A Journal in the Federal Capital

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Kuala Lumpur street scene in the Thirties.

Introduction

This book makes no pretension to the Anglo-Malayan scholarship represented by the M.B.R.A.S. in my day; but as a contribution to the records of the British period one can at least claim for it a different approach and a new viewpoint, since these gleanings from the journalism of half a century ago were written when I was the first staff correspondent of The Straits Times to be stationed in Kuala Lumpur, and, as the job developed, the only Straits Settlements journalist with a roving commission in the Federated Malay States.

This unique experience, the best and most educative phase of my personal and journalistic life, began when The Straits Times in Singapore sent me to a small branch office which they had just opened in Kuala Lumpur, a bold new move in the parochial Anglo-Malayan journalism of the day, when every newspaper either relied on "stringers" for news from outside its own territory or had no such representation at all. (A stringer in journalistic jargon is a local correspondent, usually in a local newspaper office, who is expected to send only brief and occasional news items; and in my day he was paid according to the number of lines in each item used.)

The Straits Times stringer in Kuala Lumpur was a Ceylonese reporter on the Malay Mail, and he was naturally discouraged by his employers from sending by wire any news to Singapore before it had appeared in his own newspaper, so that it would be out-of-date by the time The Straits Times reached the F.M.S. by the night mail train the next day. More often than not, he only sent a paragraph or two by post, and such stale items were only fillers for the back pages.

Hitherto that had not mattered very much, for in the Crown Colony there was little interest in F.M.S. affairs, apart from planting and mining development; and vice versa. Moreover, in the early years after the 1914-18 War, The Straits Times had a great editor named A.W. Still who was peculiarly well informed about the F.M.S., having occupied that editorial chair since 1909. But now a new and more progressive chapter of Malayan journalistic history was opening. However, that is another story.

When I joined the small European community of Kuala Lumpur as a newcomer from the Colony, I had almost everything to learn about the Federal Capital and the F.M.S. I had been living in Singapore since I landed there from England in 1923, a month before my 21st birthday, to join The Straits Times as a junior reporter; and in those six years I had only been in Kuala Lumpur two or three times on brief reporting assignments, and once in Perak, trailing a British Under-Secretary for the Colonies on an inspection tour southwards from Penang. However, that ignorance was actually an asset, for I was writing on a clean slate, as it were, completely new and fresh impressions, an outsider comparing Kuala Lumpur with Singapore and exploring the F.M.S. for the first time, when I started to write a weekly feature called "A Journal in the Federal Capital". Moreover, nearly all Straits Times readers were just as ignorant of the topics that interested me as I was.

Anyone looking through my bulky press-cutting book of the Journal, as I have been doing for the first time for many years, must marvel that it was ever read – four solid columns, 22 inches deep in the old page size, often with a continuation on to another page. The newspaper readers of this electronic age, with all their other distractions, would certainly not wade through it. But they did so then, not only because the daily newspaper had no competition from other "mass media", but because this was a new window on the F.M.S. for people living in the Colony and the Unfederated States, and, to a surprising extent, for F.M.S. readers on States of the Federation other than their own.

It must be wellnigh impossible for people in this region of today to realise how very different the interests and horizons of their predecessors were when the Straits Settlements, the Federated Malay States and the Unfederated States were entirely distinct and separate territories, each one the historical framework within which its European and Asian communities looked at the country as a whole; but perhaps these experiences and observations from my weekly Journal of those days will take the reader in Peninsular Malaysia down highways and byways of the old F.M.S. that he will not find in academic history.

Kuala Lumpur in 1929 was not quite half a century old as a town of the modern world. Living on Weld Hill was an old lady who, as the wife of Capt. Syers, the first Commissioner of Police, had come to Kuala Lumpur with the first British Resident of Selangor when he moved his headquarters from Klang in 1880, five years after the Governor of the Straits Settlements had sent young Frank Swettenham to the Sultan's court at Bandar. The former Mrs Syers had married J.H.M. Robson, who had served in the Selangor State Service before Federation.

I knew another old resident who claimed to have seen cargo boats in the river opposite Old Market Square. That was disputed, but Yap Ah Loy's bullock-cart track to the landing place at Damansara was still kept up as a by-road by the P.W.D. Within living memory, Kuala Lumpur had been only a Chinese mining village at the confluence of the Klang and Gombak rivers in an independent and strife-torn Selangor. A man would only have to be halfway through his seventies to remember those days. Sir Frank Swettenham, still living and very active in London, was one of them.

So little traffic was there in the quiet and drowsy thoroughfare that Java Street was in 1929 that I could park my car outside my office all day; and it was not until 1934 that the police imposed a one-hour parking limit, with a $2 fine for infringement. Behind my office was Malay Street, where there was a colourful row of little Malay stalls against a beautiful background of trees along the bank of the Gombak River. You who live in an artificial indoor climate in your offices and homes can have no idea of how insufferably hot those Kuala Lumpur afternoons could be in the stuffy room which The Straits Times had in that old building, with only an overhead fan.

Java Street and Malay Street were echoes of local history,marking the sites of the original kampongs in the Chinese mining village. Malay Street is still there, as Jalan Melayu, although business development has hidden that picturesque river view; but the name of Java Street was changed after the World War to Mountbatten Road; and after independence it was changed again to Jalan Tun Perak.

Since 1896 Kuala Lumpur had been the capital of the old Federation of Perak, Selangor, Negri Sembilan and Pahang; the Federal Secretariat building in Jalan Raja had become the headquarters of a central government which had grown more and more centralised and more powerful to meet the needs of a rapidly expanding economy, while the Rulers of the Federated States and their British Residents by the same token had lost much of their former prestige and authority; and since 1909 the Federal Council which also met in that building, had been the forum of unofficial public opinion, mainly in the European planting, mining and business organisations, but in the Chinese and Indian communities as well.

With a population of about 112,000 at the 1931 census (including what were then villages in the semi-rural fringe of the capital), Kuala Lumpur was by far the largest town in the Malay States, already virtually the Malayan capital in the economic sense, though by no means in the political sense, so far as all five of the Unfederated States were concerned. It was the centre of British and Chinese commercial, banking and planting

interests, and – much more so than in Singapore – an Indian business centre as well; but it shared with Ipoh its management role in the tin-mining industry (still important in Selangor).

As a town, however, Kuala Lumpur was predominantly an official capital, a place in which the Federal bureaucracy overshadowed the European business community. In fact, it had only been officially a town since 1898, when the Kuala Lumpur Sanitary Board was gazetted, and that odd name for a local authority was still in use (not only in Kuala Lumpur but in all towns of the F.M.S.). There were only the first stirrings of civic spirit when I lived there, the first gathering of local tradition, the first vague aspirations towards an independent municipality similar to that of Singapore.

But Kuala Lumpur as the Federal Capital was also the central arena for the two main debates and controversies of the F.M.S. during this period: Decentralisation and what was known as "the pro-Malay policy". Decentralisation, a most complex problem, was mainly an argument between two schools of thought at the top level of the Malayan Civil Service: those who took their stand on undertakings given in the Rulers' treaties with Great Britain, and their opponents who saw overriding administrative and financial difficulties in the attempts of three High Commissioners to put the clock back in the centralised government of the Federation, now virtually a new unitary State as seen by overseas capital.

The controversy over the "pro-Malay Policy" surfaced during the world depression of 1930–34 when the non-Malay communities of Kuala Lumpur and other F.M.S. towns first began to react with concern to the basic British policy of preference for the Malay race wherever special protection and help were needed, as against the more enterprising and resourceful immigrant races. What had been purely immigrant communities, and were still so regarded by the British administration, were now into the second generation of local-born Chinese, Indian, Ceylonese and Eurasian families, and this was a new class of people who were beginning to think of themselves as "Malayans" – not only subjects of the Rulers but citizens of the F.M.S., with no other homeland than Malaya.

It is a truism of history teachers that to understand the present you must know the past, and that has never been demonstrated for me so clearly as when I have looked again at that vanished Kuala Lumpur reflected in the fading pages of my old press-cutting book. Here are the origins of the issues of today, in a veritable seedbed of postwar Malaysian politics.

Any European resident with his ear to the ground in the early 1930s – and such monitors of social seismology were rare eccentrics in that in-

sulated colonial society – now began to be aware for the first time of a developing Malayan middle class. That was a concept entirely new in the scenario of Malayan urban life. Hitherto there had only been the Chinese and Indian business men at the top (with a very few lawyers and doctors as well) and the coolie class at the bottom, and in between a tiny minority of English-educated office and shop workers known as "the clerical class".

But now the commercial and clerical strata of the social structure – mostly local-born people, but including some Indian and Ceylonese settlers who regarded themselves as Malayans by virtue of long residence and identification with the country of their adoption – began to coalesce into an increasingly articulate Malayan middle class, a collective voice of public opinion on such issues as the colour bar of British colonialism against local candidates for employment in Government service at the professional level or in British firms and planting companies at all levels above the Asian clerical staff. This trend in F.M.S. towns, and particularly in Kuala Lumpur, was paralleled in the Colony, and particularly the relatively great port-city of Singapore, where it had its most influential leadership in the Eurasian and Straits-born Chinese communities.

This emerging middle class was as yet almost entirely non-Malay, for the Malay race still lived in a world of its own, with a traditionally rural and feudal way of life. Kuala Lumpur was the only modern town in the F.M.S. which had a sizeable Malay community, and very few of the workers living in its separate Malay Settlement earned even a low clerical salary. The Malay Administrative Service – founded by Sir George Maxwell, one of the finest of Anglo-Malayan administrators, when he was Chief Secretary in the F.M.S. Government – provided employment mainly in the districts and outstations, and then only in junior posts subordinate to the Malayan Civil Service (an exclusively British service except for about a dozen Malays of royal or aristocratic birth).

But by 1930 in the F.M.S. there were about 1800 Malay boys in English schools (Government and mission primary and secondary schools), exempt from the fees which non-Malay parents had to pay, and in many cases living as boarders at Government expense as well. Without this special help no kampong parents beneath the aristocracy of major and minor chiefs could have afforded to give their sons the English education which was the passport to clerical or technical employment. It was only a matter of time before this new and growing element of English-educated Malay youth would be included in the Malayan middle class of F.M.S. towns – and indeed when I lived in Kuala Lumpur there were the first signs that that was happening already.

Life in Kuala Lumpur during the period of nearly four years covered by my Journal was overshadowed by the worst slump that the world had ever known, and the rubber and tin industries of the F.M.S. in particular; and that was reflected not only in Kuala Lumpur but in all the towns and villages and planting districts of the Federation. It was said that every Chinese kedai had a batch of dud cheques left behind by destitute Europeans who had lost their jobs and had been shipped home. There is nothing to be gained by recalling such melancholy echoes now, except perhaps for their human interest, when the whole world economy, both in the free world and in the Communist nations, is in another depression far deeper and more intractable than anything dreamt of then – though different so far in its impact upon Malaysia's resources development and export industries.

Nevertheless, in spite of the slump and the political controversies, those seem like halcyon years in the F.M.S. when one looks back in the perspective of today. The confidence engendered by the Allied victory in the Great War had not yet been overshadowed by fears of another war in Europe. Japan's imperialist expansion into China had reached no farther south than Shanghai, and was not yet seen even as a remote threat to Malaya. Communism in China for the planters and miners and police officers of the F.M.S. meant no more than crudely printed pamphlets stuck on rubber trees, or as a new element providing the only militant leadership which the illegal and underground trade unions of that time possessed; but no-one ever dreamt that Communism in China and what was then colonial South-East Asia would ever amount to more than that. The British Empire was in its heyday as a mighty worldwide power (though beginning to lose ground in India), and the Royal Navy was equal to that of the United States, and much stronger than that of Japan. At that time, halfway between the two wars, no-one had the slightest premonition that that would be the last decade of tranquility and peace in the F.M.S.

There are some good memories of each of the four Federated States in my Journal of those years: Perak, the premier State of the F.M.S., with its relatively modern technology in the Kinta Valley and at the Chenderoh dam, and its vigorous civic life in Ipoh . . . . . . Selangor, after the great flood of immigration during the first rubber boom before the Great War, from India and China, but from Java and Sumatra as well, yet still under old Sultan Suleiman, who as a boy had seen the transition from Malay rule to the British Residential system in his State . . . . . . Negri Sembilan, where I saw a ceremony in the lovely and sequestered setting of Sri Menanti honouring the venerable Yang di-pertuan Besar, whose memories of internecine strife and British infantry intervening in it were

contemporaneous with those of his royal brother at Klang . . . . Pahang, when the road to the East Coast ran through a hundred miles of virgin jungle, and when a new road through the mangrove swamps from the Pahang River to Kuantan had just ended the ages in which the historic old Malay town of Pekan had only been accessible by river or sea.

There are memories of two of the Unfederated States too, entering a new era on the East Coast and in the wild country of Ulu Kelantan: the completion of the East Coast railway, the greatest achievement of British engineering in the Peninsula up to that time, bringing Singapore within 24 hours of Kota Bahru; and Trengganu, the most backward and most isolated State in the Peninsula, linking up with modern Malaya through a new road to the Kelantan border and thence to the F.M.S. Railways and the Siamese railways as well.

In A.D. 1981, cut off from the past by that watershed in the modern history of South-East Asia, the Japanese conquest and occupation, there is such bitter, tragic irony in the Colonial Office designation used in the British period, the Protected Malay States, that an old-timer of my vintage can hardly bring himself to recall it. Yet it belongs to the period, and we cannot escape it. That was the background of our lives in the F.M.S. The States of the old Federation were not British colonial territories, as the Straits Settlements were, but Malay protectorates and at the same time independent Muslim sultanates under their treaties with Great Britain.

That basic difference was reflected in Colonial Office policy and Malayan Civil Service administration; and in these recollections of the early 1930s one sees not only the infrastructure of the postwar Malayan Federation and Peninsular Malaysia, but also the historical explanation of why the era of European colonialism in South-East Asia ended after the World War of 1939–45 so much more happily in the Malay States than in French Indo-China or the Dutch East Indies.

Echoes of Bukit Betong

(What was known as "the Jelai case", a claim by a Singapore syndicate, Jelai Concession Pahang Ltd., to exploitation rights in the hereditary territory of the Dato Maharaja Perba Jelai, had aroused country-wide interest because the legal issue was whether the last of the old Malay land grants was valid under modern law.)

Kuala Lumpur, 4 April 1931.

The Jelai case, in which the Chief Justice of the F.M.S. Sir Lancelot Elphinstone, reserved judgment this week after 30 days of evidence and argument, brought out little of the secret history which lies behind the Burma-Malay Company's former claim to the area covered by the Jelai Besar, amounting, so it was said, to one sixth of the State of Pahang.

When examined on this point the Dato Maharaja Perba Jelai said that his father exercised authority over the area, but that the area which he actually owned was defined by the grant which he (the present Dato) holds, and which covers about 400 square miles of the Jelai Ketchil area.

There is plenty of evidence in Sir Hugh Clifford's stories of old Pahang to support the Dato's statement as to the position of his father, and indeed the Dato himself was a young man of twenty-two when the Pahang Treaty was signed with Great Britain, so that he can remember when his family ruled the Jelai free from British interference.

The reader may recall that passage in one of Sir Hugh Clifford's stories in which he says:

> "The Jelai valley has, from time immemorial, been ruled over by a race of chiefs who, though they are regarded by the other natives of Pahang as ranking merely as nobles, are treated by the people of their own district with semi-royal honours. The

> chief of the clan, the Dato Maharaja Perba Jelai, commonly known as To' Raja, is addressed as Ungku, which means 'Your Highness', by his own people. Homage, too, is done to him by them, hands being lifted up in salutation, with the palms pressed together, as in the attitude of Christian prayer, but the tips of the thumbs are not suffered to ascend beyond the base of the chin. In saluting a real Raja, the hands are carried higher and higher, according to the prince's rank, until, for the Sultan, the tips of the thumbs are level with the forehead."

The present Dato claims to be the seventh of his line, and his lineage was obvious in his bearing and features as he stood, dignified and composed amid unfamiliar surroundings, in the witness-box.

The Dato always wore European costume in court, and arrived at the court every morning in a car driven by a uniformed chauffeur. The fact that his westernisation had not gone very far, however, was shown by the fact that he preferred to stay in a small Asiatic hotel rather than one of the bigger European places, and also by the manner in which he gave his evidence. As the interpreter pointed out on more than one occasion, the Dato's mentality was not that of a town-bred Malay, and questions had to be put to him in the simplest form.

He also puzzled the court by the absolute literalness of his answers. For example, he was asked "Did you get a letter from Mr Thorne?" to which he replied with a firm negative. On counsel showing that this letter was among the documents "admitted" by the Dato's counsel another attempt was made to get the correct answer, using "terima" instead of "dapat", and this time the Dato admitted that he did "receive" the letter.

The contrast between past and present in the Malay States was strangely brought to mind when the Dato stated that he received a pension of $325 a month from the Government, out of which $125 was being deducted for repayment of a loan for a motor-car, and that he had thirty persons dependent on him. That the Dato's authority is still real in the jungle wilds of Pahang, however, was shown by his statement that he had recently held a durbar at Cameron's Highlands which was attended by hundreds of Sakai and that the Sakai brought padi to him every year.

Today the Dato lives in a bungalow – not a Malay house – at Bukit Betong, his ancestral village, on the Jelai River 12 miles from Kuala Lipis. There is no road from Bukit Betong to Kuala Lipis, but the railway line runs near the Dato's house and he usually wears European costume even in his own village, so that signs of modernity are not lacking.

All was very different when the late Sultan Ahmad gave the Dato's father his "surat kurnia" (grant of land) 44 years ago for aiding him in the Pahang civil wars. The present Dato comes of a warlike line, and presumably it was his grandfather, Wan Idris, of whom Sir Hugh Clifford says that he was "an aged man, cursed by the possession of many sons, arrogant folk, who loved war".

The Dato's father, Wan Mohamed, who only died in 1919, aged over 80, was a remarkable man, over six feet high, and a great warrior in his day. He led his clan with the Pahang forces which in 1873, in Sir Hugh Clifford's vivid words, "poured over the cool summits" of the central Malayan range, via the trail over the Ginting Simpah pass, to end the civil strife in Selangor.

Sir Hugh, however, is apparently more sceptical about the martial prowess of the late Dato than the story-tellers of today, for he says that "among the great chiefs who led their people across the range one of the last to go, and yet one of those whose heart was most uplifted by victory, was the then Maharaja Perba of Jelai."

Strange things have happened in the village of Bukit Betong, which now watches so sleepily the Jelai flowing by, and which is mentioned so often in the notes of evidence now being perused by the Chief Justice.

Does the reader recall how Kulop of the Hare-lip, after he had crossed the central range from Perak and raided the Sakai of the inner Pahang country, came with his raft laden with stolen produce to Bukit Betong, "the village of To' Raja, the great upcountry chief who then ruled that district", and how "the sorrows of the Sakai were the cause of much amusement to those from whom they sought redress, and whose duty it should have been to afford them protection".

Another historical echo was heard when the lawyers were arguing before Sir Lancelot Elphinstone whether the modern British land laws applied to the Dato's grant, and therefore whether the Dato could legally grant a lease to the Singapore syndicate without first surrendering his document, getting his land registered and surveyed, and receiving a Government title in return. That faded document was granted to the Dato's father a month before the agreement for a treaty between Pahang and Great Britain was signed.

And it was also a month before that supreme thrill of Hugh Clifford's young life when the Sultan "suddenly emerging from the mysterious inner compartments whither no man might follow him, handed me a letter, duly chap'd and addressed by him to the Governor of Singapore, agreeing to

enter into a treaty with Great Britain, under the terms of which he consented to surrender the control of his foreign relations to Her Majesty's Representative in the Straits Settlements and to accept at his court a resident British officer who should be armed with consular and advisory powers".

The legal decision in this case is being awaited with much interest by the Malays in Pahang and other Federated States because, although Mr J.W.W. Hughes, M.C.S., stated in evidence that the Dato's grant was the only one of its kind left in the F.M.S., and his word is authoritative, some people apparently question that statement.

Note in 1981: (If my memory serves, the Singapore syndicate lost the case; but I can only refer any interested reader to the legal tomes for the Chief Justice's judgment, delivered months later.)

The Lights of Pudu Ulu

Kuala Lumpur, 25 April 1931.

The announcement that electricity became available in Pudu Ulu village last Saturday, though a small matter in itself, is a reminder to Kuala Lumpur people of how rapidly the convenience, cleanliness and efficiency of life in this district has been improved by the use of electricity.

It was on 4 July 1927, that the Bungsar power station was opened, and if ever Kuala Lumpur finds its local historian he will look back to that date as one he cannot afford to omit. Up to that time this town was getting its electrical current from an assortment of no less than four different types of generating machinery. Only the town area was served, and the supply had reached its limit.

Nevertheless Kuala Lumpur has been more fortunate than other Malayan towns, for it was getting electricity from the hydro-electric plant at Ulu Gombak (which was only closed down in 1927) twenty years ago, when nearly every other town in the country was dependent on gas or paraffin lamps.

Penang had an electrical supply as far back as 27 years ago, and Singapore has had gas and electrical undertakings for some years, but certainly oil lamps were used in some of Singapore's suburban bungalows until just after the War. Today, of course, it has a very up-to-date power station owned by its municipality which is, if anything, slightly larger than the Bungsar station.

Quite apart from future historians, anyone who is keeping a reflective eye on the changing life of Kuala Lumpur must take note of the avidity with which this new servant of man which is called electricity has been welcomed here. Since 1927 the demand for electric current in Kuala Lumpur and a radius of fifteen miles around it has grown to eight times what it then was.

The way in which the distribution system has spread outwards from Kuala Lumpur in the last three years is notable.

In the direction of Klang it has now reached Puchong village, some 14 miles out, but the proposal to carry it as far as Klang has been dropped until the slump lifts. In a southerly direction the system goes out to Serdang village and the surrounding mines and beyond them out to Kajang.

In the east and north Kuala Lumpur station is lighting Ampang village, Ulu Klang village, Kepong village and the leper settlement at Sungei Buloh. In Kuala Lumpur itself the demand for electricity for domestic use is steadily growing.

The tin-mining industry is a very big consumer. In normal times six dredges and eight open-cast mines get their current from the Bungsar station, but two dredges and several other mines are temporarily closed down.

An interesting development is the use of electricity in rubber estate factories in place of oil engines. At present the Bungsar station is supplying Westcountry Estate, three miles beyond Kajang, and the Bungsar and Puchong estates.

In recent years the uses of electricity in the home have been pushed enthusiastically, and, while Malaya will probably never equal the United States in this respect, this policy has had a good deal of success.

In 1927 there were five electric geysers and seven electric cookers in Kuala Lumpur; at the end of 1929 the numbers were 227 and 257 respectively.

The geyser is a particularly convenient addition to a bathroom. It costs just over $3 a month for current and $1 a month for hire and provides two hot baths a day without the slopping on stairs, work for servants and delay involved in getting water heated in the kitchen.

The electric stove has indisputable advantages in its cleanliness and convenience, and if properly used it should cost very little, if any, more than a firewood stove, but it must be closely supervised by the "mem". If it is left to servants who have not been trained to use it economically its advantages are outweighed by the expense.

Possibly the truth about electric and gas stoves in this country (the latter are quite popular in Singapore) is that they are only advisable when the housewife does her own cooking, or has a well-trained cook, or where she has a modern kitchen actually in the house and not adjacent to the servants' quarters.

There are other ways in which electricity can be used in the home, notably for toasters and coffee percolators, and these are displayed in the Electrical Department's showroom in Gombak Lane.

It must be a sobering thought for those who have been responsible for the allocation of Federal funds since 1920 to know that during that decade – judging by the reduction in the death-rate which has followed the installation of a water-borne sewage system in cities as far apart as Eastbourne and Rangoon – several thousand people have died in Kuala Lumpur who might have been alive today had we adopted modern sanitation.

The project is a very big one and cannot be started in a hurry, but Penang is now making definite plans for water-borne sewage, Ipoh is making a preliminary survey, and Kuala Lumpur is looking for a site, so that it really looks as though this blot on Western civilisation in Malaya will be removed as soon as the public treasury becomes full again.

Comparisons with Singapore

Kuala Lumpur, 2 May 1931.

The tributes which have been paid to Mr R.J. Farrer, M.C.S., on his retirement from the presidency of the Singapore Municipality, and the comments which have been made on the past and present government of Singapore, have made interesting reading for thoughtful citizens of Kuala Lumpur who are questioning whether their oddly named Sanitary Board is not an obsolete form of local government for a city of 115,000 people.

No Chairman of the Kuala Lumpur Sanitary Board has held office in recent times for a longer period than three years. Mr Farrer has presided over the Singapore Municipality continuously since 1919, and that continuity, together with his personal qualities and administrative ability, has enabled him to make a reputation which, because continuity has existed nowhere else in Malayan local government, is unique in this country.

In several other important official posts Singapore has been more fortunate in obtaining continuity than any other Malayan town has been.

Take the long and valuable regime of Dr. Gilbert Brooke, who practically created the port quarantine system in Singapore and drew up the rural health measures on Singapore Island as they are today.

Then there was Mr James Lornie's almost unbroken term of service in the Land Office in Singapore from 1911 to 1926, which gave him an unrivalled knowledge of local land values and town development.

In the Municipal service there is Dr P.S. Hunter, whose handling of the anti-malarial measures on the new Singapore waterworks has brought him fame and who is in many other respects an exceptionally valuable public servant.

One recalls these things in faraway Kuala Lumpur because they show how Singapore has benefitted by its municipal officials being able to see their own work gradually growing and coming to fruition.

In this town not only the Chairman but the two principal officers of the Sanitary Board very rarely stay here longer than three years.

It happens that Dr W. J. Vickers, our Health Officer, has come back to that post after home leave, but the usual procedure is for the Health Officer and the Town Superintendent — both of whom do vitally important work - to be sent to some other part of the Malay States when they return from leave.

These officers are engaged by the Medical Department and Public Works Department respectively, whereas Municipal officials in Singapore are engaged by and are permanent employees of the Municipality. The Chairman of the Sanitary Board is always an M.C.S. officer, and likewise subject to transfer.

It follows that officers attached to the Kuala Lumpur Sanitary Board merely regard service in this town as but one stage of their official career, to be gone through with efficiency and credit, but, inevitably, not with the really infectious keenness which characterises the best of the departmental heads in the Singapore Municipality.

It is only human nature that a man should take a much greater interest in a scheme or a policy if he can look forward to seeing it through all stages from the blueprints upwards, and ratepayers in Kuala Lumpur must face the fact that the present system under which their town is administered makes for nothing more than an average — and not an outstanding — level of efficiency and enterprise.

This question is, of course, bound up with the whole controversy as to whether Kuala Lumpur should convert itself - for past discussions suggest that the issue lies with the ratepayers themselves, rather than with the Government - into a municipality.

To anyone who has lived in a city like Singapore, which has a relatively long civic tradition, the apathy of the average Kuala Lumpur resident, European and Asiatic, towards the town in which he lives is startling.

Here we see the virtues of the committee system, as it is worked by the Singapore Municipal Board, and also the value of a large membership of that Board. There are 26 Municipal Commissioners in Singapore, thirteen of whom are nominated by Government, and the rest by the Straits Settlements Association, the Chamber of Commerce, the Eurasian Association, the Straits Chinese British Association, the Chinese Chamber of Commerce, the Hindu Advisory Board and the Mohammedan Advisory Board. The Municipal Commissioners are appointed by the Governor, but in practice the nominations of those seven public bodies are always accepted.

Admittedly Singapore, with a population within the Municipal boundaries of half a million, is about four times the size of Kuala Lumpur, but it is easy to see how this large membership and constant thrashing out of departmental matters in committee keeps the Board thoroughly informed as to affairs in its territory.

On the Kuala Lumpur Board there are nine unofficial members, who distribute themselves among three committees, the latter dealing with town planning, traffic control and anti-malarial work.

Admittedly ratepayers in Kuala Lumpur are getting from Government a number of services which in a municipality such as Singapore would have to be paid for out of their own pockets. Moreover, they were recently told by the retiring British Resident of Selangor, Mr J. Lornie, that in his view they could attain all their objectives without changing the Sanitary Board system.

Nevertheless there seems little doubt that this change will come sooner or later – unless Kuala Lumpur's literate population is so mesmerised by the presence of the Federal Secretariat and Government Departments in its midst that it is completely devoid of that sense of corporate responsibility and pride which every civilised town of its size possesses in greater or lesser degree.

One cannot expect a town which was only gazetted as a Sanitary Board area in 1896 to exhibit the same strength of tradition as does an ancient English borough, but unquestionably that tradition is taking root in the Federal capital, and experience in the Colony suggests that the soil is good and that growth will be rapid.

One cannot help feeling sometimes, however, that at the present early stage of its local history Kuala Lumpur is hardly a town at all in the civic sense. It is an official capital, dominated by the Federal Government establishment and the Residency, with a European community in which Government officers and their wives are in the majority, and uninterested in local affairs because they only stay here for two or three years at most.

There is also in the European community a small minority of business and professional people, who are quite satisfied with things as they are, and are more inclined to ridicule than to support unofficial members of the Sanitary Board who venture to criticise the Government departments which in effect run this town.

There are some Eurasian, Chinese, Indian and Ceylonese families in which the second generation are beginning to feel themselves identified with this town and to act accordingly in public life – but only a few.

There is general dissatisfaction with the inappropriate designation, Sanitary Board, but the M.C.S. bureaucracy refuses to change it. Perhaps

the time for a municipality will not be ripe until the third generation of local-born people takes over.

In the meantime, Kuala Lumpur is not at all a bad place to live in, and in this and other F.M.S. towns there are advantages and compensations which perhaps only a newcomer from Singapore like myself can fully appreciate.

In its harbour Singapore has a never-failing source of interest and beauty, but those who gaze so gratefully upon that coloured panorama as they drive along the Esplanade in the mornings are not so appreciative during those hot, muggy, thoroughly uncomfortable nights that we so rarely get in this mountain-fringed Selangor plain.

There is in Singapore a stimulating sense of being in touch with the wider world from which all Europeans in this country are more or less resigned exiles. Great ships come and go, warships lie occasionally in the roads, and the Dutch mail plane lands every week at the Seletar aerodrome. There is, moreover, in a city of half a million people a stir and bustle, a thrill of massed and cosmopolitan humanity, which is missing in our peaceful Federal capital.

Singapore really has its "rush hours". Along the main traffic arteries at eight-thirty in the morning and five in the afternoon there is a stream of cars, mosquito-buses, trolley-buses, and rickshas which would make our traffic policemen in Kuala Lumpur open their eyes.

But Singapore has already grown too big to be comfortable. Before the Great War, when it was what Penang is today, when people rode to town behind trotting horses, and offices got busy at nine-thirty a.m., it must have been quite a tolerable place.

But today your European resident must either accept life in one of the half dozen large blocks of flats that have been built, with its convenience and its numerous drawbacks, or he must go two, three or four miles out of town, and drive into office and back again in a mile-long stream of honking traffic.

He will almost certainly not be able to go home for tiffin – that restful midday interlude which is possible in Kuala Lumpur – and after a time he will feel a longing to get away from the swarming city and the small and monotonous island which is far from easy to satisfy.

The European and Chinese swimming clubs are pleasant places, but the water around the Singapore beaches is not as it is at Penang – gloriously clear and lively. At Singapore's seaside resorts it is often frankly muddy, and rollers are never seen, thanks to the Rhio Archipelago stretching away seventy miles southwards.

Changi used to be, and still is, a beautiful spot, but His Majesty's engineers and gunners have grabbed a great part of it and are likely to want more. Elsewhere along the coast the bungalows of the well-to-do monopolise the beauty of the beaches and their fringes of leaning palms.

No! The psalmist was right about the hills. Kuala Lumpur owes much to its background of cloud-wreathed summits, with their promise of fascinating, unexplored hinterland.

And for those who are domiciled in this country, and whose salaries enforce a more restricted life and less expensive pleasures, it is probable that life in Kuala Lumpur or Seremban or any of the smaller towns has more to offer, in real satisfaction, than may be found in Singapore.

True, Singapore is a highly progressive city, and if the conversion of the old racecourse into a public recreation ground is completed quickly it will be well ahead of Kuala Lumpur in the provision of open spaces, while it already has a large and ideally situated public swimming bath.

But in the long run it seems certain that all the F.M.S. towns, and especially the "garden city" of Seremban, will offer those of their population who live in shophouses, terrace houses and "quarters" far more facilities for open-air exercise and recreation than overcrowded and congested Singapore can ever hope to do.

Any F.M.S. dweller who is casting envious eyes on that human ant heap of south-eastern Asia which is Singapore would do well to reflect on the blessings of a quiet life, especially in a climate which takes an extra toll of nervous energy, in the European, if not the Asiatic resident.

Jungle on Jugra Hill

Kuala Lumpur, 20 June 1931.

