establishing this political position Britain confronted France in the period of Anglo-French colonial rivalry. They resolved their differences in 1896 when both parties agreed to regard Siam as a neutral zone. A supplementary agreement in 1904 defined Western Siam as a British sphere of influence, and Eastern Siam as a French sphere of influence.

In pursuance of the policy of expansion certain Governors and British officials in Malaya urged the extension of British control over Kedah, Perlis, Kelantan and Trengganu.

Siam too chafed under the extra-territorial rights which it had granted to Britain when King Mongkut in 1855 opened the country to Western trade and signed a treaty of friendship and commerce with Britain.

An opportunity to free itself from the trammels of extra-territoriality presented itself after the Siamese Loan Agreement with Kedah was implemented. Siam then planned to transfer suzerian rights to Britain in return for British abandonment of extra-territorial rights in Siam, and a loan for railway construction.

Kedah was not officially informed about the proposal. It got wind of it only in the middle of 1908 and immediately protested to Bangkok. It also engaged the legal firm of Adams and Allan in Penang to represent to the British Government its views on the proposed take-over.

Mr. (afterwards Sir) Arthur Adams accordingly forwarded a memorandum to the British Government stating that Kedah would accept British suzerainty provided that it was consulted; that although it paid tribute to Siam its soil was not "part of the Kingdom of Siam"; that it had temporarily "pending repayment" accepted a financial adviser from Siam in consideration of a loan; that Britain had recognised the status of Kedah in so far as it had signed treaties with Kedah in 1800 and 1869; and that Kedah's peaceful administration did not justify the assumption of British jurisdiction as had been the case in Perak and Selangor.

The British Government acknowledged receipt of the memorandum but did nothing about it. So in March, 1909, Mr. Allan wrote a letter to the British Prime Minister with whom he had a nodding acquaintance.

When no reply came a London solicitor, Mr. Charles Russell, acting on behalf of the Kedah Government obtained an interview with the Colonial Office and was told that Kedah was an integral part of Siam.

Nearer home, Allan had an interview with the Governor, Sir John Anderson while Adams unsuccessfully sought an interview in London. He had to be content with leaving memoranda at the Colonial and Foreign Offices; and in July, Anderson sent the first British Adviser, Mr. (afterwards Sir) George Maxwell to take over in Kedah on the basis of the Anglo-Siamese Treaty signed on March 10, 1909.

THE COMING OF THE BRITISH

After the promulgation of the new constitution of July 29, 1905, by which Sultan Abdul Hamid authorised the formation of a Council of State to assist him in the "administration of all public affairs", European officers began to come and serve in Kedah.

They were not the first to do so for in 1883, following the example of the Siamese Court where Mrs. Leowens had been governess to the young Siamese princes, the Sultan had engaged an American of French descent, a Mr. Quays, to tutor the sons of the Kedah Ruling House.

One of the first officers to arrive under the new order was Dr. A. L. Hoops, Acting Colonial Surgeon, Penang, who was seconded to Kedah to organise the Medical and Prison Departments.

Hoops had served in the Boer War in which he had been wounded. When the Financial Officer, Mr. G.C. Hart, went on medical leave in 1907 Hoops acted for him. He began to give orders to heads of departments and endeavoured to enforce punctuality in the Government offices.

Tunku Mahmud, who had that year been appointed, on the death of his elder brother, the Raja Muda Tunku Abdul Aziz, hauled Hoops over the coals and told him that he must advise only on finance. This sparked off a row at the highest level as to what an adviser could and could not do. As a result of his dispute, Hoops got into the bad books of the powers-that-be.

Apart from this, Hoops made a success of the job he was brought to do, that is to place the Medical and Prison Departments on a sound foundation.

When he arrived in Alor Star in 1905 the people in the town and its environs were plagued by cholera epidemics which carried off hundreds of persons annually. The main cause was insanitary drainage which led to the pollution of wells and rivers.

To overcome this serious difficulty and prevent the disease from spreading, rainwater was collected in tanks 80 feet long. Little by little the mortality-rate was reduced but it was not until a proper reservoir was built at Bukit Wang, near Jitra, in 1912, that cholera was brought under control.

In the meantime, with the help of hospital assistants (then called "dressers") Srinivasagam and Weerakutty, and health inspectors (then called "sanitary inspectors") Oliveiro and Arunasalam, Hoops waged a long and hard campaign against cholera before he achieved success.

Soon after he arrived in Alor Star he built a hospital of four wards, a dispensary and an office at the junction of the main trunk road and the road now named Jalan Sultanah. One of the wards was reserved for women but it was not until Dr. (Mrs.) M.G. Brodie came to Kedah as Lady Medical Officer in the 1920's that they overcame their reluctance to go to hospital.

There was no motor ambulance in those days. Patients from a distance came in bullock carts, and stretchers were made of sarong and gunny-sacks. The travelling dispensary was also a bullock cart. It travelled along the only good road which went as far as Jitra. The town dispensary was in a shophouse in Jalan Pengkalan Kapal.

The High Commissioner, Sir John Anderson, visited Kedah in 1909 and expressed admiration of the administration, especially of the Prison and the Hospital (both of which had been organised by Hoops) and the Audit Department under Mr. George Ward, brother of Mr. Willie Ward and Mr. Bertie Ward of Penang. Despite all the precautions he took, George Ward died from cholera and was buried in Alor Star Christian Cemetery.

After the transfer of suzerainty Hoops had the assistance of Dr. J. Hall-Tennant who was posted to Kulim in 1918. Dr. C.J.S. Nicholas was recruited from Taiping to fill the vacancy. In 1926 Dr. P.T.K. Nayar and Dr. M. Bhandari came from India to reinforce the Kedah Medical Service.

The first trained nurse, Mrs. Grace Eliathamby, was appointed in 1921. When Hoops went to Singapore in 1920 to be Principal Medical Officer, Straits Settlements, besides the General Hospital in Alor Star, there were district hospitals at Sungei Patani and Kulim with accommodation of almost 400 beds.

Hoops who hailed from Ireland, was a keen horseman, as was Tunku Mahmud and several others who rode for exercise. They shared a common enthusiasm. Mr. J.J. Fleury, another Irishman who was State Veterinary Surgeon as well as Secretary of the Sanitary Board, Alor Star, was also a keen horseman.

With convict labour he and Hoops made Alor Star's 'Ballymena' race-course, and were the leading lights in organising periodical gymkhanas to which came visitors from Penang with their ponies.

At every meeting, in addition to the usual scurries and longer races there were gymkhana events – 'musical chairs', tent-pegging, 'thread-the-needle' – but the most testing of all was the cross-country steep-lechase which started from where the United Garden Housing Estate now is.

The start was not visible from the starting point. Horse and rider came into view only when they reached the race-course, near the railway crossing. More often than not one or two horse-men had fallen by the wayside before they reached this point.

If he did not pass the winning post first Hoops invariably and purposely fell off his mount. It was exhibitionism for the fun of it. He once rode up the flight of 15 stone steps of his bungalow 10 feet high, for a wager.

Occasionally he and Fleury organised pig-sticking parties. There was plenty of wild boar around. One day Fleury made history by spearing a wild boar during an open chase over a padi-field. The feat has never been repeated on horseback, but during the Japanese Occupation, when the possession of firearms was banned, bands of Indian estate-labourers, agile and 100 per cent physically fit, went pig-sticking on foot to spear wild boar to supplement their food supply. The chase on such occasions was as exciting as it was strenuous.

CHAPTER THIRTY-SIX

THE BEGINNING OF FORMAL EDUCATION

After the transfer of suzerainty in 1909, education in Kedah developed rapidly. Under the new regime the English Language became very important — it was the open sesame to jobs.

But even before the turn of the century the people of Kedah had come to realise the importance and the need for literacy. As narrated in a previous article, the Sultan had in his employ an American citizen, a Mr. Quays, born of French parents, who in the 1880's tutored the sons of the Sultan, in the same manner as Mrs. Leonowens was governess to the sons of King Mongkut of Siam.

Long before this, however, as Kedah emerged from its primitive state, the Mahawangsa kings had introduced Hindu arts, philosophy and religion. Sanskrit was the official language. When the fifth Mahawangsa King, Pra Ong Maha Podisat, was converted to Islam in the second half of the 15th century, Arabic superseded Sanskrit but very few people could read or write the script.

In the period of Siamese suzerainty Siamese was the predominant language but there were no schools for the ordinary people. Some of them could read and write Malay which they had picked up from traders from Penang or sailors who had served on trading-vessels.

The literate were highly respected. They helped to read and write letters and were frequently called upon to settle disputes, especially those concerned with money.

Illiteracy weighed so heavy upon the people that eventually the people of Changloon, on the Kedah-Siamese border, decided to open a Malay school. They were on one of the main elephant routes between the west coast and the east coast and contact with traders had made them education-conscious.

To them therefore must go the credit of opening the first Malay school in Kedah. This they did in 1892.

Five years later — in 1897 — the first Malay school in Alor Star, was opened in Jalan Bahru. It owed its origin to the enthusiasm of Wan Abdullah, a Minister of State. The first teacher was Che Ahmad bin Kerani Maidin.

During the marriage celebrations of Tunku Sulong in 1903 all the paraphernalia used in connection with the wedding was stored in the schoolhouse. So great was the quantity and so heavy the things that the building collapsed. A new building was built in the following year. In the preceding year a school had been opened at Kulim (1896).

In due course more schools were built and at transfer of suzerainty (1909), in addition to the three Malay schools in Changloon and Alor Star there were eight other Malay schools, at Yen (1900), Simpang Empat (1906), Junjung (1906), Sungei Seluang (1906), Guar Lobak (1906), Alor Merah (1907), Kota Kuala Muda (1907) and Sungei Kob (1908).

The increase in the number of Malay schools was largely due to the initiative of Shaik Ahmad bin Mohamed Sheriff who was Superintendent of Education with headquarters in Alor Star. In South Kedah his deputy was Tunku Yahya.

After the change of administration, education in the Malay medium developed slowly owing to crippling shortages in furniture, equipment, school buildings and trained staff.

Above all, during four years immediately following the transfer, from 1909 to 1913, there were three superintendents of education, namely Mr. J. Richey (1909), Mr. J. McDonough (1910-1913), and Mr. A. Cavendish (1914). McDonough who had served in the Royal Irish Constabulary, chose the site for the Government English School, now the Sultan Abdul Hamid College.

In 1914 education in Kedah Malay schools made a big leap forward. Mr. E.A.G. Stuart who was on the staff of the Malay College, Kuala Kangsar was appointed Superintendent of Education and Headmaster of the Government English School. A Malay scholar of attainment and a man of great understanding, he immediately set to work to remedy deficiencies. New buildings or annexes providing accommodation for more pupils were completed as replacements or additions to existing buildings in urban and rural areas.

Malay teachers were recruited from Penang, among them being Messrs. Ahmad bin Mohamed Saman, Chik bin Abdul Rahman, Abdul Rahman bin Ahmad and Mohamed Saman bin Yusoff. Gradually new schools were opened in districts until then unprovided with schools, and teachers' quarters built.

Teachers were sent to Sultan Idris Training College for training, and when Stuart died in Penang in 1927, the number of Malay schools in Kedah had multiplied ten-fold, and teachers had increased from 30 to about 300, but the enrolment had failed to keep pace with expansion.

The main reason for this was the indifference of the padi-planter to the advantages of schooling. The aim of the rural schools was to give a sound primary and practical education to boys who would remain on the land and find occupation in local agriculture.

This did not appeal to them very much. So attendance was made compulsory for boys living within 1½ miles by the nearest path or road from the school. The limit of distance was later extended to two miles.

Another cause of the comparatively low enrolment was the poverty of the padi-planter. Children were needed to help on the farm and during the harvest season as during the fasting month, all schools were closed so that the pupils might help in the harvesting.

THE FIRST ENGLISH SCHOOL

During the 14 years (1914–1927) when he was Superintendent of Education in Kedah and Perlis, the late Mr. E. A. G. Stuart organised and consolidated education in the two States, but the man who started an English school was the late Encik Mohamed Iskandar, to whom Stuart referred as “the acorn from which grew the oak”.

Penang-born Mohamed Iskandar began teaching at the Penang Free School in 1899. In 1908 he obtained the Teacher's Certificate of the Normal Classes that had been instituted in 1906 for the training of teachers in English schools. In the second half of that year, one year before suzerainty was transferred, he left the Free School to take up the Headmastership of the English School in Alor Star, which the Superintendent of Education (Shaikh Ahmad bin Sheriff) and the Inspector of Schools (Mr. J.G. Richey) planned to open.

The opening ceremony fixed for Dec. 8, 1908, but not a single pupil or parent turned up for the tea-party and for registration — in strong contrast to the education explosion that took place after the Japanese incubus (1941–1945).

Undaunted by this lack of enthusiasm, Mohamed Iskandar went to the Malay school in Jalan Bahru and arranged for 15 Malay boys to come to his school after the Malay school closed at 11 a.m. His school hours were 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.

After this he sought the assistance of the Kapitan China, Towkay Choon Tow (he had had the title of “Phya” bestowed upon him by the King of Siam, and had been appointed “Datuk Vijaya Setia” by the Sultan of Kedah). With the Kapitan China's co-operation 25 Chinese boys, their ages ranging from 7 to 16, were enrolled.

In the beginning Mohamed Iskandar had difficulty in enrolling Malay boys because the parents were prejudiced against English education. They questioned the value of learning English. They were under Siamese suzerain and thought it would be better to study Siamese. The hajis were in favour of Arabic. Above all there was the fear that an English education would turn the children into Christians.

To overcome the last objection, Mohamed Iskandar got the assistance of the Shaikh-ul-Islam (Haji Wan Sulaiman) who assured the parents that their fears were groundless; for had not he himself been educated at an English school and remained a good Muslim?

The logic of the argument proved convincing and with the help of an imam, Haji Jaafar, Mohamed Iskandar went from house to house and canvassed for pupils.

The enrolment received a big boost one day when two of the Sultan's sons, Tunku Abdul Rahman and Tunku Ya'acob, were sent to school. Mohamed Iskandar, who had a high sense of the saving grace of humour, was always fond of recalling the incident. In accordance with royal custom, he said, the two small Tunkus arrived at the school with a retinue of attendants. Some of them carried “nasi kunyit” (Saffron rice) and other comestibles.

He gladly took in the boys and the “nasi kunyit” too. Thereafter, Tunku Abdul Rahman's mother, Ma' Che Manjalara, sent him to school every day, carried pickaback by an attendant whose name was Idris. There were no cars in those days!

As a result the enrolment increased. One of the pupils was an Indian girl, daughter of a hospital assistant. She was the first of the girls who are now enrolled at the College (formerly the school) but as she was dressed in shirt and shorts, her sex was not noticeable. The second girl admitted was the niece of a teacher, Mr. G.M. Khan, who was enrolled when Mr. E.C. Hicks was Headmaster in 1930.

The opening of the School was marked by another incident. It had been opened without official sanction of the State Council. So Shaikh Ahmad and Richey were hauled over the coals for not obtaining the Government's approval. They gave a workable explanation, and were told not to do it again!

At the end of the first year the enrolment rose from 15 to 97 – too many for one man. So an assistant master, Mr. Mohamed Salleh, was appointed to teach the lower classes. The schoolhouse was a small Malay-type building on stilts, near the Balai Nobat, where the present High Court now stands. As it could hardly hold 60 boys, one class had to be taught under a big tree in the school compound.

After the transfer of suzerainty the School continued to function but in 1910 Mohamed Iskandar left to become Headmaster of the English school in Pekan, Pahang, which was to serve as a preparatory school for the Malay College, Kuala Kangsar. He was succeeded by Mr. Salleh who in turn was succeeded by Mr. Ismail Merican another 'Old Free'. The enrolment was then 97 and the school-fees \$1 a month. The wooden building was obviously inadequate; so a house was rented in Jalan Penjara Lama.

When Ismail Merican left to join the Kedah Civil Service in 1913, Encik Abdul Manaff, another "Old Free", was appointed Headmaster. Within a year he too left to join the Kedah Civil Service and Encik Syed Jan was Headmaster until Stuart arrived in 1914.

Meanwhile the School's enrolment had increased to 196. It had grown to such an extent that it was decided to erect a more suitable building. The present site was acquired. Building was begun in 1914 and completed in 1916. One pupil likened its shape to that of an aeroplane. It had a two-storey middle from which three classrooms projected on each side. This was the nucleus of today's sprawling complex.