Sir Malcolm Watson has recently been telling the world what Malaya has done to conquer malaria, but there is one place in this country where the battle between man and malaria has been won, definitely and finally by the latter. Tucked away in a remote corner of Selangor, in the mangrove swamps of the Port Swettenham estuary, is a town which has been abandoned to the jungle, and, so rapidly is nature obliterating the works of man that only a few more years must pass before the visitor will find no evidence at all of its former existence.

This town is Jugra, a name which occurs frequently in books and records dealing with the early years of British administration in Selangor. It is now nothing more than a memory, but a memory preserved by very many people still living in Malaya, for it was only in 1921 that Jugra was finally abandoned by the Selangor Government.

It had been, since the early days of British administration, the headquarters of the Kuala Langat district, but its unhealthy reputation, due to the combination of mangrove swamp and hilly country around this outstation, was so notorious that its unofficial population left it before the year 1920 and the District Officer lived at Morib, travelling to Jugra daily, for several years before his headquarters were finally moved to Telok Datoh.

Jugra could hardly be more completely off the beaten track – a fact which explains why so few people visit it. So out-of-the-way is it that motor-car tourists from more distant parts of the country can hardly be recommended to spare the time to see it, unless they happen to be interested in looking up the places in which British history in the Malay States began. But Selangor people who are spending a day at Morib should certainly include Jugra in their itinerary.

It is reached by a branch road leading out of the Klang-Morib road through country which was closely settled with Malays long before the coming of the white man. Eventually the road runs up to a high, jungle-covered ridge which is Jugra Hill, and here the visitor forsakes the present and seeks the past, for he enters upon the old, and now practically disused, road to Jugra.

This road runs parallel with Jugra Hill for two or three miles. For a time the surface is fairly good, as the road serves a granite quarry which is still being worked, but after that it degenerates into an overgrown cart-track, and the car moves along between thick vegetation and beneath a ceiling of overhanging trees.

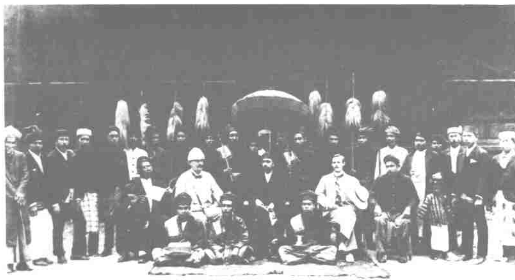
If one stops the car in this tunnel of gloom and searches in the undergrowth on one side of the road, one strikes concrete foundations and a roadside drain – all that is left of a row of shophouses that were inhabited and busy just over ten years ago. Farther on one sees the roofless ruin of a two-storey building almost enveloped in jungle. This was the District Office of Kuala Langat. Already one would have to cut a path in order to get to it.

The next thing of interest is the old jetty, now a perilously shaky structure from which one looks down at the tidal waters of the Jugra creek, some 12 feet below. This jetty has been the scene of dignified official gatherings, for it was from here, after the instalment of the present Sultan of Selangor in 1898, that the guests were conveyed by launch round to Port Swettenham. That this ceremony was held at Jugra, and not at Bandar, several miles away, is the recollection of an old resident of Selangor who attended it and whom the writer has consulted. There are numerous signs of solid stone and concrete foundations near this jetty, but what they represent the writer has been unable to discover.

Just past this jetty the road becomes impassable, but a well-marked path, with road metal underfoot, shows where it ran in an easy gradient up the hill to the District Officer's bungalow. This building is also in ruins and the jungle has so encroached upon it that what was evidently a spacious garden, with fine casuarina trees, has become impassable to anyone who is not armed with a parang.

The path along the slope of the hill runs through what has evidently been cleared ground and then enters the virgin jungle with which much of Jugra Hill is still covered.

Incidentally, the map shows two Sakai reserves in this locality, but, interesting as it would be to picture naked aborigines isolated on this hill in an ocean of rubber and kampongs, Government officers who have worked in this district say that there are only a very few Sakai left, and



Group photograph taken at the Istana Jugra in 1898 after the installation of Sultan Sulaiman of Selangor. He succeeded Sultan Abdul Samad. The acting British Resident, Mr Conway Belfield, is seated on the Sultan's right and on the right is Raja Haji Bot.

they are indistinguishable from the Malays in their manner of living.

Up to a few years ago, however, there were still Sakai in a rather wilder state in the uncleared portions of Carey Island, and there may be today for all the writer knows to the contrary.

Unhealthy as life in the District Officer's bungalow must have been, it obviously had its compensations, for it commanded a view which is uncommon in Malaya – a vast expanse of mangroves seen from a granite mass jutting out of a wide plain. The same thing, of course, is to be seen at Kuala Selangor. At sunset the view from Jugra Hill over the tangled swamps and unruffled reaches of the broad creek below makes a beautiful picture of sunset colours glowing on the burnished water in a setting of delicate, misty green.

And what a place it is in which to muse upon the past – that past which is so tantalisingly near and yet so difficult to grasp in present-day Selangor! To anyone with a sense of history it is curious to see how much is complacently taken for granted by most people living in this State, absorbed as they are in the interests and amusements of the present.

The first British officer to serve in Selangor, Sir Frank Swettenham, who knew this State when, in his own words, "its normal life was robbery, battle and murder," is still living, and the work which was done by the earliest British administrators in this corner of the Malayan coast around Bandar and Jugra and Klang is only half a century away. Mr. J.H.M. Robson, who came after the first pioneers, served in Kuala Langat district when there was no road through to Klang and any journey to that town had to be made by sea.

Just what part Jugra has played in Selangor history is difficult to ascertain. There certainly was a royal *balai* there, and apparently the Sultan sometimes lived there, for in his recent series of articles entitled "Personalities of the Past" Mr. Robson said: "The then Sultan (Abdul Samad 1874–1898) was an old gentleman who lived at Jugra, where he could be seen pottering about in his garden."

One has also been told that the late Sultan, although he died at Bandar, was buried at Jugra, and that the instalment of the present Sultan certainly took place at Jugra. Further evidence of the use of Jugra for official occasions is to be found in Sir Frank Swettenham's account of the expedition which followed a piracy at the entrance to the Jugra River (the inlet of the sea mentioned above) in 1873. Sir Frank says:

> "In February, 1874, Sir Andrew Clarke arranged with Sir Charles Shadwell, the Admiral of the China Fleet, who happened to be in the Straits, to join him in a naval demonstration at Jugra. The Governor took his yacht up to the Sultan's village and managed to get the Sultan to visit him, when Sir Andrew pointed out the disgraceful state of affairs which had so long continued, and asked the Sultan to give satisfaction for the recent case of piracy . . . . The squadron sailed away, and the Viceroy was left with the eclat of these proceedings to quicken his authority."

It would be useful if the part played by Jugra in these early events could be cleared up definitely, so that future generations in Selangor may know exactly where the beginnings of British authority occurred. Jugra perhaps may not be important as a place of pilgrimage, but Bandar, a tiny village at the junction of the Jugra creek and the Langat River, surely is, for here it was that the first British officer was stationed in Selangor.

It seems to be generally believed that honour fell to Mr. J.G. Davidson, but Sir Frank Swettenham states clearly in his *British Malaya* that he was stationed at Bandar Langat in August, 1874 as "British Adviser" to the Sultan of Selangor, and that it was not until November of that year that

Sir Frank Swettenham, first Resident-General of the Federated Malay States and later Governor of the Straits Settlements and High Commissioner for the Malay States — from an oil painting by John Singer Sargent.

the appointment of Mr. Davidson as the first Resident of Selangor (with Sir Frank, then Mr. Swettenham as Assistant Resident) was gazetted.

Further, the list of Residents published in the "Buku Merah" gives Mr Davidson as occupying his post in Selangor from January, 1875, to November of that year. It would seem, therefore, that we must do honour to Sir Frank as the first British officer to be stationed in this State.

Sidelights On The Present

The reader's indulgence must now be asked for a somewhat abrupt return from past to present Selangor.

Singapore people will be able to call up the Federal capital about the beginning of August, and the complete scheme of carrier telephony for Malaya will be finished by the end of this year.

It has been possible for some time to telephone between Kuala Lumpur and Penang and 50 to 60 calls a day are dealt with on that line.

The longest call which is possible in Malaya at the present time is nearly 400 miles between Port Dickson, in Negri Sembilan, and Alor Star, in Kedah.

The carrier telephony programme is only part of the modernisation of life which is evident in Kuala Lumpur today.

The three Moth aeroplanes of the Flying Club were in the air together last Sunday, and our small wireless station on Petaling Hill is a promise of what the future may bring forth in the form of more ambitious broadcasting and telephony to Europe and the rest of the world.

A New Era on the East Coast

Kuala Lumpur, 26 June 1931.

An official inspection train has just been run from Kuala Lipis, in Pahang, to Tumpat, in the north-eastern corner of the Peninsula, thus reminding us that that vast undertaking known as the East Coast line is about to be opened for commercial traffic.

It requires only a glance at the map to realise the potentialities of this line of over 300 miles in length running from Gemas, in Negri Sembilan, to Tumpat, on the China Sea. By this line huge areas of valuable planting land will be made accessible, through transport from the interior of Kelantan and Pahang will be provided to the ocean steamer in Singapore, and Singapore will also be connected with south-eastern Siam.

The first spike in this line was driven on 25 November 1930, 243¼ miles from Gemas, whence the line had started no less than 22 years previously. Light traffic has been run over the whole line since that time for the transport of construction materials, but the line will not be opened for commercial operation until about the beginning of September.

It will then be possible for His Highness the Sultan of Kelantan, who now can only leave his State by sea or by the roundabout route over the Siamese railways, to be in Singapore within 24 hours of leaving his capital at Kota Bharu.

The total cost of the East Coast line will be over $38,000,000, and is being borne entirely by the Federated Malay States. What return may the F.M.S. Railways hope to receive from this enormous expenditure?

The prospects of profitable operation are certainly more favourable than they are on the western side of the Peninsula, where a network of roads is competing with the railway. The Malayan road system on the

eastern side of the country reaches its northern-most point at Kuala Lipis, and its future development will no doubt be strictly controlled with a view to co-operation, instead of competition, with the railway.

Another advantage which the East Coast line will enjoy is that Tumpat is difficult of access by sea during the north-east monsoon. Then, of course, there are the incalculable possibilities arising out of future development of the area served by the railway for agricultural industries. Already there is a considerable inward and outward trade in Kelantan for which the East Coast line will compete. The total value of Kelantan trade last year was over $10,000,000; and there are 135,000 acres under rubber and 56,000 under coconut trees.

Highly important as the economic aspect of the East Coast line is, it is as an engineering achievement that it appeals most strongly to the layman. Such enterprises as the Perak Hydro-Electric Company's dam at Chenderoh, the Singapore Municipality's waterworks scheme at Gunong Pulai, in Johore, and the Johore Causeway are ambitious enough, but the East Coast line must rank as the greatest engineering achievement which Malaya has yet seen.

It has been constructed from both ends, starting from Gemas in the South in 1908 and from Tumpat in the north in 1912. Its progress has been delayed by the Great War, the post-War slump and the great floods at the end of 1926. It reached Kuala Lipis in October, 1917, and it took 10 years to go on from there to the Kelantan boundary.

At the present time, of the total length of 328 miles, only 46 (from Gua Musang to Kuala Gris in Central Kelantan) are not what are called in railway phraseology "open line": that is to say, they are not ready for commercial operation, although they now only lack the finishing touches.

On the map of Kelantan, between two villages named Manik Urai and Gua Musang, there is a sea of unbroken virgin jungle; it is in that country that the most difficult railway construction ever done in Malaya has provided the safe and easy track which now exists. Numerous bridges and tunnels (some of them long and difficult), heavy earthworks, ingenious transport arrangements, elaborate health measures, and the highest skill, determination and pluck of British engineers have been required to run an artery of civilisation through that broken and remote country.

In Kelantan alone – apart from the sections of the East Coast line in Negri Sembilan and Pahang – there are 178 bridges of an aggregate length of three and three-quarter miles, and no less than three of those bridges rank among the major engineering feats of Malaya.

The Guillemard Bridge over the Kelantan River has five 250-foot spans and five of 150 feet, making it by far the longest bridge in the country. The Peel Bridge over the Galas River has two spans of 250 feet and one of 150 feet, and the Clementi Bridge over the Nenggiri River has two of 250 feet and one of 100 feet. These are solid structures based on concrete piers and abutments and constructed of steel girders, of which a quantity weighing over 16,000 tons was used.

There are eight tunnels in Kelantan of an aggregate length of one and a half miles. The longest is nearly half a mile long and runs all the way through rock so hard that special drilling plant and expert foremen to operate it had to be obtained from England to make the tunnel.

Over 14,000 tons of British-made steel rails, 400,000 cubic yards of ballast for the road-bed, and 320,000 sleepers (locally made) have gone into the Kelantan railway, which has also required over 11,000,000 cubic yards of earthwork and 400 culverts through the embankments.

When the future traveller in Kelantan rides at his ease along this route it will be salutary to remember that it cost the lives of five European engineers to bring the railway on which he is travelling into existence, as well as the deaths of a number of labourers. The general health has been satisfactory, however, considering the nature of the country. Elaborate precautions against malaria have been taken by the railway authorities, who have maintained a series of hospitals all along the line and employed Dr W.J. Geale, an old resident of Kelantan, as their medical officer in charge of anti-malarial measures.

One factor which held the engineers back was the enormous damage caused by the floods at the end of 1926, when among other things, those floods swept clean away two 250-foot spans, weighing over 400 tons each, of an unfinished bridge.

Transport of men and materials has been a great difficulty, and the engineers have had to organise a river transport service in interior Kelantan. Materials were sent via Penang and the Siamese railways down to the northern end of the Kelantan line and from railhead were taken eighty miles upriver in lighters towed by specially designed shallow-draught tugs.

Beyond the limit of these lighters, which was Nenggiri, in the remote interior of the State, motor-boats were used for another 10 miles, and after they could go no farther the engineers used prahus with outboard motors. A place called Gua Musang is worth finding on the map because it was the extreme limit of navigation for the railway engineers.

The labour used was mostly Chinese for the building work and Indians for the earthworks.

Considering that for over a hundred miles the line was constructed through virgin jungle, the interference caused by wild animals was surprisingly small, although signs of their proximity were seen in plenty. Elephants were the most troublesome, especially in Pahang, where coolie lines had to be protected from them by trenches and barbed wire.

Residents of contemporary Malaya must count themselves fortunate to have seen the completion of this fine example of British colonising energy, and of a scheme which will play no small part in the development and civilisation of a vast region of the Malay Peninsula between the Main Range and the China Sea that is still as it was before the Malay race settled along the rivers and the East Coast.

A Midnight River Rite

Kuala Lumpur, 25 July 1931.

The Chinese and Tamil Street processions seen in Malayan towns are picturesque, noisy and exciting, but no more than that, whereas a little ceremony which the Japanese community of Kuala Lumpur conducted on the banks of the Gombak River, opposite the Supreme Court, last Saturday night was both moving and beautiful to a European observer.

Only a handful of the crowds returning home from the cinemas noticed the bobbing lanterns in the dark trough of the river channel, but those who yielded to the lure were rewarded with the spectacle of an ancient rite of Japanese Buddhism performed in the heart of the Malay Peninsula.

The ceremony, we have since been told, is performed every half-year and its purpose is to speed the spirits of those who have died during the preceding six months on their way to Paradise. An extra touch of sadness is lent to the ceremony in Kuala Lumpur, for in it is also expressed the sadness of people temporarily exiled from a country in which patriotism is a religion.

The illuminated boats are laden with food gathered from the graves of those who have died during the past six months. When these boats bearing, so it is said, the spirits of the departed, are launched on their journey down the Gombak River in Selangor the intention is that they shall reach the ocean and eventually be cast up on the shores of Japan, where only is Paradise to be found. So runs the story as told to us, but how far it represents the real motives and beliefs of everyone in that little company gathered at the riverside one cannot say.

Two model boats, of antique rig and build, were lying on the sandbank waiting to be launched; their sides were hung with pale-green lanterns

and other lanterns more curious in design and brighter in colour lighted the masts and sails. Incense sticks and candles were burning in the sand.

Dominating the assembly was a strange figure, a priest in a robe and head-dress reminiscent of the Catholic ritual, standing motionless and dignified, holding about and before him a wand from which a globe of pale green light hung in the darkness. A soft-toned bell sounded again and again, and, as though governed by its notes, rhythmic, deeply solemn chanting in the Japanese tongue broke out, rising and falling in waves of sorrow.

Midnight sounded from the tower of the Government buildings; the boats, with their gay lanterns and their freight of human memories were hoisted on men's shoulders, and soon they were floating on the turbid current, escorted by a whole flotilla of dancing, single lights. What the handful of Christians who watched them go, and the Hindus and Moslems who saw them as they drifted through Kuala Lumpur, thought of them one does not know, but the whole ceremony, though conducted in a foreign tongue, was as eloquent as any Western ritual of the mystery of life and death.

The Enchantment of Sri Menanti

Kuala Lumpur, 21 August 1931.

The ceremony at Sri Menanti last Monday in which the aged Ruler was invested with the G.C.M.G. by the High Commissioner for the Malay States, Sir Cecil Clementi, was a wonderful opportunity to observe the feudal and tribal life of the Negri Sembilan.

The four Undang, or principal territorial chiefs, who have the right of choosing the Yang di-Pertuan Besar, were there; likewise the minor chiefs, whose number and precedence are beyond the comprehension of all but the Malays themselves and those members of the Malayan Civil Service who have made a special study of the Negri Sembilan.

Even that study is not sufficient for exact knowledge and correct local protocol, for sufficient material has been found in several of these little States for separate and lengthy descriptions of them. Thus Mr R.J. Wilkinson has published an account of Sri Menanti (as well as general notes on the Negri Sembilan), Mr Andrew Caldecott has dealt with the State of Jelebu, and Mr J.E. Nathan and Dr R.O. Winstedt have jointly published a study of Johol and seven other tiny feudal territories.

Historical and sociological research has not ceased among the M.C.S., for we have recently had Mr de Moubray's study of matriarchy among the Malays of the Negri Sembilan.

But there is still an enormous amount of ground yet to be covered, and if other scholars will do for Selangor and Pahang and the Unfederated States what has been done for Perak and the Negri Sembilan – and for the Naning Malays by the late Mr Humphreys – the more inquisitive and intelligent members of the public will be grateful.

At present the European, Chinese or Indian unofficial resident of Selangor – to take only one example – has no way of learning the feudal

structure of the State in which he lives, and its modern history is still contained in inaccessible archives or in the memories of living men.

It is a curious reflection that the Colony possesses in Raffles Library, Singapore, an almost complete collection of early literature relating to Malaya – which residents of the Malay States are not allowed to use – while there is not even the nucleus of a historical library in the Federation.

One of the first necessities after the slump ought to be the organisation of adequate public libraries in Kuala Lumpur, Ipoh and Seremban, with fees within the means of the local-born English-speaking residents.

However, we have strayed too far from our starting-point in that remote and lovely valley of Sri Menanti where an old Astana of wood and quaintly curved roofs and a new palace of solid and ultra-modern appearance present so strange a contrast. His Highness the Yang di-Pertuan Besar is a symbol of contrast himself, for not only is he one of the most admirable of Malay Rulers but he has himself seen the whole of the rapid and bewildering transformation that British administration and enterprise have wrought in the Malay States.

The present Ruler of the Negri Sembilan was a boy of fifteen at the time of the Sungei Ujong Wars, when British and Indian troops sweated

Astana Sri Menanti

through the jungles and crossed the rivers and hills of the Negri Sembilan to settle the perpetual squabbles of the little confederation.

His Highness must remember when his father, Tungku Antah, attacked the Dato Klana, of Sungei Ujong, who was then under British protection, and thus precipitated the second and last employment of British troops in this part of the Peninsula. It was after that "war", in which the only fighting of any importance occurred in the forcing of the Bukit Putus pass, that Tungku Antah resigned his claims to the titles of "Yamtuan Besar" and "Sultan" and agreed to style himself only "Yamtuan of Sri Menanti".

In 1883 his son succeeded him, and the present head of the Negri Sembilan has therefore been a ruler of a Malay State – though not the Yang di-pertuan Besar – continuously for 48 years.

For a time there was one "Resident of Negri Sembilan" in charge of Rembau, Sri Menanti and Tampin and another "Resident of Sungei Ujong" in charge of Sungei Ujong, (the territory in which Seremban lies) and Jelebu.

In 1895, however – to quote from Sir Cecil Clementi's address at the investiture ceremony last Monday – "The Negri Sembilan were formed into a confederation to be administered with British advice. Three years later the Undang of the Confederated States of Sungei Ujong, Rembau and Jelebu, at a great meeting held at Sri Menanti, elected and recognised Your Highness as Yang di-pertuan of Negri Sembilan".

That election must have been a great spectacle. The procedure was well-established, for the present Yang di-pertuan Besar is the seventh of his line, claiming direct descent from Raja Melewar, who was recognised as sovereign of the Negri Sembilan in 1773. "Under that constitution", says Mr Wilkinson, "Raja Melewar became the titular king of the country, with no ownership of the soil and no power to tax the people, but with high titular dignities and a small civil list".

He is a bold man who attempts to master the complexities of Negri Sembilan history since that date, but the institution of kingship has persisted, and Mr Wilkinson has written a full account of the elaborate ceremonial which is associated with the election of a Yang di-pertuan Besar, and which was carried out at the election held at Sri Menanti in 1898.

Certain places are prescribed at which each of the four Undang must stop before proceeding to the valley of Sri Menanti. Again, certain places are prescribed in that valley at which they must stay, each in a pavilion of distinct and fixed design. When the Undang have agreed upon the personage to be nominated the Dato Klana, of Sungei Ujong, makes the nomination in the audience hall, or balai, of the Astana.

After the royal emblems have been shown to the people, the Dato Klana rises and bids the Herald proclaim the object of the meeting. Says Mr Wilkinson:

> "The Herald's attitude at this time is worth describing, as it has been prescribed by ancient custom and is remarkable to the point of ridicule. He is expected to stand on one leg, with the sole of his right foot resting against his left knee, with his right hand shading his eyes, and with the tips of the fingers of his left hand pressing against his left cheek. Even the most unblushing poursuivant is nervous under such conditions."

One may hazard a guess that that will not be seen again when the next Yang di-pertuan Besar is installed in the modern palace at Sri Menanti.

It would have required an expert to have distinguished the various palace officers, chiefs and lesser chiefs at Sri Menanti last Monday, and indeed several European officials whom the writer questioned as to the Malay procession which escorted the insignia of the G.C.M.G. to the balai were uncertain as to its nature.

But if the significance of the variety and arrangement of the costumes was lost upon most of His Highness's guests, their beauty was unmistakable. The massed colour in this gathering was amazing. There is surely no more attractive race in the world than the Malay on a gala day, and the unique situation of the palace grounds, set in a bowl among low, jungle-clad hills, gave the scene a perfect setting.

Here, in a valley which has played its part in Malay history for three or four centuries, in what is today a district strictly reserved for the kampong life of the Malays, several miles from the main road and 25 miles from the modern capital of Seremban, one felt that one was as near the old Malay life as it existed before the coming of the British as one is ever likely to get.

If one was inclined to regret the decline of Malay feudalism, or its retreat before the regimented plantations of King Hevea, or its archaic aspect in a country supplying the world with vast quantities of raw materials, one could solace oneself as that good friend of the Malays, Mr Wilkinson, did when he reflected upon another spectacle at Sri Menanti.

That passage, despite the advent of the aeroplane and the motor-car and the talkie at the cinema, is still nearly, if not quite, as true of the Malays of the Negri Sembilan as it was when it was written.

> "At the last installation in 1898 there were many features that had no place in the old ceremonial of 1773, when the Yamtuanship was created. The Dato Klana had to share with the

> Bandar the position of representative of Sungei Ujong. The Tengku Besar of Tampin had no place in Raja Melewar's constitutional arrangements. The British Resident himself, the speeches, the guards of honour and the football matches are incongruous elements in a Malay ceremony. 'The old order changes'; but we might wish that it did so in a manner less suggestive of Philistinism. Let us derive what consolation we may from the sentiment expressed on that very occasion, 'Malays possess that true conservatism which, while tenacious of the constitution, is ready to accept useful measures of reform' ".

Negri Sembilan today is a very different territory to that which its Ruler knew as a young man. Its Malay population is actually smaller than its Chinese, and of its total population of 249,285 (an estimate based on the 1921 census) only 86,000 are Malays.

It has 350,000 acres under rubber, and only 32,000 under padi and 32,000 under coconuts. Its revenue last year was over $10 million and its expenditure $11 million. It has half a million acres of reserved forests and a small mining industry, and the value of its inward and outward trade last year was about $44 million.

It has extensive police, medical, infant welfare, public works, lands and education organisations. The expenditure on education last year was nearly half a million dollars.

The State Council of Negri Sembilan consists of the Ruler, the British Resident, five senior Malay chiefs, and one solitary non-Malay member – Dato Wong Yick Thong.

The position is very much the same in the other Federated States, except that in Perak the State Council has one Indian member.

Last year the State Council of Negri Sembilan held seven meetings, and the British Resident's annual report sums up its activities in the brief statement that three enactments were passed and three sentences of death reviewed. Under Sir Cecil Clementi's scheme of decentralisation the State Councils are to deal in future with some of the most important subjects now dealt with by the Federal Council.

A Girls' Sports Meeting

Kuala Lumpur, 4 September 1931.

Those who were present at the girls' sports meeting in Kuala Lumpur last Saturday felt that they were seeing something new and pleasant in Malayan life.

The meeting was far different from those stern events in England in which hard-faced Amazons in abbreviated garments sprint, leap hurdles and run the mile with no concessions to the physical handicaps of their sex. Our meeting is still an essentially feminine affair, adapted to the present stage of athletic achievement of the Malayan schoolgirl, and destroying no masculine illusions.

Indeed, the latter were likely to be actually enhanced by the trim and dainty appearance of the competitors, each in the uniform of their school or club. One team wore white with a touch of orange, another white with blue bandeaux, another red and white, and so on. Charming!

Most of the girls wore European styles of dress, but one cherishes a mental picture of Chinese schoolgirls in pale yellow pyjamas scampering over the field.

The most remarkable thing about this meeting is that it could be held at all. For Chinese parents to permit their daughters to compete in a public sports meeting, held outside the seclusion of their own schools, is revolutionary indeed, as anyone who has taken part in the English education of girls in this country in the past twenty years will tell you. Yet fathers and mothers were there on Saturday in hundreds, gazing benignly on what was in truth a pretty and thought-provoking scene.

Indeed, for me at least, it was more than that. At this time when all Malaya is in a phase of governmental, industrial, commercial and rural

poverty far beyond the worst slump ever remembered by their oldest inhabitants, when everybody is anxiously watching the tin and rubber barometers of world depression, what a relief it was to forget all that in watching youthful grace and joyousness on a sunny and breezy Malayan afternoon, with parents and grandparents – the old folks still a bit dubious about this aspect of the Modern Malayan Girl in garments abbreviated for outdoor sport – beaming upon this jolly and happy scene.

When the first girls' schools were opened in Singapore and Penang by Catholic and Protestant women missionaries some forty years ago one of the greatest objections raised by the older generation of Chinese and Indian parents was that it was impossible to allow their daughters to venture into the streets except in a curtained gharry or ricksha, and closely chaperoned. The girls, kept in strict domestic seclusion, were awkward, stiff and self-conscious to a degree that is difficult for anyone who sees them in their schools today to imagine.

In the gradual development of spontaneity and self-confidence the physical games introduced into the girls' schools have been of the greatest value, and today the visitors to these schools will find tennis, badminton, volleyball and other games occupying a regular and important place in the routine.

Saturday's meeting, which attracted competitors from Kuala Lumpur, Seremban, Ipoh and Klang, was started last year, thanks to the energy of the local Y.W.C.A. executive, and it is surely worth imitating elsewhere in this country.

The programme is confined at present to group competitions, it being felt that the Malayan schoolgirl is not physically capable of the more strenuous athletic exercises which make up a sports meeting at a boys' school, while emphasis on the unit, in preference to the individual, is considered valuable in building up school esprit de corps.

It was also very pleasing on Saturday to find the head of the Mohammedan religion in Selangor, in the person of the Sultan of this State, presenting the challenge cup which is awarded to the most successful school or club at this meeting. No better evidence could be found of His Highness's desire to promote health and happiness among the rising generation.

Sports facilities for girls are still inadequate in Kuala Lumpur. There are not enough tennis courts, and an up-to-date swimming pool would be the biggest boon a local millionaire could confer on the town. But these things must be put off for a more auspicious time.

Old and New Chiefs of Selangor

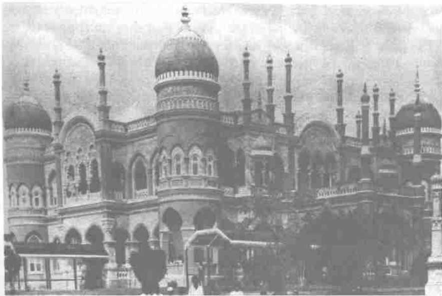
Kuala Lumpur, 26 September 1931.

It is not often that as many as eight Malay chiefs are installed at one time, and the ceremony in the Istana Mahkota at Klang a few days ago was a reminder to the vast majority of the other communities living in Selangor of how little they know about the feudal structure of this State. Indeed, to the foreigner from overseas this ceremony may seem to have had an anachronistic air, unrelated to the modern world outside the royal palace; but there are over a hundred thousand Malays in Selangor to whom it was a living reality of their communal life and racial culture.

The central act in the ceremony of installation was the presentation to each chief of a kris or a sword, depending on his rank, at the command of the Sultan. The ritual was performed in strict accordance with traditional procedure and in the presence of a full gathering of Selangor chiefs, and immediately after the newly installed chiefs left the throne-room they departed from the town of Klang to remain away for one week, as custom prescribes.

The ceremony of the Ayer Tolak Bala, was performed in the palace at Klang on the same day in celebration of the Sultan's 68th birthday. A vessel containing holy water, blessed by high Mohammedan dignitaries, is brought to the palace with much pomp and His Highness dips his hand in it, an act which is supposed to ensure happy auguries for the coming year. What is essentially the same ceremony is performed in the kampongs when it is desired to drive away sickness or calamity.

Under the new decentralisation policy the royal court at Klang will acquire a greatly enhanced dignity and prestige; and the Malay chiefs of Selangor, of whom few subjects of King George and equally few non-Malay subjects of the Sultan know anything at all, will be correspondingly more important.



Sultan's Palace, Klang, Selangor

Hitherto it has seemed as though Klang, as a royal capital, has not enjoyed quite the same distinction as Kuala Kangsar and Sri Menanti and Pekan.

Not only has Klang, a town of busy and modern appearance and an important planting centre, provided an incongruous setting for the royal palace, and one, moreover, in which historic associations have been entirely over-laid by modern commerce – as they have not been in the other royal towns of the Federation – but Klang has also been overshadowed by the F.M.S. capital 20 miles away.

The Federal framework in future will be but a pale shadow of what it is now, and Klang will go up in public estimation, although the question of whether it – or what it signifies – will play any greater part in the practical administration of Selangor is yet to be answered.

Of the European and other guests who are privileged to enter the royal palaces of the Malay States on occasions of State there are very few indeed who know the significance of what they see, of the ceremonial, the costumes, and the formalities with which they find themselves surrounded. They feel themselves to be in a different world, a world in which

procedure and precedence are governed down to the minutest detail by ancient and tenacious tradition, but beyond that they cannot go.

The guest at Kuala Kangsar and Sri Menanti will find, if he takes the trouble to go to the literature of Malaya, that Mr R.J. Wilkinson and others have thrown much light on the mysteries of these courts, but modern Selangor has never been fortunate enough to attract an Anglo-Malayan scholar.

Although there have been British secretariats in Klang and Kuala Lumpur since 1875, the only publication dealing with the Malay aristocracy of this State is a booklet in romanised Malay that has been compiled for the use of the Malayan Civil Service.

Even this is notably vague about the functions of the various major and minor dignitaries who collect at a State ceremony at Klang, and it is plain that a number of offices which, in the days before the coming of the British, had clearly differentiated duties are now not only completely unrelated to the modern administrative machinery but are perhaps not essential in the royal entourage itself.

An obvious example is the post of harbour-master, which was a very important one fifty years ago, when the Viceroy of Selangor collected tolls at Klang and a fort dominated the river, but today it carries with it only ceremonial duties. At the same time, these old titles, reminders of an era when Selangor was a purely Malay State, are cherished and valued as distinctions conferred by the Sultan upon his subjects.

The revival of two ancient titles at Klang only a few days ago was sufficient proof of that.

One striking feature of the Klang installation was the advent of the young English-educated generation of high-born Malays. The old order is indeed changing in Selangor. The old type of chief, knowing only his own language, living in his own kampong, entirely detached from the administration of the State, except for occasional consultation with his District Officer or penghulus, yet revealing in his bearing and personality a pride and authority which had a very concrete basis not so many years ago, is fast passing away.