In 1917 the Seventh Standard Examination was held for the first time. A pass in this was a qualification for entry to the Government Clerical Service. After this Kedah was able to recruit clerks locally. Previously they had come from Penang and Perak.

In 1919 the School entered candidates for the Junior Cambridge Local Examination. Those who passed went to Penang to prepare for the Senior Cambridge because there were no facilities for this in Alor Star. Malay boys of well-to do families were already schooling in Penang at this time. They stayed with Mr. Frank Hawkins of the Penang Free School for some time but later, as their numbers increased, the Government opened a hostel for them in Penang and placed it in charge of Encik Osman.

In those early days there was no age limit or restrictions as to what the boys could wear. Consequently some of the pupils were married. Malays, Chinese, Indians and Siamese wore all sorts of clothes and the medley looked queer. Two Chinese boys had cues and were vulnerable to pranksters. Almost everyone came to school barefooted.

THE SPREAD OF EDUCATION

The foundation of education in Kedah so well and truly laid by the late Mr. E.A.G. Stuart, weathered the Japanese Occupation during which the Nipponese resolutely and rabidly endeavoured to eradicate the English Language.

At this time there were three Government English schools in the State with an enrolment of 563 pupils and 33 teachers. The Government English School (now the Sultan Abdul Hamid College) and the Kampong Bahru Girls School (now the Sultanah Asma School) were in Alor Star. The third was the Government English School (now the Ibrahim School) in Sungei Patani, which was opened in August 1919 — 10 years after the College.

Tuan Syed Jan, from Alor Star, was appointed "master-in-charge". He had one assistant, Mr. Mohamed bin Mann, one of the first group of students to pass the Government Standard VII Examination in Alor Star in 1917, and the only one who chose to be a teacher.

The Government English School in Sungei Patani opened in a small timber building in front of the mosque in Jalan Pengkalan. On the first day five pupils enrolled and at the end of the year the enrolment rose to 60 boys in four classes from Primary One to Standard Two.

As numbers increased, accommodation decreased; so a shophouse was rented. This too soon proved inadequate and another shophouse, in Jalan Petri, had to be rented. The School literally moved from pillar to post and in 1928 occupied an attap-roofed building where the Telecoms Office at present stands. It had been used as the District Office and the Magistrate's Court. It was only in 1936 that the School got a permanent building of its own.

Besides the three Government schools there were private English schools which had been opened by the Roman Catholic Mission — the Convent Schools for girls in Alor Star and Sungei Patani and St. Theresa's School, Sungei Patani (1929), St. Patrick's School, Kulim (1933) and St. Michael's School, Alor Star (1939). The last-named had for headmaster a Penang-born Japanese, Mr. K. Nishikawa who, some slyly suggested had been brought in to provide opposition to the British. The land for the school in Kulim was gifted to the Mission by a non-Christian, Mr. Tan Ah Choy.

Malay vernacular schools at the outbreak of World War Two totalled 111 with an enrolment of 18,143 and 538 teachers. A feature of these schools was the practical teaching of hygiene. As soon as the pupils arrived at the school early in the morning they were in their turn put to the work of sweeping the classrooms and the surroundings of the buildings, swilling out the floor of the latrines and the school drains and afterwards washing their hands and feet at the school-well.

They were then lined up for inspection of their hair, teeth, nails and dress before they were allowed to go into their classes to start their normal school-work.

Religious instruction, however, was not within the jurisdiction of the Education Department. Koran classes were held in the school buildings in the afternoon and were taught by teachers appointed by the Shaikh-ul-Islam.

A red-letter day in the history of Islamic education in Kedah was 13.5.1356 A.H. (1935 A.D.) on which day the Sultan opened the Mahmood College. The late Tunku Mahmood who was of a deeply religious bent of mind, had laid the foundation stone in 1934, and the College was named after him. Its completion was one of the objects very near to his heart — the establishment of an institution for higher Islamic education.



Mr. E.A.G. Stuart (right) and Mr. R.P.S. Walker of the Education Department in Kedah.

In the beginning the College was supervised by Shaikh Mohamed Salleh. Later Shaikh Abdul Halim returned from Al-Azhar University Cairo and assumed the Headmastership. The College is now an affiliate of Al-Azhar University.

When the first Chinese school was opened is not known but it was probably at the beginning of the 19th century. Before that time very little was heard of Chinese in Kedah. One of the earliest references to them was made by Thomas Forrest who visited the country in 1783.

He said: "The Government is monarchical under a Malay Mohammedan prince, who like many other Malay princes, engrosses almost all the whole foreign trade of the port, except that of an annual Chinese junk, which pays a certain sum only as duty, and then had leave to trade freely with the inhabitants. This junk imports immense quantities of coarse china ware, iron pans and many other articles from that country, and exports beche-de-mer, sharks' fins, edible birds' nests, rattan, damar, tortoise-shell, deer-skins and deer-sinews, bullock and buffalo-hides and horns and other common articles.

From the above it may be gathered that Chinese trade by sea was strictly restricted to one junk a year but large numbers of Chinese came across the isthmus from Songkhla and settled in the Pekan China part of Alor Star to which they gave their name and like Chinese everywhere else in the world they maintained Chinese schools.

At the turn of the century a Chinese school existed in the precincts of the Chinese temple in Jalan Penjara Lama and a passer-by would often hear the children shouting out at the top of their voices as they learnt their lessons by rote.

In one corner sat the teacher, begowned and bespectacled, listening to a pupil recite his lesson, his back turned towards the teacher lest he get a look at the book!

The first Tamil school was opened by Indians who came to Alor Star from Nibong Tebal more than a century ago to make bricks. They settled on both sides of the river near the Merdeka Garden and named the place "Kala-Wai" which means "Bakar Bata" or "The Brick Burning Place".

Unfortunately for them the place was so densely populated that when cholera broke out, their houses had to be burnt down to prevent the spread of the epidemic, and the people moved to Jalan Bahr. They had made a shrine under a big tree that stands there and this had to be abandoned temporarily. It was frequented by devotees from time to time and today a handsome new temple has risen phoenix-like from the ruins of the past to occupy the site.

In the villages near the Siamese border there were Siamese schools at places such as Padang Sera in the north and Naka in the east.

EDUCATION OF GIRLS

The appointment of Datin (Dr.) Salma binti Ismail as one of the two women members of the Higher Education Advisory Council in 1973 recalls to mind the beginning of her school — the Kampung Bahru Girls' School (now the Sultanah Asma Girls' School), Alor Star. It was opened in 1924.

Before this there was no school for Malay girls in Kedah. The consensus of opinion among Malay parents was that a woman's place was in the kitchen, and much deeply-entrenched prejudice had to be overcome before "liberation".

Two years before this, with the intention of converting it into a school, the government of Kedah had bought the three-storeyed Istana behind the Istana Kampung Bahru, which had belonged to Cik Spachendra, the first wife of Sultan Abdul Hamid.

It took two years to coax and encourage Malay parents to send their daughters to school. For years they had been, as it were, caged, hidden in the background, rarely seen and deprived of all the contacts that make life rich and full.

Eventually, however, in 1924, with the support of "Tunku Sulong" (Tunku Ibrahim, the Regent) and his brother, Tunku Ya'acob, a Cambridge graduate, who held exceptionally liberal views, the Government decided to open a school for daughters of members of the Ruling House and the top echelon of Government Officers.

The pupils were selected by a board consisting of Syed Mohamed Jitra (father of the Consort of the present Governor of Penang), Syed Mohamed Iddid (Chief Magistrate and afterwards Judge), the Superintendent of Education (Mr. E.A.G. Stuart) and Encik Ismail bin Haji Puteh (father of Dr. Salma) who was Under Secretary to Government.

The first headmistress was Miss M.C. Waddell. She had two Malay assistants, Cik Rahmah and Cik Intan. The enrolment was 30. Among the first pupils were Tunku Lat and Tunku Habsah (daughters of the Sultan), Tunku Kutam binti Tunku Abdullah (a grand-daughter of the Sultan), Tunku Rodziah and Tunku Mariam (daughters of Tunku Ya'acob) and Cik Salma.

In June, 1929, Miss M.B. Lewis succeeded Miss Waddell as Headmistress, and in December that year, on the retirement of Cik Intan, Cik Tom binti Datuk Abdul Razak of Selangor, one of the first Malay women to qualify as a teacher, was appointed to assist Miss Lewis.

Cik Tom had come to Kedah on her marriage to Encik Mohamed Zain Ariffin who had recently returned after many years in England where he had been at Wadham College, Oxford, with Tunku (afterwards Sultan) Badlishah.

To Miss Lewis, wholeheartedly supported by Cik Tom, must go the credit of "liberating" women of Kedah from "purdah". She had to fight a hard battle against age-old prejudice and conservatism. The pupils went to school in covered rickshas and curtained cars. It was considered highly improper if not outrageous for them to appear in public, and many an eyebrow was raised and tongues wagged when Tunku Habsah took to driving her own small yellow Baby Austin car. All that is changed now, and the Malay girl of today is very different from her sister of yesterday.

Miss Lewis, a Welshwoman, small in build but big in heart, gradually surmounted all difficulties. She introduced up-to-date teaching methods. Pupils who were not good in academic subjects were given more practical lessons in cooking, sewing and handwork. The first external success came when certificates were awarded to Cik Salma and Cik Asiah binti Laedin for handwork sent to an exhibition in Kuala Lumpur.

All the time Miss Lewis continued her struggle against prejudice and bureaucracy.

She took the girls for outings and picnics. At the first concert girls over 14 years of age were not allowed to take part and the select audience was partially concealed for fear that the girls might take fright.

In 1934 Miss Lewis asked the Government to open the school to the public. The authorities referred the matter to the Public Works Department whose engineers decided that the building was too old and unsuitable to be used as a school. It could hold only 60 pupils. It was decided, however, to expand the school and admit children of other Malay officers.

Two years later another problem arose — whether to teach more Malay than English. The then Superintendent of Education, Mr. Stowell, with the approval of the Regent, Tunku Mahmud, decided to allow only 30 per cent of English. The parents clamoured for more English but at first the Government paid no heed to them. One of the officials went so far as to say, "A little education is sufficient. A woman's place is at home."

A long correspondence ensued between Miss Lewis and the Government, and after much passing and re-passing of minute papers the little Welshwoman won the day. It was agreed that Malay should be taught up to Standard Two.

From that time the school never looked back. It went from strength and in 1947 had the distinction of producing the first Malay woman-doctor in Malaysia. Objections were raised when Dr. Salma went to Singapore to study medicine but by her success, she gained a notable victory and opened the way for the women of Kedah to take a responsible part in the expanding world around them.

After World War Two, in 1954, Sultan Badlishah laid the foundation stone of the new buildings of the School which was re-named after Sultanah Asma, Sultan Badlishah's Consort (now the Tunku Perempuan).

Meanwhile, appreciating the need for the schooling of girls who were not able to go to Kampung Bahru School, Reverend Mother Tarcisius of the Penang Convent, accepted the invitation of Mak Che Manjalara, mother of Tunku Abdul Rahman, to open a school for girls in Alor Star. Consequently in 1934 St. Nicholas Convent School was opened in a building where St. Michael's School now stands.

It started with 48 pupils. It was not, however, the first Convent School to be opened in Kedah. In 1933, on Feb. 15, the Sisters of the Holy Infant Jesus had opened Father Barre's Convent School in Sungei Patani. The first Headmistress was Mrs. Hendricks. In Alor Star Mrs. Bentley was Headmistress.

KEDAH BECOMES RUBBER-CONSCIOUS

In his first year as British Adviser Mr. W.G. Maxwell initiated far-reaching reforms. The chief were enactments to provide allowances for Members of the Ruling House, to define the powers of Kathis' Courts, and to abolish debt-bondage and forced labour.

Other important enactments included the Chandu Enactment, the Private Note Enactment, the Sanitary Board Enactment, the Concession Enactment and the Land Revenue Enactment. Import duties in Langkawi were abolished and salaries were paid to penghulus. In addition there were important decisions relating to gambling-farms, opium-farms and other monopolies.

In the introduction of all these measures Maxwell had to overcome a great deal of prejudice and opposition. He became very unpopular in some quarters but by the time he went on leave in 1911 Kedah was well on the way to progress. The survey of the proposed railway-line through Kedah and Perlis had been begun, and more than 30 rubber estates of considerable size had been opened up. The State had become rubber-conscious.

Even before the Anglo-Siamese Treaty of 1909 rubber had been planted in Kedah. In 1905 the soil had been found to be very favourable and the Government had granted 10 concessions for planting rubber. Three years later, in 1908, surveys confirmed that the land was rich and well-watered. Four rubber-plantations had been opened up in the Kubang Pasu District. They were owned by the Kedah Rubber Syndicate (4,224 acres), Tunku Ibrahim (2,250 acres), Mr. C.L. Rode (603 acres) and Encik Ibrahim (500 acres). In Kota Star District Mr. Lim Eow Hong had 1,634 acres under sugar.

At first most of the estates were planted with tapioca and coconut but when the price of rubber boomed, rubber gradually replaced tapioca. In Kulim District, for instance, Mr. J.C. Pasqual commenced to plant rubber on Victoria Estate (12,746 acres) which he named after Queen Victoria. When Victoria Estate was sub-divided he planted rubber on Henrietta Estate which he named after his wife, Henrietta. Today on Henrietta Estate (3,477 acres) has been planted with oilpalm, a more profitable crop.

Owners of other estates in the Kulim area were Sandilands, Buttery and Co. (8,379 acres), Mr. Loke Chow Thye (6,305 acres), Mr. Lim Eow Hong (5,588 acres), Mr. Tan Teik Huat and Partners (4,823 acres) and Poh Huat Estates (4,662 acres).

In Kuala Muda District the principal estate-owners were Mr. Kong Hong An (7,887 acres), Mr. Khoo Seng Khoo (5,000 acres), Mr. J.C. Pasqual (4,714 acres), Mr. Fok Peng (3,834 acres), Mr. Chong Ah Phe and others (3,624 acres), Messrs. R. Young and Shona Rawten (3,030 acres), Mr. Chua Teng Cheng (2,660 acres), Mr. Hock Lye (1,383 acres), Messrs. Mathieu and Schubert (1,167 acres), Mr. B. Purdy (960 acres) and Mr. Pek Yam (917 acres).

In Bandar Bahru District Mr. Tan Weng Cheng had 2,996 acres; Kedah Rubber Plantations, 2,000 acres; and Hamburger Gummi Gesellschaft, 695 acres.

The new Land Enactment offered extremely favourable terms to rubber-planters, and in his report for 1909 Mr. Maxwell said:

"The 'rubber boom' was productive of great in dealings in rubber-estates and in applications for land for rubber-plantations. More than half of the estates in the country changed hands, and companies were

formed in London, Shanghai, Singapore and Penang to acquire estates. The influx of capital and labour, into South Kedah had been most beneficial in every way to the State."

In 1910 a Kedah Planters Association was formed with Mr. E.A. Watson as Chairman, and Messrs. Kennedy & Co. as Secretaries. Several meetings were held, principally relating to the introduction of Tamil immigration and labour. Maxwell did all he could to meet the wishes of the planting community, and in 1910 reported,

"It is interesting to planters in the Peninsula generally, to find the State coming into life in the matter of legislation with regard to Indian immigrants..... It has for a considerable time been a genuine source of grievance with planters and contractors in Kedah that they were precluded from taking over Tamil labourers from Penang."

In Kuala Muda District that year there was feverish activity in planting rubber, and over a quarter of a million trees were planted. There was the same wild activity in Kulim District where some people were so foolish as to cut down coconut and betelnut trees in order to plant rubber. One result of this rush to get rich quickly was the dimming of Kedah's prospects as a producer of tin.

By 1913 rubber-planting had made great progress but Maxwell prophetically said, "Rubber has come and rubber will probably grow; coconuts have come and coconuts may possibly go; but as long as rice is eaten in Asia, rice will be the staple crop of Kedah."

Nevertheless acreage under rubber continued to increase rapidly. Big estates expanded. Chinese towkays increased in confidence and Chinese smallholders planted with undiminished vigour. Chinese smallholdings became one of the features of Kulim and Kuala Muda Districts; and when World War One broke out in 1914, 58,000 acres were under rubber, its export valued at \$1,323,600.

THE RICE STORE OF MALAYSIA

In his report for 1913, Mr. W. G. Maxwell, the first British Adviser, wrote, "As long as rice is eaten in Asia, rice will be the staple crop in Kedah."

Today rice is not only its staple crop but Kedah has become the "Rice-store of Malaysia."

This happy result in great measure has been due to the enlightened and progressive policy pursued by the State Government and implemented by men like Tunku Ya'acob, a son of Sultan Abdul Hamid. After graduating from Cambridge he joined the Kedah Agricultural Department which was then headed by Mr. W. H. Sands. Later Tunku Ya'acob became Principal Agricultural Officer and strove to make the State self-sufficient in rice. Kedah was well on the way to achieving this objective when World War II broke out.

Padi had been planted in Kedah for centuries. According to Sir Richard Winstedt in "Malaya and its History", "fertile plains may have been irrigated under the Kings of Langkasuka (the ancient name of Kedah) the Hinduized little State which Chinese Chroniclers date back to the 1st century A.D."

"Certainly Kedah, Kelantan and Patani must have planted wet rice under the sovereignty of Sri Vijaya, and when that Malay Buddhist empire and its colonies fell before Hindu Majapahit in the 14th century, Northern Malaya came first under the influence of the Javanese and then under that of the Thai, or modern Siam, both of them experts in the irrigation of rice-fields."

"It is for these historical reasons that rice-planting reached so high a standard in the north where wide irrigable plains attracted a population large enough for rice to be cultivated even on a commercial scale."

This corresponds in many respects with what the "Hikayat Merong Mahawangsa", or "Kedah Annals", says. It places the Bujang Valley as the site of the Hindu settlement. In the surrounding swamp, good rice was easily grown; and as the population increased, rice-lands gradually extended to include the plains of Kedah and Perlis.

A Jesuit priest, Father Tallandier, who visited Kedah in 1709, said, "Its plains are traversed by many small rivers which fertilise different species of rice." Two hundred years before this, in 1517, Tome Pires, the Portuguese navigator, had mentioned it as a place stretching from Bruas in the south to Trang in the north and having enough rice for its needs.

Agriculture, however, was not organised until 1921 when the Department of Agriculture was established. In that year Raja Mahmood bin Raja Aman Shah was appointed Agricultural Officer. His office was a corner of the Harbour Office at Tanjong Chali; his staff consisted of one office-boy. Later he had a few field officers who were known as "coconut inspectors" recruited to deal with the coconut census and the control of pests.

Raja Mahmood was a dedicated agriculturist. He was a product of the School of Agriculture, Serdang, and as he compressed it himself when giving a talk to the Government English School Union, he wholeheartedly believed in the dictum of Swift that "whoever could make two ears of corn or two blades of grass to grow upon a spot of ground where only one grew, would deserve better of mankind, and do more essential service to his country."

At this time the Department was primarily occupied with coconuts, planted in the kampung in the coastal belt, the coconut industry being the major agricultural industry of Malaya at that time. Rice or wet padi was grown on the river-banks and along the main roads of North Kedah.

To improve the cultivation of padi, several padi experimental stations were set up and as padi cannot grow without water, a department dealing with drainage and irrigation was established under Mr. H.M. Butterfield. It improved the Wan Mohamed Saman Canal and other existing canals and maintained an adequate water-supply for the adjoining padi-fields.

The Drainage and Irrigation Department subsequently concentrated its attention on rice. Created in the Federation in 1906 to prevent deterioration of existing areas and to bring abandoned lands under cultivation again, in Kedah it turned its attention to the improvement and development of rice-cultivation. One of its first successes was the large part it played in the conversion of the Gelam Forest area in Kubang Pasu into arable land. At the outbreak of World War II more than 250,000 acres in Kedah were under wet padi.

A feature of the padi-harvesting season in Kedah until recently was the influx of padi-reapers from Patani. Kedah farmers did not have the manpower to cope with the large amount of padi harvested, and before the railway via Padang Besar and Sungei Golok (Kelantan) was constructed large groups of harvesters trekked from Patani.

They crossed the border at Durian Burong from where they made their way to Kuala Nerang, the road-head. It was a perilous journey. The way was infested with tigers and on one occasion a tiger carried off one of the men.

Another feature relevant to Kedah's prominence as a rice-growing country was evinced in its first postage and revenue stamps which were issued in 1912. The lower denominations (1, 3, 4, 5 and 8 cents) bore the picture of a sheaf of padi. The middle denominations (10, 20, 30, 40 and 50 cents) depicted a Malay farmer (Penghulu Mat Jaafar) wearing a baju, seluar and sarong with a conical nipah-leaf hat, plough-oxen.

HOSPITALS AND PRISONS

Before Dr. A. L. Hoops came to Kedah to organise the Medical and Prison Department, Ku Din was in charge of the old gaol in Jalan Penjara Lama, where the Police Station now stands. To' Ali Penjara was chief warder.

Ku Din spoke and wrote Malay and Siamese. He was completely trusted by the Siamese who in 1898 sent him to Setul to be Governor.

Setul had been a part of Kedah up to 1821 in which year Siam partitioned the "province" into four parts — Kedah, Kubang Pasu, Perlis and Setul.

Ku Din proved to be such an able Governor that when the Raja of Setul died and the Raja Muda was sent to Bangkok for training, the Siamese appointed him Regent.

One of the irregularities that the authorities had to contend with before the prison system was reformed, was immunity from arrest enjoyed by retainers and servants of members of the Ruling House. Chinese convicts too were let out on 'security' whenever anyone could be found to bail them out.

Soon after he arrived and built the first hospital, Hoops constructed a new gaol next to the hospital. In colonial days the doctor was also in charge of the prison. Consequently prisons like the Penang Prison and Outram Road Prison in Singapore, were usually situated close to hospitals: This facilitated administration under one officer.

The walls of the new gaol were built of brick about 18 feet high, and on the top of the wall were loose bricks which were easily dislodged by anyone attempting to escape.

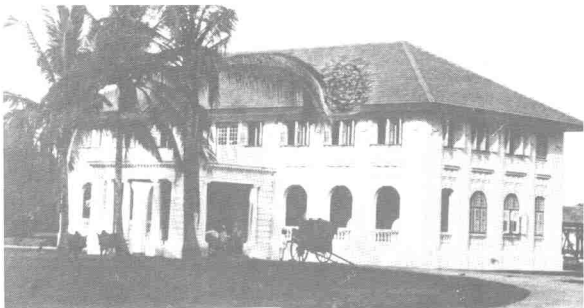
Hoops was State Surgeon as well as Superintendent of Prisons. Wan Mohamed Amin was gaoler and To' Ali Penjara continued as chief warder and occasionally acted as hangman. Another senior warder was To' Chin.

One big reform after the appointment of Hoops was the abolition of the "keris" in the execution of condemned prisoners. Effective gallows were installed and in later years the services of a proficient prison officer from Taiping was requisitioned whenever required.

Other reforms included the introduction of workshops for carpentry, handwork, rice-milling, blacksmiths, tin-smiths and weavers. A laundry washed the uniforms and clothes of hospital and gaol personnel.

Before reforms were effected prisoners who had served half of their sentences and who were well-behaved, were allowed to go out on Fridays. This practice was stopped. Long-sentence prisoners were not usually allowed to go outside the walls. If allowed they were fettered with two chains from the ankles to the waist. The restricted freedom of movement and minimised chances of escape.

Short-sentence prisoners did extra-mural work. They levelled grounds, cleaned and swept gardens, carried water to the hospital and government quarters and cleaned the town. They were also employed on the construction and maintenance of the race-course and the golf-course. During the most severe cholera epidemic in 1913 they were sent out in gangs with sanitary inspectors and dressers to disinfect houses.



General Hospital, Alor Setar 1922.

Convicts who were outstanding for their good conduct were made assistant warders to assist the warders who were usually Sikh and Punjabi.

In 1923, at about 5.30 a.m., while food was being served, nine prisoners rushed the inner gate, seized guns and bayonets from the armoury, snatched the key of the outer gate from the door-keeper whom they beat severely, and escaped. Seven of them were re-captured the same morning but the other two got away completely.

As a result of this prison break the Prison was reorganised. It was placed under a European gaoler, Mr. E.C. Thomas. Mr. S.E. Dennys, a former Malayan Civil Service Officer, the State Auditor was Superintendent of Prison too.

The prisoners who were never re-captured, probably got across the border. There was no extradition agreement at that time and it was comparatively easy for a bandit to commit banditry on the Kedah side and slip across to Siam where he could not be arrested. The chief crossing places were at Durian Burong (a few miles from Kuala Nerang), Sintok (in the north) and Baling (in the south).

Occasionally escape was in the reverse direction. To' Poh, a Siamese rebel, crossed the border from Siam to take refuge in Baling. Siam asked Kedah to help arrest him. By persuasion and guile Che Mat the District Officer of Kuala Muda, persuaded the rebel to meet the Sultan of Kedah as a distinguished visitor.

All Baling turned out to give the rebel chief and his strong force a royal welcome. At Alor Star a guard-of-honour was mounted at the wharf to await his arrival. Nearing Alor Star To' Poh and his men were persuaded to put aside their swords, krisses and guns in deference to the Sultan.

When they landed they were received by the guard-of-honour and escorted to the State Prison instead of the Balai Besar. They were later sent to Siam. For his part in the arrest the Siamese awarded Che Mat a medal.

Half a century later Baling was the venue of the abortive truce negotiations between Tunku Abdul Rahman and Chin Peng.

BUFFALOES FOR FARMING AND FIGHTING

Mr. J.J. Fleury was one of the first European officers to come to Kedah and the only one who owned a fighting-buffalo. He was appointed State Veterinary Officer in 1903, and when he retired in 1936 the livestock industry in Kedah was on a sound foundation.

The State was providing a satisfactory fresh meat supply to other parts of Peninsular Malaya, valued at \$500,000 annually. Most of the live animals for slaughter — oxen, buffaloes and goats — were imported from Siam through the frontier station at Padang Besar.

Buffaloes were the wide-horned Malayan or Siamese type upon which the Kedah padi-planter had depended for generations to cultivate his crops. It was to him what the horse was to the farmer in the wheatlands in other parts of the world, and the wealth of a man was assessed by the number of buffaloes that he owned.

In fact they were so precious that in 1667 A.D. the laws of Datuk Sri Paduka Tuan made provision for their care and maintenance.

No one, for instance, was permitted to sell buffaloes and other cattle without a certificate from the headman under pain of arrest. Buyers and sellers had to pay a purchase-tax of three 'mas'. The salestax was two 'mas'; and if an owner of cattle wished to slaughter an animal he had to obtain a permit from the headman who was entitled to the horns and hide of the animal slaughtered.

The code also provided for straying buffaloes. After ploughing, an owner had to send his buffalo to a common or watch it himself day and night to ensure that it did not do any damage. If it escaped from its cords and damaged rice-fields it could be killed, stabbed to death by the owner of the damaged field, without any penalty.

It was also forbidden to tether half-wild buffaloes by the roadside. If this rule was disobeyed and the animal wounded a person, the owner had to pay compensation; and if the person died, as happened in Kuala Lumpur recently, the owner was put to death. Similarly, buffaloes which were known to chase people, had to have a crosspiece on their horns. This practice prevails to this day.

The buffalo therefore was the animal around which the farmer's life centred and buffalo-fights became a popular pastime. Until they were prohibited in the 1930's they took place every year at Anak Bukit, on the padang opposite the entrance to the Istana.

On such an occasion all Kedah appeared to foregather in a bewildering throng. Raja and rakyat levelled by their common interest, rubbed shoulders with one another as they cast appraising eyes on the buffalo they fancied.

Each combatant was held under control by a cord passed through his nose-ring. His black leathery body glistened with stimulating 'chili' water with which he was drenched, and as a result of three months of expert dieting and systematic massaging he was the embodiment of physical fitness from snout to tail. His wicked little eyes gleamed in a massive head above which reared a pair of large curved horns bedecked with coloured strips of paper.

Around him stood his trainer and his assistants who beat upon "kompang" waved branches of trees, and from time to time, shouted 'sorak' in chorus.

After paying a dollar at the box-office a spectator carefully climbed up the attap-roofed grandstand made of stout uprights supporting longitudinal platforms about 12 feet above the ground. The structure was square with sides 100 yards long.

An opening about four yards wide was left at each corner for the ingress and egress of the combatants. The turf enclosed by these platforms was the arena. Two small flagstaffs were planted on opposite sides. These were to distinguish between "kampung" and 'padang' — the usual designations of the combatants, and the red flag indicating the former and a green flag the latter.

Tier upon tier of faces met the eye at every dawn, The Sultan and his entourage were accommodated in a royal box above which floated his standard. The other platforms were packed with people whose garments were strikingly colourful. The ladies had a special side of the square reserved exclusively for them, and were dressed in their smartest silks.

It was a blaze of brilliant coloured 'slendang' and exquisite sarong. The men too were in 'seluar' and 'baju' and sarong of hardly less striking hues. It was colour, colour everywhere.

When the fight was about to begin the green and red flags were hoisted. An expectant rush fell upon the multitude as the two buffaloes were led into the arena and then up to each other, their heads lowered and their horns protruding. It was the most crucial moment; for sometimes one buffalo might have no stomach for the fight and might turn tail and run away, to the deep disappointment of the throng.

On the other hand should both animals be willing to make a match of it (as happened when the writer witnessed a fight) the guide-ropes were slipped at the first impact and the horns of the buffaloes were locked. It was like a wrestling match. Each beast brought his ponderous weight to bear upon his opponent, and punctuated his pushes with vicious jabs.

They carried on in this style for several minutes, angling for a coup de grace. All this while each trainer tried to reinforce the efforts of his charge by pushing from behind and shouting encouragement and advice.

Great excitement prevailed. Not a movement was missed by the thrilled spectators who jumped and shouted with as much zest as if they were taking part in the fight themselves.

Eventually the better and stronger tactician of the two succeeded in driving the tip of his right horn into its opponent's neck. With a tremendous heave, summoning up all its strength, it lifted its antagonist to its hind legs, dropped it suddenly and spent by its exertion, made a ghost of a stab at its prostrate body.

The fallen by now had had enough of the fight, it realised that discretion was the better part of valour and lumbered out of the ring through the nearest exit, pursued by the victor. Fear lent speed to its legs and it outdistanced its pursuer.

The moment the fight was decided pandemonium broke loose. The backers of the winner who carried their money shouted themselves hoarse, waved sticks, threw umbrellas into the air, and jumped for joy. The pent-up emotions of some found expression even in dance-steps and gestures of the "bersilar".



A Buffalo Fight in 1929

CHAPTER FORTY-FOUR

HORSE RACING

The successful Kedah Gymkhana Club meet at Alor Star recently, recalls to mind that the Club was founded half a century ago. It held its first meeting in 1921, on what was sometimes called in racing-circles "Alor Star's Ballymena Course." It was so named because Mr. J.J. Fleury and Dr. A.L. Hoops modelled it on the race-track in Ballymena in Northern Ireland.

Both of them were Irishmen. Hoops was a graduate of Trinity College, Dublin, and Fleury came from Killarney where he was at school with the Very Rev. Brother Barnitus Kennedy, at one time Visitor of the Schools of the Christian Brothers in the East.

Before this, soon after Mr. W.G. Maxwell assumed office as the first British Adviser, a racecourse and golf links had been made around the Residency at Bakar Bata.

Reminiscent about this in "Malaya in History," Maxwell wrote:

"Convict labour also made a nine-hole golf course designed in such a manner as not to interfere with a race-course which was also being made round the house Every year there was a gymkhana meeting and visitors came up from Penang (by boat) with their ponies.

Tunku Mahmud and some other Malays were keen horsemen, and rode regularly for afternoon exercise. Dr. A.L. Hoops, the State Surgeon, and Mr. J.J. Fleury, the State Veterinary Officer, were enthusiasts. At every meeting, on top of the usual gymkhana races and events, there was a cross-country steeple-chase.

The course, laid out by Dr. Hoops and Mr. Fleury, covered some miles and lay over padi-fields baked to the hardness of cement, and intersected by frequent drains of varying sizes. It really was a dangerous course, and as it was all out of sight of the spectators until the final run-in to the winning-post, the wives of the riders were sometimes sorely afraid until their husbands, battered, and bruised maybe by falls, appeared in view....."