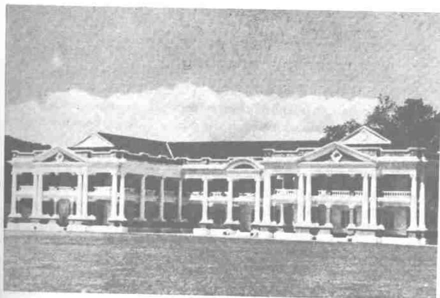
It was a very fine type in its way. A Kuala Lumpur magazine published here in the early days before the Malay Mail, in announcing the death of "the last of the old fighting Rajas of Selangor", recalled that when trouble was brewing in the new Chinese settlement of Kajang, this chief moved up from his kampong, armed with spear and kris, and accompanied only by his son-in-law, and let it be known that if there was a disturbance, he as the representative of the Government, would take an active part in it. There was no disturbance.

Only last year there died in Klang the venerable Dato Amar, who was a man nearly thirty when Sir (then Mr) Frank Swettenham established himself in a pestilential swamp some twenty miles away and Mr Davidson came to Klang as the first British Adviser.

Dato Amar retained clear memories of those troublous times, when Kuala Lumpur was practically an independent Chinese town, when Selangor was so disturbed that the Sultan confessed that he was unable to punish his district chief in Kuala Selangor for piracy, when a little army of mercenaries vanished to a man in the swamps between Kuala Lumpur and Klang, and when men of Kedah and Pahang poured into Selangor to settle the internecine strife.

Dato Amar wrote, in Malay, a modern history of Selangor in his old age, and all who care about the preservation of the early traditions of British administration in the Malay States, already fading so quickly, will hope that that history will be translated.

Those who lament the passing of "old, forgotten far-off days" will lament – and those who recognise modern realities will welcome – the fact that four of the new Selangor chiefs are young men, speaking English fluently, one or two of them already in Government service, and all of them products of the Malay College at Kuala Kangsar. This institution



Malay College, Kuala Kangsar

has long ago proved its value, but Selangor is now seeing for itself the result of educating Malay boys of good family in this unique school.

Probably nowhere in the world is so good an education – using the adjective in the comprehensive meaning attached to it in English public schools – available at no cost whatsoever to the parents.

The Malay College is not only modelled after the English public school; it is amazingly like one. The governing traditions of the class from which its boys come, the emphasis on manners, and the feeling of breeding, of aristocracy, that one has even among the youngsters of the junior school, all go to make up the likeness.

When, in addition, one sees spacious football and cricket fields, fives courts, a swimming bath and a rifle range, and one finds the house system working smoothly in the dormitories and elsewhere, one must admit that the English model has been faithfully followed.

It may be argued that this is all too generous, but unquestionably the College is successfully training the young Malay of good family to take the part that is due to him in the modern administration of his own country, and, while the products of the College who figured in the ceremony at Klang the other day were taking up ceremonial rather than administrative posts, the fact remains that they typify the modern leaders and spokesmen of the Malay people.

At the head of the Malay aristocracy of Selangor, and immediately below the Sultan and the Raja Muda, are the Tengku Panglima Besar and the Tengku Laksamana.

The former is president of the Council of Chiefs, and the holder of an office that was highly influential in olden times. The duties of the Tengku Laksamana are vague at the present time. This office is not mentioned at all in the Civil Service category, and His Highness, in promoting his son, Tengku Alamshah, to hold his title, is evidently desirous of reviving it.

Raja Nong, who was educated at the Malay College, becomes Engku Panglima Raja which is a high position in the palace. This appointment forms an interesting link with the past, for Raja Nong is a great-grandson of the late Tengku Panglima Raja, who was a famous chief in the pre-British era of Selangor.

There follow several chiefs of equal importance. The duties of the Engku Seri Paduka Panglima Dalam are to look after the internal affairs and the palace and to see that traditional customs are observed.

He is assisted by two minor officials, the Penghulu Dalam and the Penghulu Balei, whose spheres of responsibility are the palace and the hall of audience respectively. Below this pair again are the Pelayan Pelayan Istana Balei, who are merely attendants.

The higher officer in charge of the royal household is also assisted by the Dato Bentara Kiri Kanan, whose special concern is the observance of due formalities in the audience hall, and by the Dato Bentara Kiri, who is in charge of the servery or kitchens.

Of the same status as the Engku Seri Peduka is the Engku Seri Peduka Shahbandar, a title which preserves the ancient office of harbour-master, but merely involves today the conduct of the Sultan's business outside the palace.

Other officers of the royal household are the Dato Maharajah Lela Setia Peduka, the Dato Amar Di-raja Penghulu Isti Adat, and the Orang Kaya Maha Kurnia Bijaya Di-raja. The exact differences between the functions of these dignitaries seem to have been lost in the passage of time, although there are still broad distinctions which settle the parts they play in State ceremonies.

Next we come to the five chiefs whose titles preserve the old territorial divisions of Selangor, although their positions are apparently not as high as those of the great territorial chiefs of Perak, and, of course, are entirely different from those of the major chiefs of the Negri Sembilan.

The present-day duties of a district chief in Selangor are broadly to keep in touch with the District Officer and penghulus and to advise the Sultan as to happenings in his district.

The district chief of Kuala Selangor is known as the Dato Penggawa Tua Permatang Peduka Maha Bijaya, of Kuala Langat as the Dato Penggawa Muda Peduka Maha Bijaya Klang, of Ulu Selangor as the Orang Kaya Maha Bijaya Ulu Selangor, and of Ulu Langat as the Orang Kaya Tok Engku Maha Bijaya Ulu Langat.

In addition two old titles have been revived by His Highness recently: that of Panglima Prang Kanan Aman Di-raja and that of Panglima Prang Kiri Sedia.

There is a solitary and perfectly genuine specimen of the primitive Sakai still living near Klang. His appearance is only too civilised, for he wears a tattered shirt and trousers, but his habits are those of his fathers. He lives in a shanty in the jungle and he gets a daily ration of rice from a nearby estate.

And so he ought, for he and his forbears lived and hunted in the jungle which once covered the land now occupied by that estate, and he will lead you among the rubber trees to the spot where his parents are buried.

He is a confirmed jungle dweller, for he once built himself a hut in an open place among the rubber and speedily abandoned it, declaring that it was too hot! He still does some fishing and trapping of birds and animals,

and a curious detail is that he speaks of his children not by names but by numerals. Thus he will tell you that "Number Satu" is ill, or "Number Dua" is earning wages.

So on that British-owned rubber estate, thanks to the kindness of its management, there is a living link with a past that goes even farther back than the traditions in the Istana Mahkota.

Morning on the Kelantan Plain

Kuala Lumpur, 11 October 1931.

The special train which conveyed passengers from Singapore and Kuala Lumpur to the formal opening of the East Coast Railway last Saturday left Tumpat on the return journey at half-past six on Sunday morning, and anyone who sees the coastal plain of Kelantan as it appeared on that morning will never forget it.

To express in prose the quality of that morning is a task for the artist, not the journalist. It was as though we were in a country other than Malaya, so free and exhilarating was the air of this wide plain, and so eloquent of industry and efficiency the agricultural scene before us. The foliage of the palms and fruit trees in which the brown timber-and-attap houses nestled was golden in the early sunlight, and as far as the eye could see peasants were ploughing in the padi fields.

Elsewhere in this Peninsula one has always the feeling of being shut in; the air is damp and heavy because it moves through mazes of vegetation. Moreover, agriculture along the railway is in the form of serried ranks of rubber trees or scattered market gardens or untidy kampongs.

On a fine morning in Kelantan the breeze off the China Sea moves unimpeded across a thousand square miles of rich, level farmlands. The air is cool as it never is in the later hours of the morning on the western side of the Peninsula, and the eye rests gratefully on the good brown earth of ploughed land that has supported a numerous Malay population since before the dawn of recorded history in this corner of South-East Asia.

It may be that the rice-growing districts of Kedah are similar to this part of Kelantan; the writer is not qualified to make the comparison; but certainly between Penang and Singapore there is nothing that so satisfies the

exile from the British Isles, with love of the soil deep in his racial consciousness; and there is nothing that reveals the Malay peasantry in so flattering a setting.

Nordic energy, inclined to be intolerant of the drowsiness of the riverine kampongs and padi swamps of southern and western Malaya, responds at once to this orderly, organised, industrious agriculture of Kelantan's coastal plain as something to be appreciated and admired in the Malay life of this enervating country.

In Kelantan it is not "always afternoon." The morning is put to good use, and those who travel by the East Coast Railway express, which leaves Tumpat every Thursday morning, will discover that here is a State in which the rural Malay really works, as the word "work" is understood in sterner climes.

When the special train conveying the High Commissioner and the Sultan of Kelantan pulled up at Palekbang, which is a station on the other side of the Kelantan River from Kota Bharu, there were hundreds of Malays to greet them, and as the railway stern-wheeler moved out into the river this crowd flowed like a tide of colour over the greenness of the sloping bank.

Sir Hugh Clifford has written in moving language of the beauty of Malayan rivers as he saw them forty years ago and as the inhabitant of modern Malaya, moving along roads and railways, never sees them. But something of what Sir Hugh knew in Perak and Pahang may be known by the traveller today in this brief crossing of the Kelantan River. Brown-sailed boats move along this water highway, here more than half a mile wide; palms and villages fringe the banks, and a cluster of white buildings marks the capital and the Sultan's place of residence.

A leisurely stroll through Kota Bharu is well worth while. There are old cannon on the waterfront and near the Balei Besar, showing that this town was once a "kota", or fort, in fact as well as in name. One of these guns bears the date 1686 and a Latin inscription. How did it find its way to this remote corner of the Malay Peninsula?

With its padang, war memorial, fire station, asphalted streets, telegraph lines, motor-cars and bungalow suburb, Kota Bharu has much in common with other Malayan towns. Yet it is a queer mixture. It seems much less substantial and much less prosperous than towns of the same size in the better-known parts of Malaya, and the way in which Malay houses, raised above the ground and surrounded by high fences, are found cheek by jowl with solid Chinese shop-houses is unusual.

The ideal holiday trip to Kelantan, now that the East Coast line is open, will be by sea from Singapore and back by rail, so that the traveller

sees the finest part of the scenery, the coastal plain and the rivers and forests of Ulu Kelantan, in the freshness of morning, before the afternoon heat and drowsiness sets in during the long day in the train.

What have been the other outstanding ceremonies in the history of the Malayan railway system before the opening of the East Coast Railway? There was a formal opening of the Kedah line, and at least one during the spasmodic growth of the Perak State Railway.

The Johore State Railway was formally opened by the Sultan of that State in 1908, and an old resident has written a letter to the Malay Mail that is especially interesting to anyone who has travelled on the East Coast Railway through a hundred miles of jungle.

"Those of us," he writes, "who were privileged to make the first journey over the new line to Gemas will remember how the track appeared to wind its way through a green tunnel of commanding jungle, with an occasional small clearing at long intervals, where a lonely station-master and porter were the only inhabitants. Except for a very small amount near Gemas and Johore Bahru, there was no rubber planting in those days."

Will the next twenty-three years see as great changes in Ulu Kelantan as have come to Johore since Sir John Anderson, Mr Spooner, Mr Fryer and others attended that ceremony in 1908?

Mud, Mangroves and Malaria

Kuala Lumpur, 31 October 1931.

The financial gloom in which the slump-ridden F.M.S. Government is studying the Imperial Shipping Committee's recommendation to construct a huge new port for central Malaya in the Klang Straits is in sad contrast with the boldness and optimism of those early years in Selangor in which deepsea shipping was first brought to the service of this State.

The little river port of Klang continued to be used by small coastal steamers up to 1895 or thereabouts, but the iron wharf and railway siding that were being talked of in 1890 never materialised. In 1895 the British Resident, Mr W.E. Maxwell, reported that by the end of the following year he hoped that "the building of an iron wharf now being proceeded with at the mouth of the Klang river and already connected by rail with the present terminus of the line at the village of Klang will give Selangor a deepwater port and harbour accommodation that will be availed of by ocean-going steamers".

The confidence that must have been felt at that date in the future of Selangor is shown by the fact that this costly scheme, involving the building of several miles of railway across mangrove swamps, and wharves at the seaward edge of those swamps, was undertaken at a time when the annual revenue of the State was under four million dollars.

The work did not progress as fast as Mr Maxwell had hoped, and in the first year of the present century Port Swettenham was still not in use. The British Resident, Mr H. Conway Belfield reported: "The history of the Kuala Klang wharves has been one of unpleasant surprises throughout, and of unexpected expense and difficulties almost inseparable from the construction of heavy works in bad foundations (sunk in 120 feet of mud)."

In 1902 Mr Belfield's successor, Mr E.M. Merewether, was able to report that the port had been opened for commercial operation, but his record of that event reminds us that malaria was once so bad in the swamps around Port Swettenham that ships could not get their cargo discharged.

> "An event of great importance to the State and the shipping trade was the opening of Port Swettenham, which took place on Sept. 15.
>
> During the months of October and November malaria was rife all over the coast districts, and Port Swettenham and Klang suffered severely. Owing to sickness among the coolies and the staff generally there was for several weeks considerable difficulty and delay in discharging cargo, and in a good many instances steamers had to leave the wharves with a part of their cargo undischarged."

Contrast that situation with the smooth progress of the big construction works at Gunong Pulai in Johore, Sungei Buloh in Selangor, and Chenderoh in Perak, which have been undertaken within the last five years with modern anti-malarial precautions!

One finds no explanation in those early records of why those responsible for the scheme chose the site of Port Swettenham – where, in the words of the Imperial Shipping Committee, "even at present ocean-going vessels prefer to anchor in the stream and work from lighters rather than go alongside the existing deepwater wharf."

Today, when more accommodation is wanted, the site selected is three miles away, on the Klang Straits, and involving the construction of a bridge across the Klang River and a railway extension across quaking swamps to connect it with Port Swettenham.

There is no mention in the Residents' reports of experts having been consulted, and perhaps we can detect the true explanation of their failure to choose Deepwater Point in the following passage written by Mr. Merewether in 1901:

> "An accurate survey of Port Swettenham itself was made in December, 1893 . . . . but no recent survey has been made of the Klang Straits and the only existing chart is on such a scale as to be practically valueless. The want of a proper chart constitutes a serious obstacle to the use of Port Swettenham by large steamers."

Port Swettenham

In other words, the early British administrators in Selangor do not appear to have known very much about local waters when they chose the site of Port Swettenham.

Perhaps there is a secret of local history here. An old-timer writing in the *Times of Malaya* says that the original trace for the railway from Kuala Lumpur to Kuala Klang was entirely along the north bank of the Klang River, and that "powerful interests" forced the deviation across what is now Connaught Bridge to the south bank at the town of Klang.

In spite of its disadvantages Port Swettenham has attracted a steadily growing volume of trade from its earliest years. This is shown in a passage written by Mr. Belfield in 1902, in which we also see the justifiable pride with which the completion of this enterprise was regarded.

"The experience of this year," Mr. Belfield said, "has already proved that the new port is likely to take a leading place among the factors which combine to effect the continued progress and development of this State.

"The records of past years exhibit abundant evidence that the creation and establishment of this port was only accomplished in the face of unknown and continuous difficulties.

"The spot was a mangrove swamp situated on a mudbank of unknown depth. The cost of erecting permanent wharves upon such a foundation was difficult to estimate and was never known with certainty until the work was done and the original forecasts had been vastly exceeded. The whole neighbourhood was so saturated with malaria as to be pestilential to Europeans and natives alike . . . . .

"Building has commenced on shop lots already alienated, and the dismal swamp of past days has been transformed into one of the healthiest and busiest places within the confines of the State."

In 1903 Mr. D.G. Campbell, acting British Resident, was able to report that "the towns of Kuala Lumpur and Port Swettenham continue to enjoy almost complete immunity from malaria, as the result of Dr. Watson's preventive measures." Dr. (now Sir) Malcolm Watson is today at the head of the malarial division of the Ross Institute.

In the year 1904, 1,386 vessels used the port, and the British India Line started to call but other deepsea shipping was chary of using it for several years to come. In 1906 only 14 ocean-going ships were seen in Port Swettenham, but in the following year the number increased to 45 and the P. and O. line began to call at the port.

Although there is no mention of Deepwater Point in the early records, it was not long before the mercantile interests of Selangor began to ask whether the Government had not made a mistake in choosing such a landlocked harbour as Port Swettenham, and only eight years after the port had been opened we find Mr. J.H.M. Robson raising this question in the Federal Council.

The question was never raised in the Council again from 1910 onwards, but it is clear that the champions of the Deepwater Point site were active behind the scenes in 1914, when proposals for extending the wharves at Port Swettenham were under consideration.

The High Commissioner, Sir Arthur Young, wrote in a dispatch that "a large sum of money has already been expended at Port Swettenham and it is therefore out of the question now to consider whether another site should be selected and developed."

Practically the whole of the ocean business of the port was in 1910 conducted by means of lighters, but since that time Port Swettenham had acquired two ocean berths and over three hundred deepsea steamers went alongside in 1913.

The growth of Port Swettenham reflects the growth of Selangor. In 1907 its trade was under 200,000 tons, that trade had increased by 37 per cent five years later; it remained almost stationary during the Great War, but in the post-war boom it grew steadily from 1925 onwards, reaching its peak with over 600,000 tons in 1929. The rubber handled at the port in that year was five times the figure for 1913.

Today, after a lapse of 21 years, we are about to hear of Deepwater Point in the Federal Council again, but whereas the total cost of constructing Port Swettenham as it stood in 1911, including reclamation, wharves, godowns, quarters, roads, buildings, water supply and the railway extension from Klang was only about two and a half million dollars, the complete scheme which the Imperial Shipping Committee has just considered would cost 36 million dollars.

Few people are optimistic enough to believe that the Federal Government will go on with this scheme at the present time, but the vision of mighty funnels smoking above mangrove swamps in a new port on the Klang Straits is less incredible to us who can look back on the past fifty years than it was in the days when "the village of Klang" was the principal port of Selangor.

Footnote in 1981:- What could not be written in 1931, when Sir Frank Swettenham was still living in England, may be revealed now. I was told by J.H.M. Robson, one of the oldest residents of Kuala Lumpur, and a former member of the Federal Council, that it was Sir Frank Swettenham who ordered the deviation across Connaught Bridge at Klang, and thence along the south bank of the Klang River to the site of the future port. Furthermore, it was generally believed that he had extensive investments in land around Klang on the south side of the river. In Swettenham's early days Government officers were allowed to invest in land. It had long since been forbidden when I was writing in 1931.

The Multi-millionaire in a Rickshaw

Kuala Lumpur, 5 December 1931.

The memory of one of the most remarkable men in the pioneering days of the F.M.S. and the founder of the family fortunes was honoured by a few of his contemporaries among the hundreds of guests of all races at the fashionable Loke-Leong wedding in a mansion in Ampang Road last weekend.

Towkay Loke Yew died in 1917, leaving an estate valued at $20,000,000, and his story is worth re-telling today because he represents a phase in the development of the Malay States that will never recur. Gone for ever are the days when an enterprising Chinese could make a million out of an untouched patch of alluvial tin, as Loke Yew is said to have done at Rasa, in Selangor. The Malayan tin-miner of the future will need a large amount of capital, enough to buy the powerful dredges which alone will be able to operate profitably in the worked-over tin-fields of this country.

Real estate is another source of wealth which is never likely to be what it was in the infancy of these States. A man who bought land in any town in Perak, Selangor or Negri Sembilan from 1890 onwards – with the exception of a few small towns such as Serendah which dwindled when their mines were worked out, – could not have avoided making substantial profits.

Rubber has also played a part in building up big fortunes, and although we cannot be as sure about the future of this industry as we can about mining and real estate trends it is probable that the enormous reserves of Dutch East Indies native rubber will operate as an effective check against spectacular booms for many years to come.

No one will venture to say that a sudden quickening of the world's economic life after this rubber and tin slump may not bring prosperity back to Malaya, but it does seem as though the day of the self-made millionaire, of the type of which Mr. Eu Tong Sen and Mr. Tan Kah Kee are living examples, has gone for ever. The man who hopes to make a fortune in Malaya in the future will have to have the nucleus of a fortune to start with.

Moreover, the pioneering phase of the Federated States already seems dim and legendary to the young people now growing up in this country, and the Europeans who have come in since the War know even less about it.

It was a daunting and sometimes dangerous phase, but it was far more adventurous and generous of opportunity than are the prosaic towns and developed countryside of today, and the part which the Chinese played in it was an admirable one.

There is no better way of reconstructing the picture of pioneer Malaya for the benefit of the post-war public than by following the rise of Loke Yew to fame and fortune.

Loke Yew landed in Singapore as a penniless boy of fourteen. He died worth twenty million dollars, a Companion of the Order of St. Michael and St. George and a Doctor of Law of Hong Kong University. The boy whose early years were spent in working on his father's farm in the Kwangtung province of China became one of the best-known, most successful and most philanthropic Chinese of the Malay Peninsula.

It is often said that no race excels the Chinese in the gift of making money multiply. Loke Yew demonstrated this, for it was with ninety-nine dollars saved in his first four years in Singapore, while working in a shop in Market Street, that he launched out as a capitalist.

He invested this money in a small shop under the name of Chop Heng Loong, a name that afterwards became known throughout Malaya. For five years he conducted this firm in person, with increasing success, and then handed it over to a manager while he went to try his luck in Larut, at that time the main mining district of the Peninsula. That was before the Sultan of Perak signed the Treaty of Pangkor with the Governor of the Straits Settlements in 1874.

Loke Yew did well out of his first mines at Kamunting, but four years after he arrived in Larut the price of tin dropped disastrously and he lost $140,000. He met with other setbacks, arising out of the disturbed state of Perak at the time, and came near complete ruin, but he carried on with determination.

Dr Loke Yew, C.M.G., D.Litt (Hong Kong) — a picture taken outside his house in Batu Road, Kuala Lumpur, in 1917, shortly before he died.

He had secured the contract for the supply of food to the British troops then stationed in northern Perak after the murder of its first British Resident. Loke Yew never defaulted with that contract, although hostile Malays did all they could to harass him, and he had more than one narrow escape when piloting his laden boats up-river in the darkness.

After the Perak War was over and the administration of Sir Hugh Low had got under way the Kinta district of Perak, in which the present town of Ipoh then did not exist, opened up rapidly, and Loke Yew, as usual, was on the spot to secure his share of the profits. He acquired large interests in Kinta mining,while at the same time his Singapore business was expanding and now necessitated the opening of a branch in Kuala Lumpur.

While Loke Yew always had large interests all over the Colony and all four States of the F.M.S., it was with Selangor that he was mainly associated in his later years.

He was the first to introduce the use of electricity into the mining industry of this State, although not with very satisfactory results. He made the first road from Kuala Lumpur to what is now the busy mining centre of Sungei Besi, then only accessible by water, and profited to the extent of two million dollars from his Sungei Besi mines. He held the gambling, spirit and pawnbroking monopolies in Selangor and made a vast amount of money out of them.

Loke Yew also opened up remote districts in return for concessions of land. He made the Bentong road in Pahang, 21 miles long and started the first motor service across the main range from Kuala Kubu to Kuala Lipis. He lost two million dollars in 1906 and stood the loss without blinking.

Whenever a little town began to spring up he bought land in it – and watched land values grow. How wise he was! In the first twenty years of this century the population of Kuala Lumpur rose from 32,281 to 80,424, of Ipoh from 12,791 to 36,860, of Kampar from 5,097 to 12,325, of Telok Anson from 3,134 to 10,859 of Klang from 3,576 to 11,655 and of Seremban from 4,765 to 17,272.

And Loke Yew was fully alive to new opportunities. In 1908, only ten years after rubber planting had begun seriously, he had twenty thousand acres planted with rubber at Tanjong Malim. (If family tradition is correct about Tanjong Malim, that is an amazing figure in early rubber history in the F.M.S.)

He owned partially or entirely a number of mines, three rubber estates, two coconut estates, oil mills and a cement works, and had large holdings in Malayan Collieries, the Straits Steamship Company, the Straits Trading Company and other leading Malayan enterprises.

In his later years Loke Yew, wearing a Panama hat and a shiny black Chinese suit, was to be seen any day jogging unpretentiously in a rickshaw along Batu Road, Kuala Lumpur, in which road his house still stands.

Mr. J.H.M. Robson told the present writer that when he once called upon Loke Yew to convey an inquiry from the Governor of Hong Kong as to whether he would welcome a recommendation for a British honour the old gentleman replied that he would rather "receive his C.M.G. from God," by which he meant that he would look for his reward in heaven. However, recognition from His Majesty and from various other quarters came in full measure while he was yet living.

It would be impossible to give a complete account of Towkay Loke Yew's philanthropy, which was spread over a wide area and among many institutions, but among his outstanding acts were a gift of $50,000 to Hong Kong University, a loan of $500,000 to that institution for twenty years free of interest, a gift of $30,000 for educational work and an equal amount for an old men's home in Kuala Lumpur.

When war broke out in Europe in 1914, and panic prevailed among the labouring classes in the Malay States, he gave free rice to all who asked for it in Kuala Lumpur and also bought tin at a time when the Federal Government was the only other buyer. He subscribed one and a half million dollars to the F.M.S. War Loan and invested largely in the first British War Loan.

Of his personality there are none but pleasant memories in Kuala Lumpur. A writer who knew him well wrote in the Malay Mail at the time of his death: "As a man he particularly disliked ostentatiousness in any form, lived very quietly and was always at work. He had no leisure and no particular hobbies. He was much respected by everybody as a very upright, conscientious businessman."

Looking at his life, one may ask whether such complete absorption in business was worth while. It was not all work, however. Loke Yew visited Europe three times, the first time with a party of Chinese gentlemen who travelled under the guidance of Mr. J.H.M. Robson.

To the end of his life he could only speak a few words in English and barely sign his name in that language. He was married four times, and a son of his third wife was married in Kuala Lumpur, in the presence of the acting Chief Secretary and many leading residents, a fortnight ago, while the present Mrs. Loke Yew is now in Switzerland with her children.

Kampong Life in the City

Kuala Lumpur, 12 December 1931.

The comparatively young Malay Settlement in Singapore is not without its troubles, if criticisms in the newspapers are to be believed, and it may be useful to give an account of a similar scheme which has existed in Kuala Lumpur for nearly thirty-one years and today has every appearance of success and permanency.

This settlement forms a completely self-contained Malay suburb, with a population of over three and a half thousand people and its own schools, shops, mosque, recreation ground and club. None but Malays live in it and all its houses are of the Malay type. Each house stands in its own plot of ground one-third of an acre or less, and coconut palms and durian, mangosteen, rambutan and other fruit trees are everywhere.

Nowhere else in Malaya is it possible to see so many Malay houses clustered together, and on the eve of Hari Raya Puasa it is delightful to stroll through the settlement and see little coloured lights glowing in front of the houses lining the main roads and far back among the trees.

The Kuala Lumpur settlement has one great advantage over the one which has been created off Changi Road in Singapore Island, and that is that it is less than a mile from the centre of the town. Such proximity would not be possible in the built-up Kuala Lumpur of today were it not for the fact that this land, comprising two hundred acres owned by the State, was set aside for a Malay settlement as far back as 1901.

The intention then was to create an agricultural settlement, but so many Malays were taking up work in Kuala Lumpur that the demand was soon seen to be for a residential settlement, and that is what one finds to-day. Apart from fruit trees there is no cultivation, nor is there sufficient ground for it.

Poultry are kept by some of the householders and attempts to help them towards better marketing of this class of produce in town have been made recently, but without very satisfactory results.

No title deeds are given for the holdings, thus preventing the owners from using their land as security for loans. The proof of ownership is the entry in the settlement register, and a holding is held on perpetuity by the family in occupation of it, inheritance being decided according to Mohammedan law. Holders are not allowed to let their land or houses, except in extreme cases, of which there are very few.

The settlement is controlled and strictly supervised by a committee appointed by Government, the members of which are Government officers except one. The settlement is an interesting example of the policy of preferential treatment of the Malay in his own country. Its inhabitants are a varied assortment. There are commercial clerks, motor drivers, peons, Government pensioners and Government employees of all kinds.

They pay no rent for their land; their houses they build themselves; their schools are free; their water is free if they care to fetch it from a standpipe; and they pay a very small amount of taxation in return for the public services they receive.

Clearly a Chinese clerk employed in Kuala Lumpur, who has to be content with one room in a shophouse and has to pay rent for that room, has grounds for envy when he visits the Malay Settlement. The same applies to an Indian peon who sees his Malay confrere leaving every afternoon for the peace and privacy of his little home amid the palms.

On the other hand, land values in Kuala Lumpur today are such that the town Malays certainly could not hope to maintain their traditional mode of life if the settlement did not exist, and the effect of shophouse architecture on the spread of tuberculosis is too well known to make us anything but thankful that at least one community in Kuala Lumpur, in addition to the Europeans and well-to-do Asiatics, can live under healthy conditions.

It is also relevant that only fifty years ago the Malays owned the whole of Selangor, and the existence of a large settlement of their race in the principal town of the Federated States, even though that settlement is given special assistance and protection, is surely a matter for thankfulness.

One must know Kuala Lumpur fairly well before he learns how widely British officialdom has spread itself over the suburbs of this town, and the most attractive and healthiest suburbs at that. How this feature of Kuala Lumpur life appears to an inhabitant of the Malay settlement is described in a pointed comment which appeared in the Malay Mail recently. The writer said:

> "Any intelligent Malay looking at the map of Kuala Lumpur might soliloquise thus: 'Ah! this by no means extensive section of the town is a Malay reserve, and that much larger section of the town east of the railway line is kept as a reserve for European officials. Other parts of the town such as Petaling Hill would also appear to be mainly a reserve for European officials.' Having taken a walk round, the intelligent Malay must come to the conclusion that no expense has been spared on the creation of these European official reserves. There are many fine, properly lighted roads which are kept in first-class order, and water is laid on to every house. And no doubt he will take note of the fact that the people who live in these pleasant surroundings pay no municipal taxes except conservancy fees. He may even remember that this is a Malay country and not part of a British Colony."

The atmosphere of the Malay Settlement today is one of security and contentment. Recently the present writer attended a cinema exhibition on the recreation ground of the settlement, and while one was there it was difficult to believe that the world, and with it the industry and commerce of Malaya, was being swept by an economic blizzard.

Everyone was neatly dressed and the children seemed well-nourished and happy. And why not? The inhabitants of the settlement are salary-earners; they are not dependent on rubber or padi, as are their relatives in the rural kampongs; and while salaries have been cut in Kuala Lumpur these Malays still have enough to meet their needs.

Life in this settlement is much less expensive than it is outside such a favoured area. Up to the end of last year its inhabitants paid no taxation of any kind, but after Government had spent $30,000 on making roads and drains within the settlement it was decided to levy a rate of seven per cent of the annual value. That amounts, in the case of a house valued at $1,000, to $8.40 a year.

It will be seen that the holdings in the Kuala Lumpur settlement are occupied on cheaper terms than those in the Singapore settlement, where rents varying from two to four dollars a month are asked.

Householders in the Kuala Lumpur settlement who have water laid on to their houses pay for their water, but there are standpipes at which water is free. The bucket system of sanitation is slowly being introduced, and where it is adopted a municipal charge is levied, but the borehole system is general at present. Lighting is provided along the main roads.

In the centre of the settlement is a large recreation ground, around which are grouped a Malay school for boys and another for girls and the Sultan Suleiman Club, the leading Malay social and sporting club of Kuala Lumpur. This club, which is equipped with the usual amenities, receives a Government subsidy but is mainly supported by the inhabitants of the settlement.

The club is prominent in local football and has its own ground on the recreation area, which is also used for a football league in which teams from the five divisions of the settlement compete. A pack of Malay Brownies meets every Monday in the girls' school.

Education is free, and also compulsory, in the schools in the settlement, as it is Malay schools throughout the country. This is another advantage which the Malay salary-earner in Kuala Lumpur enjoys over non-Malays, who have to pay for the primary education of their children in Government and mission schools.

There is yet another educational advantage, for not only can a Malay boy get free vernacular education but he can get free English education as well.

More than a hundred boys in this settlement are attending English schools, and it is safe to say that nearly all of them are doing so under the scheme whereby a Malay boy who passes the fourth standard in a vernacular school before his eleventh birthday can get free tuition in an English school.

All things considered, the inhabitants of the Malay settlement are very fortunately situated in comparison with non-Malay residents of Kuala Lumpur drawing the same salaries. We have here a notable and successful effort to help the Malay to adjust himself to urban life while at the same time preserving as far as possible the kampong tradition. There is even a penghulu (headman) in this settlement, although he has no part in its administration.