Some years before suzerainty was transferred from Siam to Great Britain in 1909, gymkhanas had been held in Anak Bukit Garden. The events included scurries for ponies, jumping and races for buffaloes. Fleury who had joined the Kedah Service in 1903, was the leading light. He even owned and trained a couple of buffaloes for buffalo-fights. These fights were banned in 1935, as was cock-fighting which is carried on surreptitiously in some 'kampung' even to this day.

After the present race-course was completed just before World War I broke out in 1914, the steeplechase was less hazardous. The course started where the United Park now is, crossed some drains, and continued on to the racecourse which it entered at the corner near the railway crossing.

In the first few years the steeplechase was held on the Sunday morning after the Saturday evening when the other events were held. One steeplechase was won by Mrs. K. Wilkinson, wife of the State Forest Officer, who lived in Sungai Patani. Tunku Mahmud's "Babz II" with Mr. E.M. Stowell, up was lengths in the lead when the field reached the railway corner.

Tunku Mahmud appeared to have the race in the bag, unfortunately for him the rider suddenly remembered that he had not cleared one hurdle. So, to the surprise of the spectators on the opposite side of the course, he turned his mount round to jump the fence that he had missed. By that time "Marie Dresslar" ridden by Mrs. Wilkinson, had overtaken "Babz II".



Tunku Mahmud on his favourite horse.

Falls were frequent. Mr. Harry Pearson, a well known gentleman-rider in his day, who came to Kedah to open the West Coast Contracting Company, was one day thrown. He was badly shaken but not seriously hurt. Not so fortunate was Mrs. Bridges, wife of Dr. D. Bridges, the State Surgeon. One morning she was thrown by "Cremor", a fractious Egyptian stallion owned by the Regent Tunku Ibrahim. Her spine was broken and she never walked again.

The first meet in Alor Star was graced by the presence of Sultan Abdul Hamid of Kedah and Sultan Iskandar Shah of Perak whose support contributed in large measure to the success of the occasion. The success was so great that when the committee invited entries for the meeting the following year it used the advertisement columns of the "Pinang Gazatte" to refer to it as a 'howling success'.

As in the early days in Penang, the race-day in Alor Star was declared a half-holiday to give the public a chance to go to the races.

As racing developed in Penang and the railway made transport easy, horse-owners in Kedah turned their eyes to Penang and farther afield. The Sultan of Kedah gave a cup for an event which still bears his name, and in 1923 the Regent of Kedah, Tunku Ibrahim, registered his first win on the turf when his horse 'Fair Dinkum' won the Selangor Cup on the first day of the Selangor Turf Club meeting.

Closer home, Kedah owners entered horses for the Penang Races on the old racecourse in Sepoy Lines, now occupied by the St. George's Girls School and the Maternity Hospital. One successful horse was 'Desmondette' owned and trained by Fleury. He was not a habitual punter and had only one ticket on the mare.

As more and more horses were imported the old racecourse was found to be inadequate and the present course at Batu Gantong was made. After the prize-giving at the last meet at Sepoy Lines on Jan 7, 1939, Mr. J.P. Souter mounted the bandmaster's platform and the strains of "Auld Lang Syne" rang down the curtain on the course which had served turfites in Penang (and Kedah) for 70 years.

TRANSPORTATION IN THE EARLY DAYS

Exactly one year before the railway reached Alor Setar (in October, 1915) the line from Bukit Mertajam junction to Pinang Tunggal on the Sungei Muda, the boundary between Kedah and the Province, had been opened. Five months later it had pushed on from Pinang Tunggal to Gurun, thereby increasing the growth of Sungei Patani and Bedong whose old name was "Pengkalan Ayam," i.e. a landing-stage for poultry which were loaded here on "perahu" for export to Penang. Much poultry was reared in the surrounding "kampung".

As soon as the railway-line reached Bedong the Kedah Government put up for sale 45 lots of land beside the railway-line at an upset price of \$25 per relong on condition that a house should be erected upon the lot within 12 months of sale. At this time Tunku Mohamed Abaidah who lived at Kulim (where his father, Tunku Mohamed Saad, was generally known as "Raja Kulim") was Assistant Director of Lands, South Kedah. In this official capacity he was responsible for land-administration as far north as Gurun. The Land Office, Central Kedah, had not yet come into being.

After the railway-line to Alor Setar was completed there was a slight delay in construction before it continued to Bukit Ketri in Perlis near where clay medallions stamped with the image of Buddha and inscribed with Siamese characters, had been discovered several years before.

In 1918 the line eventually linked up with the Royal Siamese Railways at Padang Besar thereby providing a train route from Singapore to Bangkok. Up to this time one way to reach Bangkok from the west coast of the Malay Peninsula was by the elephant-route from Alor Setar via Changloon and Sadao to Singgora, more or less following the road taken by overland travellers from Haadyai today.

It was a hazardous journey, as can be seen from the following letter from a French missionary, Father Pecot, in Kedah to the Superior of the Seminary in Penang, dated April 17, 1822.

"It is decided that I shall leave for Siam and travel through Quedah. I have just heard that the Viceroy of this Kingdom has to go to Ligor. I do not know him but I will, however, go straight to him so that he may take me as his travelling companion under any title he wishes to assign me — chaplain, missionary or simple soldier.

We shall have to sleep out of doors for at least five nights while crossing the jungle. Our food will not be famous. It will consist mainly of biscuits and salt fish. Happy shall we be if the thieves do not steal our modest provisions. We shall have to ride on elephants. Even His Majesty the King of France cannot boast of such a privilege! It will certainly not prove as comfortable as a royal carriage as these animals have the knack of treating their riders to a very shaky ride!....."

The Superior in reply tried to dissuade Father Pecot from making the journey, saying.

"I think, Father, that I am wasting my ink and paper. Anyhow there are things about which we cannot keep silence. Yesterday I went to speak to Mr. Ferrao about Quedah. He does not approve of your proposal to go to the East. He does not understand why the Governor should go away. (He found his position untenable because the Malays were waging a guerilla war against the Siamese and he had asked his father, the Raja of Ligor, to be relieved of his post — J.F.A.)

SUNGEI PATANI

As mentioned in the last chapter, the railway reached Alor Setar in October, 1915. Until then the normal means of travelling between Penang and the Kedah capital was by steamer, which took about six to eight hours. A French missionary who visited Alor Setar in 1883, described the trip as a rough one, with many passengers becoming sea-sick.

"At 9 o'clock," he wrote, "we embarked on 'The Fly' which measured about 15 by 3½ metres. We arrived at the mouth of the Kedah River at about 4 in the afternoon. There we dropped anchor and awaited the Customs officers.

"While going through the necessary formalities we surveyed the fort which guards the entrance to the river. It was jerry-built, I could not judge the size of the cannon as they were facing us.

"We sailed up the river for about an hour. The tide was favourable and we disembarked at the port of Laosta, capital of the kingdom, where the Sultan's residence is."

In 1911 an alternative route was overland. The traveller set out from Alor Setar by pony-trap and went to Kota Sarang Semut, about 12 miles southward, along a metalled road which crossed the Pendang River by a steel bridge. If the tide was up it was possible to go by perahu on the Mat Saman Canal to Guar Chempedak, about eight miles away. From there a footpath followed the Gurun River through orchards.

At Gurun (which derives its name from the Siamese word "Kurun" meaning a broad drain round a plain tree or "kampung" to prevent animals, especially wild elephants from damaging plants, people and houses), the traveller usually spent the night in the police lock-up because there was no better place.

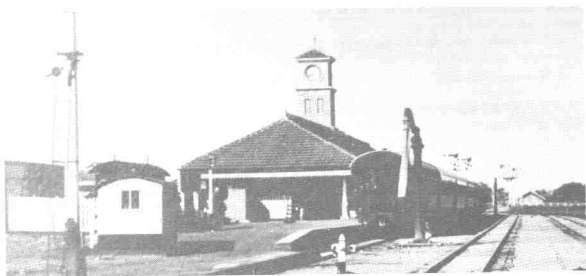
From Gurun the footpath followed the present road for two miles before branching off behind Bukit Ayer Nasi to Semeling where there were tin mines.

The journey from Semeling was continued by perahu or boat down the Merbok River and through Sungei Trus to Kota Kuala Muda. A sampan then ferried one across the river to the opposite bank at Permatang Bendahari where the Province road-system began. Kulim which was named after the large number of "kulim" trees found there, was linked to this system by a short and tortuous road. Cart-tracks interlaced the rubber-plantation which were then being developed.

At this time Sungei Patani town did not exist. Chinese lived in a collection of huts on the high ground in what we now call Pekan Lama, and Malays occupied "Penghulu Him," a kampung named after Penghulu Ibrahim. Kota Kuala Muda was the chief town of Kuala Muda District but it was not well-situated and could not be developed.

Mr. Maxwell decided that it was necessary to have a market-town and an administrative centre between Alor Setar and Kulim. He therefore planned a new town and in 1912 after he had acquired the land and compensated the landowners, he sent engineers to start the layout. Sungei Patani town is therefore 60 years old now. (1972)

As the rubber industry developed, the town increased in size and importance, and at one time there was a suggestion that it should become the administrative centre of the State. An indication of its prosperity may be gathered from the fact that the Hongkong and Shanghai Bank erected its impressive Moorish-style building here and opened for business in 1923. It was not, however, the first bank in Kedah; for the Chartered Bank had stolen a march on it and opened a branch in Alor Setar in 1921.



Alor Setar Railway Station was first opened in 1915.

The name "Sungei Patani" is said to have been derived from its geophysical position between two rivers — the Sungei Patani and the Sungei Pasir — which flow parallel to each other, "bertanding" in Malay. Local dialect changed "bertanding" into "petaning", which, it is claimed, became "patani" in course of time.

Another version of the origin of the name was advanced by Mr. Anker Rentse many years ago. He suggested that it might refer to an ancient trade route from Patani on the east coast of the Malay Peninsula, up along the Patani River through its gold-bearing areas, and then down through Kedah somewhere along the Ketil River towards Kuala Merbok. This line, he said, would pass the present Sungei Patani Kedah.

It therefore seemed probable that the town derived its name from the river by which the Patani traders arrived in Kedah with their products. Gold, spices and merchandise were easy to carry on elephants which were commonly used for transport in South Thailand and Upper Perak.

The theory is within the bounds of possibility. Tin from the Rahman Tin Mines at Klian Intan were taken to Penang by river via Kuala Muda, as mentioned by Michael Topping in "Dalrymple's Oriented Repertory" in 1800 or thereabouts.

"Qualla Murha (Merbok)" he wrote, "is a large river deep and rapid. The water is here always fresh to the sea. The land is high and bank sandy. The heavy surge which breaks upon this shore during the south-west monsoon, by opposing the current from the river has formed a dangerous sand-bank extending three miles out to sea, and on which there is only one fathom of water.

This bank reaches almost as far as Qualla Muda. Qualla Muda is a shallow and rapid river but convenient on account with its communication with the tin-mines.

The annual production here is about 1,000 piculs. This small quantity, however, is not owing to the scarcity of ore but to the want of hands, and to the poor pay given to the few people employed."

In another paragraph Topping wrote, "Great numbers of Paltany (Patani) people nearly 15,000 have migrated and come down to Qualla Muda. If these people settle there they will greatly increase the cultivation and benefit Pinang. It is needless to add that the King of Quedah has been advised of the advantages he would reap by having the country opposite Pinang well cultivated. The soil is of the richest quality."

SPORTING ORGANISATIONS

As British influence spread, more and more games were introduced.

Hockey was started by Mr. J.S.W. Arthur in 1917. He was a fine type of British civil servant. In a letter to the writer he once said, "It is a social duty to make the lives of other people pleasant." He lived up to this ideal, especially in sport. He was a good golfer, a proficient polo-player, and a yachtsman.

He fostered hockey by providing the sticks, the balls and the shandy. The grounds of his quarters in Jalan Maxwell (now Jalan Bendahara) were sufficiently large for a hockey pitch, and every Wednesday he would get together two hockey XI's. One of the players was his houseboy, Enam. The others were clerks and other Government officers who had played the game in Penang and Perak before they joined the Kedah Government Service.

After some time Arthur decided to pit the prowess of his team against an outside XI. So they took on the Penang Free School team who were on a visit to Alor Star in 1918. Before the game began Arthur got his men together in his sitting-room and gave them a short talk on tactics and finer points of the game. It was not surprising therefore that they were victorious.

After this initial success Arthur raised a Kedah team to play the Penang Cricket Club in Penang. The P.C.C. was the foremost hockey club and had some good hockey players like W.H. Lee-Warner. The Kedah team included Arthur, H.W. Rikeard, Saaid and Mustapha who were brothers, as were A.V. Perrin and B. Perrin who had played representative hockey in Ireland. F.C.D. Labrooy, Abdul Rashid Pilus, Abdul Rahman Haji Samaudin and the writer.

The team gave a good account of itself and beat the P.C.C. by two goals to nil. The two Perrins who were planters in South Kedah, distinguished themselves in this game.

After Arthur was transferred from Kedah (he later on became Resident Councillor, Penang) hockey languished until it was revived by the Kedah Warders Recreation Club. The warders had a field of their own and the goaler, Mr. A.E. Watson, was a keen hockey player. So he got the warders to play together until hockey enthusiasts in the town raised a team to play the warders once a week.

They kept the game alive until Tunku Yacob came back from Cambridge and the Kedah Hockey Association was formed. He was President and the writer the first Hon. Secretary. After that Hockey League competitions were held annually and Kedah began to take on other States.

They were able to hold their own against Penang but could not make headway against the formidable Perak team which included five or six Clifford School boys, until one wet day when the conditions militated against Perak's fast play and Kedah beat them by one goal to nil.

Cricket was started at the Government English School, Alor Star, by the writer in 1920, with the support of Mr. Abdul Rashid Pilus.

After initial shortcomings such as lack of gear, a proper pitch and other facilities, the game developed gradually and the School was able to hold its own against the Penang Free School and St. Xavier's.

In 1921 the Alor Star Cricket Club was formed with Mr. Oswald Watson, an Australian Government Surveyor, as President, and the writer as Hons. Secretary.

One of the aims of the Club was to liaise with the Cricket Section of Sungei Patani Club. World War I had ended and British planters from the public schools were coming out to work on the rubber-estates around Sungei Patani and Kulim. This led to the formation of a Kedah Cricket Association, and inter-state matches were played. Mr. C.O. Tyndale-Powell, Manager of Sungei Tukang Estate, was an enthusiastic cricketer and did a great deal to get the game going in Central Kedah.

Fifty years ago tennis flourished at all clubs. The Kedah Lawn Tennis Association was formed in 1922. Encik Mohamed Zain Ariffin was the first Hon. Secretary. Mr. J.H. Spowers, an Australian in the Survey Office, Kulim, held the Championship for many years until it was wrested from him by Mr. Sim Boo Jeong, a clerk in the PWD, Alor Star. Sultan Badlishah was a keen tennis player and with Zain Ariffin who had been contemporary with him at Wadham College, Oxford, invariably won the doubles.

Rugby which has sometimes been described as "a licensed form of assault and battery," was first played at the Government English School, Alor Star, when Zain Ariffin returned from England. He had played it at Dulwich. Encik Salleh bin Hussain of the tutorial staff, who had come from Raffles College, continued coaching when Zain Ariffin left off, until a European master, Mr. R.A. Goodchild, took over and made the School XV one of the strongest in Malaya.

In Central Kedah ex-English public school boys were responsible for promoting the game. They formed the nucleus of the State XV, which participated in inter-state games.

Athletics were not organised until recent times. Schools held their annual sports but as the pupils had no birth certificates, it was not possible to grade them according to age. Grading according to height proved unfair because short boys with prowess easily beat taller schoolmates who were not so agile.

Matters came to such a pass that those responsible at one stage almost seriously decided to try and gauge age by looking at the teeth of the competitors!

WORLD WAR TWO BREAKS OUT

The war that changed all our lives, came to Malaya on Dec. 8 1941. The Japanese decided to attack the north, and Kedah and Kelantan bore the brunt of the first onslaughts.

The invasion was sudden and contrary to expectations of the British High Command. In September, 1941, for instance, Britain's Far Eastern Commander-in-Chief, Air Chief Marshal Sir Robert Brooke-Popham, reported that in his opinion it was highly improbable that Japan could be contemplating war in the south for several months.

On the civilian side the Governor of Singapore, Sir Shenton Thomas, wanted the whole defence concept in Malaya to be subordinated to the economic contribution (by means of the tin and rubber industries), that Malaya could make to the war which had broken out in Europe in 1939.

Although the general belief was that the British position was impregnable, preparations were made for a war which seemed remote or might never come.

In Alor Star the civilian population were enrolled as Air Raid Precaution Wardens, Auxiliary Firemen and Medical Auxiliaries. A Kedah Volunteer Force was formed.

On the military side, the "Jitra Line" was designed to cover the road-junction where the road to Perlis branches off from the main trunk road to Thailand.

For some months before the out-break of hostilities intermittent night-curfews were imposed upon residents as armaments and ammunition were moved up under cover of darkness to fortify the Line.

When war appeared imminent, General Wavell who had been appointed Commander-in-Chief in the Far East, came up to Alor Star to see for himself what the defences were like. He pronounced that they were not solid.

In Alor Star itself, except for the presence of soldiers and military units, life went on as usual. From time to time orders were flashed on cinema-screens recalling the troops to barracks; but everyone thought it was only an exercise.

The first ominous sign came on Oct. 22, 1941, when a long, strangely-shaped, twisted cloud was noticed very high up in the northern sky. The superstitious declared that it portended evil; others said it was caused by a British plane at great height. The latter were correct in their surmise that it was a plane but wrong in thinking it was "friendly." The cloud formed by smoke emitted from a Japanese plane which was making a reconnaissance over north-west Malaya where the British had aerodromes at Alor Star, Sungei Patani, Mata Kuching (Butterworth) and Taiping in addition to smaller airfields nearby.

In less than three weeks all doubts were settled. At dawn on Dec. 8 the Japanese bombed the Alor Star and Sungei Patani aerodromes, taking the British completely by surprise. Shortly after this a news broadcast came over the air to say that the Japanese forces had landed at Bachok in Kelantan and the British troops there were machine-gunning the beaches.

The first reaction of residents of Alor Star was one of shock and surprise. They were astounded but did not panic, confident in their belief that the authorities would be able to control the situation.



*Major General Sukigawa Seiji,
Governor of Kedah 1942-43*

Their first contact with reality came on the following evening when about 60 Japanese planes hovered over the town.

Mobile anti-aircraft batteries were immediately moved into Alor Star. From positions they took up in the town, they fired shells at the enemy who sailed majestically overhead without being hit.

To many who had never heard big guns and seen enemy-planes overhead before, the experience was most terrifying. Children wailed, adults prayed, all expecting walls to come crashing down about their ears at any minute. The Japanese, however, made no attempt to drop a bomb, and after the better part of half an hour, they flew away.

In the meantime, although they had been warned by British Intelligence that Japanese convoys had been sighted making for Singgora, the British forces had been ordered that in no circumstances should they cross the frontier until the Japanese had struck the first blow. Thus shackled, the British Commander was unable to take any action before the Japanese began landing at Singgora.

The Japanese had acted with consummate dissimulation. On the morning of Dec. 7, after passing Cape Cambodia at the southern tip of Indo-China the convoy altered course as if proceeding to Bangkok. At noon it changed course and headed towards the east coast of the Malay peninsula. By daybreak on Dec. 8 the advance part of the force had disembarked. Their first objective was to capture the air-field, which they did without much resistance.

Siamese artillery after that kept on shelling the air-fields to prevent Japanese planes from using them but at noon, in the face of superior artillery fire from guns which had been brought ashore in the late morning, Siamese resistance stopped at the command of Premier Pibul.

Having established a beach-head, the Japanese quickly marshalled their forces for a break through the frontier without loss of time, to forestall the British counter-attack.

JAPANESE ADVANCE INTO MALAYA

In the face of the Japanese advance the Kedah branch of the railways stopped functioning on Dec. 13, 1941. Four days later the military forces which were composed of two brigades of the 11th Indian Division, withdrew to the Krian River.

Their first clash with the Japanese had taken place 10 days before, at Sadao, 10 miles inside Thai territory.

As narrated previously, the advance column had reached Sadao at dusk on Dec. 8. They had taken up positions along the only road through the area so that they could fire on enemy-troops moving towards the frontier.

They did not have long to wait. In less than three hours a Japanese detachment came along, spear-headed by three tanks whose lights blazed through the pitch-black night.

This detachment had been formed even before disembarkation was completed. Speed was essential to forestall the British before they could reach the beach-head at Singgora and counter attack. Moreover, a noonday report from a reconnoitring plane had told them that a British column was moving north from Changloon.

In the first encounter two of the Japanese tanks were knocked out but the soldiers who were following in trucks, debussed and began an enveloping movement through the rubber-trees.

After an hour of fighting the British force withdrew, leaving behind in an armoured car a map showing the disposition of troops around Changloon and the Jitra Line. It was of tremendous value to the invaders during the next 10 days.

The Japanese then halted and waited for reinforcements. Thus ended the first day of war.

In the meantime the British had lost mastery in the air. The surprise bombing of Alor Star and Sungei Patani airfields at dawn on Dec. 8, had damaged them and made them useless, but the R.A.F. squadron based at Mata Kuching, Butterworth, was able to take off and raid Singgora where they scored direct hits and strafed the invaders. All the planes returned safely.

The next morning while the men were having their breakfast before taking off, Japanese bombers and fighters came over in strength and destroyed all but one of the planes on the ground.

Piloted by Squadron Leader Arthur Scarf, the lone plane took off and fought its way through "scores and scores" of enemy — fighters to Singgora where it bombed and strafed forward positions of the Japanese.

His mission completed, Scarf started to fight his way back. His arm was shot to ribbons. Jap bullets thudded into his back. He knew he was dying. Nearing Alor Star, he said, "I know this place, it's Alor Star," and crashed in the marshy padi-field east of the race-course.

His crew, unhurt, carried him away from the plane as doctors and nurses from the nearby military hospital came up. They were on duty within perimeter bounded by the main trunk-road. Jalan Hospital, and the railway to which all European residents had been evacuated for safety.

Scarf had good reason to know Alor Star. His wife was a nursing sister there. They had been married in Penang six months before the outbreak of war.

From the military hospital he was transferred to the Alor Star General Hospital.

Writing about it afterwards Mrs. Scarf whose maiden name was Scarfe, said:

"Six months after our marriage in Penang I was on duty in the hospital when we heard that an R.A.F. officer was due in as a casualty. I went to see him. It was Pongo."

"He was terribly wounded. His back was riddled with bullet-holes. His left arm was so badly shot up that it had to be amputated. Despite all this, Pongo was as charming as ever. He never lost consciousness while I was with him."

She gave two pints of blood in an attempt to save her husband's life but he died before he could receive the transfusion.

For his bravery, Scarf was awarded the Victoria Cross, the first V.C. in the Malayan Campaign. He was buried in Alor Star's waterlogged Christian Cemetery but after the war his remains were removed to the War Graves Cemetery in Taiping.

CHAPTER FIFTY

THE RAIL WITHDRAWAL

Shackled by the order that British forces were in no circumstances to cross the frontier until the Japanese had struck the first blow, the British lost the initiative when the Japanese advance forces landed on Singgora beaches in the early hours of Dec. 8, 1941.

It was not until 5.30 p.m. that same day that the first troops of the 11th Indian Division under Major-General Murray Lyon crossed the Kedah-Siam border at Bukit Kayu Hitam. At dusk about 6.30 p.m., the column reached Sadao, 10 miles inside Siamese territory, and halted to await developments.

In the meantime an armoured train driven by the writer's brother, the late Sergeant Eddie Augustin of the Railway Operating Maintenance Company (ROMC) of the Federated Malay States Volunteer Force (FMSVF) advanced 10 miles into Siam and blew up the Haadyai - Padang Besar bridge and then withdrew to Padang Besar.

The following diary kept by Sgt. Augustin gives a first-hand account of the fighting along the railway in Kedah sector of the Battle of Malaya in the opening days of the war in 1941:-

Friday, Dec. 5: Our unit (composed of Chinese, Eurasian, Indian and Malay Personnel of the F.M.S. Railways under Captain H.P. Yates, himself a railwayman) was ordered to move from the Kedah Volunteer Force Drill Hall in Alor Star to the Sultan Abdul Hamid College Hostel nearby.

Saturday, Dec. 6: 1700 hours: The O.C., Capt. Yates, instructed me to go to the locoshed and get the armoured engine ready.

After getting up steam, my first fireman, Sapper Donald U'Ren (now Adviser to Asian Transport Workers in various parts of Asia in connection with Trade Union Administration, Finance and Negotiations) the second fireman, Sapper Megat Zakariah, and I drew ammunition and rations for two days.

2200 hours: Ordered to proceed to Bukit Ketri and await signal to go to Bukit Ketri, pick up troops there, and go on to Padang Besar. Two troop-trains would follow at interval of 400 yards.

2400 hours: Reached Arau.

Sunday, Dec. 7 - 0200 hours: The two following trains arrived. The boys were in high spirits. Being senior NCO, I kept them out of mischief.

Monday, Dec. 8 - 0800 hours: Heard a loud explosion nearby and saw many aeroplanes. Anticipated action. Not sure how far we would have to go, and having some misgivings as to whether there was sufficient coal, I phoned to Koding for more. At 1000 hours a breakdown train brought it.

1600 hours: Received orders to proceed to Bukit Ketri where we picked up some Punjabi soldiers under Capt. Burns. The detachment included sappers and miners.

1900 hours: moved forward cautiously into Thai territory. Reaching the big Haadyai-Padang Besar bridge, the sappers prepared to blow it up.

Ordered to take the train a mile back. While waiting for the blow up heard enemy convoys rumbling on the road half a mile away.

The destruction of the bridge completed, we rushed back to Koding.

Tuesday, Dec. 9 — 0530 hours: Arrived at Kodiang. Rested there for a couple of hours and then returned to Bukit Ketri where we were on the alert all day and night.

Wednesday, Dec. 10 — 0600 hours: Moved back a little as enemy artillery were finding their range.

1800 hours: Ordered to retreat.

At Kodiang found two barrels of engine-oil and cylinder-oil. Filled our boxes to the brim and then poured all the remaining oil into the ground to deny it to the enemy.

Until ordered to withdraw at 23 hours, patrolled the line between Kodiang and Arau.

Thursday, Dec. 11 — 1800 hours: ordered to retreat to Tunjang. In pouring rain sappers and miners blew up bridges. We afterwards took the men to Anak Bukit. That night we patrolled the canal between Anak Bukit and Tunjang.

Friday, Dec. 12 — 1300 hours: Some of the East Surreys emerged from the jungle on our right. Was pleasantly surprised to see among them a friend of mine carrying a tommy-gun. To celebrate our re-union we shared a bottle of lime juice.

While talking we noticed a suspicious movement in an adjoining padi-field. Trailed it for a mile until an Indian soldier came to tell us the enemy were trying to surround us. Sent off the information to headquarters, warned all troops in the vicinity, and awaited orders, within minutes came the order to withdraw. A train with coaches arrived on the scene. Loaded troops and took them back to Anak Bukit. Five minutes later the Japanese attacked.

Saturday, Dec. 13 — 0800 hours: Took in water at Alor Star after patrolling the Alor Star — Anak Bukit section the whole night.

Ordered to withdraw. When we were about to set off a terrific explosion rocked the neighbourhood — the sappers had blown up the Alor Star railway-bridge.

The demolition, however, was only partially successful. The rails still rested on the girders. Orders came to run the engine over the bridge and sink it in the river.

I was about to do this when Capt. Burns came and asked me to show him how to manipulate the levers. I volunteered to do the job myself but he ordered me off the engine because my legs were water-bitten and in bad shape.

My firemen and I therefore unloaded our belongings and saw the engine go thundering off. To our amazement it jumped over the broken rails, righted itself, and went on. We doubled after it. As we did so firing broke out in our rear.

To head off the engine I tried to get a lift from a passing truck but there was no room for me on it. However, 1½ miles farther on an Royal Artillery battery took me a mile, until they received orders to turn back. In great pain I trudged 12 miles before a truck picked me up. Having had no sleep for five days, I dropped off to sleep, to wake up with a start when we reached Sungei Patani.

Went to the railway-station to report myself to the O.C. and was told that Sapper U'ren was bringing back the engine attached to the Red Cross train. I was instructed to take it over. Did so and drove it to Bukit Mertajam where a relief-crew took over.

Thus ended the railway withdrawal from Kedah.

CONFUSION IN ALOR STAR

In the six days that elapsed between the Japanese landing at Singgora on Dec. 8 1941, and their occupation of Alor Star on Dec. 13 1941, the town was turned upside down.

The morning the war broke out the police rounded up all Japanese males, and the Civil Defence Services — Air Raid Wardens, Auxiliary Firemen and Medical Orderlies — manned the posts allocated to them. No one among the civilian population realised how serious the situation was. They tended to look upon it as fun.

Like thousands of others in the Peninsular they were not aware that the jungle was passable — that Shebbeare who had been a member of an Everest Expedition, had gone over the ground himself a couple of months before and found that the jungle was as easily penetrable as a rubber estate. A false sense of security prevailed.

At the Sultan Abdul Hamid College the Cambridge School Certificate and the Junior Local Certificate Examinations were going on. The Junior Certificate answer-scripts reached Cambridge safely and the results were announced at the Liberation in 1945. The School Certificate candidates, however, were not so fortunate. Only a part of the answer-scripts got to Cambridge. They were marked and detailed results were sent out in 1945.

The nights were made hideous by exchanges of artillery fire. The cannonading went on without stopping from dusk to dawn. It ceased only in the daytime.

Behind the defence lines fifth columnists and other Japanese agents tried to disrupt communication. In one instance a man who looked like a Chinese beggar, all of sudden pounced on the back of a Punjabi dispatch-rider and brought him down on the road in front of the College.

In other instances lurid pictures aimed at subverting Indian soldiers, were dropped by planes which also machine-gunned cars on the Alor Star — Pokok Sena Road. The writer's wife, proceeding to a place of comparative safety at Jabi Estate, about eight miles out of town, had a terrifying experience when a plane flew over the tree-tops and machine-gunned the car in which she was travelling.

In their terror the five occupants of the car which belonged to the late Dr. M. Sundarajan, jumped out and dived into the monsoon drain by the side of the road. They were soaked to the skin.

It was along this road that 500 Japanese, all mounted on commandeered bicycles, came to Alor Star, after they had overrun the camp of the East Surreys at Tanjong Pau Estate, Jitra. They were adopting a tactic that they had initiated at Sadao, and which they were to carry out right down the Peninsula to attack the British from the rear. The cyclists were lightly clad, only in singlets and shorts and rubber-shoes.

This enabled them to move with speed. They occupied the College.

They were not the first Japanese to reach Alor Star; for on the preceding Wednesday a lone motorcyclist, carrying a pillion-rider came into the town. As he negotiated the traffic-island in front of the General Post Office, he was fired on from the police station. He lost control of the machine, crashed into a shoemaker's shop where the Hotel Mahawangsa now is, and set it on fire. The shophouse and the one adjacent to it were burnt to the ground.

By Friday all optimism had evaporated. Those who owned cars cashed their petrol-coupons and moved out, most of them going south. Realising the gravity of the situation the Government decided to pay all Government servants a month's salary before the State Treasurer, Mr. F.E. Ivery, and his staff removed all the money to Kulim. There, those who had not yet received their salary, were paid.

In the town itself confusion reigned. Thousands of refugees, civilian as well as military, fled to the river bank frantically calling for boatmen to ferry them across. Some British soldiers reached the safety of the other bank, using planks and hands as oars, but many did not make it. Encumbered by their heavy equipment they drowned; and for the next few days swollen corpses floated up and down the river with the tide. It was most gruesome.

Street-fighting continued all the time as the Japanese carried out mopping-up operations. One eyewitness saw four British soldiers shot in Jalan Raja near the Post Office.

There was no water-supply or electricity. Huttonbach's power station had been put out of action by the retreating troops. Looting went on everywhere except Pekan China where shopkeepers armed with sticks, changkols and axes, guarded their property. But they were unable to withstand the Japanese soldiery for long. At bayonet-point they were forced to give provisions.

General Yamashita, Commander of the Japanese 25th Army arrived in Alor Star on Dec. 14, and set up his headquarters there. Two days later mopping-up was completed and everybody in the town was ordered to assemble in front of the police station.

Here Mr. K. Shiba, an old and prominent Japanese resident of Alor Star, who owned a shop in Jalan Raja next to the Theatre Royal, was detailed by the Japanese Military Administration to proclaim:

"We, the Sons of the Rising Sun, have conquered Malaya from the British. We are your saviours from the white yoke. Therefore you need have no fear but return to your homes happily from your hiding places and carry on your business as usual. At the same time follow the rules and regulations of the Nippon Government."