The existence of a penghulu in modern Kuala Lumpur, drawing an allowance from the Government, is interesting as evidence that the Malay, although essentially a countryman, has not been entirely swamped by the immigrant races in the largest town in the Malay States.

The Kinta Valley in its Heyday

Kuala Lumpur, 19 December 1931.

How delightful it is, to anyone who knows only the thickly forested and broken country of southern Malaya, to motor in the Kinta Valley on a sunny morning! The eye, tired of overshadowing trees and hillsides, travels gratefully across the level country. And the colour in it! The cloud masses hanging in a blue sky, the limestone cliffs, the delightful sensation of motoring between hedges across open country as one does in England, the ungainly tin-dredges squatting in their pools, the great holes left by the Chinese miner – it all makes a wonderful picture.

And that is not all. Ipoh is a fine town, with a personality of its own; and farther north is the noble river which until recent times was the main artery of the State; and then there is the Malay life around Kuala Kangsar, the little valleys green with the padi crop on the way to Chenderoh, and the big power scheme.

What strange things are happening to the old Perak River, which has been a highway of Malay civilisation since the legendary period of Perak history! In all these years it has suffered only one desecration, the crossing of its waters by the railway. Apart from that it has flowed on as it has always done.

Changes it has seen on its banks in the course of its long journey from its sources in the hills on the Siam boundary to its mouth in the flat country around Telok Anson. A pretty town has grown up at Grik, in the little-known country of Upper Perak, and a larger one at Kuala Kangsar, while coasting steamers nose their way up its tidal waters to a wharf at Telok Anson.

These, and the appearance of monotonous rubber forests and of craft with snorting little engines in their sterns, are all the signs that the river

has seen of the transformation that the British and Chinese and Indians have wrought in the ancient State of Perak.

Most of the life along the river is as it has always been. Native boats float on its bosom as they did when tin and jungle produce came downstream and rice and other imports upstream, to be taxed by major and minor chiefs as they went along. Kampongs still nestle on its banks amid groves of palms and fishermen earn a scanty living in its waters.

Today, however, what desecration is being wrought! A vast dam, with cunningly contrived outlets for the tortured water, has been thrown across the river, so that fish may not go upstream to spawn and boats only with the aid of a little railway and locomotive; while farther downstream massive piers are being driven into the bed of the river and the spans of a great bridge are extending across it.

It would be little wonder if the simple folk whose forefathers have dwelt by the river since the memory of man should feel dread lest it should rise in its wrath and make one last desperate effort to sweep away the obstructions which intruders from the Western world have placed in its path.

As one contemplates the new bridge at Enggor, which is to be the largest road bridge in the Malay Peninsula, one sees in it a symbol not only of the new era in this country but of the rapid progress of civilisation. Far below the lofty piers and strong steelwork of the unfinished bridge lies the narrow track of the old pontoon bridge, which has served the traffic of the main road through western Malaya for thirty-nine years.

Pontoon Bridge at Enggor

When the great flood came in December, 1926, the entire bridge was swept away, and several days later, when strange reports of whales near Telok Anson were investigated, several of the missing pontoons from Enggor were found at sea.

The floodmark of five years ago is high up a coconut tree on the river bank at Enggor – staggeringly high up – but the new bridge is above that mark and its foundations are locked in bedrock, so it would seem that the Perak River will never again hold up road traffic.

When the late Sultan Idris, who himself had seen the development of his State from the stage of kampong life and primitive mining to a modern territory, opened the pontoon bridge in February, 1892, he named it Gertak Khorsani Shah, which means "The Bridge of Real Steel." That name is more appropriate to the bridge now being built, for the old one has nothing more than wrought-iron and timber in its construction.

This digression has taken place while we are speeding northwards from Kuala Kangsar along the Grik road into Upper Perak. Grik is one of the ends of the Malayan road system, there being nothing beyond it except jungle until developed country is reached in southern Siam.

Grik is an attractive little town, unusually cool to live in, and the centre of one of the most interesting administrative districts in the Peninsula. The District Officer of Upper Perak has a very large territory to cover and travels almost entirely by boat or elephant.

Some thirty miles along this road we turn off on to the private road of the Perak Hydro-Electric Company. Although only six or seven miles long, this road cost a great deal of money because it had to be specially strengthened to bear the weight of the great flywheels and shafts used in the hydro-electric scheme at Chenderoh. Motor tourists in Perak should not fail to visit Chenderoh. The engineer does not usually improve on the handiwork of Nature, but here he has given us an experience of pure artistic pleasure in one of the loveliest curves imaginable.

The great dam is curiously shaped, so that when the river is high the water pours over the crest and down the sixty-foot slope on the other side in a curve which is so graceful that one can hardly tear one's gaze away from it. At the crest it is perfectly smooth, but as the water falls it disintegrates into a white cascade which is dashed into spray on the rocks beneath.

The setting is a worthy one. The Perak River at this point flows through a narrow gorge between hills, and the view downstream is a beautiful one of water and forest. Above the dam a lake some twelve miles in area has been formed and opens out tempting vistas which we were unable to explore. Five British engineers live a lonely life at this place.

Here is the nerve-centre of a system which stretches all over central Perak, as far away as Chenderiang, seventy miles to the south of us, and those flickerings on instruments in the control room of the power house indicate demands for power coming from towns and mines scattered all over this area.

The Perak Hydro-Electric Company today is only generating one-third of the power which it can provide from its Chenderoh undertaking, but its subsidiary company already is lighting nine towns, including Ipoh, and the tin-miners are increasingly turning to electricity, so that if the Kinta Valley ever sees a boom again the capital invested in this great undertaking should pay satisfactory dividends.

From Enggor we drove on to Kuala Kangsar through a countryside with a dense Malay population. In Kuala Kangsar a new palace, costing three quarters of a million dollars, is being built for the Sultan, and one wondered whether the old State Council Chamber in this town, which dates from the early years of British administration in Perak, will be used for the reconstituted State Council when that body is inaugurated ceremonially next year.

His Highness said at a meeting of his Council some days ago that the Old Chamber in Kuala Kangsar, which now forms part of a block of Government offices, would always be preserved in memory of Sir Hugh Low, who created in Perak the first State Council to function in the Federated Malay States. Some of the early minutes of that Council have been published and give a vivid impression of the difficulties experienced in laying the foundations of modern administration in a Malay State just emerging from the Middle Ages of Malaysian history.

The next day we were privileged to see the most extreme contrast in mining methods and equipment which the Kinta Valley presents.

First we drove out to Gopeng, which was a centre of mining long before Ipoh existed or before there were British officials in Perak. Indeed, in one of the early meetings of the Perak State Council we find a chief petitioning the Government to compensate him for the loss of $10,000 which he had spent on the development of mines at Gopeng before the Perak War. Ten thousand dollars in those days was a great deal of money, so that it was no mushroom town we were visiting.

The mine we were inspecting has the cheapest production cost of any tin-mine in the world. We were on the property of Gopeng Consolidated, which even now in the world slump is paying dividends and can go on doing so with tin at very much lower prices than those prevailing today, thanks to the water-power which it obtains by means of three pipelines laid into the nearby hills.

An open-cast tin mine

Having seen the open-cast method of mining, our party were taken to Batu Gajah to see the latest development in tin-dredging. The Malayan Tin Dredging Company, which was the first company to dredge for tin in this country and now has a fleet of five of these floating machines, lately has brought into operation a dredge which can dispose of three hundred thousand cubic yards of earth in a month.

That makes it, in point of digging capacity, the largest dredge in the country, although the Killinghall monster, in Selangor, is an equally remarkable example of dredge design because its buckets scoop down to a depth of one hundred and twenty feet, as compared with eighty feet in the Malayan Tin Dredging Company's dredge.

At Batu Gajah we visited the historic little Kinta Club, which has existed almost as long as British people have lived in Perak. It is delightfully situated, with a sporting golf-course nearby which occupies the ground on which the Kinta race meetings were held before a bigger racecourse was made at Ipoh. The Kinta Club must have seen gay times in the old days, when the mines were booming, and racing, cricket and dancing were crowded into one festive week.

Ipoh people are wondering what changes will follow the transfer of the State capital from Taiping to their town. Malayan towns differ greatly. In Singapore the influence of municipal government is great and valuable. In Malacca the age of the town gives it a wonderful civic spirit, transcending communal boundaries. Nowhere in the country is Chinese hospitality quite what it is in the Chinese Chamber of Commerce in Malacca.

Kuala Lumpur is not a town at all: it is an official settlement. It contains a small element of non-official residents who have long associations with the place and take a pride in its administration and development, but the majority of Kuala Lumpur people, notably the Europeans, are without civic spirit such as one finds in Singapore and Malacca and Ipoh.

The Kinta Sanitary Board, on the other hand, with its headquarters in Ipoh, has been for many years an exceptionally efficient and progressive body whose activities are closely followed by the public and which has no difficulty in commanding the services of prominent and able men. It is significant that very little has been heard of municipalisation in Ipoh, whereas there has been a marked feeling of dissatisfaction with local government in Kuala Lumpur.

Commerce, mining and planting are what matter in Ipoh, and the appalling correctness of the caste system in Government service has influenced its social life hardly at all. The consequence is that Ipoh has a pleasantly free-and-easy atmosphere. Moreover, Ipoh has never fallen into the mental habit, so blighting and pervading in Kuala Lumpur, of leaving everything to Government. Ipoh, despite its short history, is a town in the sense that Malacca is and Kuala Lumpur is not, and it is significant that Ipoh is the only place in Malaya in which a fund to relieve clerical unemployment has been supported actively by leading European residents.

This is the environment in which the official cohorts from Taiping are now to establish themselves, and one gathers that Ipoh people, while welcoming the prestige that will accrue to their town as the capital of Perak and recognising the modern conditions which make the transfer necessary, are wondering whether they are not going to see social as well as material changes in the busy capital of Kinta.

The attitude towards the decentralisation policy which one found in Ipoh was interesting. In Kuala Lumpur supporters of the policy are few. Officials are dubious as to its administrative success, and most unofficials, unwilling to think out so complex a problem, simply condemn the policy as an annoying disturbance of an established system.

One learnt in Ipoh, however, that people there are far from unwilling to see the shadow of the Federal capital removed. Some of them think that Perak has lost more than it has gained through federation, and the part which the Perak mining revenue has played in opening up Negri Sembilan and Pahang supports that view. Still, it is a highly debatable question, for the world-wide reputation of the Federal Government has had much to do with the inflow of overseas capital for mining and planting in Perak.

A Festival at Bandar

Kuala Lumpur, 13 February 1932.

The focus of interest for the Malays of Selangor on Hari Raya Puasa is a tiny village situated in a most uninviting spot among the creeks and rivers and coastal flats which lie to the south-west of Port Swettenham. This village, which is called Bandar, is inseparably associated with the royal house of Selangor.

At least two Sultans have lived at Bandar; the present Sultan, while now residing mostly in his palace at Klang, retains a strong affection for the peaceful and sequestered village in which his boyhood was spent; and at Bandar is a mosque which has the same personal significance in Selangor as the Royal Chapel at Windsor has in England. In this mosque on the morning of Hari Raya Puasa His Highness the Sultan, as befits the head of the Mohammedan religion in his territory, mounts the high pulpit and addresses a congregation which includes all the principal members of the royal family and the major chiefs of Selangor.

This is a ceremony of which the alien elements of Selangor – the Europeans, the Chinese, the Indians, the planters, the miners, the business men – know nothing. No one ever thinks of going to Bandar, still less of utilising a holiday to go there. It is fifty miles from Kuala Lumpur by road, and he who would seek a shorter route must hire a sampan to cross a broad and muddy river; and when the traveller arrives, there is little for him to see – little, that is to say, on the surface of this apparently insignificant village.

Consequently the Sultan and his chiefs come and go at Bandar on Hari Raya Puasa unnoticed by the non-Malay world; the peasant folk gather in their gay holiday costumes to see the great ones of their race worship at the mosque and receive hospitality; and for one private day in the year the Malay life of Selangor expresses itself in formality and festivity entirely devoid of alien elements.

On other occasions of State there are always British officials in helmets and tight, ungraceful uniform, and the polyglot crowd whom the reporters call "unofficial residents", the males in stuffy suits which look as hot and uncomfortable as they feel, in contrast with the loose Oriental costumes around them.

At Bandar on this day of days there are no such incongruities. True: there are motor-cars, and the luxurious motor-coach in which the ladies of the royal household travel. But that is all. Hari Raya Puasa in the traditional home of the Sultan of Selangor is an unspoilt Malay festival, in which the Sultan moves among his chiefs and people free from any symbols, human or otherwise, of the foreign life of the State of which he is the constitutional head.

Alas! This year there was an intrusion. An all-pervading, incalculable, suspect, indispensable force in modern Malayan life reached this last Malay refuge, protected though it is like the lair of Hereward the Wake by streams and marshes.

Last Tuesday in the compound of the mosque at Bandar was to be seen a strange figure. Surmounted by a solar topee, directing its vision through horn-rimmed glasses, clad in a white suit, and carrying upon its arm an overcoat, this figure walked hesitantly and peeringly among the bright-hued throng. Were any ghosts of old-time Bandar Termasa, the City of Festivals, gazing on the familiar celebrations they might well have gaped. What was this trespasser? Alas and again alas! It was a representative of the Press.

How it happened need not be related. The Press, like love, makes light of difficulties, whether they be keyholes or long motor journeys on the morning of Hari Raya Puasa. But Malay courtesy and hospitality was triumphantly equal to the occasion. Soon came a polite messenger, "Would the stranger care to take refreshments?" The representative of the Press, being ignorant of Malaya outside its towns and also of its language, was nervous lest he should commit an unintentional breach of etiquette in high company.

But the messenger was unmoved, repeated the invitation, and led the way to a long, low building, gaily decorated, which ran along one side of the compound. At its entrance the representative of the Press removed

his shoes and walked through a crowd of Malays who were seated on the floor of the building eating and drinking.

At the end was a separate chamber, in which were the hosts who had issued this most courteous invitation. Here His Highness the Sultan had partaken of refreshment and had left a few minutes before. At the head of the low table, seated on the floor, was the Sultan's eldest son, the Raja Muda, gorgeously arrayed in the costume of the Wahabis of Arabia which he wears only twice a year. There were also the Adviser on Religious Affairs, the chief kathi and a number of major chiefs.

The table was covered with cakes and sweetmeats, which were pressed upon the newly arrived guest. The time was spent in conversation, while a voice was raised in an Arabic chant now and again. At last the chief kathi pronounced a prayer and the entertainment was over.

Afterwards the representative of the Press went on a historical pilgrimage, in which his Malay hosts cordially co-operated. "A pilgrimage, in Bandar!" the reader may exclaim. Certainly in Bandar: for was it not here that a British officer was first stationed in Selangor, here that Sir Frank Swettenham knew the unique loneliness of being the only white man in a Malay State still in its Dark Ages, and here that British men and women pioneers of the modern era of Selangor lived under conditions which seem intolerable and incredible today?

More has been written about this village, lying in a loop of the Langat River, than about any other place in which European life in the Malay States began. No one village in Pahang has been depicted in complete material and psychological detail by Sir Hugh Clifford. Of Seremban and Klang and Kuala Kangsar and Taiping in their early days we have little more than the jottings of tourists: but two Europeans actually lived in Bandar and wrote down fully what they saw and felt.

If we go to these literary sources we can see exactly what this village was like when the Sultan of Selangor first accepted a British officer at his court in 1874; we can know exactly how life on this swampy river-bank appeared to foreigners nurtured in the civilisation of England; and we can know what a heavy price in dreariness and loneliness was paid by a white woman for the service which her husband rendered to the cause of civilisation in Selangor some fifty years ago.

In this pilgrimage the Raja Uda, a son-in-law of the Sultan and an officer of the Malayan Civil Service, gave kindly aid, and the guide was the oldest inhabitant of Bandar, a very old Malay whose eagerness to talk of the past was so great that the words came to his lips almost faster than the infirmities of age would permit of their utterance.

This old man remembered Sir Frank Swettenham well; indeed, he was with Sir Frank during the pursuit of the rebels after the Perak War. He also remembered other British officials of the early days in Selangor. "Tuan Douglas" and "Tuan Innes" were among the names that fell from his lips, and he remembered Mr Innes' wife as well – the unfortunate Mrs Innes who lived in Bandar and loathed it so thoroughly that she wrote a fascinating book to give vent to her feelings.

First the old man was asked to point out the site of Sir Frank Swettenham's stockade. The reader may remember what this was like:

> "It was a very rude structure with log walls about six feet thick and eight feet high, a mud floor, a thatch roof, and no doors. Outside it was a high watchtower of the same materials, but the ladder had fallen down. Of roads there were none, but a mud path ran through the stockade from river-bank to village, distant some three hundred yards . . . . . The tide at high water completely covered the floor, and the log walls were full of snakes."

The old man led the way to the river-bank, to a point where a ferry operates between Bandar and the other side of the Langat River. At this point also the Jugra River joins the Langat River. The scenery is not enlivening. The muddy waters run through flat country, their banks covered with low vegetation. "The exact corner made by the junction of the streams," says Sir Frank Swettenham, "contained a few scattered huts in a grove of melancholy and diseased coconuts." That description fits the place perfectly today.

Part of the site of the old stockade has been washed away, but part of it is still left on the bank, and the old man's account of how a path ran through the stockade tallied exactly with Sir Frank Swettenham's description. Later he seems to have acquired a house of sorts, but he still had the same unlovely view of river and swamp.

It is easy to understand why part of the site of the stockade has been washed away. A former Sultan cut a ditch two hundred yards long to connect the Langat River with the head of the Jugra Creek, a tidal inlet which runs into the sea seven miles away, and the action of the tides was so violent that in the course of a few years it deepened and widened the ditch until it attained the dimensions of a river.

That process was still going on when Sir Frank Swettenham and Mrs Innes lived at Bandar, and they both describe the spectacular destruction done by the tides as they ate into the soft mud banks and carried away jungle vegetation out to sea.

At the junction of the rivers there is today a flight of concrete steps for the ferry service, and beside these steps are the remains of a jetty. It was this jetty that Mrs Innes had in mind when she wrote that "one had to jump in a crouching posture from under the awning of one's boat and alight on a slippery rung of a sort of hurdle, which hung loosely over the mudbank into the river and swayed to and fro with the tide."

From this place the pilgrim last Tuesday went in search of the site of the "palace" in which Sultan Abdul Samad lived when Europeans first came to Bandar. This search showed how greatly Bandar has changed since it found a place in Malayan literature. Mrs Innes' first impressions of the place (in 1876) are worth quoting:

> "As soon as the sun had gone down we went out to look at the village, being anxious to know the worst and get it over. The first bit of the mud path took us between Malay wigwams, called by courtesy the bazaar, where squalid wares were displayed hanging from strings or shut up in glass bottles on account of the ants . . . .. Having passed the bazaar and the Sultan's palace – a dilapidated wooden building – we continued our walk. Here the path became narrow, and it was necessary to walk in single file, as the surrounding ground consisted of seething black mud . . . . . At about two hundred yards from the last wigwam the path came to an abrupt end and lost itself in the swamp. We stopped a minute or two to look at the hill of Jugra, and agreed aloud that if we had to remain six months in this fearful place we must either leave the service or commit suicide."

At that time Bandar consisted of the Sultan's residence, a stockade commanding the river, and a few native houses and miserable shops strung along the only path of the village. Today Bandar at least has metalled roads, but it had degenerated in another respect: its Malay population has decreased greatly, and extensive lands which were planted with rice and fruit-trees fifty years ago are covered with secondary jungle today.

The site of the old "palace", which was raised on brick pillars, built of squared timbers, and boasted a tiled roof, was pointed out on Tuesday by the old man from the road, but jungle has hidden whatever remains of the building. Shortly after the commencement of British protection the Sultan moved to Jugra, four miles away, and it was not until his successor, the present Sultan, ascended the throne that Bandar became a royal place of residence again.

Today Bandar is a decayed and almost deserted village, and when a new Sultan is installed in Selangor it will probably fade finally into obscurity, for it is unlikely that a younger monarch will be attracted to a place so lacking in modern amenities and so difficult of access. Even now the rambling old palace is empty most of the time, and the lawns and flower-beds around it are not kept up as they used to be. His Highness comes to Bandar every Friday to attend prayers in the mosque, but he rarely stays in the village.

On the grass in front of the palace are four old cannon, relics of a battery of seventeen with which the Sultan once dominated traffic on the Langat and Jugra Rivers. An old wooden balei, or hall of audience, stands in the palace grounds, but it is never used now. Outside the palace ground there is nothing to see except the mosque, which is out of all proportion to the local population, and a few Malay houses. An air of melancholy lies upon the place. If it loses its royal associations, as it surely must in the modernisation of Selangor, it will also lose the one day in the year on which the chiefs of Selangor still worship with their Sultan in its mosque, and it will be utterly forgotten.

Meanwhile it is good to visit that open place on the river bank, where the Jugra River is on the left and the wide bend of the Langat River on the right, and muse on the days when Sir Frank Swettenham sat around a fire at night in his stockade with his police and the Malays of the village, when Mrs Innes was so lonely that she gave her fowls individual names to keep her amused, when Captain Bloomfield Douglas came boisterously up from Klang in the Residency launch to shoot snipe and irritate his Collector at Bandar by forgetting to bring the mail, and when the shadows of modern government settled slowly and inexorably upon the free and turbulent life of the capital of the last of the old-time Sultans of Selangor.

The Pawang

Kuala Lumpur, 20 February 1932.

Last Saturday's article on the royal village of Bandar has evoked a most interesting letter from an old European resident recalling some of his early experiences in the Kuala Langat district of Selangor.

The outstanding part of his letter is that in which he gives the most remarkable personal evidence of the powers of the Malay pawang, the medicine man wise in the animistic lore lying beneath the surface of Malay Mohammedanism, that I have ever read.

Other writers, notably Sir Hugh Clifford, have written of similar performances, but they have guarded themselves either by putting the stories forward as second-hand or by wrapping them in the garb of fiction. This correspondent, on the contrary, says boldly that he has actually seen a pawang reveal powers over animal and bird life which rival those of the Pied Piper of Hamelin.

"I saw one of the very old-time Malay performances at Bandar," he writes, "on the Jugra side of the ferry. Several Malays had been taken about that time by crocodiles, and the last victim was a young girl bathing by that jetty you mention. The girl was of high birth, possibly even belonging to the Sultan's Astana at Bandar.

"An old pawang entered the river to his waist, cut some reedy grass, and made himself a whistle or flute from the same. He then played some notes of a sort of tune, and very shortly a crocodile was seen approaching, with the pawang still up to his waist on the river's edge. Then another crocodile was seen, then another until quite a number was there, with the pawang still tootling away on his flute.

"He then told us that the bad crocodile had come and he quickened the playing faster and faster. Soon the crocodiles were struggling all together,

tails flashing out of the water and a regular battle proceeding. Blood appeared freely in the water, which was in high commotion with the lashing of tails and struggling bodies and angry noises. They paid no attention at all to the pawang, who continued to tootle away very fast.

"Finally one body of a crocodile floated away and the rest gradually disappeared. Some other Malays put off in a prahu and towed ashore the dead crocodile, very badly mauled. The brute was cut up and in his stomach were the remains of many victims, in the form of bangles, buttons, belt clasps and so forth. It was claimed that the last victim's bangles and rings were recognised by the girl's relations. The pawang, still in the water, played some more tunes on his flute, slow and melancholy notes, and he said that these were admonitions to the other crocodiles to take no more victims at the bathing point."

That is the story in my correspondent's own words. Some will refuse to believe it, some will say that it has become exaggerated in the passage of time, and some will say that the assembly of crocodiles may have been attracted in other ways. Sceptics may make what they like of that story, but they must remember that my correspondent was stationed in the Jugra district many years ago, that he is known to many of the older residents of Malaya, and that he relates this story in the course of a long letter much of which is not concerned with magical matters at all.

The calling of the crocodiles, moreover, was not the only demonstration of the pawang's powers. Let us go back to the letter:

"After he came out of the river he (the pawang) gave us a long yarn about Malays and their river-lore of old times, when they depended solely on the rivers for transport and had to know all about the denizens of the river waters and banks. To prove to us his powers he played more on the flute, different tunes altogether, and monkeys (kra) galore appeared on bushes by the river thereabouts, chattering away in a very excited state, jumping from branch to branch, and plainly upset about something.

"The pawang asserted that old-time riverine Malays knew every tune for different animals and fishes – had to, he said, for food and protection, but 'these young Malays' (a fine gesture of scorn from the old man) had abandoned the craft of their forefathers and had become landlubbers with little or no knowledge left in them (pointing scornfully at the men assembled there) of the old Malay adat, undang-undang, etc."

Here is still another story of the pawang, in which he is seen in a very different role.

"On another occasion we were assembled at a bungalow where this old man gave a splendid performance of mystery. We were about twelve men all told, one being a visitor from afar and actually unknown to most of us

there – his name even unknown correctly. The host was asked by the pawang to write down the vistor's name, or, better, ask the visitor to write down his own name on a piece of paper, which was folded up unseen by the pawang.

"The host then held the paper in his hand and we all joined hands, left to right in our line of chairs. The pawang had descended the verandah steps and stood quite outside during the name-writing. He then came up again and stood in turn in front of each European slightly touching our hands. Then he asked for a piece of chalk, went to the plank wall behind us, and wrote out the name of the visitor. It was not only his name, but the writing was just the same as the signature of the visitor.

"Of course, we all said 'collusion,' and I cannot swear to this day that there was not, but getting about was difficult in those days, and to me the odds were against direct or deliberate collusion, for I know that the visitor was unknown to our host, and was merely a guest of another man there, casually brought along for a little Saturday night sing-song and bust-up."

"The pawang was annoyed at our doubts and put up other mysteries. One was distinctly fetching. He took an ordinary keris off the wall of the bungalow in its sarong (sheath) and passed it round for inspection. It had sharp edges and several twists or curves. The pawang stood in front of us all (no preparation about this trick any way), rolled up his sleeves to the armpit, and began to draw his right hand forcibly down the sharp edges of the keris, chanting in Malay some unknown pantuns, possibly of Menangkabau origin and in a form of spoken Malay difficult to follow, as he mumbled his words quickly.

"Faster, faster he drew his right hand down the edges: then drip, drip, fell the blood on the verandah plank floor. He became quite hysterical and finally threw the keris away from him with a theatrical gesture, appealing to us not to touch the keris or pick it up, for it would burn us. Of course somebody picked up and felt the blade, and dropped the keris promptly. Some others tried it and did the same. They all said it was burning hot.

"Then the pawang became normal again, showed us his hands (which were not cut at all), picked up the keris to pass it round as being free of any preparation or even still hot, sheathed it, hung it on the wall once more, and went down the verandah steps to give us time to talk it over."

Hypnotism, you say? Perhaps so, but if the old-time Malays did in fact possess knowledge that the modern European does not, this pawang would have had it, for he certainly was of a bygone generation. This is what my correspondent says about him:

"This pawang was a famous old man of Jugra in those days and must have been very old. Right down the track from Jugra Estate to the Langat River at Telok Datoh on the Jugra side, where Mr D'Arcy Ervine's bungalow now stands on Banteng Estate (or did the last time I was in that neighbourhood many years back) lived a very old Malay or Banjarese, who was a famous hunter of those days. His land of possibly fifteen acres or more was pitted with holes, all staked with sharp bamboos at the bottom, for catching tigers and other wild animals. This old man had lost one arm in a fight with a crocodile and was wounded in many parts of his body from personal encounters with wild animals. He said that the pawang of Jugra was as old as his (the hunter's) grandfather, so the pawang must have been truly ancient. He certainly looked it."

Reflections on Bukit Kutu

Kuala Lumpur, 23 April 1932.

The development of Malayan hill stations during the last ten years has added amenities to European life in this country such as our predecessors, or most of them, never knew.

They were content, if they lived in Singapore, to drive out in a trap along soft-hued laterite roads to Bukit Timah, where they spent a week-end happily enough six hundred feet above sea level, or they went to the seaside. If they lived in Kuala Lumpur they drove to Dusun Tua and occupied themselves with bathing in the hot springs or rafting down the stream, then delightfully clear but now polluted by kampongs; or they climbed the cliff on which the Klang Gates bungalow used to stand and admired the view. Neither in Singapore nor Kuala Lumpur did people think it necessary to go more than fifteen miles away for a holiday.

In later years hill bungalows were built in the Federated Malay States, on Bukit Kutu in Selangor, at The Gap on the divide between Selangor and Pahang, on Gunong Angsi in Negri Sembilan, on the Kledang range near Ipoh, and on Maxwell's Hill above Taiping. Penang Hill was also opened up as a holiday resort and the hill railway constructed after the War. But for most Europeans in Malaya a hill holiday was a very rare experience up to five years ago, when Fraser's Hill became generally known and popular.

Previously there was only Penang Hill, at which hotel rates had to be paid, or Brastagi, which was also expensive, or the F.M.S. hill bungalows, which were few and always in demand, even if they were known at all to Singapore people, who were not as familiar with the Malay States in the days before the Johore Causeway as they are now.

It is said that we owe the development of Fraser's Hill to Bishop Ferguson-Davie who, shortly after the 1914-18 war, walked up the jungle track from The Gap to Fraser's Hill and was so impressed by its possibilities as a hill station that he approached the F.M.S. Government with a proposal for its development. Fraser's Hill, however, had been known for long before that to European miners and others, and no doubt its claims would have been considered in any event, as soon as the decision to create a hill station for the F.M.S. was taken.

Gunong Tahan, a mountain in Pahang with a plateau at a high elevation, was thought of, and a survey party spent six months on its summit, but the soil was too barren and the climate too unsuitable for a hill station. Why Cameron Highlands, which had been known for many years in a vague way, was overlooked ten years ago is a mystery the solution of which must be sought in official archives.

Fraser's Hill cost a great deal of money, and sometimes Asiatic taxpayers in the F.M.S., who have practically no benefit from the new hill station, have been inclined to grudge that money. This is one of the matters which it is considered impolite to discuss but which engender ill-feeling if they are not ventilated. Only two building sites on Fraser's Hill have been taken up by Asiatics, namely Mr Choo Kia Peng and Mr Alan Loke, and it has been freely stated that the policy of the Government was to reserve the sites on the hill, the number of which was limited, for that section of the community which suffered most from the tropical climate.

A new and larger rest-house at Fraser's Hill has been built, but doubt exists among Asiatics as to whether they are expected to use it. Only a fortnight ago a well-known Chinese resident of Kuala Lumpur, who has stayed in metropolitan hotels in Europe, asked the writer whether Asiatics could obtain rooms at the Fraser's Hill rest-house. Presumably the rule of no racial discrimination which applies to Government rest-houses throughout the F.M.S. applies to this one also. It could not be otherwise, for, whatever there is to be said for segregation in normal social life in Malaya, racial discrimination in amenities paid for out of public funds may be a source of most unfortunate and unnecessary ill-feeling.

However, this Chinese gentleman did go to the Fraser's Hill rest-house with an Indian friend, also a community leader, and there was no unpleasantness.

It is a mistake to suppose that Asiatics (except Malays) do not like cold weather. Immigrants to this country from Ceylon have always been accustomed to holidays in their own excellent hill stations, and many well-to-do Indian and Chinese residents will be found at Cameron Highlands in the

future. Indeed, one of the reasons for welcoming the development of that hill station is that there will be plenty of room for all comers there.

Despite the slump, Cameron Highlands is going ahead fast. Twenty applications for building sites have been granted, a large area of the lower Highlands has been taken up for agricultural purposes, a syndicate is about to build a hotel, and the rest-house is always full of visitors.

One says that the Highlands are developing "despite the slump" but perhaps it would be more correct to say "because of it." The fading hopes of retirement to Great Britain have made many men turn to the Highlands, and there is every prospect of a lively and well-equipped hill station, with a permanent European population, taking shape there during the next ten years.

It is certain that for the European community no money spent in Malaya has yielded richer returns in human health and happiness than that devoted to hill stations, and so long as the available facilities were limited our Asiatic fellow-citizens, while disliking discrimination in principle whether in hill stations or hospitals, were genuinely glad to see the benefits which accrued from Fraser's Hill.

It must be conceded that people from temperate countries, accustomed to a bracing winter of snow and biting winds, need hill stations most, and probably it is difficult for anyone born in the tropics to understand the feelings which sweep over an exile from northern Europe when he finds himself in the Malayan mountain air. Only too clearly do we see Anglo-Malayan values when we are five thousand feet above the steaming plains – and only too easily do we break those good resolutions when we descend to the plains again.

These remarks are inspired by a holiday at Bukit Kutu, a mountain-top which has harboured Europeans in contemplative mood for the last thirty years or so.

We may be thankful that these isolated hill bungalows in Selangor and Perak and Negri Sembilan are being kept up, for many people prefer them to Fraser's Hill, which they think resembles too closely the life from which they are trying to escape. Cameron Highlands will be even more civilised than Fraser's Hill when a club, a hotel, barracks and various other things spring up there.