Thus, in the words of Tennyson, did the old order change, yielding place to new.

THE COLLAPSE OF THE JITRA LINE

The Japanese swept through Kedah in 10 days, notwithstanding the Jitra Line which was expected to hold out for at least three months.

The defence of North Malaya hinged on the Line. It covered the road junction at Jitra where the road from Perlis meets the main trunk road to Thailand. It consisted of three lines of entrenchments.

The first was the Asun line behind a swamp. To the rear was the second and most formidable line. It was mostly in jungle and equipped with wire-entanglements, land-mines and anti-tank trenches. The third line was deep in the rear. When war broke out, however, the line had not yet been completed.

After the first clash on the night of Dec. 8, 1941, the Japanese advance-column of about 300 men, halted at Sadao, 10 miles inside Thai territory. There they waited for reinforcements while the British advance force withdrew across the Kedah-Thai frontier.

On Dec. 9 there was no contact but the Japanese planes bombed Alor Star aerodrome for the second time and it was evacuated.

On the night of Dec. 10-11 contact was re-established. The Japanese, now reinforced, moved forward to the big bridge on the Thai side which had earlier been demolished. As their vehicles could not cross the river and there was no time to lose, the troops debussed, crossed the river by boat, and walked into Kedah without firing a shot.

They had not advanced far, however, when British shells began to drop behind and in front of them. Nevertheless they continued the advance and south of the cross-roads at Changloon ran into heavy machinegun fire. In the skirmish that ensued they captured their first prisoners from whom they learned that the main British force held strong position between Changloon and Jitra.

The next morning, Dec. 11, spearheaded by 10 medium tanks, they continued the attack along the main road, and in pouring rain and in poor visibility overran 20 British armoured cars. Before both sides could get over their surprise they were locked in a bloody battle which proved disastrous for the British. Having failed to stem the advance, the British retreated to their first line of defence at Asun.

Shortly after midnight, after probing patrols, the Japanese launched their attack on the Jitra Line. They infiltrated through gaps between the wire-entanglements and the British position became untenable. So orders were given to withdraw to the south bank of the Kedah River at Alor Star. Owing to unpreparedness the Line which was to have withstood attack for three months was penetrated in 15 hours!

The Japanese advance party pressed hard on the heels of the British troops some of whom had been slow to escape. This led to intermittent fighting in the town. Firing continued all day from top-storey windows as the Japanese carried out mopping-up operations. It was Dec. 13, scarcely six days after the landing at Singgora.

Inside the town, Major General Kawamura, in command of the invading forces, stood on the steps of the police station and hardly pausing for breath, urged his men on with the cry "To the south! To the south!"

On the other side of the river, Major-General Murray Lyon who was in command of the 11th Indian Division, stood on the bridge watching his war-weary men come across. Suddenly he saw a motor-cyclist followed by two more emerge from the town and approach the bridge, overtaking some of the British vehicles as he did so. As he accelerated past the General he waved and laughed at him. The General himself was the first to exclaim, "My God, that's a Jap!"

The Jap was Lieutenant Hajima Asai. The two men were Corporals Kaneko and Nakayama. For their bravery General Yamashita on the day Singapore fell, awarded a citation to their regiment, the Eleventh Infantry Regiment. Citations in the Japanese Army are awarded to units and not to individuals. They are rarely given. In the whole Malayan Campaign only 15 citations were awarded.

The citation translated from Japanese, was as follows:

"After the breakthrough of the fortified position of Jitra by the 5th Division, the Asai pursuit troop received orders to seize the bridges on the southern edge of Alor Star. During an attack by our main force they charged through the defeated enemy and arrived at the first bridge at ten minutes past ten on the morning of 13th December."

"Under heavy fire from the enemy at the southern end of the bridge, Platoon Commander Asai, in a motor vehicle, immediately rushed across to the southern end, leaving his two corporals, Kaneko and Nakayama, to seize the northern bridge foundations and disconnect the enemy demolition charges."

"Just as Lieutenant Asai was about to disconnect the charges at the southern end they blew up, killing him. Corporals Kaneko and Nakayama fought with their bayonets against great odds, and killed several of the enemy. Corporal Nakayama was the first to fail and Corporal Kaneko was wounded."

"The rapid, intrepid charge by those under the section commander caused panic and confusion in the enemy ranks, and it was easy to seize possession of the railway bridge at the eastern side of the abovementioned bridge, which henceforth was of considerable value for the further operation of the 5th Division."

"The heroic action and sublime sense of responsibility of Lieutenant Asai and his men must be a model for the whole Army, and I acknowledge such distinguished military service as unparalleled. Therefore I here bestow a citation."

THE TUNKU KIDNAPS HIS FATHER

Although he was a recluse in the evening of his life Sultan Abdul Hamid Halimshah (1882-1943) knew what was going on and never lost an iota of his dignity.

He was first and foremost a man of prayer. Anyone who happened to pass by the Istana Kampung Bahru of a morning would see him stroll in the vicinity of the Istana or ride in his ricsa which was drawn by a Malay attendant. He sometimes walked ahead of the ricsa with the puller and the vehicle behind him. All the while he fingered his prayer-beads ("tasbeh") in prayer.

His Private Secretary for many years, the late Encik Mohamed Zain Ariffin, an Oxenian, at times spoke of how the Sultan dressed for dinner. It was prepared by a Chinese cook named Ah Phum. The Sultan ate sparingly and in solitary state. At billiards he excelled and played almost daily in his private billiard-room.

Except when he went to the Mosque for Friday prayers or for a drive in his Victoria which in course of time gave place to his canary-coloured Rolls Royce, he seldom appeared in public.

On Hari Raya it was customary for members of the Ruling House and senior Government Officers to pay their respects to him at the Istana Kampung Bharu. Visitors were ushered up to the drawing-room upstairs where they sat in rows facing the chair prepared for the Sultan. Cigars were handed out and perfume sprinkled on handkerchiefs while the assembly waited for the Sultan.

When he entered the room everybody stood up and bowed. Hardly a word was spoken on such occasions. After a short time the Sultan would rise and retire. On the evening of his Birthday a garden-party was usually held in the grounds of the Istana. The Sultan would grace the function with his presence and stroll about with yellow umbrella held over him.

This insignia of royalty gave rise to an incident when the Kedah Gymkhana Club held its first meet in Alor Star. Sultan Iskandar of Perak was strolling on the lawn with his royal umbrella borne over him when Sultan Abdul Hamid unexpectedly appeared. He had come down from the royal box to walk about, and his umbrella-bearer held his umbrella over him. Sultan Iskandar promptly ordered his umbrella-bearer to fold up his umbrella. It was a striking example of courtesy and protocol.

The story of how the Sultan was "kidnapped" has already been told but is worth repeating.

When the Japanese invaded the country in December, 1941, Tunku Abdul Rahman was District Officer in Kulim. The night before the "kidnapping" he was on duty at A.R.P. Headquarters and received a message from his brother-in-law, the late Dato' Sri Syed Omar Shahabuddin, that the British were going to evacuate the Sultan at dawn.

That same night the Tunku made up his mind that it was but right for his father to remain with his people in time of trouble. He therefore decided to prevent the authorities from taking him away. So he armed himself and, with his friend, Syed Abu Bakar Al-Idrus, waited for the Sultan at Kepala Batas junction.

The first car with the police-escort passed by and two minutes later came the Sultan in the Rolls Royce. Tunku Abdul Rahman stopped it, jumped into the car, and forced the driver to turn towards Kulim. It was only when they reached Penang that those following realised they had arrived without the Sultan.

After frantic inquiries and telephone calls they ascertained that the Sultan was with the Tunku in Kulim. The Tunku was able to carry out the coup because the cars in the convoy travelled at two-minute intervals to avoid the dust. The two minutes gave him just enough time to divert the Sultan's car. That evening Penang was bombed.

He took his father to his quarters at Kulim, and when the Japanese got nearer he conducted him and the Regent to a retreat specially prepared at Bukit Sidim Estate, off the line of advance, where the party remained until the Japanese sent a delegation to escort them back to Alor Star.

When they got back to the capital the Sultan, not without some protesting on his part, was not allowed to live in the Istana Kampung Bharu because the Japanese Military commandeered it. So the Regent took him to live at the Istana Anak Bukit where he died in 1943, having reigned for 62 years. Preparations for celebrating his Diamond Jubilee were under way when the Japanese invaded the country and put a stop to everything.

By a coincidence, shortly after the Japanese soldiers moved into the Istana Kampung Bharu lightning struck the Istana flagstaff, split it from top to bottom, and the Nipponese flag bit the dust.

THE BATTLE AT GURUN

As narrated before the railway bridge at Alor Star was only partially demolished by the British. As soon as the Japanese came in on Dec. 13, 1941, without any loss of time, they took possession of it and began to repair it.

They collected a big gang of local labourers and at the point of the bayonet, forced them to lay big beams of timber across the damage spans. By nightfall the bridge was passable. Cars, trucks, armoured cars, tanks and other vehicles were able to use it not only during the initial stages of the invasion but also for a long time afterwards.

The repairs enabled the Japanese to bring up their armour and that same night the British forces, war-weary and worn-out, withdrew to Gurun at the foot of Kedah Peak.

The Gurun position was a naturally strong one. The watergates of the area — the most extensive padi-growing region in Kedah — were opened to flood the fields. The only way through this vast lake was by the north-south trunk road.

The line should have held for some time but the speed with which the Japanese advanced prevented the defence from digging in. They were in position barely three hours before Japanese planes bombed the Guar Chempedak cross-roads, covering advancing lorry-borne infantry which were supported by tanks.

The next two days were most bloody. In fierce attacks and counter-attacks on the road between Guar Chempedak and Gurun hundreds of men on both sides were killed. Their corpses stank for over a week. Some local residents went up the slopes of Kedah Peak to get a grandstand view of the battle.

In Sungei Patani on that fateful morning of Dec. 8, 1941, when the Japanese blitz figuratively and literally came as a bolt from the blue, Encik Mohamed bin Man, Senior Master at Ibrahim School, and an Air Raid warden, was putting on his boots when two terrific explosions rocked his quarters.

Air Raid wardens were scheduled to carry out a Civil Defence exercise at 9 that morning and his first thought was that it was only part of the exercise: but on looking out of his house he saw two huge columns of smoke billowing above the aerodrome. Led by their ace-pilot, Kato, who was later deified as a "Japanese Air God," the Japanese had hit the petrol-dump and set it ablaze.

Hurrying out to the town, he found the streets full of people. Most of them believed that it was all part of the practice made as realistic as possible. They thought the planes were British. A group of small boys shouted with glee at the sight of the aircraft circling like hawks in the sky.

The wardens immediately went into action and told the people to take cover. Their advice was emphasised when a Japanese fighter-plane flew low and machine-gunned the streets. Fortunately no one was hurt.

In the next few days Sungei Patani was full of confusion and panic. Everywhere families loaded their belongings into cars and carts and streamed out of the town. Government offices functioned until the Thursday, before moving down to Kulim.

Militarily, on Friday the British position was untenable and the troops withdrew first to Sungei Lallang and then to the Muda River.

Hot on their heels came hundreds of Japanese all lightly clad and camouflaged with palm-leaves and greenery. Their first objective was the aerodrome which they captured almost undamaged, together with an abundant supply of equipment, ammunition, fuel and provisions. All fell into their hands intact and proved of considerable value for further operations. Sungei Patani Aerodrome was the fighter-base for Northern Malaya and its loss was a great blow to the British.

In a very short time Japanese soldiers occupied every part of the town. Military headquarters were set up at the Hongkong Bank building while the old rest house across the road became the office of the dreaded Kempeitai or Japanese Gestapo.

In the meantime Kulim had become the administrative centre of the State. The Government had evacuated there with the cash. The Sultan and his entourage were at the quarters of the District Officer, Tunku Abdul Rahman, and the Regent and his family were at the old Rest House. The town was off the war-track.

Troops from the Baling area, facing a threat from Kroh and Betong in Thailand, withdrew to Selama from where they crossed into Perak, by-passing Kulim which was thus spared the horrors of war.

To fill the gap between the forces on the Kedah-Province border and those in the Baling area who fought a rearguard action at Titi Karangan before withdrawing to Selama, the British posted troops to guard the Batu Pekaka bridge at Merbau Pulas, near Kuala Ketil. This was the scene of day-long Japanese attacks which were repeatedly repelled on Dec. 16.

To reach this point the Japanese were guided by a German who looked like a British rubber-planter. As he approached the partially-demolished bridge the pseudo-planter hailed the Punjabi sentry on the farther side, who signalled him to cross. As soon as he got near the sentry the German jumped on him. The wide-awake sentry who had all the time covered him with his tommy-gun, shot the German dead.

EARLY DAYS OF THE JAPANESE OCCUPATION

In the first days of the Japanese Military Administration Alor Star was under Colonel Ohyama who bore the title of "Chokan," i.e. Governor. He had served in Indo-China and could speak French and English but he refused to speak English because it was the language of the enemy. This made matters extremely difficult because he could not speak Malay.

So an elderly Japanese woman, Ohba San, who had lived in Alor Star for a long time and who was married to a local resident, acted as an interpreter. Unlike the majority of interpreters, especially those of Taiwanese origin, who were exceedingly arrogant, she was understanding and helpful.

One of the first acts of the Japanese was to send a deputation to Bukit Sidim, near Kulim, to bring back the Sultan and the Regent to Anak Bukit. The Sultan was made Head of Religious Affairs which looked after mosques, kathiis, imams, religious instruction, religious schools and religious festivals.

In other matters the Administration endeavoured to reproduce the pattern of British Government, with Japanese officers in key positions and Malay officers of the Kedah Civil Service in the top executive posts. For instance Tuan Haji Mohamed Sheriff who had been head of the Civil Service, was put in charge of the "General Administration Department" which looked after district offices, sanitary boards and the audit department.

To his younger brother, Tuan Haji Mohamed Arshad, must go the credit for restoring postal services in a very short time. Minibuses were used to carry mail between Alor Star, Kulim and Sungei Patani.

A third brother, Dr. Mustapha bin Osman, kept the Medical Department going for a short hiatus during which a hospital assistant acted as "State Surgeon." As head of the new "Social Welfare Department" Dr. Mustapha was responsible for hospitals, dispensaries, health and social welfare services.

In the first few weeks of the Occupation he worked almost singlehanded against odds which lessened after the New Year when doctors and other medical personnel who had evacuated to Kuala Lumpur in the face of the Japanese onslaught, returned and resumed duty. They had gone to Kulim, and then to Taiping, and eventually to Kuala Lumpur where they were given the option of going on to Singapore or returning to Kedah.

The Japanese administration in Kedah, as well as in Malaya, had three principal aims – restoration of the country's economy to its prewar level, substitution of Japanese for Western cultural influences, and the elimination of Communists.

In the cultural sphere the first target was the English Language. Japanese educational policy had three main objectives, viz. 1. the fostering of Nippon-Go (the Japanese Language) as the lingua franca of East Asia; 2. the inculcation of Nippon-Seishin (the Japanese spirit) into everyone, which meant, briefly, iron discipline, blind obedience to authority and undying loyalty to Tenno Heika (the Emperor); and 3. the training of the younger generation to be useful subjects of the Japanese Empire, spiritually and physically fit to be drafted into any form of military or national service.

In pursuance of the first aim all English school-teachers were sacked, and Nippon-Go schools were opened. Nippon salutation, Nippon manners and customs, and Nippon songs were taught. Progress in Nippon-Go was rewarded with promotion or higher salaries, which made it clear that the Japanese language was the gateway to better prospects in life.



Tuan Haji Mohamed Sheriff bin Osman headed the General Administration Department in Alor Setar during the Japanese Occupation.

The Head of the Education Department or "Bunkyo-ka," in the beginning was Tuan Syed Mahathir Fada'ak, a magistrate, who was soon superseded by a Japanese. Malay schools were not closed. They did not teach the language of the enemy and were allowed to function.

In the beginning standards were maintained but they gradually deteriorated as supplies of textbooks and stationery were exhausted and could not be replenished.

Stocks were not available. Added to this the morale of teachers collapsed owing to the scarcity of food, clothing and other essential commodities.