The choice depends on individual tastes. If you want a shop, a post-office, roads, a golf course, newspapers (perverted desire!) and the other amenities of suburban life you go to Fraser's Hill. If you want quietness, isolation from humanity, informality and simplicity you ascend Bukit Kutu and dwell there in misanthropic solitude.

Except at holiday times, such as Easter or Christmas, it is easy to get accommodation at Fraser's Hill. Admittedly, many of the houses are owned by Government, and Government servants are given preference in allotting them, but if reasonable notice is given, and public holidays are avoided, the unofficial visitor can always find accommodation.

The Negri Sembilan Planters' Association at its annual meeting last month decided to suggest to Government that as the Government bungalows at Fraser's Hill were built with public money Government servants were not entitled to preference in allotting them. Alas! The planters have no hope of prying officialdom out of that particular position. The privilege of staying rent-free at Port Dickson or Fraser's Hill is just one of those little things which make the public less sympathetic with public servants than they ought to be.

Coming back to Bukit Kutu, one may say that here one enjoys the kind of hill holiday which was the only kind our predecessors in the F.M.S. knew before a garden village sprang up on Fraser's Hill. To reach the place one leaves the main road to Pahang some five miles beyond Kuala Kubu Bahru, drives one mile along a branch road, and leaves the car at the end of it. Coolies, previously ordered from Kuala Kubu Bahru, are waiting with provisions and, if necessary, with sedan chairs in which to carry the weaker members of the party.

The path leads five miles through a forest and game reserve, a steady climb all the way but not too strenuous, and affording fine vistas of hill scenery. On the top of Bukit Kutu are two bungalows, situated at such a distance from each other as to satisfy the conventional British reserve, and there are a tennis court, a badminton court and vegetable gardens. There is no postal delivery, and all shop provisions have to be carried by coolies up the mountain path.

The older bungalow, which was first built somewhere about 1898, gives a most magnificent view, taking in the Selangor plain, with the Port Swettenham estuary shimmering in the extreme south, the mountains around Fraser's Hill to the north and north-west, and to the east the serrated line of the main range and the Pahang boundary. No place which is accessible to the townsman gives him a deeper sense of the grandeur and loneliness of Malaya's mountain ranges. All day long at Bukit Kutu his eye rests upon forested valleys and slopes and peaks. No sound breaks the stillness save the calling of monkeys and the shrilling of insects. Far below are the silver meanderings of the river around Kuala Kubu Lama.

In the evening, perched on the edge of a noble promontory thrusting itself out into the Selangor plain, one may see a storm driving over the

mountains, and with that sight comes realisation of the calm, sturdy courage of the first white men, Cameron, Fraser and others, who, accompanied only by Malays, first slept in those jungles and crossed those ranges. Even more strongly comes this realisation at night, when wild weather howls around the lonely bungalow.

It was strange to descend the jungle path and drive on immediately from one extreme of Malayan life to the other – from the primaeval solitude of Bukit Kutu to the city of Singapore. It is good for a resident of the Malay States to visit Singapore now and again. It corrects his sense of proportion.

The swirling traffic currents around Fullerton Building at the five o'clock rush hour, the broad roads, the far-extending suburbs, the massive buildings, the life of Raffles Place, the shipping in the roads, all these things make one realise the imperial importance of this city and seaport.

Singapore is like nothing else in Malaya, psychologically isolated and distinct, fed by streams of trade from distant lands ignorant of the Peninsula save as a region for investment. In Singapore the civilisation which Great Britain has created in south-eastern Asia has reached its greatest mass and complexity. To see it is good – but to board a Straits Steamship vessel and say goodbye to that fine waterfront is even better.

Life in the Malay States is depressing enough today, when men with children at school in Great Britain are receiving polite office letters depriving them of their living and the Government services are in a state of uneasiness and anxiety. Nevertheless, we are closer to Mother Earth than our unfortunate fellows in Singapore can be in their maze of cement and asphalt. The countryside is not far from our suburbs, and we, unlike Singapore, have not forgotten the peasant who perhaps alone finds true happiness in this age of hustle and competition.

Having seen people sixty miles from the Equator driving every morning through dense traffic to reach their offices, living in the rabbit-hutch bungalows which Singapore land values are dictating, enduring stifling nights, allowing the wealthy to monopolise their sea beaches, tolerating wide expanses of shop-houses innocent of playing-fields, one goes back to the F.M.S. with the conviction that the inhabitants of our smaller and quieter towns, whether they be European or Asiatic, gain much more than they lose by placing a few hundred miles of rubber and jungle between themselves and one of the main seaways of the world.

The Last Chinese Tin Smelter

Kuala Lumpur, 14 May 1932.

The one and only Chinese tin smelter left in this country is a curious survival at Pudu of the days when the Chinese had a monopoly of the tin-mining industry of the Malay States, and some notes about it may be welcome.

Older mining men can remember when Perak, Selangor and Negri Sembilan had any number of these Chinese smelters. They were numerous at the beginning of this century but began to go out rapidly somewhere about 1909, the cause of their decline being the establishment of the Eastern Smelting Company. The sole survivor is situated at Pudu, near Kuala Lumpur, and is owned by the Tan Ban Joo Company, the proprietor of which, Towkay Tan Hong, is living in Singapore and is over seventy years of age.

This smelter, which was started in Kuala Kubu Lama over forty years ago and moved to Pudu in 1926, has four furnaces. One is a modern type operated by electrical power and capable of treating over a hundred piculs of ore a day, but the other three are the genuine, old-fashioned Chinese variety, into which air is forced by bellows worked by coolies.

Except for the use of fire-bricks instead of clay to line the furnaces, we see in this Pudu smelter a fairly close replica of the apparatus which was used to treat tin-ore in the rich mining lands around Kuala Lumpur in the days of Yap Ah Loy. The furnace is charged with a mixture of ore and

charcoal. On top of the charge is kindled a fire of bakau wood, air is forced into the furnace by a primitive bellows, and the molten tin runs out at the bottom into a container, from which it is ladled into moulds. As the liquid cools impurities come to the top and are skimmed off, but it is melted again in a Chinese refinery in Singapore, more impurities are removed, and the metal is then sold to manufacturers in India, China and Japan.

This smelter, with its four furnaces, has a capacity of about six hundred tons of metal a year and even under the international restriction scheme is turning out about 300 tons.

Naturally the plant, with its corrugated iron roof and sides and its trucks for moving the ore and metal, presents a very different appearance to that of a Chinese smelter of fifty or a hundred years ago, but the actual furnaces, apart from the modern one installed two years ago, display a method of treating tin-ore which was used long before white men penetrated the interior of the Peninsula.

It may be of interest to quote a description of a Chinese smelter written by a traveller in the Malay States fifty years ago. He says:

> "The Chinese method of smelting the tin ore is in cylindrical-shaped furnaces made of clay, round the outside of which sticks are placed perpendicularly and close together, being held and kept in position by bands. In the centre, and down through the middle of this structure, there is a hollowed-out space in which the fire burns, being kept alight by fresh supplies of charcoal thrown on the top, where the tin ore is also placed in small quantities and whence, melting, it trickles down through the burning charcoal and runs out at a small aperture at the bottom of this tube, falling into a pan dug in the ground and lined with clay, from which it is removed by ladles and poured into sand moulds, where it cools and solidifies."

Actually two kinds of furnaces were used by Chinese smelters in the Malay States and the type described above is the Relau Semut, in which a mass of clay and sand was made in the shape of an inverted segment of a cone, within a frame of saplings, and then hollowed out. Into the cavity ore and charcoal were poured together and melted.

This was a very wasteful method, it being estimated that not more than half the metal in the ore was extracted, and the slag was smelted over and over again.

The other type of furnace, the Relau Tongka, was the one from which Towkay Tan Hong's furnaces at Pudu are descended. The Relau Tongka was also made of a mixture of sand and clay but it was bound with iron bands, based on a solid iron pan, mounted on a framework two feet above the ground, and equipped with a bellows consisting of a piston moving up and down a hollow tree trunk and worked by coolies. This in later years was the only method of smelting allowed by law in the Malay States.

In 1896 there were nearly three hundred Chinese furnaces of both types in Selangor alone.

New Light on Yap Ah Loy

A remarkable article on Yap Ah Loy was published some days ago. Some of the history in this document may be garbled but its authenticity is beyond doubt, for the Chinese original is possessed by the Yap Ah Loy family and it was written by a man named Hien Fatt, who was a lieutenant of Yap Ah Loy in the civil wars in Selangor and also his secretary during more peaceful periods.

Some of the old Chinese families of Malacca and Penang have stirring records of hardship and danger, but the peculiar interest of this Yap Ah Loy autobiography lies in the fact that this raw immigrant, after his five-week journey in a junk from Macao to Malacca, scorned to stay in the peaceful colonial settlements under British rule and plunged boldly into Negri Sembilan and Selangor, territories which were then ruled by entirely independent Malay rajas and chiefs. Thus we have in this Chinese document not only an autobiography of an extraordinary man but a record of life as it was in this Peninsula, outside the Straits Settlements, seventy years ago.

Yap Ah Loy was Capitan China at Seremban in 1860, when he was only about 27 years of age. He came into that office shortly after the Malays had turned on the Chinese miners and slaughtered a number of them. Afterwards the Malays regretted the loss of the tribute which they had levied on the miners. Therefore peace was made and Yap Ah Loy held the balance between his compatriots and the Malays until 1864.

In that year Yap Ah Loy came to Kuala Lumpur, taking two days to walk from Seremban. His path must have lain through jungle almost the whole way. He invested his savings in Kuala Lumpur in a Chinese dispensary and in mining and prospered exceedingly. Before he died, in 1885 at

the age of 49, British administration was established in Kuala Lumpur, but for some fifteen years this man ruled Kuala Lumpur, as a bold and beneficent dictator.

So great was his authority as Capitan China that a man could leave tin-ore by the roadside without fear of theft – and that at a time when the rest

Yap Ah Loy

of Selangor was so lawless and disturbed that every Malay over the age of 20 was said to have killed at least one man.

In the civil war that was then endemic in Selangor Yap Ah Loy backed one side loyally and vigorously, with the result that he drew the enemy upon Kuala Lumpur, and we read in his biography of fighting at Pudu, at Ampang, at Petaling, at Damansara, and even in the heart of the town, where the High Street is today.

Once Yap Ah Loy was driven out of Kuala Lumpur to Klang, the stronghold of his allies, and we catch a glimpse in his biography of that strange and tragic episode in which the European adventurer, Martin, and his force of mercenaries were annihilated in the swamps around Petaling.

There is still one man living, Sir Frank Swettenham, who saw Yap Ah Loy at the height of his power in Kuala Lumpur, before British intervention in Selangor and at a time when Yap Ah Loy was expecting another attack on the town. The story of his paying for enemy heads in the market place is too well known to be repeated here.

When Yap Ah Loy died he left a vast fortune, including some of the most central and valuable land in Kuala Lumpur. Government did what it could to obtain wise administration for the estate, but comparatively little of it is said to be left today.

There is no memorial to Yap Ah Loy in Kuala Lumpur, except a street named after him, and unless the conscience of posterity is stirred there never will be.

Since writing the above notes I have come across another article on Yap Ah Loy which was published in the Selangor Journal in 1893, at a time when many of the men who had fought with him and against him were still living.

This article confirms in general the statements in the Malay Mail article except that it says nothing of Yap Ah Loy having been Capitan China at Seremban. What it does say of his stay in that settlement was that when the Malays attacked the Chinese miners Yap Ah Loy fled into the jungle and took refuge with some charcoal burners but the house was searched by Malays and Yap Ah Loy was shot in the thigh. Later he was carried back to Seremban and recovered.

When he was Capitan China in Kuala Lumpur a faction of the Chinese, siding with a Malay leader named Raja Hassan, rebelled and Yap Ah Loy was driven to Klang. He recaptured Kuala Lumpur, so this writer in the Selangor Journal says, because he found a man who could make rockets, and this new weapon of war was too much for the Malays.

We find in this article a reference to a grim episode in Kuala Lumpur's history of which most of its present-day inhabitants have never heard.

When Yap Ah Loy recaptured the town 300 Chinese prisoners were taken. On the pretence that they were going to bathe they were led in tens down to the river near where the Java Street bridge is today and beheaded. When 230 of them had been murdered the survivors, seeing that their fellows did not return, became alarmed and set up such an outcry that Yap Ah Loy came to know what was going on and stopped the massacre.

There are two other points worth mentioning in this article. One is the use of a sort of irregular cavalry in the Selangor wars. The writer repeatedly speaks of "men on foot and on horseback" in Yap Ah Loy's forces. The other point is that when the Capitan China died the flag at the Residency was half-masted, and this Chinese writer, not knowing the English custom, solemnly recorded that "God on that day struck and broke the flagstaff, and when the English found this they dared not raise the flag again, but held a meeting and decided to follow the procession to the grave."

How easy it is, when East and West meet, to be misunderstood!

A Red-Letter Day for Trengganu

Kuala Lumpur, 30 April 1932.

With the exception of the tiny State of Perlis, which occupies three hundred square miles in the extreme north-west of the Peninsula, the State of Trengganu is the least known of the nine Malay States under British protection; and the linking up of Trengganu with the road system of Kelantan and the railway system of the Peninsula, inaugurated in the presence of the High Commissioner and the Sultans of Kelantan and Trengganu last week, has aroused a new public interest in this State and in the development of the East Coast generally.

A much wider outlook is evident in Malaya today. Whereas thirty years ago people knew little about affairs outside their own State or Settlement, and petty parochial jealousy was common, the improvement of communications, the popularity of motor touring, and the increase of English-speaking, non-Malay communities permanently settled in Malaya have widened our mental horizons, so that we are beginning to see the emergence of a type of "Malayan" who is as interested in the municipal experiments of Ipoh or in British policy in Trengganu as an Englishman is in the Halle orchestra of Manchester or in the clash of political parties.

Presumably this development will not be universally welcomed. A British official working unselfishly and quietly for the welfare of the Malays in a remote East Coast town might not welcome the appearance in his dominion of that strangest of genii, Public Opinion, conjured up by leader-writers whenever flesh-and-blood characters are not available. And there might be good reasons for that official's attitude. Some forty years ago Sir Frank Swettenham, speaking at a cricket dinner in Singapore, made great play in his drawling, sarcastic style with ill-informed colonial critics of affairs in the Native States, and the same lack of information would apply to Kelantan and Trengganu today.

However, we need not fear that the penetration of the jungle barriers which hitherto have protected north-east Malaya will embarrass the benevolent and beneficent autocracy that prevails there. The gradual breaking down, by means of roads, railways and vernacular newspapers, of the isolation in which the Malays of Kelantan and Trengganu have lived is as inevitable as is the growth of interest in these States among the educated public of the more developed parts of the Peninsula.

The former process involves very real dangers, for the peasantry of western Malaya are forsaking their traditional, well-balanced dietary for the machine-made foods of the coffee-shop, they are (or have been) turning their padi fields into rubber holdings, and they are as anxious to see their sons slaving in Government offices as is a Scottish crofter to get his son into the ministry.

Fortunately it will be a long time before the rural economy of the East Coast States is seriously threatened by capitalist industry, and the painful but salutary lessons learnt during the present world depression will not be forgotten. Moreover, the spread of ideas from the more developed States to Kelantan and Trengganu will have this advantage: that it will make for closer co-operation between all the nine Protected Malay States. As a Kedah Malay said some time ago, "a bundle of nine sticks is harder to break than a bundle of four."

The opening of the new road from the State capital to the Kelantan boundary, giving access to a State which hitherto could only be reached by sea, and only intermittently by sea during the north-east monsoon, means that Trengganu is now, whether she likes it or not drawn into the network of Malayan life. Tourists speaking the barbarous Malay of the Singapore bazaar will appear in her capital, knowledge of her potentialities will grow, capitalist enterprise will be facilitated, and population will flow into her empty lands.

These changes, or the more important of them, may be delayed for some time, but there is little doubt that anyone idly turning over the files of the Straits Times a century hence and happening upon this article will marvel at the feelings with which we in the year 1932 contemplated the opening of this new road in Trengganu.

It is clear that we are at the beginning of a new era in the history not only of Trengganu but of the East Coast of the Peninsula. It is now possible to leave Singapore by train one morning and be in the capital of Kelantan or Trengganu early the next day.

Nor have we seen the end of travel facilities on the East Coast. A trace has been made for a road southwards from Kuala Trengganu to link up with Kuantan, in Pahang, and a motorist fifty years hence – the rapid

development of western Malaya enforces hesitation in suggesting a period – may be able to leave Kuala Lumpur, cross Pahang, and motor right along the East Coast to Kota Bharu.

If we look even farther into the future we may perhaps see the road tentacle which has recently reached Pekan pushing southwards through the trackless jungles of south-east Pahang to emerge at Mersing, in Johore. Such a scheme is much less incredible to us in A.D. 1932 than was the connection of Prai and Singapore by road in A.D. 1870.

Even so, it will be many years before ambitious road construction along the East Coast can be undertaken, and travel will be limited to the routes already open. That there will be much traffic along those routes, both for business and pleasure, is certain; and people who have lived in Kelantan and Trengganu before the completion of the East Coast Railway and the new road to Kuala Trengganu may count themselves fortunate to have seen these two Malay States in a phase of evolution from which, however conservative the policy of their rulers and the mentality of their people, they will now begin to pass.

Trengganu was the last Malay State to receive a British adviser. The State was transferred from Siamese to British protection in 1909 and a British Agent was then appointed, but it was not until 1919 that a British adviser was appointed "whose advice must be asked and acted upon in all matters affecting the general administration of the country and in all questions other than those touching the Mohammedan religion."

Kelantan and Kedah had had British advisers, appointed by the Siamese Government in Bangkok, as far back as 1905, and although Johore did not accept a British adviser with full treaty powers until 1914 she had employed British officers for many years before that.

Thus we see how recently the ideas of modern administration have been implanted in Trengganu. The geographical isolation of the State has enhanced the natural conservatism of its people, and it is only five years since the misguided peasantry of a certain district rose in rebellion and some of them were killed in an attack on a police station. There is an echo of this rising in a recent report of the British Adviser.

> "His Highness, with the British Adviser and a party of the chiefs, visited the coastal towns and villages to the south of Kuala Trengganu and was everywhere received with enthusiasm. These visits of His Highness, started methodically in 1347 (A.D. 1929), have done a great deal of good both to him and his people. The latter no longer feel that they are mere payers of the taxes suggested by the whim of a distant

State Council, and there have been no further signs of the disaffection of 1346." (The date in the Muslim calendar.)

Considered as a field for enlightened imperialism Trengganu is exceedingly interesting. Here is a State five thousand square miles in extent, or about half the size of Wales, and with a population of about 180,000. Last year there were thirty-three Europeans in the whole State.

The financial position of Trengganu seems extraordinarily unbalanced, for the amount provided for personal emoluments last year, nearly a million dollars, was more than half the estimated expenditure of the Government.

The opening-up of the State has been financed by the Straits Settlements by means of loans, but Trengganu has been badly hit by the world depression and was forced to default in its payment of interest on these loans last year.

With the borrowed money the road from Kuala Trengganu to the Kelantan boundary, sixty-five miles long, has been constructed, but it has not been metalled, so that it cannot be used during the rainy season. Other and shorter roads have also been made, giving a total length of some 120 miles in use.

Only the coastal plain and the river valleys are inhabited, the western half of the country being mountainous and known only to mining men. A geologist's verdict is that "during the past hundred years the country has been well prospected, especially by Chinese and European prospectors, and it is not expected that any large fields remain to be found," but he goes on to say, "there are indications in several parts of Trengganu of tin-lodes awaiting discovery."

The Bundi Mines in the Kemaman district, financed by Australian capital, have been working tin lodes prosperously for some years. The iron-ore mining industry in Trengganu, developed by Japanese interests, is notable, and last year no less than 200,000 tons of this ore were loaded into ocean freighters at Kuala Dungun. There is only one agricultural estate in the State.

The Trengganu peasantry, who are dependent upon agriculture and fishing, are living very much as their forefathers did centuries ago. They are famous boat-builders and they do a certain amount of weaving and metal work, although the latter handicrafts are declining. "The local Malays," says the British Adviser's report for last year, "work as and when they choose except on rare occasions when in any particular district the crops fail and relief works have to be instituted."

There are a number of Malay schools, some of them staffed by teachers trained at the Sultan Idris College, and there is one small English school. No girls' school exists, but girls under ten years of age are taught with boys in some of the Malay schools.

Medical services are provided and courts of law function, although the procedure in the latter might puzzle an orthodox member of the Colony or F.M.S. Bar. Indeed, a young Singapore lawyer who visited Kuala Trengganu in a client's interest some time ago was horrified to discover that there was no Criminal Procedure Code or Evidence Enactment in the State, and that he had to address the court through a Peguam or local lawyer acquainted with the Hukum Sharah.

The State is without the agricultural and forest services which it badly needs, and it needs population to develop its empty lands.

Kuala Trengganu is the most isolated station to which a British official can be sent in this country. Its European population consists of seven persons, of whom two are women. During the rainy season mail and cold storage supplies may be delayed for a fortnight or even a month, if the coasting steamers are unable to call.

However, life in Kuala Trengganu has its compensations. Marvellous beaches of white sand stretch away for forty miles to the south, and on them during the northeast monsoon great rollers pound unceasingly, while a temperature five or more degrees below that of western Malaya whips up the blood. Some day people may go to Kuala Trengganu for an invigorating seaside holiday instead of Huahin, in Siam.

Despite its conservatism Trengganu, and its near neighbour, Kelantan, are likely to be the region in which the Malay, under British guidance, will adapt himself most successfully to the conditions of modern life. The economic competition of the non-Malay races has been kept in check in these States, and there has been no period of feverish development to disturb the training of the Malay in technical and administrative work.

For many reasons, economic, geographical and political, Trengganu for many years to come is likely to be the most "backward" State of the Peninsula, but who shall say that her people will be any less happy or contented? As in Siam and in the western Malay States, so in Trengganu the younger generation will gradually come into power and steer the ship of State more boldly towards modernisation.

In the meantime the influence of Great Britain can only be exerted with the utmost sympathy and patience in a State which is making its first stumbling and hestitant steps into the twentieth century.

The Malays, the Only Happy People

Kuala Lumpur, 11 June 1932.

I spent last Sunday morning in the sunny silentness of a typical inland Malay reservation. Little houses on stilts were dotted among the groves of rubber trees. Around the houses were fruit trees, and tapioca, Indian corn and various vegetables and herbs were planted untidily. Poultry scratched about in the undergrowth. A river unspoilt by mining silt ran through the lush valley and irrigated padi fields. The soil under the rubber trees was rich and moist, and a firm faith in the "rubber forestry" advocates' objection to weeding was evident. Kuala Lumpur was very far away, and so was that other product of civilisation, the slump.

This seemed to be the only unfeignedly happy place one had been in for months. The official film-making operations which were the object of our visit, and of which, I, as a newspaper man, was privileged to be a spectator, attracted a large number of the Malay inhabitants. They seemed thoroughly carefree and their faces were one perpetual grin as the camera recorded a tale of kampong life. They were certainly not under-nourished, and the children in particular were as plump and bright-eyed and happy as Malay youngsters ought to be. One seemed to have strayed out of a gloomy and anxious world into Arcadia.

And indeed there was reason for that extravagance of imagination, for as one stood among the merry group of Malays one contrasted with relief and thankfulness their lot with that of the miserable folk who gather at the Hakka temple in Kuala Lumpur twice a day for a bowl of rice gruel, or of the hungry men who recently marched on the Ford factory in Detroit, or of Europeans in Malaya who constantly fear the spectre of retrenchment.

If old Raja Bot, who declared that the Selangor Malay would live to rue the day on which he planted rubber, were to come back to earth today he would find himself to have been a true prophet; but he would also find

that his countrymen were for the most part, better off at the present time than any other race in Malaya which had become dependent on the rubber industry.

He could stand in the Malay reservation at Ulu Gombak and see around him all the necessities of life, just as he used to do in a kampong in Selangor fifty years ago. He would see rice, fruit, vegetables, poultry and fish near at hand, together with rubber which still brings in a little cash.

Moreover, if the old raja could go to the Malay settlement in Kuala Lumpur early on Sunday morning, as we did before going out to Ulu Gombak he would be assured of two things: firstly, that the Malay, with special assistance, is maintaining himself and living a natural life in the modern capital of the Federated States; and, secondly, that the rural Malay, again with a little pushing from behind by a paternal Government, is making a serious effort to supply the urban markets and cut out the middle-man.

The Malay market, which was only started a fortnight ago, showed marked growth on its second Sunday and there is every prospect of its becoming a permanent and useful institution in Kuala Lumpur.

Our morning in a Malay market and a Malay reservation suggested a number of questions. What is the real economic position of the peasant in the slump? How far is he suffering distress? How far can he achieve independence of import crops? Has he enough land to make his position secure? How far can he, by co-operative marketing, direct contact with the consumer, and other means regain that portion of his birthright which he has surrendered to the industrious Chinese?

More study is being given to these problems today than ever before and surprising and, in some cases, apparently contradictory information is being gathered.

Take, for instance, the sub-district of Setapak, a few miles from Kuala Lumpur, in which we were last Sunday. This sub-district is populated very largely by small-holders. The average size of their holdings is two acres. About seventy per cent of the land is under rubber, but there is some padi and mixed cultivation. The cash return from two acres of good rubber at the present time, assuming that the owner does his own tapping, is about seven dollars a month.

The income required by a Malay family of husband, wife and two children, if they buy all their food and rely entirely on rubber, is estimated by some authorities at about five dollars a head. That is presumably a normal and not emergency figure, and there is little doubt but that it could be reduced appreciably without the family suffering an actual shortage of food.

Morever, the larger the household – and a dozen persons in the house is not uncommon – the lower becomes the cost per head of food. Twenty dollars is not an unreasonable monthly figure for a family of four, but that income will feed considerably more than four persons without real hardship.

Another point is that not all foodstuffs need be bought. A list of twenty-one commodities is given as representing the normal purchases of a Malay family living on a rubber holding. It comprises rice, sugar, coffee, kerosene oil, coconut oil, tobacco, matches, fish, salt, vegetables, blachan, dried prawns, onions, limes, chillies, spices, sireh, beef, soap, and coffee-shop sundries. Of that list a peasant ought, in ideal circumstances, to be able to produce at least eight items on his own holding or obtain them in exchange for his own produce. Much of the produce sold in the Malay market in Kuala Lumpur is disposed of by barter and not for cash.

Even assuming, however, that an estimate of five dollars per head per month is unnecessarily high for a slump year, it is clear that there must be a serious gap between the cash income and the needs of many inhabitants of this Setapak district. That there is a certain amount of real poverty is shown by the fact, that Malay rubber growers from Setapak have moved out into a jungle reserve and started a new settlement. The small amount of foodstuff cultivation that is possible around a house does not seem sufficient to augment adequately a cash income of seven dollars a month.

Yet we saw no signs of distress. The people had the usual carefree bearing of Malay country-folk and seemed to be getting enough to eat. Indeed one was told positively that stories of people living on one meal a day, although undoubtedly true of certain parts of Malaya, had no foundation in this district, except perhaps in a few cases. The truth is that in a district of this kind, a few miles from a large town and possessed of a certain amount of padi and mixed cultivation, it is very difficult to form a complete and accurate picture of the economic condition of its inhabitants.

One puzzling thing, in both the Ulu Gombak and Dusun Tua reservations, is the amount of new building that is going on at the present time. That strikes the motorist at once as he passes through these districts. At frequent intervals along the roads heaps of timber and bricks are seen, Chinese carpenters are at work and houses are going up.

A reasonable explanation would be that Malays – who retire to Ulu Gombak much as a Malayan Civil Servant retires to Bournemouth – are being retrenched from Government service and are building houses with their savings or gratuities.

One was told authoritatively, however, that this was not so, and that the builders in most cases were established residents of the locality who

had decided to take advantage of the extraordinarily cheap costs of building now available. A small wooden house of the Malay type can be built for little over a hundred dollars and six hundred dollars will buy quite a pretentious residence, with brick supports and tiled roof.

If this explanation is correct it means that the Malay equivalent of the English countrywoman's stocking is better filled than we thought it was. Indeed, most people would have said that there was no stocking in a Malay house at all, and those who remember what Mr Andrew Caldecott, British Resident of Perak, had to say about the indebtedness of the peasantry of Perak last year will find it difficult to believe that the Malays of Ulu Gombak have any considerable savings.

Yet that theory is borne out by the knowledge, obtained as a result of recent inquiry, that practically no land in this particular reservation is pledged to money-lenders, the explanation being that the holders of the land are mostly Sumatran immigrants of a hardworking, thrifty, careful type.

Other possible explanations of the present building activity are that a lot of gold has gone out of the kampongs lately, in response to attractive prices offered by Chinese dealers, or that Malays in comparatively well-paid positions in Government departments are remitting money to build houses for themselves.

Another factor which obscures the true position of these Ulu Gombak people is that many of their sons are employed on a humble Makan Gaji basis in Kuala Lumpur. I was astonished to hear that some of them cycle five, six and even nine miles into town every morning and the same distance back in the afternoon. It scarcely befits a European, riding comfortably to work in his car, to condemn as lazy a Malay who cycles fifteen miles a day to and from his employment!

Then there is reason to believe that many of these peasants eke out the proceeds of their rubber in various ways. The man who has nothing more than seven dollars a month from rubber must be a rarity.

Indeed at Ulu Gombak there is unmistakable evidence around the houses of increased cultivation of foodstuffs. Ground is being given more attention, while the padi swamps in the Gombak valley, although not sufficient to feed the whole population, are a very useful standby.

A highly important question which arises is this: is a self-supporting, economically independent peasantry possible so long as the average holding is only two or three acres?

It is accepted that a condition of self-support is mixed cultivation. A Malay peasant ought to have a little land under padi, a little under fruit trees and vegetables, and a little under rubber. Thus he will have the es-

sentials of life, other foodstuffs with which to vary and supplement his diet, and a cash crop to give him the wherewithal for luxuries.

A Malay living on a holding of that kind, and consuming his own unpolished rice, has much less reason to fear dental decay, abdominal disease and various other unpleasantnesses than people living comfortably in the towns.

At the same time, it is useless and indeed unfair to expect the Malay to do without rubber entirely. Even with the price as low as eight cents a Malay with five acres of rubber was better off than a Malay with five acres of padi – and of course he was doing much less work. The Malay is somewhat disillusioned now, but rubber has served him well in the past and, except for a quarter of an acre here and there and possibly also stunted rubber in what plainly ought to be padi land, he is not going to cut out his rubber trees.

Those who, like the chairman of the Dunlop Rubber Company, expect the estate to put the native grower out of business by cutting costs are living in a fool's paradise. If a Malay grower does his own tapping his actual production cost, allowing for rent and everything else, is not more than two cents a kati (one and a third pounds). Compare that figure with European estate f.o.b. cost of six cents a pound or thereabouts!

How, then, can we expect the Malay small-holder, however he may diversify his other cultivation, to be so considerate as to withdraw from the rubber industry?

What cheaper production unit could be imagined than a Malay holding at Ulu Gombak, within easy reach of a buying centre and rail and sea transport, with the trees growing in rich, undamaged soil, with their owner doing his own tapping, and with his own foodstuffs to fall back upon if rubber becomes unsaleable? Not all the budgrafting and organisation of Dunlop's is likely to beat that combination.

On the other hand, the Malay peasant is learning his lesson. He hopes that his rubber will bring him rich profits again but he is no longer prepared to trust to it entirely. An interest is being shown in food production among the Malays today such as their government mentors have never been able to arouse before.

The Malay sees Indian and Chinese coolies being shipped out of the country in thousands and he realises at last the unreliability of rubber. He knows that he can, given the land, make himself independent of these disturbing changes and he is willing to do so.

Lest I be accused of painting too roseate a picture of the rural Malay's position in the slump I should add that Ulu Gombak is a favoured district. It is near enough to Kuala Lumpur for its youth to cycle into town

and work for wages and it is also near enough for its surplus menfolk not to lose touch with likely openings for employment as drivers and in other capacities.

The Dusun Tua reservation, however, although farther away from Kuala Lumpur, is equally if not better situated than Ulu Gombak, for its rich valley soil gives very high padi yields, and probably the Malay areas in the valleys of Negri Sembilan and of inland Perak present a similarly re-assuring picture.

Unfortunately in the villages along the flat coastal belt in Perak and Selangor there is undoubtedly real privation. The latter areas are planted with solid rubber on poor soil, so that miserable yields of two hundred or two hundred and fifty pounds an acre are common, and it is probable that some peasants in these districts are actually not getting much more than a dollar an acre per month from their tiny holdings.

The consequence is that they are migrating to new settlements in jungle reserves and probably will not regret their move in the long run.