In the economic sector all European-owned rubber-estates were operated by the Syonan Gomu Kumiai under the Japanese Military Administration. Tapping and milling were soon resumed under staff who had returned to the estates. The industry in Kedah was fortunate in that the Japanese officers in charge were men who had planted rubber in Sumatra, who could speak Malay.

They understood the difficulties confronting planters and the Superintendent of Estates in Kedah, the late Mr. C.A. Panickar, and the Assistant Superintendent the late Mr. R.J. Augustin, had comparatively little difficulty in liaising with them.

All the rubber produced in Kedah was transported to Penang for shipment to Japan. The first shipment was destroyed by a fire which burned for several days. This delayed further shipment and the rubber was sold to the public who used it for extracting a low grade oil to take the place of petrol which became scarcer and scarcer as the war went on.

This oil was combustible but it was necessary to use a little petrol to start engines. It was largely used by owners of cars and buses but in the long run it proved deleterious to machinery, especially internal combustion engines, but temporarily it served its purpose and vehicles were able to move.

RECRUITMENT FOR THE INA AND THE DEATH RAILWAY

In contrast to their antagonism to the Chinese whose Communist proclivities they detested and feared, the Japanese went out of their way to win the hearts and minds of the Indians. Their reason for doing so was not hard to find.

After the fall of Singapore in February 1942, Rash Behari Bose with the support of the Japanese formed the Indian Independence League (I.I.L.). One of its principal aims was to raise an Indian National Army (I.N.A.), afterwards named "Azad Hind Fauj", to fight for the freedom of India.

In Kedah prominent members of the Indian community became leaders of the League, and a State branch was formed with headquarters in Alor Star.

The movement in Kedah got a big boost in August 1942, when Subhas Chandra Bose came to the State to whip up support for both organisations. He had reached Singapore the month previous in a German submarine placed at his disposal by Hitler.

Three months later, in October 1942, his brother, Rash Behari Bose, addressed a rally on the Malay school padang in Sungei Patani. As a result of all the harangues and propaganda, many Indians joined the I.I.L. and the I.N.A.

Their watchword was "Jai Hind!" ("May India Flourish!"); and whenever they met one another or spoke over the telephone they opened their conversation with this slogan, which was like "Heil Hitler!" in Nazi Germany. Every member of the League, male as well as female, was required to swear an oath of allegiance, which was administered by official of the League.

As is already known, the Japanese transported a large number of European prisoners-of-war from Singapore to Thailand to build the infamous "Death Railway" from Bangkok to Rangoon. In spite of their humiliating condition, the POW's comported themselves with dignity. Several of them who had been heads of departments and senior officers in Kedah, were respectfully greeted by their former subordinates when the trains carrying them north stopped at Sungei Patani, Alor Star and Padang Besar.

At the last-named railway-station an Assistant Veterinary Officer was surreptitiously able to pass over a couple of \$100 notes in Straits Currency to his former head. The British Officer was one of those who came back alive.

The POW's however, were insufficient in number. So the I.I.L. recruited large numbers of Indian labourers from the railways and the rubber-estates and took them to Thailand. Among them were a few from Jabu Estate, Alor Star, of which I was Manager. Only two out of 40 of them came back.

The tale told me by one of them is worth relating if only to reveal the conditions under which they worked.

From Kedah, he said, he was taken in Federated Malay States Railway (F.M.S.R.) goods waggon, herded 32 to a waggon. The waggons made of steel, fried them by day and froze them at night.

The journey to Bangkok took five days and nights. They passed through Haadyai, Bandon, Chumpong, and eventually reached a place called Bampong from where they marched through thick jungle to Kanchangburi.

Conditions at Kanchangburi and at work-camps on the railway were appalling. Food consisted of a thin gruel, vegetables and saltfish; surroundings were insanitary; and medical supplies and medical attention sadly lacking. Hundreds went down with malaria, dysentery and cholera. Men died every day and the mortality rate was even higher than that of the POW's. On a rough estimate about 80,000 labourers died in constructing the railway.

In fairness to the I.I.L. it must be mentioned that a list of all who went away from Kedah was kept in the I.I.L. Office in Alor Star and their wives and dependents were regularly paid allowances out of funds provided by the Japanese.

On the military side, members of the I.N.A. were trained in the towns and on the estates before they went to the front. They had no arms and drilled with staves; but as they grew in strength they were given weapons, and took part in the march on Imphal which ended disastrously for the Japanese.

At home the lot of the Indians (as well as that of everyone else) grew worse and worse. The majority of them were on estates. In the early days of the war the Syonan Gomu Kumiai which looked after the estates, had ample stocks of rice, sugar and salt. But as days lengthened into weeks, and weeks into months, supplies became shorter and shorter.

The rice-supply especially was drastically cut down and labourers augmented their food by planting vegetables for their own consumption. Occasionally groups of men would go out pig-sticking to supplement their diet with meat of the wild boar. These animals abounded in the jungle which fringed estates, and rooted young rubber.

Equipped with spears and holding dogs in leash, the party would make for an area where wild pig had been seen. On arrival at the spot the dogs were unleashed. Then barking and baying they chased their prey from cover. When the boar appeared in the open the men, lithe and agile, took up the chase. Outracing the boar, the dogs worried him until he was forced to turn on them to fight. This was the time when the man caught up with him and speared him.

The carcase was skinned and cut up on the spot and the spoils of the chase distributed among the hunters. As a special reward the testicles of the boar were given to the dogs.

Thrown upon their own resources, this was one of the ways in which labourers on estates kept good health during the Occupation. Coupled with toddy which the I.I.L. frowned upon after prohibition had failed, it vitaminised them against deficiency diseases when hundreds of their fellow-labourers were dying like flies on the "Death Railway."

THE DREADED KEMPETAIS

As already stated, the Japanese Military Administration in Malaya had three principal aims, viz. the restoration of the country's economy as far as possible to its pre-war level within the concept of "The Greater East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere"; substitution of Japanese culture for western culture, as symbolised by bowing instead of shaking hands; and the extirpation of Communists.

To the Japanese, communism was like a red rag to a bull. Their hatred and fear of it stemmed from experience for in their campaigns in China they had found the Communists to be their bitterest and best organised enemies.

The first objective of the Kempetai or Military Police was therefore to eliminate all Communists or anyone suspected of Communist sympathies, and hence anti-Japanese.

For this purpose they mobilised hundreds of informers from all races and from all occupations. These informers haunted every place and caused untold misery to thousands.

Evidence was not necessary — suspicion was enough. Anyone who had a grudge against someone else, could lay false information, and the accused was taken into custody and tortured. Judas-like many of these renegades betrayed friends and associates.

Japanese spies were everywhere and it was not safe for anybody to say anything because no one knew who could be trusted and who could not. People lived in continuous dread.

As soon as they came in, the Japanese began to round up everyone who had tattoo marks which indicated membership of a secret society. Next, without any consideration they indiscriminately took in every Chinese suspect.

The most dreaded of all anti-Communist measures were the identification parades. Without any warning at all, the entire Chinese population of an area would be ordered to gather in some open space. Many were carried off without any reason being given, and were never seen again. One of these unfortunate ones in Alor Star was a Government clerk, Mr. Tan Liam Kee.

In Sungei Patani a large group of teachers in Chinese schools and students, thieves and looters, were collected and impounded at Bakar Kapor, near the public padang. From time to time they were brought out in batches and beheaded. Their bodies were buried on the spot but after the war they were accorded decent burial in the Chinese cemetery at Sungei Pasir.

In another incident, on Harvard Estate, where the garrison was commanded by an officer who spoke perfect English — he had lived in California many years — two men were publicly shot to death for alleged anti-Japanese activities. The penghulu who represented the local government, was compelled to be at the executions but managed to avert his gaze from the ghastly sight.

In the face of such atrocities many young Chinese took to the mountains and in the jungle joined guerillas who later in the war grew into the MPAJA (Malayan People's Anti-Japanese Army). They preferred the hardships of the jungle to the comparative comforts of the town, rather than be within the reach of the Japanese. They gradually built up a resistance movement and proved a thorn in the flesh of the Japanese.

Those who stayed behind in the towns were subject to strict supervision. Everyone was registered in his hometown. All movement was controlled. A person who wished to stay away from home for one night, had to obtain permission from his headman as well as from the headman of the place where he was going.

It was a crime to possess a photograph of Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek, a radio, a Union Jack, and to associate with people suspected of having anti-Japanese sentiments and who in any way might undermine the war effort.

One of those taken in was the late Mr. Ooi Ah Kow, who was for many years Alor Star correspondent of the "Straits Echo". He was accused of writing something detrimental to the Japanese. Taken into custody for interrogation he was kicked, punched, slapped and thrown judo and ju-jitsu fashion.

Fortunately for him he escaped the "Tokyo wine treatment," otherwise the "water-treatment". He was set free mainly through the good offices of a local officer who was *persona grata* with the authorities and returned home more dead than alive, on condition that he wrote for the "Penang Shimbun", the English-language newspaper published in Penang.

The writer was more fortunate than Ah Kow in his meeting with the Kempetai. When he returned to Alor Star shortly after New Year's Day, 1942, the Kempetai Chief summoned him to his office. The interrogation had hardly begun when a liaison officer, Lt. Toda, came in.

Toda knew Tunku Abdul Rahman well, and as Providence would have it, the writer and his wife had stayed with the Tunku's sister, Tunku Habsah, and the Tunku's brother-in-law, Syed Sheh Shahabuddin, in Kulim in the first days of the invasion. From them he had learned how the Japanese had commandeered the Tunku's car and how University educated Toda had retrieved it and restored it to the Tunku.

The Kempetai Chief happening to go out for something, the writer mentioned the incident to Toda who declared it was "Too bad!"

When the Kempetai Officer came in again Toda spoke to him in Japanese. The writer did not know what he said but he must have vouched for him because after speaking to the Kempetai man, Toda told the writer that he could go home.

Greatly surprised and deeply grateful to God, the writer who had expected to be browbeaten, beaten up, and even put in the lock-up returned home to his anxious family.

ADJUSTING TO THE OCCUPATION

In anticipation of war the Malayan Government in 1940 began stockpiling rice at the Government Rice Mill in Anak Bukit. The rice was limed so that it could keep for a long time. As rice-supplies decreased during the war because of declining yields and lack of imports, the Japanese authorities released the limed rice for consumption in other parts of the Peninsula.

It was eatable but all traces of the lime had to be washed away completely before it was cooked. Many people did not know this. As a result they suffered a great deal from acute disorders of the stomach; but they bought the rice wherever they could because they were reduced to eating tapioca and sweet potato — this in a country where the average rice-consumption was 16 ounces per person per day.

Being in a rice-bowl, the people of Kedah were more fortunate in this respect. Thanks to the care of the Agricultural Dept., or "Nomu-ka", of which Tunku Yacob was the executive head, good rice was always obtainable in North Kedah. People who lived in the countryside were able to stock padi surreptitiously (surplus stock was commandeered by the Army) and they pounded it into rice as the need arose.

The greatest difficulty was the lack of transport. Cars were hard to come by and bicycle-carriers could not carry very much. Rev. Father Paul Vong, solved the problem in an ingenious and unique way. He had an orphanage at Pagar Tras in the Province, just across Kedah's southern border. He had many mouths to feed.

So he got an old ricksha, fitted long shafts to it, improvised harness for it, and trained a pony to pull it. He was in charge of Chinese Catholics in Kedah and by easy stages slowly made his way up-country, stopping en route at various places to minister to his flock.

In his sweat-drenched cassock and "solar topee" he was a venerable figure and treated with respect. His journeys to and fro took him about 10 days but he always returned with enough rice to feed his orphans and aged mother.

The Japanese paid great attention to padi-growing and experimented with short-term strains. From time to time whole staffs of offices were taken out during office-hours and made to plant padi in the padi-fields surrounding Alor Star. It was reminiscent of the famous English teacher, John Ruskin (1819-1900) who put his students to manual labour to impress upon them the dignity of labour.

Another agricultural product in addition to tapioca, sweet potatoes, soya bean and other food-crops, was cotton. The experiment was not successful.

Besides rice-production the Agricultural Dept. looked after co-operative societies, weekly fairs, drainage and irrigation, and veterinary affairs. The depletion of livestock, particularly water-buffaloes and oxen, adversely affected rice-growing. Many areas went out of production altogether as cattle were moved south to feed the troops.

In the changing circumstances it was not unusual for square pegs to be put into round holes. An English school teacher for instance was placed in charge of the electricity supply in Sungei Patani, the head of the Public Works Department in Kedah was under a man who knew nothing whatsoever of civil engineering, and Tunku Abdul Rahman was appointed auditor "But I did not see even a single account book" he afterwards said.

Nevertheless the machinery of government did not grind to a complete standstill. In the first half of 1943, before the Japanese handed over Kedah, Perlis, Kelantan and Terengganu to Siam, the "Chokan," or Governor, was Major General Sukegawa. His administration was divided into three main bureaus — the General Administration Bureau, or "Somu-bu", the Industry Bureau, or "Sango-bu" and the Financial and Industry Bureau, or "Zaimu-bu". A fourth bureau, the Religious Bureau, or "Shamuin" was under the Sultan and left alone.

In matters of religion in Kedah the Japanese did not interfere. Temples and churches functioned as usual in their old places of worship except in Sungei Patani where the Catholic compound was taken over by the Air Force and the community held their services first in the Freemasons Hall, and then in a disused aerated water-factory.

In the early days of the war, before the church-land was taken over, the priest, Rev. Fr. (now Archbishop) Vendargon, had a harrowing experience.

One night a British plane bombed the airfield nearby. The Japanese immediately mounted a hunt for paratroopers. In their search they found a small oil-lamp burning in the servant's quarters at the presbytery. They immediately seized Father Vendargon and took him to their headquarters where he was kicked and slapped, beaten up and otherwise manhandled. This treatment continued well into the next day, until he was able to convince the Commanding Officer that he had done nothing wrong. He was a priest and bound in duty to obey and respect authority as enjoined by Petrine injunction. Eventually, bruised and battered, he was allowed to go home.

DAY OF DELIVERANCE

Kedah's "Day of Deliverance" after the Japanese capitulated on Aug. 15, 1945, was Sept. 17. On that day the first British troops returned after their withdrawal in December, 1941. The soldiers were men of the Royal Sussex Regiment. They came in military trucks, and after dropping an occupying force at Sungei Patani they moved to Alor Star which they reached at dusk. Flags were hoisted in every house in both towns and the streets were filled with happy throngs expressing great joy and thankfulness.

The Re-Occupation may be divided broadly into two parts — military and civilian.

Militarily, the British troops took over the sentry-posts which Japanese soldiers had manned pending their arrival. British Field Security replaced Japanese Military Police but were forbidden by Admiral Lord Louis Mountbatten, Supreme Allied Commander of South-East Asia Command (SEAC) to behave childishly and inflict indignities on the defeated.

Formal surrender of the Japanese took place on the Sungei Patani airfield, in two stages.

On the first occasion, on Oct. 6, more than 4,000 Japanese Navy personnel and 400 senior Japanese civilians surrendered. They had been stationed at Penang and after the capitulation they had been interned at Bedong.

They were marched under guard about 10 miles from their camp to the airfield, along the main road. The Japanese had cleared both sides of the road of rubber-trees to allow aeroplanes to land in case of emergency.

The surrender-ceremony took place in brilliant sunshine and lasted two-and-a-half hours. Soldiers of the 9th Royal Sussex, 3rd Gurkhas, 14/10 Baluchis and 7/15 Punjabis lined the parade-ground. The surrender-forces stretched about a quarter-of-a-mile down the field.

The surrender was accepted by Brigadier A.C.W. Cargill, Officer Commanding the 74th Indian Infantry Brigade. He was flanked by a small detachment of soldiers with guns at the ready and fixed bayonets which a World War I veteran referred to as "toothpicks" because they were comparatively so small.

The proceedings commenced when the order "Japanese Naval Division will return swords!"

Immediately after this came the second command, "Search parties begin search!"

The search parties having searched the captives efficiently and thoroughly, there came the third command, "Japanese Naval Divisions will surrender swords!"

Thereupon the Japanese officers one by one goose-stepped towards the base, unhitched their swords, and laid them on the ground.

In all 400 officers did so. Among them was Admiral Uzumi, the former Japanese Naval Commander in Penang. Two high-ranking Japanese Naval Officers fainted during the ceremony.