Those who have given most attention to the experiences of the Malay peasantry during the present depression consider then the lesson to be learnt is clear: it is one of mixed cultivation and larger holdings. Given those two conditions, the peasantry of these States will have no more cause to fear a slump in the United States than they had in the days of Christopher Columbus.

An Old Coffee Planter

Kuala Lumpur, 3 September 1932.

Several days ago it was my privilege to entertain a man who was planting coffee forty years ago on the land on which my house stands. His estate was then the outermost limit of Kuala Lumpur in that direction; beyond it was nothing but jungle and patches of Chinese mining activity.

To reach his bungalow my friend had to make a leisurely journey in a horse conveyance, much of the way through jungle; and if anyone motoring up Weld's Hill today will look closely at the hill on his right he will see, winding among the rubber, the line of the old earth road that led to the assistant manager's bungalow.

The manager lived in a shanty on the exact site of the house in which Mr J H M Robson lives today, on the bluff overlooking Ampang Road.

As we drove out to my house my friend pointed out bungalows and gardens occupying the land on which his tea bushes and pepper vines grew; and, what was still more worthy of record, he showed me the spot where the first rubber trees were planted in Kuala Lumpur. These were received by Mr Thomas Heslop Hill, who opened up Weld's Hill Estate, from Sir Hugh Low in 1883 and planted near the junction of Weld Road and Treacher Road.

The possibilities of rubber were not realised at that time and Mr Hill went ahead with other crops, but it is worth noting that a good part of the land formerly covered by his Weld's Hill Estate is covered with rubber trees today, although these trees are only awaiting the turning of the economic tide before surrendering to the builder.

The last of Mr Hill's experimental rubber trees was cut down only a few years ago, when it measured more than hundred and forty inches around

the bole. Its disappearance was a pity, for it was the only representative left in Kuala Lumpur of the first generation of trees sprung from the original stock brought by Sir Henry Wickham from Brazil to Kew in 1876.

To show how fast and far we have moved since my friend's days it is only necessary to say that my house, situated in Kia Peng Road, is now within the inner circle of Kuala Lumpur suburbs; the journey from town to the site of his bungalow takes me four minutes in a motor-car; and the land covered by his estate, which fetched thirty-five thousand dollars for two hundred and fifty acres in the early 1890s, was selling at fifteen thousand dollars per acre five years ago.

When my friend first saw Kuala Lumpur it had been the centre of British administration in Selangor for only ten years and had just emerged from its original phase as a Chinese mining village.

Life centred about the old Government offices, now occupied by the F.M.S. Police; the old Selangor Club, on the site of the present St. Mary's Church; and the Chinese shops of High Street and Market Square. There was a small European group of officials, planters and miners, with a few white women. Estates were being opened up along the roads leading out of the town.

To one who has lived in one of the oldest towns in England, a town which was sacked and burnt by Queen Boadicaea fifty years after Christ was born and which still retains in its streets the lines of the old Roman encampment, it is not a little remarkable to meet someone who has seen Kuala Lumpur grow from that pioneer phase to the modern capital of the Federated Malay States. His memories had faded, but he produced enough from the fascinating lumber-room of his Malayan memories to show how wide is the gulf between the Kuala Lumpur which he first saw and that which he sees today.

Everything must have been very simple then. All Government had to do was to open up the country and prosperity, in a world greedy for the wealth of the tropics, was sure to follow. Schools were built in the solemn Victorian conviction that they would bring the culture of the West to a benighted country, and nobody bothered his head as to what the products of these schools were going to do with themselves afterwards. And rightly so, for the demand for clerks was insatiable.

Racially there was a better feeling. White women had not yet come out in sufficient numbers to inflict their intense colour prejudice upon the country, the relations between employer and employee were still personal and based upon thorough mutual understanding, and society had not crystallised into the distinct and heterogeneous strata that we see today.

In spite of our Government model housing schemes (with their stifling "departmental" atmosphere), our health clinics, our newspapers and cinemas, one got the impression that Kuala Lumpur forty years ago was a happier place than it is today.

Everybody had plenty of elbow-room in those days; inside and outside Government service there was a chance for the ambitious man to go ahead; and above all there was an atmosphere of buoyancy and hopefulness and adventure. Unknown though the future was, it was believed to be a rosy one, and so it proved, with a few ups and downs, for more than three decades.

We in modern Kuala Lumpur are not by any means so sure of ourselves and our destiny. We have just had a much-needed tonic in the shape of a rise in rubber and tin prices, but we are uncertain not only as to the real causes of that rise but as to the whole economic system in which we are involved.

If we have such an appalling slump in 1932, what guarantee is there that another and a worse one will not come in ten or fifteen years' time? Even if we recover a moderate amount of the ground we have lost, as we all expect to do, what signs are there that mankind is learning to understand, still less control, the mysterious forces that have brought us to this pass?

That is one respect in which we differ from our predecessors of forty years ago. Slumps were not unknown to them – the tin price fell to £90 a ton in the 'eighties – but they never had any doubt about the capacity of the world to go on increasing its economic activity indefinitely.

Today we are not sure one way or the other, but at least we know certainly that the seas in which the good ship Malaya is sailing are not by any means as well charted as we thought they were, and the certificates held by our navigators – not only ours but those of the greatest nations – do not impress us quite as much as they used to do.

However, we hope that the tide has turned, and if the same hope arises in everybody everywhere the world may shake off the miasma of doubt and fear that hangs over it. But is it not undesirable to use the turning of the tide as a metaphor? Tides have a way of running both ways, and they are governed by planetary forces beyond the control of mortal men. Since we refuse to believe that economic forces are beyond control by mankind, we must believe that sooner or later the Boom-and-Slump alternation will be banished from Malaya.

In the meantime, we can only temper our gladness at the signs of recovery with caution lest the next breathing-space should produce no more economic statesmanship than the last one did.

The Ghost of a Waterway

Kuala Lumpur, 1 October 1932.

This week has seen another step forward in the transformation of Kuala Lumpur, for the Klang River has been diverted into the wide and deep channel that has been dug for it in the centre of the town, and the old channel will be gradually filled up. Thus dry land and houses will utterly obliterate the old river route up which native cargo boats were painfully poled in the days before either road or railway had linked Kuala Lumpur with the sea.

There must be very few people left in Kuala Lumpur who can remember having seen these craft lying in the river opposite what is now the market, for it is more than forty years since the water-borne traffic died out. Its doom was sealed when the railway from Bukit Kuda, three miles by river above Klang, was opened in 1886.

One man still living in Malaya who can recall the old river traffic is Mr Charlton Maxwell, for when he arrived from England in 1890 to stay with his father at the Residency there was still a considerable trade carried on the river to and from Kuala Lumpur. With the completion of the railway, however, the State Government ceased to keep the river clear for navigation, and no doubt the later silting caused by agricultural development put the finishing touches to that neglect.

That craft laden with tin did once lie in the centre of our modern town, thirty miles by water from what was then the port of Klang, is a tradition worth preserving, especially at this time when the unsentimental and utilitarian Drainage and Irrigation Department is erasing from the map the tortuous and muddy river reaches which used to carry that traffic. and which we have been accustomed to see from the High Street and Kampong Attap bridges.

One of those bridges has already been demolished and the other will soon have solid ground underneath it, so we had better set down while we may what is known about the waterway that is about to vanish for ever.

The river traffic was an essential part of the pre-British phase of Kuala Lumpur and it only lingered five years or so after that phase ended.

Concerning that early period we possess unusually detailed information, contained in Malay documents left by the late Raja Bot, whose father, Raja Jemahat, was the most powerful chief in Selangor in the middle of the last century and dominated a highly productive Chinese mining settlement from his stronghold on the Lukut River.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century there was nothing but jungle where Kuala Lumpur is now, and the following statement by a writer familiar with Raja Bot's papers relates how the town came to be founded.

> "In 1857 Raja Jemahat, from the large Chinese population at Lukut, took two towkays to work for tin at Kuala Lumpur. This was the first time that that locality had been tried, although Sultan Muhamad (the immediate predecessor of Sultan Abdul Samad) had previously commenced some workings at Ulu Klang without much success.
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> "The spot chosen by the coolies from Lukut was Ampang and 87 Chinese were sent to work there, but such were the ravages of fever and tigers that at the end of two months only eighteen were left. On help being sent for to Lukut, Raja Jemahat dispatched a further party of one hundred and fifty miners in five boats, with provisions. It is calculated – although the usual margin must be allowed when more than three figures are spoken of – that some $70,000 was sunk in the Kuala Lumpur and Klang mines.
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> "At last the venture was rewarded and in 1859 tin was exported for the first time from Kuala Lumpur, and as a very large number of Chinese were then settled at Lukut a rush was made to the new tin-field and the enterprise soon increased."

No information is available as to the output of the Kuala Lumpur mines but it must have been substantial, for in 1874, when Capitan Yap Ah Loy ruled the town in alliance with one of the warring Malay factions then disputing the control of Selangor, the Chinese population of the settlement was estimated at five thousand, and the demand for transport facilities was so great that boatmen were demanding between thirty and forty dollars a bhara (roughly four hundred pounds) of tin for the journey from Kuala Lumpur to Klang.

On this export trade a tax of anything from ten to twenty per cent, was levied by whatever raja happened to be in power at Klang.

Communication between Kuala Lumpur and Klang at that time was not entirely by water, however, for a visitor to the latter town in 1874, before British administration had begun in Selangor, mentions that there was a track from Damansara, seventeen miles up-river, to Kuala Lumpur. Yap Ah Loy may have sent his tin by bullock cart to Damansara in later years, but before that track was opened up the river traffic reached as far.

Presumably what happened was that the tin was shipped downstream, navigation being easy with the current, and the rice and other imports were shipped from Klang as far as Damansara and then sent overland to Kuala Lumpur.

If the reader will look at the modern map of Selangor he will see a small tendril of road still branching out from the old Klang road to connect with the river at Damansara. At this point there are also the remains of the old jetty, and possibly a search might reveal the site of the strong stockade which stood at this spot in the 1870s, garrisoned by the unkempt and ruffianly mercenaries who were formerly maintained by the Sultan's viceroy and were afterwards licked into shape as a disciplined police force by Captain Syers.

The existence of a village called Batu Tiga, half-way between Klang and Kuala Lumpur, and much more than three miles from any obvious starting-point, is explained by its proximity to Damansara; and the main road from Batu Tiga to a point between Glenmarie and Sungei Way estates is the only part of the old route between Kuala Lumpur and Klang over which the modern motorist passes.

Even that portion has been so straightened out and altered as to be almost beyond recognition by any member of the small and dwindling band of Malayans who can claim to have travelled to Kuala Lumpur by launch and bullock-cart. One of those survivors is Miss Nina Daly, now living in London, who came to Kuala Lumpur as a child in 1880, the year in which the Residency was moved to this town from Klang.

About two miles on the Klang side of Sungei Way railway crossing, the old road to Kuala Lumpur branches off the present road in a northerly direction. The first four miles of it are no longer kept up, but the remainder are in good condition and run through Sungei Penchala, pass the Rubber Research Institute, through Bungsar Estate and out into Kuala Lumpur at the entrance to the Public Gardens.

Sir Frank Swettenham's description of his first trip to Kuala Lumpur, poling three days and nights up-river and walking twelve miles on the

return journey, much of the time waist-deep in swamps, is too well known to quote, but a more detailed account of a similar journey is available.

When Mr Innes, one of the first Collectors in Selangor, (then the equivalent of District Officers) revisited the State as a prosperous tea broker in the nineties, he was moved by the great changes he saw to set down some of his memories.

Mr Innes served under Captain Bloomfield Douglas, the second British Resident of Selangor, who held that appointment from the end of 1875 to 1882, and it was Captain Douglas's obstinacy and lack of foresight, incidentally, that caused the journey to Kuala Lumpur to be arduous and uncomfortable much longer than it need have been.

"Captain Douglas," wrote Mr Innes, with a candour he could not have permitted himself while that gentleman was still his superior officer, "had made up his mind that Klang was the natural capital of Selangor because it was the seaport, and he was not in favour of making progress at Kuala Lumpur. This policy delayed the development of Kuala Lumpur by five years."

"It was during this time," Mr Innes continued, "that I made my only visit to what was then, as it is now, known as Kuala Lumpur, in company with Mr Syers and a newspaper correspondent, Mr Scott.

"We went up the river by steam launch to the landing-place built for the convenience of the only public work then in hand – the Damansara Road. We rode some distance on ponies sent ahead by a barge the night before and then walked by jungle path, sometimes along slippery batang (tree trunks), sometimes across them, and generally in swampy black soil.

"The country was quite covered with heavy jungle until a red earth scaur was reached and we got a view of the village of Kuala Lumpur.

"This consisted of a fairly good loose board house occupied by the late Capitan China, the most hospitable of men, and his house was surrounded by attap houses occupied by his coolies.

"In those days the little clearing there was about Kuala Lumpur was in tapioca, and a railway from Klang to Kuala Lumpur was spoken of as a desirable but almost impossible thing. There was no money to make it and the natural difficulties were considered unsurmountable. They were in truth small, but a swamp and a bridge across the river Klang were considered to render it impossible.

"The slowly made and long-delayed Damansara Road was thought to be sufficient with the aid of bullock-carts to convey the trade to and fro – the tin to Klang and the opium, arrack and rice from Klang to Kuala Lumpur."

With the appointment of Mr Frank Swettenham to the Residentship in 1882 the administration livened up at once, and the phase of laborious travel and transport between the new capital of Selangor and Klang was ended in a short time.

Although the entire revenue of the State was only two hundred thousand dollars three years before Mr Swettenham (as he then was) took charge, he had the boldness and vision to persuade the Governor, Sir Frederick Weld, that a railway would earn handsome profits, and in 1886 that railway was duly opened.

The Damansara Road then became of little importance except as a means of opening up the country, and the police stations that were formerly stationed along it were withdrawn. Four years later the railway bridge at Klang was built and three miles of difficult navigation to the old terminus at Bukit Kuda were thus eliminated.

The final page in the history of communication between Kuala Lumpur and Klang covers the gradual expansion of the road system, ending with the direct route now followed and enabling the present-day motorist to complete in half an hour a journey which once took Sir Frank Swettenham three days.

It seems almost frivolous at a time of deep anxiety and uncertainty throughout the civilised world to seek forgetfulness in these quaint and curious tags of local history, but after all, Kuala Lumpur will survive this and many other economic adjustments, and anyone who feels a sense of attachment to the town, of identification with it during his brief human span, must not fail to note such signs of growth as the disappearance of familiar river reaches and the substitution of the highly efficient, canalised and ugly channel that has just been brought into use.

Perhaps fifty years or so after these words are published they may help someone to understand the mood in which we in 1932 summon up an imaginary Rip Van Winkle to travel along the old Damansara Road and emerge upon the Kuala Lumpur of today.

In place of Yap Ah Loy's tapioca fields our traveller sees the trim slopes of the Public Gardens; in place of cargo boats lumbering up the river he sees modern transport speeding into town by road and rail; even the river itself has been unrecognisably changed by the restless and forceful race that has assumed control over this peninsula; instead of attap roofs showing over the foliage on the river banks he sees the solid buildings and massed houses of a city of a hundred thousand people and the capital of the Federated Malay States; on the line of the old track into the town from Damansara Road a man-made rise has appeared where Victory Avenue has been carried over the railway.

Pigs in a Bungalow

Kuala Lumpur, 11 February 1933.

Because it was such an odd mixture of the comic and the melancholy, such a revealing sidelight on the slump in the planting districts, a picture of last weekend sticks in my memory.

I was a guest on a rubber estate, and on Sunday morning my host was showing me around. Like most other managers he had, three years ago, one European assistant to every five hundred acres; now he runs the whole place himself and consequently there are two empty bungalows on the estate.

During our tour we went to inspect one of these bungalows. It was the usual wooden, two-storeyed structure, in sound condition but looking melancholy enough with its closed shutters and piles of dusty furniture inside. However, it was not devoid of life. As I passed round one corner of the building my nostrils were assailed by a strong odour, and a moment later I discovered the cause of this.

My host, evidently despairing of a return of such prosperity as would enable him ever to employ a European assistant again, had turned part of the ground floor into a piggery, the occupants of which he pointed out to me with much pride.

A fine litter of young pigs was enjoying the coolness of the concrete floor while their mother reposed on a bed of hay on a sort of wooden dais in the corner. While my host held forth on the good points of the pigs, the money he expected to make out of them, and so forth, I contemplated this visible evidence of the decline of a once-prosperous rubber plantation industry with due solemnity.

What would the former tenant of this bungalow say if he could see its present occupants? Evidently the same thought struck my host, for he

remarked in a reflective tone: "Yes . . . . my assistant used to make a sort of downstairs sitting-room out of this part of the house". The contrast between the Sunday morning scene of three years ago and today struck me privately as comic, but my host had become accustomed to that aspect of it, and as he took his pig-keeping very seriously I judged it better not to interrupt the flow of technical conversation on which he had embarked, and only when he sees these words in print will he know the amusement I was concealing.

On Saturday evening we sat out on a spacious lawn to watch the sunset. It was altogether delightful – an hour to which I look back with longing as I sit in a hot and noisy office in Java Street. The scent of frangipani flowers was blown across the grass, hibiscus bushes showed up in touches of scarlet and orange against a bamboo hedge in the background, and masses of cloud were flushed an ethereal pink by the last rays of the sun, already sunk behind a low range of hills.

There was a wonderful sense of space. One seemed to be conscious to an unusual degree of the wide and remote country lying quiet in the evening hour all the way to the Main Range east of us and westwards to the Malacca Straits. The silence was so deep that the momentary noise of a falling twig or the call of a bird merely accentuated it. For the visitor from Kuala Lumpur it was one of those moods which are blessedly free from the conscious or subconscious tension which characterises the life of the European in a tropical climate and among alien peoples.

But as we sat there I could not help recalling with a certain sadness that that garden not so long ago was the scene of gay parties to which people from many miles around were glad to come. Then there were two smooth tennis-courts where I saw only coarse grass. The long and thick bamboo hedges, now growing too fast for the solitary gardener to control, used to be neatly kept, with ornamental arches in it leading into a fine fruit and vegetable garden such as few estate households troubled to keep up even in those lavish days.

And the house itself, a rambling place with a jolly bay-window on the ground floor looking out on to the lawn and all sorts of odd additions built here and there – this house is full of ghosts, lovely laughing ghosts of children now in England and probably fast forgetting the Malayan garden in which they once played and the portico, full of disused chairs and tables when I saw it, where they used to have tea on rainy afternoons.

Well . . . . it doesn't do to dwell too much on these things. It's all very sad and at the same time inevitable, symptomatic of the great change that has so suddenly come over the rubber plantation industry since the United States plunged into the current depression. The same situation

exists in many estate bungalows in Malaya today, where the husband is working on a drastically reduced salary and sending most of it home to keep his family.

But that is not the end of the story. Before we settled down to watch the last of the sunset my host led me through the overgrown kitchen garden, along a path through secondary jungle and across a stream until we emerged into a little clearing. The owner of this clearing was a Sumatran Malay, one of the many who were attracted to this country during the last rubber boom and now sees no reason to go back.

Planters are inclined to resent the reservation of land for these people, who they say are foreigners and have no right to expect land to be kept for them. Nevertheless they are a good type of immigrant, capable of complete assimilation with the people of the country and – as we shall see – able to fend for themselves wherever they can find ground to till, jungle in which to get their raw materials and a river in which to fish.

On this clearing to which my friend led me the owner has built himself a comfortable house of the usual Malay type and has cleared and planted about an acre of ground. The house is really a marvel of ingenuity and adaptation of materials such as are to be found readily in the surrounding forest, and the owner says it took him only a month to build.

His first crop after he had felled and burnt the secondary jungle was dry padi, which gave him two months' supply of rice for his household.

Here we see how inferior this method of padi cultivation is. Not only does it result in an invasion of lallang grass, unless the ground is immediately planted with some other crop, which it rarely is, but it gives much lower yields than the permanent method of cultivation by means of irrigation and drainage.

Thus three acres under padi, given an average crop, will support a Malay family of five for one year, and that is with only eighty days' labour. No wonder Malays always seem to be lazing about when you motor past their kampong! They cannot live entirely on rice, of course, but they do have ample time to do such cultivation as is necessary to add variety to the contents of the cooking-pot. Not so the owner of this little holding. Indeed, it is a mystery how he lives at all. He can only get one crop of dry padi off his land and accordingly it is now planted with Indian corn, bananas, chillies and one or two other things whose names I forget.

Later he intends to plant various fruit-trees, and when they are in bearing he says that he will be able to support himself entirely on his holding, selling enough of his surplus produce to provide the small amount of cash which his household requires. But at the moment his holding is in an intermediate stage in which it yields him very little, and

no doubt if he did not get a few days' work on the adjacent estate he would go hungry most days of the week.

Our talk with this plucky and resourceful Sumatran settler made me realise as never before the difficulties which are being experienced by government officers in collecting the land revenue during the slump.

This man literally had no money. He had given up another holding owing to inability to pay rent, and rather than continue what was evidently a hopeless struggle he had gone to the trouble of building himself a new house and clearing a new piece of land.

Fortunately he lives rent-free where he now is, for my friend out of the kindness of his heart has allowed him to settle on a corner of the estate land that has never been planted and is never likely to be required.

(*Footnote in 1981*: That was Escot Estate, Tanjong Malim, and the manager was M.J. Kennaway, a senior and very popular figure in the British planting community of the F.M.S.)

Lessons Learnt at Pekan

Kuala Lumpur, 3 June 1933.

Last Sunday night I found myself on the north bank of the Pahang River opposite the town of Pekan at one o'clock in the morning. At that hour the landing place was deserted, the wide expanse of water was empty of craft of any kind, and all signs of human life had vanished. There was only the silence and vastness of the night, the river illumined by starlight, and on the farther side a line of blackness which marked the south bank.

Suddenly from that blackness, carried by the night wind, there came the low but distinct throbbing of a ronggeng gong. At that time and in those circumstances the sound seemed wild and barbaric to a degree. The moment was one that had nothing of modernity in it; it was utterly different from the impressions with which my head had been crammed by the coronation ceremonies of the previous day. Here was only the river and the night and that throbbing of the native gong coming across from the dark land. For all the evidence of the twentieth century that was about me I might have been in the Pahang of a hundred years ago; or a thousand, or fifty. There was but one human note in this expanse of land and water, faintly seen under the night sky, and that note was one which had been heard in Pahang since recorded history began.

It was heard when Sultan Mansur Shah, before the Portuguese galleons anchored off Malacca, invaded Pahang and began the era of Mohammedan monarchy which continues to this day. That gong was heard when an Achinese fleet sailed into the Pahang River and carried off the ruler of the country; and it was heard when Bugis raiders ravaged the seacoast of Pahang. Throughout the centuries of European penetration into Malayan waters it was heard. When square-rigged ships of Portugal, Holland and England were warping their way up the Johore River to trade at the capital of a Malay kingdom the ronggeng gong was sounding

over the Pahang River; and when Captain Light began British history in Malaya; and when a self-possessed youth of twenty-one arrived at Pekan overland from Perak to negotiate a treaty between Great Britain and Pahang.

Jack Norris at the court of Pelesu . . . . how those tales of Clifford came back as one heard the Malay gong sounding in the darkness across the river! Clifford must have heard that sound many a time when he was alone at night, and for him it must have been menacing as it could never be today. At such a time Clifford must have felt intolerably lonely and unprotected – a solitary white man with a bodyguard of twenty Malays living at the court of an independent Oriental despot and among a fighting race known throughout the Peninsula for its bold and arrogant bearing.

It is easy to imagine Clifford alone on the river at night, with the sound of barbaric music drifting across the water from Pekan. At such a moment he must have seen with terrible clarity the alien and dangerous country he was in, and the risks he was taking; he must have steeled his nerves again and taken a renewed grip upon himself before he returned to the court of Pelesu. And he must have wondered at such a time whether his days were numbered; the Malays themselves told him that he was the bait on the British hook, and he must have asked himself how long it would be before they swallowed that bait.

Young Hugh Clifford, the bearer of a famous Devon name and as gay an adventurer as Elizabethan England ever produced, has left his impress permanently upon Pekan and this beautiful stretch of the Pahang River which he loved so much; and he is continually in the mind of any British visitor to this peaceful part of Pahang today.

These and other thoughts arose as I waited on the bank of the river. The wildness of the scene and the sound of the ronggeng gong recalled the eventful history of the place, the dynasties of Sultans and bendaharas that have ruled there from the fifteenth century onwards, the blood that has been shed by warring fleets and forces, the terrible things that Clifford saw.

All this stretch of river from Pekan to the sea six miles away is strewn with relics of history. There have been royal courts at several places besides Pekan on the banks of the river. Local place-names and finds of pottery and other things recall the time six centuries ago when Pahang was under Siamese rule and Buddhism was the religion of the people. In Kampong Marhum, the village down-river where the royal graveyard is situated, there are many gravestones of Malay notabilities of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

The remains of the old mosque in which the Bugis fighting-men of the Temenggong of Johore made their last stand against the invading Ahmad, later the signatory to the first treaty with Great Britain, are still to be seen at Pekan Lama. Many inhabitants of Pekan can show the visitor specimens of the old tin coinage or "tampang", which was legal currency in Pahang from the earliest times up to 1893.

The names of the rulers and principal nobles who have lived in and around Pekan are known with a fair amount of accuracy for several centuries. As recently as 1914 there was still reigning at Pekan the monarch who saw Sir Hugh Clifford make his first appearance at the Pahang court in 1887, and the spot was pointed out to me in Pekan where Clifford lived

Sir Hugh Clifford

at that time. The whole atmosphere of the place is steeped in tradition, as much so as Malacca or any historic town of England, but here it is the history of the old Malay world, of long-dead chiefs and warriors and vanished dynasties and kingdoms, that is remembered.

Today trim little coasters steam up the rivers in which that history was made, and, what is more significant, that history causes capacious yawns when learned men record it in the journal of the Malayan Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society. It all seems unreal and remote today, as dead as the dynasties of ancient Egypt, swept away by the expansion of more vigorous and powerful empires.

But is it so unreal, so unrelated to present-day realities in Malaya? Before I went to Pekan I might have thought that there could be no doubt about the answer, but now I am not so sure.

The sound of the Malay gong did not remind me only of history during my nocturnal wait on the Pahang River. It reminded me also that here was a civilisation that was much older and quite distinct from the Pahang that I had seen during my motor journey from the capital of the Federated Malay States – the Pahang of mining and rubber growing, of towns inhabited by British officials and Chinese shopkeepers, of motor roads and wireless stations. This is the only aspect of Pahang that the unthinking Britisher unfamiliar with the State, or with the indigenous life of any Malay State, ordinarily takes into consideration.

But no British inhabitant of Malayan suburbia could have been in Pekan during the last few days without realising very clearly that he was in a State containing well over a hundred thousand Malays, living their own lives on their own land very much as they did before white men entered their country, and with their own ancient and valued social organisation, descending from the royal family to the major chiefs, thence to the minor chiefs and thence to the village headmen. And every part of that organisation, and the relations between the parts, are laid down by rigid etiquette and precedent.

That is the framework within which the Malay lives, whether he be chief or peasant, and so long as he is within it he is able to maintain the innate dignity, courtesy and self-respect which characterise his race to such an exceptional degree.

So long as he is within that framework he can regard the British administration, and all the modern facilities and amenities that have appeared in his country, without suspicion, and can avail himself of these things with confidence that his own civilisation remains intact and apart from them, maintaining itself as it has always done along the rivers and seacoast and in the inland valleys, but drawing upon the services of medicine and

agriculture and many other things which Great Britain has brought to its doors.

The inhabitant of Kuala Lumpur, and more especially the inhabitant of Singapore, is in danger of underrating the Malay factor in British policy in these States. He sees only the city life of this country, in which the Malay plays at best a humble and unsatisfactory role among the poorest classes of wage-earners. He does not see the very large rural population from which those unhappy urban Malays come, and he knows little or nothing of the Malay civilisation which must ever remain the primary consideration of Great Britain as the protecting power.

"May the Malays never become landless men" was the hope expressed by the late Rajah Sir Chulan at the last meeting of the Federal Council which he attended before his death; and when one contrasts the position of the Malay peasantry living along the valley of the Pahang River with those of Chinese and Indian wage-earners on estates and mines one sees how deep was the instinctive racial wisdom which prompted those words.

Because the modern European in Malaya does not learn the Malay language, talk with the Malay people, and study their custom, traditions and history, he assumes that they desire only a paternal and benevolent imperialism. But they desire more than that: they desire to maintain their own civilisation and to preserve it from obliteration by the forces of westernisation.

Looked at in that light the ceremonies enacted at Pekan last Sunday took on a deeper meaning. To some they were merely picturesque anachronisms, as remote from all that really matters in modern Malaya as are the landed nobility of England from the industrial life of the country. But when one remembers that to the Malay the enthronement of his sultan with the dignity, solemnity and beauty which marked the Pekan ceremonies is a visible assurance that the bulwarks of his own civilisation are being maintained – nay strengthened – by the British administration, these ceremonies take on real constitutional significance and political importance.

So from history I passed into musing on modern imperialism during my enforced wait on the bank of the Pahang River. And then I saw something which robbed the landscape of its inspiration as suddenly and destructively as a knife ripping through the canvas of a painting. I saw over the darkness of the farther shore beams of light like searchlights in the sky. They were caused by the headlights of motor-cars in Pekan, the ancient seat of royalty, the birthplace of Pahang history, the scene of tales of old-time Malaya that will be read as long as literature survives in this country! So I was reminded that even Pekan is changing and that no man

Street scene at Pekan, Pahang (c. 1926)

can predict with any confidence what the future may bring forth.

Six years ago there was only one motor-car in this royal town, and that was an ancient Ford belonging to the late Sultan Abdullah. Today there are dozens of them of all makes and sizes, dashing about the roads and bringing twentieth-century hustle into a place where life has always moved with leisure and dignity. The road is now open from Pekan Sabrang, the landing place on the opposite side of the river, to Kuantan, having been constructed at great expense through twenty-five miles of swamp jungle. Six years ago one could only get out of Pekan by going down to the river mouth and up the coast to Kuantan by sea, or by going upriver to Jerantut and other towns of the interior. Now there is the road to Kuantan, and consequently every chief of any importance in Pekan has his car.

There have been other changes in the town. A fine mosque has arisen on the river bank, its white walls and metal-capped dome and minarets showing dramatically against a green background. There is a new rest-house, with sanitation of a type which would have astonished old-time Pekan. A Malay speaks nonchalantly with a friend across the river via a

submarine telephone cable. The water supply comes from an island through pipes laid on the bed of the river.

Many things are changing in Pekan, and the new road will bring yet more changes. So long as communication could only be had by sea or river Pekan remained the most remote and unspoilt Malay town in the Peninsula. Perhaps it still is, for there is no other town in which Chinese and Indians are such an insignificant fraction of the population. Moreover, the waterfront even now is very quaint and restful, with its overshadowing trees, its grassy bank, its little groups of Malay village folk, its native craft moored to the bank or travelling to and from the river kampongs, and its air of quietness and repose.

Life was very full and busy during the coronation and birthday festivities. One constantly wished that one could see Pekan as it normally is, without hundreds of visitors, cars rushing about, cannon going off, military bands playing, and all the other accompaniments of State occasions. But in the early morning, before the ceremonies had begun, it was possible to see Pekan in a more workaday mood.

I happened to be living in a tent, and it was very pleasant to emerge from its stuffy interior, breathe in the fresh air laden with the scent of tembusu blossom (I have never seen so many of these trees as there are in Kuantan and Pekan), and watch Malays clad in their charming national costume drifting along the quiet rural roads.

But clearly the ferment of modernity is working in Pahang today, and Pekan cannot escape it. It has held out longer than most places, and its river life will always give it a distinctive character, but it is bound to yield, if only slowly. Already an aeroplane has landed on its padang, and heaven knows what changes will have occurred when next a sultan is installed at Pekan.

Even so His Highness Sultan Abu Bakar, who celebrated his twenty-ninth birthday last Monday, may well feel that he is fortunate in the time of his enthronement. He is the fourth sultan to occupy the throne of Pahang since the era of British protection began, and he finds himself the ruler of a State which is connected by two mountain roads with western Malaya, by a railway with Singapore and Kelantan, and by shipping services with the former port.

Its principal towns of Bentong, Raub, Kuala Lipis and Kuantan are linked up by roads, and those roads open up some of the finest forest land available for tropical agriculture today. It contains two of the largest mines in Malaya in the Pahang Consolidated and Raub (Australian) Gold undertakings, and in normal times it can produce over two thousand tons of tin a year. It has two hundred thousand acres of rubber, large areas of

Sultan Abu Bakar of Pahang in 1932

coconut palms, and untold wealth of virgin forest. It also has a promising asset in Malaya's new hill station, Cameron Highlands.

Thanks to the mountain barrier which protects it, Pahang has lagged behind the other States of the Federation, so that it now finds itself less permeated by alien influences and in a better position to maintain and strengthen its status as a Malay State than Perak, Selangor and Negri Sembilan are in.

Without doubt Pahang in future will follow the unfederated rather than the federated model of Malayan administration as far as it can, but it will have to face a great problem in financing itself, it will have to deal justly with the large and useful non-Malay elements which it has already absorbed; and it will have to perform the exceedingly difficult task of preserving the independent life of the Malay peasant and at the same time encouraging the non-Malay economic development from which revenue for the advancement of the Malay peasant is obtained.

Altogether Sultan Abu Bakar has good reason for taking pride in his inheritance and for feeling a pleasurable anticipation, sobered by the recognition of numerous and difficult questions of high policy, as he contemplates the future of his reign.

Beyond the Main Range

Kuala Lumpur, 17 June 1933.

Government officers and others who are constantly moving about the country are so inclined to take it all for granted that I hesitate to record the things which interested me during my first extended stay in Pahang. I comfort myself, however, with the knowledge that the vast majority of Straits Times readers have never been in Pahang and that for them, as for me, there is romance in the very name of this Malay State.

For fourteen years after British administration had been established on the western side of the Peninsula the State of Pahang retained its independence and its ruler and chiefs exercised an unfettered despotism. Twice in the 1890s British forces and Malay tribesmen were opposed in guerilla warfare in its jungle. For a long time after the Union Jack was first flown at the Residency at Pekan the life of the British officer in Pahang continued to be very different from what it was in the other protected States.

When roads and railways were extending in all directions in Perak and Selangor, travel in Pahang was still conducted almost entirely along its great river and the tributaries of that river. It was not until 1898 that Kuala Lipis became the administrative capital of Pahang instead of Pekan; and for many years after that the British Resident continued to go down-river once a year to spend three months in the old capital, in order to keep in touch with the Sultan.

Throughout its modern history Pahang has occupied a place of its own in the Federation. Lying as it does on the other side of a mountain range, it has retained its individuality as a State; its mountain barrier is a real boundary and not an administrative convenience, as are the dividing lines between the other States of the Federation. Even today Pahang remains the wildest and the most backward, as it is the largest, of the four united States. It is isolated, remote and largely undeveloped, and is

therefore fortunate or unfortunate, the choice depending on the reader's point of view. The business community, which regards these States with a coldly realistic eye as conglomerations of estates and mines interspersed with certain quaint anachronisms known as Malay reservations, may feel a certain pity for Pahang; but others may express thankfulness that the differences between Pahang and the neighbouring British colony are somewhat more marked than they are on the other side of the mountains.

I crossed the main range by the Ginting Simpah pass, the other route via The Gap being blocked by landslides. The Ginting Simpah route is only two miles longer, and for people addicted to car-sickness it is preferable, in that it only rises to about two thousand five hundred feet. It is a delightful road to motor over and I wonder that more people do not choose it when going to Pahang. On the Selangor side it follows the Gombak River, which has escaped defilement by mining and is still as clear and lovely as an English trout stream. But soon the road enters the hills and remains in jungle until the miniature hill station on the divide is reached.

This road is a fairly recent one, having been constructed in 1910 or thereabout. Certainly it is a much more recent route than the road from Kuala Kubu to Raub. Formerly the only alternative route over the range dividing Selangor and Pahang was by a track leading past Klang Gates up the valley of the Klang River and over a pass known as Ginting Bidai. Many a time that fine old pioneer, Towkay Loke Yew, travelled over the Ginting Bidai pass with thousands of dollars in wages for the coolies in his Bentong mines. He always had a police escort, but even so the risk of ambush on that lonely mountain path must have been great.

The Ginting Simpah road on the Pahang side does not afford fine views such as that obtained on the other mountain road at Walsh's Corner, where I recently indulged in meditation on the danger of flying over the main range in the single-engined Moth aircraft used by the Kuala Lumpur Flying Club. But the Ginting Simpah road offers compensation in the form of continual glimpses of a pretty mountain stream which grows in volume as it descends, until it has become a river of very respectable size by the time one says goodbye to it near Bentong.

This little town, which must always be associated with the name of Loke Yew, is notable for a remarkable piece of work done by P.W.D. engineers. Chinese have been mining in this locality for fifty years or more, with the result that a wide river valley has been silted up, and in order to confine the river to a defined channel the entire width of the valley has been criss-crossed with rows of stakes like a gigantic chessboard. Presumably the land so reclaimed will be available some day for agriculture.

One wonders why this side of the Peninsula is not more often explored by Malayan motor tourists. Possibly the explanation is that many people imagine that Pahang's road system is confined practically to the one road across the State from west to east. Actually one can turn south at Bentong and follow a little-known road for fifty miles or so to Seremban, keeping on the eastern side of the main range all the way or one can turn off and go to Temerloh, a district headquarters on the Pahang River.

My route out of Bentong lay north, through the foothills, and it switch-backed for twenty miles or so until it reached the village of Tras. On the way I passed certain thickly covered and yet curiously trim hillsides which belonged to the now famous Shanghai Pahang Estate, where the first serious and scientific attempts were made to grow the Hevea rubber tree under natural conditions. It was on that estate that the methods standardised by the Ceylon tea planters – planters who knew so little about the scientific basis of their profession that they actually swept the leaves off the estate floor – were finally reversed.

The methods of the Danish estate manager of Shanghai Pahang, Mr Birkemose (who had studied scientific forestry in his own country), may be modified with further experience, but he will always be remembered as the man who taught planters the fundamental truth that the soil of a rubber estate should not be baked hard by the sun and washed by the rain but should be kept cool, moist, and intact by the simple process of shading it with weeds. Unless tropical typhus or river fever makes natural covers impossible it is probable that clean weeding will never be practised again on the majority of Malayan estates.

Another feature of agricultural interest along this Bentong-Tras road is the largest tobacco estate in the country. There are any number of small holdings growing this crop, but this is believed to be the only place where it is being grown on a large scale. The proprietor is a Chinese, who is opening up a jungle-covered valley, and fields of tobacco are already to be seen. Unfortunately this cannot be regarded as a permanent addition to Malaya's agricultural wealth, since the proprietor does not intend to follow the seven-year cycle of tobacco cultivation practised in Sumatra but proposes to plant his land with rubber as soon as he has taken one or two crops of tobacco off it.

Pahang may be behind the rest of Malaya in many ways but in the rest-houses at Raub, Kuantan and Pekan it possesses three of the latest and pleasantest buildings of this type in the country. The one at Raub is particularly impressive, with a bar on the ground floor and other amenities, and travellers accustomed to the crudities of Tanjong Malim and other

Gold mining at Raub, Pahang

mediaeval resthouses should be warned, when staying at Raub, not to bellow vulgarly for the boy, as I did. They should press the bell!

I was looking the other day at a photograph of Raub which appeared in a book published in 1912. This was taken from the District Officer's house, presumably on the high bluff where the present house stands, and all that can be seen is a padang and a few attap huts. Today there is a solidly built and busy little town.

Raub was created by the Raub (Australian) Gold Company, as Kuantan was created by the Pahang Consolidated Company and Bentong by Towkay Loke Yew. Pahang therefore owes the existence of three of its largest towns to mining enterprise. Today Raub is a buying centre for a number of estates, and two State heads of departments are stationed there as well as a District Officer, but it is still largely dependent on the gold mines two miles away.

As one strolls around Raub in the evening, watching the footballers on the padang and all the cosmopolitan life of the place, it is worth recalling the British explorers with whom its history begins. They came on elephants over the trail now followed more or less by the present road connecting Kuala Kubu and Raub. Not only were they entirely at the mercy of the chiefs who governed the interior of Pahang but they were in independent Malay territory during their entire journey across the Peninsula.

A voice from the dim past speaks in the April number of British Malaya magazine. "I went to Pahang with the original party to open Raub in 1869," writes Mr Gilbert B. Whyte from Cremorne, New South Wales. And long after that date it was an adventure to go to Raub. Hear Mr Whyte again. "I was right through the Pahang disturbances, knew all the people in your picture (previously published) and also many of the rebels, as I was stationed at Lebok Tuah, where it started. I was transporting the first machinery to Raub before a yard of road was made in the country. In fact, I went to Jockan in September, 1888, to explore and find out whether river transport of machinery was possible to Raub. It took me twenty-eight days to do a journey in Malay sampans which can now be done in eighteen hours by rail and water".

The story of the Raub gold mines is a romance in itself, and one cannot help recalling that vivid sketch given by Sir Hugh Clifford in one of his tales of "a group of Australian miners sitting round a mudhole". I quote from memory, but that was what the Raub enterprise looked like when Clifford first began to explore the interior of Pahang in 1889. If only Mr Whyte could see the Raub resthouse today!

The motorist who leaves Raub east-ward bound may well feel a certain excitement as he does so, for he is about to travel over the most remarkable road in the Malay Peninsula. This narrow highway from Raub to the China Sea is today as all roads in the Malay States must have been thirty years ago. For more than hundred miles it runs through unbroken jungle. During the whole journey the traveller is lucky if he meets half a dozen other motor vehicles. A breakdown in the daylight would be bad enough, and at night it is not to be thought of. Anywhere along this road the motorist may stop and feel himself as completely buried in the immemorial forests of the Malay Peninsula as any explorer has ever been.

About seventy miles from the sea there is a queer little place called Maran, where lorry drivers stop to refresh themselves at a coffee-shop and more pretentious travellers may get a meal of sorts at a P.W.D. halting bungalow. It is a memorable experience to lie at ease in a long chair in this bungalow and listen to the silence. The paradox is used deliberately. One is here in the centre of the largest expanse of virgin forest which remains in the Malay Peninsula. If one were to plunge into the forest on the farther side of that ribbon of road one would never see civilisation again until the ricefields of the Kelantan plain were reached. If one left the bungalow in a southerly direction one would traverse southern Pahang and eastern Johore until one came out within a few miles of Kota Tinggi. To east and west of Maran there is the forest again.

Elephants, like these at Raub, Pahang, were still to be seen in rural areas of the Malay States in the 1920s.

Occasionally the denizens of that jungle emerge, in the shape of animals of large size and uncertain intentions. Not long ago a car driver was sleeping in the garage at the back of the halting bungalow at Maran. Hearing a noise during the night he went outside and switched on an electric torch. The light revealed a wild elephant. Hastily he returned to the garage. The next morning he communicated his terrifying experience to the local inhabitants, who listened wth boredom. Apparently if one lives at Maran one must expect these disturbances. But even if one is not looking for adventure one can heartily recommend the halting bungalow at Maran. For anyone afflicted with misanthropy, after an unduly long spell of urban life, it is a marvellous place to have tiffin.

There is only one other village on this road, and that is Jerantut. There the wise motorist fills up his tank, for no petrol pump exists in the next hundred miles. Strangers are scrutinised in Jerantut with the same curiosity as that experienced in a Texas prairie town. No doubt life in the wilds has that effect upon people. Anyway it is worth noting that there is a rest-house at Jerantut, although I cannot vouch personally for its merits, as when I arrived I found it reserved for a visiting sultan and his entourage of ninety followers. This is, however, abnormal.

There are three rivers to be crossed by ferry between Raub and Kuantan. The distance is about one hundred and eighty miles, and plenty of time

must be allowed, for the road is extraordinarily full of corkscrew bends, there being scarcely half a mile of straight road once the jungle is entered. Incidentally, the two members of the Malayan Civil Service who first explored central Pahang to find a likely route for that road are alive today; they are Sir Hugh Clifford and Mr F.W. Douglas.

Apart from a Chinese mining settlement at Gambang, about twenty miles from the sea, the motorist sees nothing but forest until he arrives within a few miles of the little port of Kuantan. Why do so many people assume that Pahang is inaccessible by sea during the north-east monsoon? The Straits Steamship boats tie up at a wharf in the Kuantan River, a mile from the sea, in as sheltered a berth as a mariner could ask for, and I am told that they call regularly during the months of rough weather.

Kuantan is an extremely well laid out and attractive little town, with wide streets and park-like open spaces on which I observed with interest and envy various gentlemen playing golf at eleven o'clock on a Monday morning. I must admit that it was the Sultan's birthday, but in Kuala Lumpur we do not celebrate Sultan Suleiman's birthday so pleasantly.

If the European community of the Kuantan district enjoys unusual leisure it also suffers isolation. There is no run into town for dinner and a show on a Saturday evening for people in Kuantan. If they want a holiday they must take a week off to go to Singapore or Kuala Lumpur, and in these days they can't afford to do that very often. However, they have a very pleasant club, a small golf course, a superior climate and a glorious sea coast of white beaches, great boulders and lonely coves; and away in the Ulu they have at Sungei Lembing as friendly, hospitable and democratic neighbours as could be found anywhere in Malaya.

The only other Pahang road over which I motored was that which connects the main east-west highway with the Pahang River opposite Pekan. I dare not even whisper the cost of this road, since it was confided to me by an unsuspecting Government wallah who did not know he was talking to a newspaper man, but perhaps it suffices to say that it is practically an embankment laid through many miles of swampy jungle.

The southern part passes through a peculiar and very pleasant type of scrub forest composed of rhododendron and tembusu trees. Here, being weary of the formalities of high society in Pekan, I retired one breezy and sunny afternoon and solemnly ate a water-melon with the aid of my penknife. Strange and lamentable is the mental kink which endows such moments with a sensation of happiness not to be found in drawing-rooms. But that is an eccentric digression and only to be excused on the ground that this article had become confoundedly like a guide-book, and therefore monotonous.

The only other incident which calls for record is my visit to Kuala Pahang. This is a delightful excursion if made in the late afternoon. One hires a motor boat at Pekan and travels six miles down-river to the sea. The broad river, the many islands, the palm-fringed banks, the fishing boats coming home and the sunset colours on the water make up a picture which must find a place in the richest album of Malayan memories.

Kuala Pahang was a place of some little importance before the new road to Kuantan was opened last year. This seaside village was then a place much used by people travelling to and from Kuantan by sea; hence the resthouse. The sands are marvellous – an amateur race meeting was staged there several years ago – and the rollers of the Pacific Ocean thunder upon the beach.

If I ever retreat from journalism into Hindu mysticism it will be difficult to choose between Maran and Kuala Pahang as the place of my ashram. Both are as close to nature as a human being could get in this country without actually living in a tree. But I have my doubts. Keats was greater than Wordsworth, and he returned from Winchester to London because he thought he ought to earn his living. So it ill befits a humble admirer of the poetry he left behind to refuse to return to Kuala Lumpur. Let us be content with a picnic on the wide sands of Kuala Pahang, and thankfully come back to our gregarious urban life, "rich in the simple worship of a summer's day".

Lukut in History

Kuala Lumpur, 24 June 1933.

The old road from Seremban to Port Dickson, now abandoned, ran past the foot of Lukut hill. The modern asphalted highway, constructed much later, is a mile away; and the motorist passing Lukut village, four miles from Port Dickson, probably filled with anticipation of a happy seaside holiday, little knows that he is whizzing past the site of what was once one of the most prosperous and best governed towns that existed under independent Malay rule.

In the undergrowth behind the present village there are the foundations of what was once a street of about forty brick shophouses; the swamp on the right-hand side of the road was an estuary that sheltered prahus unloading tin from Chinese mines in the interior, and junks bringing supplies for the settlement; and on the hill behind the swamp is one of the best preserved and certainly the most accessible of the old Malay forts along the west coast of the Peninsula, a standing reminder of the days when no British officer was to be found in this country outside the Straits Settlements.

Moreover, the site has been unspoilt by the progress of civilisation. The other old centres of Malay power, at any rate along the West Coast, are now overgrown with bungalows and godowns and telephone wires and similar excrescences. But the fort on Lukut hill stands apart from modern Malaya, and only the rubber groves which clothe the slopes of Bukit Gajah Mati, the Malay name for the hill, remind the European visitor of the changes that have occurred since it was the fortified stronghold of a Malay raja. (Actually, however, this place is still completely unknown, except to one or two historically minded members of the Malayan Civil Service.)

A few days ago I had the good fortune to explore what remains of old Lukut with a Malay guide and a friend, an M.C.S. officer who speaks fluent Malay and is accustomed to dealing with kampong folk. Without my friend to act as interpreter it would never have been possible for me to pass on the living kampong traditions of old Lukut that we heard during our tour that morning.

Our guide was one of the village elders, a Malay who was born in the locality at a time when Lukut was not part of the Negri Sembilan, as it is now, but was nominally under the suzerainty of the Sultan of Selangor and in practice was an independent State. At that time, moreover, none of the Malay States was under British control.

Our guide did not actually remember those lawless days, for he was a child at the time, but he was able to piece together a surprisingly complete picture of Lukut as it then was; and he was keenly interested in local traditions and not at all surprised that two white men should poke earnestly about among rubber groves and swampy jungle in search of relics of the past.

No doubt men like him exist in every Malay village which has played some part in the history of the Peninsula and it is to be hoped that the stories which they have to tell will be written down for the benefit of posterity.

The modern history of the Malay States is brief, and not everyone is prepared to follow Wilkinson and Winstedt and other savants in their researches into the pedigrees of bendaharas and temenggongs who died centuries ago, but every district of the Peninsula has its own traditions and it is a pity not to preserve them.

It has been said that with the exception of Johore the little State of Lukut had the only government remotely approaching relatively modern standards in the Peninsula in the period of the 1860s–1870s before British intervention. It was founded by a roving chieftain named Raja Busu at the beginning of the 19th Century, but it was not until his son, Raja Jumaat, took charge that it began to go ahead.

Lukut seems to have reached its prime in the late 1860s, after Raja Jumaat, by wise and firm rule, had attracted a large Chinese mining population. He had a fort in an unusually strong position, well defended by artillery, and the State of Selangor was so disturbed by internal strife that he could afford to ignore the Sultan's claim to suzerainty and keep all his revenue for himself. Indeed he was so powerful that he played a leading part in placing Sultan Abdul Samad, immediate predecessor of the present ruler, on the throne of Selangor.

There is on record a most interesting glimpse of Lukut as it was in 1870, left behind by the then Resident Councillor of Malacca, Capt. Macpherson. This is quoted by Mr L.D. Gammans, M.C.S. (now stationed in Kuala Lumpur), in a historical sketch of Lukut which he wrote when he was District Officer at Port Dickson some years ago. So here we are in 1870:

> "The contrast between Lukut and Selangor is very striking. Indeed the former can well bear comparison with any European settlement and it is equally striking and gratifying in the midst of a dense jungle to come suddenly upon the footprints of advanced civilisation. The roads are well formed and macadamized: the (as yet) only street of Chinatown is uniformly built of brick and tiled roof and kept scrupulously clean and well-drained: the godowns on the river's bank are large and massively built, and both the people and the place have an air of contentment and prosperity.
>
> "The Police peons are dressed similarly to ours in Malacca, and the arrangements in the police station which I inspected are perfect. An object of much interest to me was the Gambling Farm: it was a large square building and there are police peons stationed at each of the four doors. No Malay is permitted to enter, and the punishment of a Malay man caught in the act of gambling is severe. Although crowded with players, the most perfect order and quiet reigned throughout and those who lost their money displayed no symptoms of excitement or violence. Raja Jumaat's house is situated upon a hill which he is strongly fortifying; and a carriage-road, winding round, leads to the top .... Prisoners in chains were employed upon the work."

But after the discovery of rich tin mines at Kuala Lumpur the Chinese miners of Lukut left in large numbers for the new settlement, a process which was expedited by the outbreak of fighting between the Malays and the inland Chinese mining colonies in Negri Sembilan.

Moreover, Raja Jumaat's successor, Raja Bot, did not inherit his father's strength of character, so that for one reason and another Lukut was fading away even before the Sungei Ujong War and the forfeiture of Raja Bot's territory to the British authorities in return for a gratuity and a pension.

But even in 1874, a year before British troops invaded Sungei Ujong, the Raja of Lukut could still put up a very respectable show when welcoming visitors to his capital. In that year Mr J.W.W. Birch, who was then Colonial Secretary at Singapore and was murdered in the following year during a Malay uprising in Perak, visited Lukut, and he recorded the following note in his journal:

> "I sent ashore very early a boat and the munshi to warn Raja Bot of our visit. Guns shortly began to fire both from the watchhouse at the entrance of the river and higher up from a hill on which stood some houses. We then landed in the Mata Mata, with the Avon's galley in tow. We were met on our landing and salutes were fired from two or three places. Shortly afterwards Raja Bot and his brother, Raja Yahya, and a younger brother, met us. Raja Bot at once led us to his house and offered us refreshments, consisting of water and syrup of roses. I handed over to him the presents His Excellency had sent and had a long conversation with him on the state of his district and of Selangor in general.
>
> "There were signs in the streets of the little town of an attack made a short time ago when the Chinese bazaar was set on fire. There were about 300 Chinese mining in the valley about three miles off. There were at least 2,000 before the late row and Raja Bot used then to get about fifty bharas (about 150 piculs) of tin a month. He takes one tenth of the tin, as well as timber, in kind. His opium, gambling and spirit farm, which used to give about $400 a month, now only realises $100. There is a road from here to Sungei Ujong and another to Permatang Pasir, on the Linggi River, each being distant about six hours journey. There are two or three nice houses in the place and a very prettily situated residence might be made on the hill where Raja Jumaat, the last Raja, lived."

It was at Lukut that the British expedition which fought in the second Sungei Ujong War landed in 1875, and hundreds of men, taking with them light artillery and rocket-tubes, marched up the jungle track which led to the Chinese mines at Seremban.

That war led to the downfall of Lukut, for Mr Gammans states that in the negotiations which followed the war Raja Bot was deprived of his territory and compensated with a gratuity of $20,000. He went to live in Singapore and afterwards in Klang, where he was a well-known figure until his death after the turn of the century.

On my visit I found my fellow-antiquary, who is afflicted even more seriously than I am with a peculiar and inexplicable curiosity about old forts and other historical relics, waiting patiently beside the row of wooden shophouses which comprise the present-day village of Lukut.

These Chinese shopkeepers are occupying premises much less substantial than those which their predecessors built during the regime of an autocratic raja; but when we left them behind and turned into the kampong on the northern side of the road we found ourselves in surroundings which have changed very little since the days of Raja Jumaat and on ground which forms part of the original Malay village.

The mosque, an unusually large one for a place of this size, is the fifth which has stood on the present site, and as we passed it on a Friday morning we heard the intonation of Arabic prayers, within its dark interior and saw the village folk arriving for the service as they have done since the first Bugis chief sailed up the Lukut creek and carved out a petty kingdom for himself and his followers.

Costumes, architecture, language and manner of life are still very much the same in Lukut today. Nevertheless there are differences, as we were reminded when a young Malay rode up to the mosque on a two-wheeled product of Western civilisation and performed the always surprising feat of dismounting from a bicycle while clad in a garment which, if it were not inapplicable to a virile race, one could best describe as a full-length skirt.

Our guide led us through the kampong by a path which is metalled and undoubtedly represents the original track from the town to the fort on the hill commanding the Lukut River. Many people still living in Negri Sembilan must be able to recall the time when the road from Seremban to Port Dickson made this detour past the fort. This part of the road consists of an embankment through the swamp and is still in good condition. Whether the old rajas built the embankment leading from the fort to the village we do not know. It must have been an ambitious work to be attempted in those days.

On the other hand, the visitor can see for himself that Raja Jumaat built a carriage road circling round the hill up to the fort. This road, for which slave labour was employed, is admirably graded and metalled, and there seems to be no reason why such an enterprising ruler should not have tackled the problem of providing a road for wheeled traffic over the swamp which divided the hill and the town. Moreover, there must have been a road of sorts here at the time when the P.W.D. first inspected the locality; if there had not been, the simplest course would have been to have followed the line of the present road.

A hundred yards inside the kampong we left the path and went on through a swamp in which we could never have found our way but for the assistance of our guide. This ground must have silted up or altered greatly in recent times, for it is certain that there must have been some better communication than exists today between the road and the solidly built wharf which is still to be seen on the river bank on the farther side.

Anyway, there is now no trace of a road or a bridge, or even of a well-defined path, over this swamp, and it is not surprising that until my fellow-antiquary started to look around Lukut no European seems to have known of the existence of the old customs house which the swamp conceals.

That building is not mentioned by Mr Gammans, and it seems to have been completely forgotten until six months ago. Since then the British Resident of Negri Sembilan, the Hon. Mr J.W.W. Hughes, has inspected it and there are hopes that the jungle will now be cleared and efforts made to preserve the crumbling walls and pillars.

That effort is worth making, for the Lukut customs house is one of the very few relics of independent Malaya now to be found along the western seaboard. Is there a single building in Klang which dates back to the regime of the Sultan's viceroy in the seventies? Or any building in Kuala Lumpur which was standing when Yap Ah Loy was Capitan China of that town? Probably not. Surely then it is worth rescuing from the tightening grip of the jungle this symbol at Lukut of a social and economic structure that has vanished for ever.

That the existence of this customs house had been completely forgotten by the British administration of Negri Sembilan is shown not only by the omission of any reference to it in Mr Gammans' booklet (now out of print), but by the fact that it encroaches upon two or three different pieces of land granted to Malay owners. Presumably its site would not have been alienated if the officers responsible had known that there was anything of historical interest on the land.

We caught our first glimpse of the customs house when, after brushing through the long grass of the swamp and balancing precariously on tree trunks laid over streams, we got on to firm ground and suddenly saw graceful Corinthian pillars half hidden by dense vegetation. We were then at one corner of the building, which must have occupied an area fully sixty feet square, with an outer verandah, all the way round, an inner hall, and various small rooms or offices. The lines of the walls are clearly visible; indeed the remains stand three feet or more high, and many of the original pillars are still standing, while others are lying in the undergrowth.

Much of the masonry has been removed, and probably could be found in the foundations of houses in the nearby kampong if one looked closely enough, but masses of it are still to be seen. The bricks are of the small type commonly seen in old buildings at Kuala Selangor and the workmanship of the pillars and ornamentation generally is excellent. My fellow-antiquary – who has made a special study of such matters – said that it was far beyond what might be expected of Malay artisans of the period and he thought that Raja Jumaat must have imported workmen from Java. But of course there were skilled Chinese workmen, accustomed to Western forms of ornamentation, available in the Straits Settlements at the time.

The building must have been an impressive one in its original state, with a fine pillared entrance and steps leading up from the river, a wharf solidly built of stone along its water frontage, and the stream busy with canoes and sea-going native craft unloading rice and salt and loading tin.

Inside the building would be stationed the Malay police of the Raja of Lukut, wearing a uniform copied from that worn by the colonial police in Malacca.

Chinese from the tin mines up-country (the largest of which were situated in the valley where the dredge of the Lukut Tin Dredging Company is now working) would be paying the export tax of one-tenth of their output levied by the Raja.

All the life of a busy little town would centre around this building and waterfront.

Today the river is only a shallow and narrow creek, but its original width can be clearly seen, marked on the farther side by a line of nipah palms and on the other bank by the masonry of the wharf. Owing to mining and agriculture in the interior the river has silted up, so that now crabs scuttle over steaming mud-banks where once cargo craft lay at anchor.

The tentacles of the jungle have twisted around the massive walls and slender pillars of the building and are forcing their way ruthlessly into every crack and cranny. Bricks and tiles are scattered in the undergrowth. Keringa ants are everywhere, the sunlight filters through a dense canopy of foliage, and the air is heavy and stifling.

The waterfront of the once busy little port of Lukut has degenerated into a desolate tidal creek, with the jungle-covered ruins of the old customs house as the sole monument to the old rulers of the place, and a single canoe drawn up on the bank as the only sign that Malays still live at Lukut.

Our guide's next destination was the old cemetery. We walked up the village path, across the road and along a path through rubber trees until we came to a small graveyard surrounded by a high stone wall. Here Raja Jumaat lies, with his name carved in Arabic letters on his tombstone. Growing at the foot of the mouldering wall is a rose bush and on it, at the time of our visit, was a single red rose. Raja Jumaat's kingdom is gone, but he rests where he ruled, in dignity, solitude and peace.

Our next stopping-place was a grimmer one. It was the old execution ground, now nothing more than a levelled piece of ground surrounded by rubber trees. Here criminals were put to death by the kris, in the presence of the populace. It must have been a terrible thing to watch, and yet more humane than our English scaffold horror, which, if anything goes wrong, results in slow strangulation.

British naval officers and bluejackets had to watch six Malays executed by the kris at Jugra in 1874, following a puntitive expedition against pirates, and various British civil officials had a similar experience. Anyone who wants a technical and detailed description of execution by the long kris reserved for that purpose should look up the account of a Malay execution given to Lieut. Newbold by Mr Westerhout, of Malacca. The execution was the last carried out by the order of the Dato of Naning, before his territory came under British control, and the year was 1805.

The execution ground at Lukut must have witnessed many a scene like that, and tradition has it that Raja Jumaat did not hesitate to use it on people of his own race, even for such an offence as entering the Chinese gambling farm.

We were next led to the site of the old stockade which guarded the track leading to the mines at Seremban and elsewhere. Until fairly recent years this track could be followed for a long distance but it has now been largely obliterated by rubber cultivation and the only part of it which is clearly visible today is that which is used by the Lukut Tin Dredging Company.

There is nothing of the stockade left except a depression on one side of the road, at the foot of a hill, running for fifty yards or so parallel with the track. Our guide told us that here there used to be a trench six feet deep, and the jungle came close up at the back, so that retreat was easy.

From here we walked down the track towards the present village and were shown the site of the former Kampong China or Chinese part of Lukut. Here were the brick foundations of a long row of shophouses and various relics of other buildings. The site of the gambling farm is now occupied by rubber trees.

Well, that is all there was to be seen of vanished Lukut, and without the aid of the oldest inhabitant we would not have been able to see that much.

However, when Mr Gammans inspected the place when he was stationed at Port Dickson it was evidently possible to get a clearer picture of remains that were either hidden by dense undergrowth when we were there or were overlooked by our kampong guide. Mr Gammans writes:

> "Although the small cannon which once defended the Lukut fort have been removed to the police station and the District Officer's house at Port Dickson, and the fine woodwork of the house which Raja Jumaat built for his daughter has disappeared (the only relic of it is now in the Kuala Lumpur Museum), the plan of the fort can be traced without difficulty. The twelve-foot ditch which surrounded it, and which was filled with sharpened stakes when an attack was feared, remains, as also does the rampart of earth rivetted with unshaped stones on the inner side. The two main gateways, and the cisterns and well which provided the water supply, are in good condition."

My friend and I failed to find a few of those relics on the hill, but anyway it was very pleasant to stroll about with our obliging Malay friend, watch the village life going on so tranquilly beneath the tall durian and rambai trees, and ponder on all that has happened since the Raja of Lukut gave way to a young British civil servant residing at Port Dickson and complacently decorating his garden with the raja's artillery.

There have been many changes, not only in Lukut but in the entire Orient. As we walked down the village path on our way to the waiting motor-cars we passed – of all unexpected sights – a Japanese. He was wheeling a bicycle, on the carrier of which was an empty basket. What was he doing in this unfrequented corner of Malaya, so near to a deep-water inlet of the sea? We glared at him suspiciously, and he smiled blandly at us. Yes, there have been changes indeed since Lukut was an independent State and Great Britain was the dominant power in Eastern seas!

(*Footnote in 1981*: The friend referred to was Mubin Sheppard, who has continued his research in the fields of Malay history and culture ever since. G.L.P.)

Selangor in the Melting Pot

Kuala Lumpur, 15 July 1933.

It would appear that in this year of grace A.D. 1933 we are entering upon a new chapter in the social and political history of Selangor. For this phase various more or less uncomplimentary catchwords are current, such as "Balkanisation" and "Malayisation" and "Decentralisation", but the upshot of it all will be that Selangor will be rescued from the federal octopus and in future will evolve definitely and distinctly as an individual Malay State.

How far this process can be carried in the political field remains to be seen. It is clear that the laws governing the agricultural and mining industries, those which depend upon foreign capital, will have to continue to be uniform as far as possible, if the legislative confusion which was one of the original causes of federation is not to be repeated.

Similarly it is difficult to see how there can be any wide differences in treatment of the non-Malay population, whether in education or anything else, since these are not matters that ought to be dependent upon the personal views of a British Resident, or even of a Sultan, but should be governed by principles national in application but adaptable to local circumstances. For example, an educational policy that would be correct in Kelantan might be grossly unfair and reactionary in Selangor.

Then there are the financial obligations which Selangor has undertaken as a member of the Federation. At the present stage it is difficult to visualise the day when this State will be in entire control of its own revenues and will merely hand over a portion each year to the central government for pensions and other things.

It was argued very strongly last year that the Sri Menanti programme of reform had been torpedoed by financial difficulties that ought to have been examined before the programme was announced, but Sir Samuel Wilson has disposed of that problem in one short sentence. A block grant from the Federal purse is to be made to Selangor to finance its new departments, and the State Government will do as it pleases with the

money. That solution will maintain unimpaired the reputation of the Federation in the money market – by ensuring that Federal debt charges shall be provided for before the State services are financed – and it also provides for the other financial obligations and needs of the federal machine, while giving the individual States a considerable amount of freedom in deciding where and when expenditure of public funds is needed.