In the second formal surrender at the same place two days later 9,000 Japanese Army personnel of the 94th Division and 800 civilians, headed by General Inouye, laid down their swords before Major-General G.N. Wood, Commander of the 25th Indian Division. This time the swords were laid on tables and the ceremony took twice as long.

After this the prisoners-of-war were marched off to internment camps there to await repatriation. Most of them were housed in barracks on the airfield and from there every day gangs were sent out to clear the mess left by the war.

One of the tasks allotted to them was to exhume the bones of some 130 Chinese who had been rounded up in March, 1942, and beheaded at Bakar Kapor, near the Sungei Patani padang.

During their investigations British Military Security had discovered a mass-grave in which were buried bones and skulls of the victims who had been barbarously executed over a period of days. The remains were gathered in baskets and respectfully re-interred in the Chinese cemetery at Sungei Pasir.

Another "horror" discovery was a camp of Javanese labourers who had come back from the "Death Railway" in Thailand. They had been forced to labour in the mines in the Gurun area. Eighty had died in three months and the great majority of the survivors were in an advanced state of malnutrition.

The Japanese POW's, however, conducted themselves with courage and self-control, as did their British counterparts in similar circumstances.

MPAJA TAKEOVER FOILED

The attempted takeover of Alor Star by the Malayan Peoples' Anti-Japanese Army (MPAJA) at the time of the Japanese capitulation in August 1945, was foiled mainly through the vigilance and decisive action taken by Tuan Haji Mohamed Sheriff, Secretary to Government.

The MPAJA planned to move into Alor Star from the north and take over the administration, for which purpose they had already drawn up a list as to whom they would appoint to key-positions.

Misguided sections of the population hastily assembled lorries and went to Jitra to meet and escort the incoming force. When they got to Jitra they assembled on the Malay school padang.

In the meantime Tuan Haji Mohamed Sheriff who had got wind of the takeover, got in touch with the British Military Authorities by telephone. They in turn communicated with the Japanese and a Force 136 officer was detailed to stop the procession from Jitra while the Japanese mounted road blocks on the Alor Star - Jitra Road.

As a result of the prompt measures taken the MPAJA entry into the town was nipped in the bud. The people who had assembled at Jitra, waited until 10 p.m. before they eventually dispersed. Those who returned to Alor Star, were ordered to place their hands on their heads when they passed through the road-blocks.

The first British troops arrived in September. They were part of the force that had landed at Penang on Sept. 3. They were welcomed with open arms. There was a great deal of fraternisation as British - manufactured cigarettes, beer, whisky, brandy, chocolates and other luxuries appeared again. During the Occupation smokers had been reduced to smoking cigarettes of dried papaya leaves, while hard drinkers had drunk local-made arrack. For sweetening, people had used sugar made from the nipah palm.

Hard on the heels of the advance party of soldiers came officers of the British Military Administration (BMA), many of them old friends. "Senior Civil Affairs Officer" was Colonel E.V.G. Day who at the time of the Japanese invasion had been British Adviser in Perlis. In his cadet days (1923-1925) he had served in Alor Star where he filled three posts at the same time - "Secretary to British Adviser," "Secretary, Alor Star Town Board," and "Vehicles Licensing Officer."

He came back, he avowed, "to give back to the people some of the happiness that the Japanese had taken away."

One of the first acts of the BMA was to replenish the coffers of the Treasury. Like Old Mother Hubbard's cupboard in the nursery rhyme, the Japanese had found them bare when they came in. They had ordered the Chinese community to raise \$20 million in a stipulated time. In the face of direct threats the Kedah Chinese Chamber of Commerce got the money in cash and in jewellery which the Chamber valued.

Before the British came in, however, Tuan Haji Mohamed Sheriff, called upon Mr. Lee Ewe Boon (afterwards Kedah's first State Financial Officer) to compile a complete list of all the Kedah Government's investments overseas.

Lee Ewe Boon had been a key-man in the Kedah Treasury before the war broke out. He had preserved all the details as a result of which he was able to show that Kedah had investments totalling \$20 million in gilt-edged securities abroad. Tuan Haji Mohamed Sheriff accordingly prepared a memorandum which he presented to the British authorities.

The response was immediate. Banknotes in cases were brought in. There were so many of them that the strong-room of the Treasury was unable to contain all. So the Overseas Chinese Bank of which Mr. Lim Cheng Chye was Manager, was asked to keep some. Even the Bank's strong-room was unable to hold all, and two or three cases had to be kept in the office under guard.

Some optimists who had 'banana' notes and thought that they would have some value, albeit small, were sadly disappointed because the BMA immediately devalued the Japanese currency to zero.

The good money brought in by the BMA was soon in circulation and the economy of the State began to revive rapidly. Except for a few rubber-estates like Jabi (which the writer kept in production throughout the Occupation and in recognition of which the Directors gave him a bonus when they came back) rubber-production had declined greatly during the war. The plantations now began to get back in production, and with local rice-production increasing too, re-construction forged ahead and by 1947 was breaking all records.

The devaluation of Japanese currency was forestalled by several Government officers who owed the Government money for loans. They seized the opportunity to settle their debts before devaluation. Also benefited were persons who had contracted debts with business houses in Penang pre-war. During the Occupation they had paid their dues to the Japanese Custodian of Enemy Property there.

HOARDING AND PROFITEERING

To mark the victory of the Allies and to celebrate the re-occupation a grand dinner was held at the Istana Anak Bukit. One hundred and fifty years before this, also at Anak Bukit, a banquet had been held to celebrate the liberation of Kedah, also from Thai rule.

Fierce guerilla attacks had made Thai occupation untenable and the Thai Governor of Kedah, Phya Nuchit, had written to his father, the Raja of Ligor, to say that he could not hold Kedah any longer. Unable to send reinforcements to Kedah because of war with Burma, the Raja of Ligor had offered the governorship to Tunku Anum, a grandson of Sultan Ahmad Tajuddin, persona grata with the Thai who had made him Raja of Kubang Pasu. Tunku Anum had accepted the governorship of Kedah in order to pave the way for the return of his grandfather.

Rejoicing similar to those which greeted Tunku Anum, recurred when the British returned in 1945. Tunku Abdul Rahman gave a dinner in honour of the Malay guerillas in the Kota Che Menyclara. Officers of the British Military Administration (BMA) including a few from Force 136 attended the function. The Chettiar community fed 2,500 to 3,000 people in their temple in Jalan Bahrui.

The rejoicings did not last long, however. Owing to the war, food and other essential goods were desperately in short supply. In the circumstances hoarding profiteering and corruption reared their ugly heads, so much so that this period of the BMA came to be known as the "Black Market Association."

This led the Military Administration to introduce food control. It put up a list of more than 100 things which were not to be sold above a certain price. The price of rice, for instance, was fixed at 45 cents per gantang, sugar at 12 cents per kati, and coconut oil at 15 cents a bottle. The price list, however, was honoured more in the breach than in the observance because the authorities were unable to enforce control.

Rice especially was badly needed. Equipment had been lost, buffaloes had been taken away to feed the Japanese Army, transport had been destroyed, and many areas had gone out of production, resulting in a decline in yield. As a result the price of rice sky-rocketed to \$2 a gantang and Government servants were compelled to send a petition to the Senior Civil Affairs Officer (SCAO). They complained of the high cost of living and asked for rations. To alleviate the situation the Administration imported rice from India and Burma and distributed it free. But the quantity was insufficient and had to be supplemented by purchases in the black market.

Non-Government servants suffered severely from the insufficiency and high price of rice, and public-spirited bodies like the Kedah Overseas Chinese Association organised relief centres in Alor Star. It formed "The People's Self-Help Society" which set up centres where needy persons of all nationalities might have free meals twice a day. In addition the BMA supplied certain eating-stalls with rice at controlled price so that cheap meals could be obtained there.

The Administration also housed and fed 1,000 destitutes in the Tongkang Yard in Seberang Perak. At Tanjong Pau, Jitra, it established a reception camp for 3,000 refugees from Thailand.

In Sungei Patani, 2,500 Indian destitutes were rounded up and housed in the Sungei Patani Group Hospital. They were fed daily. About one-third were covered with ulcers and treated by Major A.G. Dumoulin, RAMC, and Dr. L.S. Abraham.

In Kulim where Flying Officer Logan was Civil Affairs Officer, and Syed Abdul Rahman District Officer, kitchens and clinics were opened in every village to tend the sick and feed the poor. To encourage padi-planters to plant padi the Administration granted them small loans and formed co-operative societies.

Despite strenuous efforts to stem the spiralling cost of living the authorities were unable to curb prices. So at the end of October, as in other parts of Malaya, Kedah abolished price-control except on rice at 48 cents per gantang, sugar at 12 cents a kati, and salt at 5 cents a kati.

Even then they were not able to exercise effective control. Food Control inspectors regularly inspected rice-mills and checked stocks but they found it impossible to prevent hoarding and smuggling. They were not fully staffed and despite control the price of rice increased by 50 per cent — to 72 cents per gantang.

THE SULTAN ABDUL HAMID COLLEGE RESUMES

One of the first English schools to be opened after the Liberation was the Sultan Abdul Hamid College, Alor Star. It began functioning again on Oct. 15, 1945 — within six weeks of the return of the British forces.

That its recovery in such a short space of time was as admirable as it was remarkable, is recorded in the College Magazine. "Darulaman," which made its reappearance on Christmas Day, 1945.

In his message to the periodical H.R.H. the late Sultan Badlishah inter alia said,

"I admire the effort of the British Military Administration in bringing the Sultan Abdul Hamid College back to life so soon after the surrender and delivery of arms by the Japanese occupying forces in Kedah.

The havoc brought about by the War and its aftermath on life and property whether public or individual, is felt throughout the State; traces of destruction and looting are seen wherever one goes, and the College is no exception to the rule.

"Furthermore, when it is remembered that the College was occupied by the Japanese continuously for nearly four years, one is not surprised at the amount of destruction caused to, and the filthy conditions left in the College.

"I understand that the College is now without adequate furniture, textbooks and other modern conveniences; it will take some time to put everything in order. Besides these there are other factors which tend to retard the recovery of the College. The general poverty and the high cost of living which are now ruling, will prevent many parents from sending their children to the College.

"A break of nearly four years during the school-age may bring a change in the habits of boys towards study and the College discipline. Besides they may have forgotten what they learnt in the past and it will take some time to bring the College into full health and vitality again....."

The College was indeed in an appallingly filthy condition. Tunku Abdul Rahman who was Superintendent of Education, took Captain P. Whitworth, the BMA Staff Officer-in-Charge of Education, to see the premises. Local lads had invaded the precincts after the Japanese left and on the walls they had scribbled all sorts of obscenities.

When Captain Whitworth asked the Tunku what the words meant, the Tunku answered that they were "very bad words," but he did not elaborate!

The misgiving expressed in another part of Sultan Badlishah's Message (which give a graphic picture of conditions in Kedah at the time of the Japanese capitulation) did not come to pass. As soon as the College reopened most of its old pupils and some new ones returned to their classes to make up for "the years that the locust had eaten."

Several of them had got married during the Occupation but that was no hindrance to enrolment for when the writer began teaching in Kedah in 1917 two of his pupils were married men — one of them had two wives!

Besides this, a cable from the Examinations Syndicate in Cambridge to the BMA Education Officer (Mr. D. Roper) at Singapore Headquarters said,

"All scripts Cambridge School Certificate Examination December 1941 except Kedah, Penang, Trengganu reached Cambridge safely and Pass Lists issued September 1942. Junior results Kedah also issued. Special Certifying Statements will be issued for Kedah and Penang candidates indicating success in any subjects for which scripts received. No scripts received from Trengganu candidates will be permitted complete examinations without further fee....."

One of the successful candidates in the Junior Examination was Mahathir bin Mohamed (now Prime Minister of Malaysia).

"As the Child is father of the Man", it is interesting to read what he said as Editor of the School Magazine almost 40 years ago.

"Nearly four years have passed," he wrote, "weary years full of trials and hardships, of cruelty and evil deeds, of murder and torture. The War seemed interminable. It was wearisome. It wearied the soldier in the frontline, the mother at home, and the schoolboy in his school. It taxed one's strength, one's endurance, one's stolidity, and left one broken and shattered.

"But Peace with all that the word implies, has come. God be praised for the Peace that we have now. It could be another "Peace" in which the Powers of Evil triumph, But it is not. It is a Peace worth living through; for have not the Powers of Right and Justice won? Though in some corners of the world there is still some fighting, yet it is only the natural aftermath of a great upheaval and by and by it too will die down. And may Almighty God prolong the Peace till Doomsday.

"Humanity is on the threshold of the greatest Age of all – the Age of Atomic Energy, and we, as members of the human race pray and hope that this revolutionary energy will be turned to peaceful usage. We hope that this marvellous discovery will enhance the progress of mankind, raise the standard of living and maintain Peace even as it stopped War."

THE ILL FATED MALAYAN UNION

Although big crowds attended rallies when Pandit Nehru visited Kedah in March, 1946, they were small in comparison to the thousands who foregathered when Dato' Onn bin Jaafar came to Kedah later in the year to whip up support against the Malayan Union.

When I attended the rally in Alor Star, Dato' Onn whom I had met in Singapore several years before, remarked to me that there was really "no reason for all this" (agitation). Subsequently events proved him right. Most of the ideas of the ill-conceived Malayan Union have since then been realised and Sir Harold MacMichael's declaration that Malaya should be "One Country With One Destiny" is becoming an accomplished fact.

Another personality who was of the same opinion as Dato' Onn was the Very Rev. Brother James Provincial of the Schools of the Christian Brothers in East Asia. He had dedicated a lifetime to Malaya and he remarked that the imposition of the Malayan Union was ill-timed — that after re-establishing control the British Government could have gradually allowed reforms to mature.

Be that what it may, the fact remains that the Union was "bull-dozed." It was bitterly resented and strenuously opposed by the Malays who formed the United Malay National Organisation (UMNO) led by Dato' Onn.

But even before UMNO was formed the padi-farmers of Kedah had demonstrated against the Union. They endeavoured simultaneously to kill two birds with one stone — they also asked the British Military Administration (BMA) to raise the price of padi asserting that it was too low because the cost-of-living was excessively high.

The demonstrators staged a mammoth procession in Alor Star. Participants carried banners bearing slogans. In an orderly manner they marched to Padang Court and there waited for the Senior Civil Affairs Officer, Kedah and Perlis (Colonel E.V.G.Day). He arrived shortly afterwards, accompanied by Tunku Abdul Rahman, received the letter, and said that he would forward it to the British Military Authorities.

The Malayan Union came into effect on April 1, 1946. On that day Sir Edward Gent was formally installed as Governor, but none of the Sultans attended the Installation, although the night before they had informally met the Governor-Elect.

In absenting themselves they acted with dignity, correctness and circumspection. In a letter to Brigadier Newbould, Chief Civil Affairs Officer, they had explained "since our representation to His Majesty's Government against the proposal of the Malayan Union, which proposals are not acceptable to us or to the Malays, are still pending, we do not wish to do anything which may prejudice our case."

One of the main contentions of the Sultans was that they had executive powers before with the British as Advisers, but now the Sultans had become Advisers in their own land. They opposed the principles of the Union and the methods by which the negotiations were carried out. The Sultan of Kedah, for instance, said that he was presented with a verbal ultimatum with a time-limit, this despite Article 3 of the Agreement concluded with His Majesty's Government in 1923 when the Siamese Loan was repaid.

The Article read as follows:

"His Britannic Majesty will not transfer, or otherwise dispose of his rights of suzerainty over the State of Kedah to another power and will not merge or combine the State of Kedah or her territories with any other State or with the Colony of the Straits Settlements without the written consent of His Highness the Sultan in Council."

Their Highnesses also said that in view of the circumstances attending the signing of the agreements with Sir Harold MacMichael they could also recognise the agreements as effective and that they were anxious to reopen negotiations as to the future progress of Malaya. They asked for time to consult their State Councils and people, and proposed as a base of discussion a federation of the Malay States with a central body controlling matters of common interest, each State retaining its local autonomy.

As a result of all the oppositions and agitation the British Government by the end of 1946 drafted proposals for creating a Federation of Malaya. It revoked the Malayan Union Order-in-Council, concluded new State agreements with each of the Malay rulers superseding the MacMichael Agreements, and restored to the rulers internal sovereignty in their States.

The Federation of Malaya Agreement came into effect in 1948, the Federal Constitution specifically declaring the British Government's intention to establish self-government.