Admittedly this reform leaves Selangor still a long way from the status of complete financial independence enjoyed by the States outside the Federation, but since that status cannot be attained without complete destruction of the Federation, and neither Sir Cecil Clementi nor anyone else has ever envisaged such destruction, the reformers may well be content with the knowledge that over a very wide range of local matters, in fact over all or nearly all matters that should be controlled by an independent member of a federal union, Selangor will now be able to distribute its expenditure as it pleases.

The form of government in Selangor is also changing. The State Council has been enlarged by the addition of the Selangor members of the Federal Council, who comprise three Europeans, one Chinese and one Indian. There are also certain other unofficial members.

But as it stands the State Council is an entirely unworkable and impracticable body, having regard to the much more difficult and responsible work it will now have to do, and this is admitted by some of the ablest and most experienced members of the Council.

Its proceedings are conducted in high Malay, which at least four of the unofficial members do not understand, and the cumbrous procedure of translation into English is therefore necessary. The president of this body is the Sultan, who has arrived at an age at which the strain of long and fatiguing meetings ought not to be imposed upon him, and who in any event ought not to sit in a body in which his own government may be attacked.

For good or ill democracy is awake in Selangor, and for the Sultan to preside over the enlarged State Council is surely as improper as would be the appearance of the King of England on the Ministerial bench of the House of Commons. Doubtless this difficulty will be solved in one way or another in the near future.

It is said that the creation of an upper chamber, in which the Sultan and his major chiefs could review legislative and financial affairs, is forbidden by the Bugis adat of Selangor, but one may reasonably reply that the appearance of a European in trousers in the State Council is equally abhorrent to ancient Malay custom.

Moreover, the majority of Malay chiefs in the Selangor Council are entirely unfamiliar with the general run of business that is now handled by the Federal Council. It seems certain, therefore, that a lower chamber of the State legislature, popular in its representation and competent to handle public affairs quickly and efficiently, will have to be created, and that its proceedings will have to be conducted in English and reported in the newspapers. If that is not done the last state of bureaucracy in Selangor will be worse than the first.

Finally, in the political field, there will be the unfettered authority of the British Resident in many and various matters in which the Chief Secretary has formerly had the final say, and in future an appeal will lie not to Carcosa but to King's House.

Some say that that will increase the High Commissioner's responsibilities to an intolerable extent, but one has only to contrast British Malaya with a province of British India to realise that in assuming the incapacity of a colonial governor to hold the strings of nine petty Malay States and a very small British colony we are showing extraordinarily little faith in the calibre of the best men in the British colonial service.

This deliberate policy of building up a modern Malay State in Selangor, with its own government and individuality and consciousness, is regarded by the cynic with undisguised scepticism. Much better, he says, keep Selangor as a part of the super-State that has appeared in the centre of the Peninsula under the name of the Federation.

To the cynic this idea of returning to a separate State government in an area no larger than an English county is a sort of Anglo-Catholicism in British colonial policy, an attempt to re-sanctify symbols that have lost their meaning and to revivify beliefs that are dead. Separatism in Malaya, says the cynic, is to Sir Cecil Clementi what mediaevalism is to Mr Gilbert Chesterton, a faith as romantic as it is inapplicable to modern circumstances.

Well, one can only reply that a choice has to be made one way or the other. If we are to have a centralised bureaucracy let it be an honest one, and let us admit that the Sultans are nothing more than picturesque anachronisms in a British colonial super-State. Or, if we choose the alternative, let us create the realities as well as the forms of State government. Fortunately Sir Samuel Wilson has settled the question for us, at any rate for the next four years, and the transfer of power from Kuala Lumpur to the State capitals will now proceed to the accompaniment of impotent grumbling in London clubs and (probably) intermittent criticism from non-Malay interests in the F.M.S.

Now the acid test has to come. Drastic decentralisation (approved by not one of the dozen unofficial commercial, mining and planting interests which presented a memorial to Sir Samuel Wilson) may be right in theory, but will it work in practice?

That is a question which the most enthusiastic of reformers must answer with caution, but, as Sir Samuel Wilson has said, governmental machinery is made for man and not vice versa, and if it is admitted to be right that these States should control their domestic affairs from their own capitals, then a machine will have to be created to make that possible.

The greatest danger is that different British Residents may follow different policies, particularly in regard to the very influential and important non-Malay interests that now exist in these States, and it seems certain that the High Commissioner will have to spend much more time in the F.M.S. than he does now.

Important social changes are already observable in Selangor. The influx of English-educated aliens from Ceylon and India has stopped and stopped for ever. In future the Government services will be staffed by men who have been born in this country, have rubbed shoulders with each other at school, and have reached a degree of understanding and acquaintance that will transcend the barriers of race and custom which now exist and which cause so much factionalism in local life. Then we shall see in Selangor, in the new clerical service, a body of men that will spend their whole lives in this State, instead of being transferred all over the Federation as members of the general clerical service are today. Immigration of the merchant class from China will also decrease very largely, since the available business opportunities will be seized by local-born men.

In various ways, therefore, there will be a tendency towards a more settled, a more homogeneous and a more patriotic population. Salaries and pensions earned in Selangor will be spent in Selangor, and not remitted to Jaffna and elsewhere. There will gradually arise a truly indigenous English-speaking population which, by virtue of its local consciousness and municipal spirit, will make Kuala Lumpur and other towns much pleasanter and happier places than they are today.

These social changes are inevitable, whatever may happen to the political policy which is taking shape at the same time, and it is probable that outside the municipal field there will be much greater interest in all sorts of Selangor institutions and activities financed by the State Council. This again is a tendency which appears to be largely independent of high policy, for if county councils can function usefully in English counties it is

surely possible for State Councils to perform rather similar duties in these small Malay States. One is thinking here of the construction of new roads and bridges, and local matters of that kind.

The time has come when unofficial opinion ought to be brought to bear upon civil servants and departmental officers in this country more frequently and effectively than is possible in a Federal Council sitting four times a year or in Sanitary Boards controlling very small urban or semi-rural areas. In the reorganised State Councils a new and welcome instrument for the expression of public opinion will be created, as indeed has already been demonstrated in Perak.

The part played in the life of Selangor by the European community, an entirely distinct and comparatively affluent caste of local society, will probably diminish. Already four out of five districts in this State are administered by Malay officers, and we have been told on high authority that this elimination of expensive British personnel will continue in all branches of Government service. Naturally there are definite limits to such a policy at the present time, but on grounds of economy alone we must expect preference to be given to the local man in future wherever that is possible.

Coincidentally, therefore, with the gradual lowering of barriers between the local-born communities, and the consequent growth of a spirit of unity and co-operation among them, there will be a reduction in the entirely unassimilable and detached European element. And one need not be guilty of disloyalty to one's own country and community if one suggests that in the long run that reduction will be good for everybody concerned. European life in this country and climate can never be anything more than a makeshift, a sort of exile for a job or a career. Nearly all of us would have got much more out of life, physically and mentally, had we remained in a cold climate. And women who live in Malaya while their children are in England are thwarting the fundamental purpose of their lives.

That Malaya will ever be able to do without a framework of British administrative and technical officers is difficult to believe, but what we may hope for, having regard to the monarchical constitution of the Malay States, is that the current difficulties of Ceylon will be avoided, and that the continuance of the present political system will not be found to be incompatible with the gradual emergence of a local-born population that is whole-heartedly Malayan in spirit and affiliations.

We are now looking far ahead, and must use caution, but what cannot be denied is that this country, and the State of Selangor in particular, is

an organism growing and changing from year to year, and that there are social forces within it which cannot be arrested but may be guided.

Let us hope that the much abused "New Policy", by bringing the unofficial into closer touch with the official, will make that guidance easier, and that the educated and enlightened elements in the local-born population will take warning from India and Ceylon; and will rely upon the very smallness of these States to preserve good governance by personal contact and understanding rather than by the dubious methods of political democracy.

If that is done it will be possible to say that the very feature of the Clementi policy that is now seized upon as its weakest point – the administration of very small areas by separate governments – has proved to be its salvation.

Is it any wonder that in this chaotic world the peasant civilisation of the Malay race should seem more precious than ever, and that Mr Egmont Hake, speaking in the Federal Council, should have made one of the few speeches concerned with non-material values that are recorded in the dry and dusty proceedings of that body.

> "The constitution of these States," said Mr Egmont Hake, "as an end in itself is to my mind a matter of minor importance. What interests me more deeply is that the policy of permitting the States to conduct their own parochial affairs will prove the most likely means of preserving the Malay civilisation, with all its simplicities and loyalties and traditions – a civilisation that has always appealed to those who know a good thing when they see it, and is likely to make a stronger and wider appeal in these latter days when western civilisation is seen to be a menace even to itself. I believe Malaya has as much to learn from the Malay civilisation as we trustees have to give of our own, and if we bring to them the best thing we have – our science in the alleviation of sickness – and leave them their own traditions and mode of life instead of the false values of western materialism, Malaya, and indeed the world, will be the better for it."

A memorable tribute to the Malay peasant from a product of European culture and the most powerful and disinterested mind to be found among the unofficial advisers of the Malayan governments today!

(Mr Egmont Hake was managing director of Harrisons, Barker Ltd in Kuala Lumpur – G.L.P.)

Two Chinese Generations

Kuala Lumpur, 29 July 1933.

The perception of history as a process is uncannily clear and persistent in Kuala Lumpur at the present time. Past, present and future cast a spell over the mind, so that we see cause and effect together and know that the one is unalterable and the other inevitable. The events of the past appear in their relationship to the problems of the present and the uncertainties of the future. Change and movement are in the air and the confidence and optimism which inspired our predecessors in the Malay States have vanished. It is as though this country hitherto has been navigating a landlocked sea and only now is feeling the swell of the ocean.

I have never felt this so strongly as I did last week, in a conversation that ranged over eighty years of Chinese history in Malaya. In this hour's talk with Mr Lai Tet Loke, the new Chinese member of the Federal Council about his career and that of his father-in-law, Towkay Goh Ah Gnee, I realised as never before the cleavage which divides the Malaya of yesterday and today. The Great Slump has written a dividing line in indelible ink across our social history, and the economic era in which these two Chinese citizens of Selangor found their opportunities and received their rewards has passed away.

Few people who have come to this country since the Great War have ever heard of Towkay Goh Ah Gnee, and many others have forgotten him since his death some twenty years ago, but he was typical of the Chinese pioneers of the Malay States and deserves to be ranked very close to Yap Ah Loy and Loke Yew, of Selangor, and the famous Capitans China of early Perak.

His career in this country began thirty years after the Union Jack was first hoisted at Singapore. He landed in that Settlement in 1850 from China, and lived in Queen Street, near the Brothers' School. One of the

strongest impressions he received at that time was of the proximity of the jungle to the town, as contrasted with the trim suburbs of later years.

As a business man and contractor Goh Ah Gnee made money, and he also had trading connection with the independent States of the Peninsula, as most merchants in the Straits Settlements had in those days.

Later, when British administration began in Selangor in the late seventies, Goh Ah Gnee decided to seek his fortune in the newly opened territory, and he was one of the first Chinese to settle in Kuala Lumpur after the British Residency was moved to this town from Klang in 1880.

The railway was not then in existence, and Goh Ah Gnee always remembered how he had to travel by boat to the limit of navigation at Damansara and then walk by a hilly jungle track to Kuala Lumpur.

From the first Goh Ah Gnee put his faith in tin-mining. His first ventures were at Rawang and Serendah, where he struck very rich ground. There were no roads in Selangor at that time, and when Goh Ah Gnee first went to Rawang he made the journey of eighteen miles on foot – an interesting contrast with the London directors of modern Malayan mining companies, most of whom have never seen the mines in which their dividends are being earned!

The Broga district, on the boundary between Negri Sembilan and Selangor, next attracted Goh Ah Gnee, and he was again successful in opening up a highly profitable mine.

As evidence of the difficulties which confronted pioneers like Goh Ah Gnee it is worth recalling that when Mr Lai Tet Loke was managing his father-in-law's interests they prospected the ground now being mined by the Sungei Way and Petaling companies near Kuala Lumpur, and gave it up owing to the terribly malarious nature of the district.

Since that time the two companies mentioned have earned very large dividends and rank today among the most profitable tin-dredging enterprises in Malaya – but this success was not achieved before the pioneer rubber estate of Sungei Way had paid a heavy toll to malaria in human life and sickness.

Few people have stopped to consider how the early Chinese miners, who were working in the Malay Peninsula for centuries before British administration began, found their mines. The answer is that they did so largely by guesswork, being guided by the general lie of the land, or by the direction of the tin-bearing "karang" as indicated by existing mines strung out over the countryside.

Goh Ah Gnee, however, was the first Chinese to make prospecting a matter of certainty by using the boring tool. He was a great traveller and

had seen much more of the world than most Chinese of his day. He had visited fifteen out of the eighteen provinces of China and also the Philippines, Indo-China, Siam, the Dutch East Indies and India. In the course of his travels he had seen the boring tool used on the island of Banka, and he promptly introduced it into Selangor.

In other directions Towkay Goh Ah Gnee showed his originality. Even when his business interests lay in Singapore he had set an example by constructing the first steam rice-mill ever used in that city, and when he became a tin-miner he continued to follow an independent path.

For example he was the first Chinese miner who dared to flout the ancient superstitions that no man must enter a mine when carrying an umbrella or wearing shoes, or that no pregnant woman must come near a mine. Goh Ah Gnee was a Catholic convert, and a devout one at that, and was thus able to snap his fingers at beliefs which had troubled his compatriots from time immemorial. One only wishes that he had been equally successful with the superstition which prevents the Chinese coolie from using grease in his wheelbarrow, thus torturing the ears of other users of the roads today.

Another and more important innovation in Malayan mining which began with Goh Ah Gnee was the direct employment of labour. Until Goh Ah Gnee started operations Chinese mining in the Malay States had always been conducted on the traditional share-out basis, and he was the first man to employ and boldly take the entire risk on his own shoulders.

Goh Ah Gnee smelted his own tin, instead of sending the ore to the big smelters at Singapore and Penang, as is done nowadays. There was nothing new in that, of course, since all miners did their own smelting in the early days, but even in this matter Goh Ah Gnee was not content to stay in a rut.

The clay-lined furnace used at that time to melt the tin and separate it from sand and other impurities was known as "the three-legged cat", and the necessary draught was created by a bellows composed of a hollow tree-trunk containing a piston lined with fowls' feathers, which was forced up and down by hand labour. Exactly the same thing may be seen in Chinese blacksmiths' shops to this day.

Goh Ah Gnee scorned this primitive device, however, and he was not long in improving upon it by substituting a blast fan driven by a steam engine. In later years his son-in-law, Mr Lai Tet Loke, showed a similar impatience with inefficiency when he invented the first effective mechanical method of separating out tin-ore from heavy clay.

As a planter Goh Ah Gnee also deserves a place in the annals of Selangor. He bought Braemar Estate in the Kajang district, from Messrs.

Toynbee and Traill when it was still in coffee, and he opened up Semenyih Estate in the same crop from virgin jungle. Later he changed over to rubber, but he was one of those who made the mistake of planting the indigenous Malayan rubber, known as rambong, and he had to cut it out later in favour of Hevea.

Goh Ah Gnee's name is especially associated with the Semenyih district of Selangor, where he founded a large Chinese settlement and made the first road from the main highway to Broga.

Mr Lai Tet Loke, who came from Sarawak as a boy to live in Goh Ah Gnee's household and afterwards acted as his manager for four years, has also been a miner throughout his life, sometimes independently and sometimes as a sideline while employed in a Kuala Lumpur office.

He has not operated on such a large scale as his father-in-law, (who had 15,000 mining coolies on his payroll at one time) nor under such strenuous conditions.

Whereas Goh Ah Gnee had to walk on foot over difficult country to select his first mines, and open up his estates and mines in a country as wild and untouched as the American prairies of the same era, Mr Lai Tet Loke usually found roads of a sort wherever he wanted to go, and he found amenities of life which, however inadequate they may seem in the Selangor of today, were yet a good deal better than the conditions which his father-in-law cheerfully accepted whenever he left the comforts of Kuala Lumpur behind him and fared forth into the country.

Even so the Selangor of Mr Lai Tet Loke's youth has vanished as completely as the seventeenth-century Malacca. Exaggerated as that assertion sounds, one has only to get Mr Lai Tet Loke in reminiscent mood to realise the complete transformation that has come over this State in the past forty years.

He has travelled over the road from Kajang to Seremban in half a dozen ways unknown to residents of Malaya who have come to this country since the 1914–18 war. He has made the journey on foot and by pony, bicycle, Australian sulky (a light carriage seating two people) and dogcart. He remembers when victorias and other stately conveyances were used by Kuala Lumpur society, and when as much as $2,000 might be paid for a good Deli pony.

He has even travelled from Kuala Lumpur to Kajang by bullock-bus – a long vehicle with seats on either side, holding fifteen persons. The bus left Roger Street, Kuala Lumpur, in the early morning, its departure being announced by the sounding of an Indian horn, and it arrived at Kajang at one p.m., having changed bullocks at the eighth mile.

Mr Lai Tet Loke has travelled in an even stranger way than that, for he has made the journey to Seremban at night in a hammock of sacking slung underneath the floor of a bullock-cart. Nowadays the same journey takes ninety minutes in a car and twenty in an aeroplane.

Whereas Kuala Lumpur epicures feed today on Dover soles brought from England to Malaya in cold storage, Mr Lai Tet Loke remembers the time when sea fish was unobtainable in Kajang, only thirty miles from the coast, so backward were the means of transport available. Today sea fish is one of the principal items in the diet of the upcountry Malay, at any rate in the more accessible districts since many of his own freshwater streams yield him little food, silting up as they are because of planting development and polluted by mining.

Social differences have also emerged. When Mr Lai Tet Loke was a clerk in the Selangor Government service in the nineties he used to play billiards with the District Officer in the club at Kajang. Today the District Officer drives into Kuala Lumpur for a dance at the Lake Club, (when he happens to be European) and the clerk regards him impersonally as a more or less agreeable stranger – or, if you like, as a larger cogwheel moving a smaller cogwheel in the official machine.

One cannot talk to any Asiatic who was employed in Government service in these States thirty or forty years ago without sensing the very wide difference between their attitude towards the European officers under whom they served and the attitude which prevails in the subordinate service today.

These oldtimers remember their District Officers and other superior officers with an extraordinary vividness. To put the matter at its simplest, it is clear that in those days the European officer and his subordinate, while preserving discipline and maintaining a separate social life, came to know each other in a way that is impossible today, when a District Officer is lucky if he serves more than two years in the same district and many impalpable but real barriers to understanding exist.

Mr Lai Tet Loke has had his ups and downs. He was mining at Broga on his own account when a simultaneous tin and coffee slump struck Selangor in 1897 and miners were paid only thirteen dollars a pikul for their ore. "Rawang, Serendah and Sungei Besi were like dead villages," he said, recalling that time. Then there were other depressions, in 1904, in 1920 and at other times.

"I have been through five or six slumps," said Mr Lai Tet Loke to me, "and I have made and lost several fortunes, but I am like the lalang of the country – I always come back." One can well believe it, observing his forceful, independent personality.

But are we not now entering upon an economic era in which it may not be possible to "come back?" During the lifetime of Goh Ah Gnee, and during Mr Lai Tet Loke's life up to the Great Slump, any Chinese who had energy, brains and capital could invest it in the Malay States in the well-founded faith that he would reap a satisfactory return.

There might be occasional depressions, as in 1897, but they only lasted a year or two at the most,and if one put by enough money to tide over the slumps one could be sure of making money in the booms. And, taking it by and large, one could expect prudence to be rewarded with a substantial fortune when the time for retirement came.

When Selangor was being opened up for planting in the first three decades of this century the demand for tropical raw materials was insatiable. There might be overproduction in one crop, as in coffee, but instantly rubber came to take its place. The idea of a world so incompetently organised that it would be glutted with wealth which the existing economic system would be incapable of distributing never entered the heads of our Selangor pioneers.

But today . . . . . At the time at which Mr Lai Tet Loke and I sat talking in a Kuala Lumpur hotel, discussing the personal history of his father-in-law and himself, the world economic conference at Geneva had failed, the disarmament conference was dying of inanition, and the United States, the richest and most powerful nation on earth, had been advised by one of its economists "to go forward like a sailing-ship into a fog".

Thus as Mr Lai Tet Loke and I looked back at the era of confidence and prosperity in the Malay States we knew that sixty assembled nations had proved their inability to tackle the root causes of the slump, that the hope of a world saved from war was as far away as it was in the days of Alexander, and that blindness and ignorance were being confessed openly by the economic "experts" of our civilisation.

The Oldest Town

Kuala Lumpur, 26 August 1933.

What a pleasant town Taiping is!

I first saw it some years ago on a rainy, cool evening, when the air was laden with the scent of flowering angsana trees and golden light bathed the slopes of the Ijau range. Soon the light failed and there was no time for sightseeing before I left the next morning, so that that first visit was a very brief one. Even so it left behind a treasurable memory and a desire to return that has never been gratified until last weekend.

The second visit more than confirmed the promise of the first. I stayed in what is certainly the most delightful of the Malayan inland resthouses known to me. The Malacca hostelry is hard to beat, but if we tear ourselves away from the endless fascination of the sea there is no resthouse to equal this one at Taiping, – with one exception, the decaying old resthouse at the abandoned mining village of Kuala Kubu Lama, with its glimpse of a lonely gorge in the foothills of the main range.

But my resthouse at Taiping, I would have you know, was not the ordinary, common-or-garden one. That you will find in the centre of the town, with the date "1894" inscribed upon it, and it accommodates the *hoi polloi*, the people whom newspapers describe as the "general public" when they have to draw a delicate distinction between the great ones of the earth and the mass of mankind.

My resthouse was the aristocratic one, reserved for . . . . well, I don't quite know whom it is reserved for. It is known as the "Raja Resthouse", but I could find no rajas in the visitors' book. On the contrary, this dog-eared tome was full of the incomprehensible initials with which the officials of our local Lilliputia designate their various functions.

Still, it certainly is a special resthouse. Not everybody can get into it. The vulgar herd is excluded. Between those who go to the ordinary resthouse and the favoured few who go to the superior one a subtle difference exists. What it is I don't know, but it certainly exists. One hesitates to appear at the Raja resthouse in a vulgar rickshaw. Nothing less than an Armstrong Siddeley, possibly with the Straits Times houseflag on the bonnet, seems to be expected.

Staggeringly polite Malay servants take the place of the saturnine Hylam, and the poor journalist wonders how on earth he can keep pace with rajas in the matter of tips. The food is awful, I must admit, and the fish served to me had certainly been snared in the mud of the neighbouring lake. But what would you? The Hylam beats the Malay at cooking and the Malay beats the Hylam at good manners, so you must take your choice. But I choose dignity and exclusiveness every time. A taste of aristocracy is too good to be missed, even if one only receives it in a resthouse.

But how, you may well ask, did a mere newspaper man enter this place? That is a mystery, but I rather think that the influence of the Incorporated Society of Planters had something to do with it (I had come to Taiping to report their annual meeting). There is no doubt that the ability to pull strings works wonders in the F.M.S. If you can't pull them you are nobody, a miserable nonentity who goes to the ordinary resthouse and knows nothing of rajas. But if you can interest the I.S.P. or some Government department in your behalf anything may happen.

I remember going to Kuantan on journalistic business some time ago, and not only was I accommodated with a special table inside the post-office (the *hoi polloi* stood at the counter!) but the postmaster hastened forward with six different varieties of pen-nibs. The explanation? Merely an office letter previously written to the P. and T. nabobs warning them that great events were toward, and that the Malayan public would await with bated breath news from Pahang.

There you are, you see. If you can pull strings in this country everything is simple. In fact if you can only pull one string – just one – the whole bureaucratic cobweb starts quivering in the most extraordinary manner. But if you can't give that preliminary tug, well, you are very unlucky, especially if you are on a journalistic errand.

This is a long explanation of how I came to stay in the Raja resthouse, but it is necessary, lest readers of the same lowly social status as myself should journey to Taiping in the hope of tasting similar joys. I must warn them that influence is necessary. On second thoughts, though, it might be managed by stealth. If one were to disguise oneself to look as much like an

S.R. or a D.E.F.M.S.R. or even a C.S.G. as possible, entry to the Raja resthouse would no doubt be granted . . . . . A harassed air, an authoritative expression and a dispatch case would probably deceive the Malay servants in supposing that one belonged to the official hierarchy.

The Raja resthouses are an institution peculiar to Perak. We certainly don't have them in Selangor, nor, I think, are they found in any other Federated State nor in Johore. There is a separate chiefs' resthouse at Pekan, but that is much inferior to the ordinary resthouse, which is a wondrous place with glass windows, a mosquito-proof room and tiled bathrooms. But Pekan after all cannot be compared with other Malayan towns. It is a sort of local Sandringham, the only one in this country where a white man loses prestige if he rides in a rickshaw (as a very conventional young M.C.S. officer indicated when he spotted me committing this faux pas during the coronation festivities).

There is also a Raja resthouse at Kuala Kangsar, and I remember being much impressed by the nonchalance with which a friend of mine, one of the lesser lights among the staff of the Chenderoh dam, took me in there one evening and ordered a stengah. These customs of other States are not easy to follow, but no doubt Perak folk have no difficulty in interpreting the social nuance represented by the existence of two Government resthouses in the same town.

But if you are an uninformed visitor to Taiping without the proper sponsorship, why risk it? Nothing could be more undignified than to be ejected from the Raja resthouse on the ground of insufficient personal importance. Besides, one can enjoy a visit to Taiping very well without staying there. Admittedly the peacefulness of the situation outside the town, the outlook on the public park and the view of Taiping's grand mountain background are additional pleasures of no mean order; but they are not essential. Taiping is certainly a town to see if you get the chance, even if you have to stay at the ordinary resthouse in town.

Taiping is like no other town in the F.M.S. Like Malacca, and parts of Penang, it has a feeling of having been lived in for a long time, of having settled down and adjusted itself and learnt the pace at which it wants to live. There is not the constant traffic of Kuala Lumpur, the bright and pleasant briskness of Seremban, or the dignity which Ipoh's civic centre, large commercial buildings and fine suburbs confer upon it. In Taiping there are broad, shady streets, lined with fine old trees forty years old and more. Playing fields and open spaces are everywhere. Government offices (for this is the capital of Perak), school buildings and the barracks of the Burma Rifles stand out among the shops and offices of Chinatown.

Taiping is almost entirely a Chinese town. It was in the surrounding district that Chinese mining first began on a large scale in the Malay Peninsula (somewhere about 1840) and it was here that the first revolutionary development in Malayan tin mining occurred – the introduction of power-driven pumping plant.

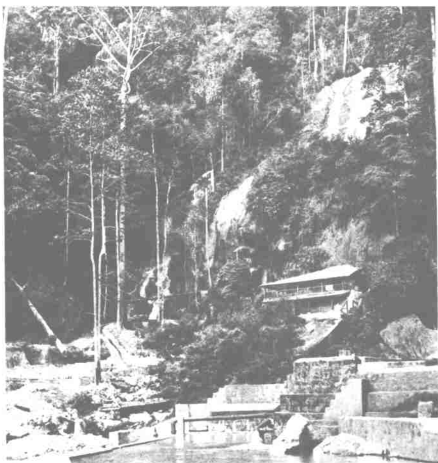
For well over half a century the Larut district has carried a large Chinese population and Taiping in the old days was the centre of one of the rival factions, while the neighbouring town of Kamunting was the other. After the Perak War Taiping received its present name, which means in Chinese "Everlasting Peace", signifying the end of the fighting that ruined the Larut district for some years and was one of the direct causes of British armed intervention in Perak.

For some years after that pacification Taiping continued to be nothing more than a large Chinese mining camp, empty during the day and buzzing with activity at night, after the coolies had returned from the mines. So close was the jungle at that time that on one occasion a rhinoceros appeared at the door of a ward in the Government hospital, walked down the ward and disappeared through the other door.

The history of Taiping is quite different from that of any other town in the Malay States. To begin with, it is by far the oldest town in these States. Situated as it is in a district that was up to the time when the Kinta valley was developed in the 1880s, incomparably the richest tin field in the Peninsula, Taiping went ahead rapidly because there was no difficulty in collecting a relatively large revenue from the district of Larut from the first year in which British administration began. Another factor in its progress was proximity to the coast, reached at first by a road eight miles long to Matang and a few years later by a railway line to Port Weld, the first railway in Malaya.

Accordingly Taiping was a thriving and well-appointed town when Ipoh was still a Chinese village, when Seremban was in the same state, and when Kuala Lumpur was just beginning to take on some semblance of permanence and solidity.

Taiping has the oldest settled Chinese population of any town in the Federated Malay States; and a continuous civic life of half a century, coupled with an exceptionally slow rate of growth in recent years, has made it a town in which citizens of all races feel a genuine common interest. In other words, Taiping has existed as a modern town long enough for its people to get to know each other, while it has not grown too large for tendencies towards understanding and friendship to be thwarted by sheer size.



Waterfalls in Taiping

To be sure, its small European community is not free from peculiar problems, arising out of Taiping's position as an official, planting and mining centre, and symbolised by two quite distinct and mutually exclusive European social clubs. On the other hand, they have the most beautifully situated and most invigorating European swimming club in all Malaya.

The Singapore Swimming Club may boast of its magnificent concrete pool, Penang may point to its exquisite coves and beaches, and Ipoh may take well-merited pride in its latest club, but Taiping leads them all. To anyone who knows Cornwall the first glimpse of this pleasure resort in the jungle is almost painful in its recollection of familiar things. There is the same subtropical atmosphere, steep paths, bright flowerbeds against weather-beaten stone, and moistness and coolness everywhere.

The club is at the foot of the lowest of four high waterfalls falling down the Ijau range, and the water is never without a stinging, invigorating freshness. There is nothing of the laziness and relaxation of a hot Sunday morning in the Singapore pool. Here, in this delightful place, you pluck

up your courage before you face the shock of the first dive, just as you do, Oh sun-sapped European, in your own hardy climate! At the foot of the fall there is a slide and a shallow pool for children, and below that there is the main pool, amply long and deep enough for serious swimming. All around and above is the jungle, and a more restful and beautiful spot could not be imagined.

Higher up the range is another pleasant resort, formerly a Government agricultural station at which tea and other hill products used to be grown; and on the top of the range is the oldest hill station in the Malay Peninsula, commanding a marvellous view of the Larut plain, the mangroves and inlets of the coast and the Malacca Straits beyond. At night the European in Taiping looks up at those lights twinkling on the dark range and wishes that he too were sitting around a log fire and enjoying a holiday.

Taiping has the heaviest rainfall of any town in Malaya, and while this is unfortunate for devotees of tennis it makes walking exceedingly pleasant after the daily deluge has fallen. As a rule walking is not a pleasant form of exercise in Malayan towns. The asphalt is hot to the feet for hours after sunset, cars whizz by leaving a trail of petrol vapour, misanthropic dogs lie in wait, and it is all very hot and noisy and uncomfortable. But in Taiping, on the two days that I was there, the afternoons were wonderfully cool, so that jaded Kuala Lumpur folk there for the I.S.P. meeting suddenly found themselves imbued with unaccustomed energy.

Apart from the temperature the visitor finds much to tempt him to walk in the town of Taiping. I had no time to see the museum, which has the finest ethnological collection in the country, or the English church and graveyard, where some of the early British officials and planters of Perak are buried.

Time also did not permit of exploration of the old site of the British Residency, where the father of Sir George and Mr Charlton Maxwell lived when he was Assistant Resident and virtual ruler of Larut. The old fort, which was built for the Perak Armed Police (later the 1st. Perak Sikhs) after peace had been restored among the warring clans of Chinese miners in Larut, could be seen from the New Club, where the planters were holding their conference.

As regards the non-European communities, that is, the vast majority of people in Taiping, the impression I got as a visitor was that those townsfolk and their families (mainly Chinese) appeared to have a way of life more peaceful and more relaxed than is possible for their compatriots in any of the younger and newer towns of the F.M.S.

The Gardens in Taiping

The Lake Gardens in Taiping are superior to any public park in Malaya except perhaps the Botanic Gardens in Penang, and they have the unique advantage of being within easy reach of the town. Life in Kuala Lumpur or Singapore would be very much healthier and more enjoyable if lawns and lakes and flowerbeds lay on the fringe of the swarming streets of Chinatown.

Certainly Taiping people make far greater use of their park than Kuala Lumpur people do. During the cool hours of the day, in the morning and evening, the road leading past the Taiping lakes, with their islets crowned with trees, is dotted with towns-folk strolling leisurely along. In the evening especially this road seems to be the most popular promenade of the town, and at dusk an atmosphere of quietness and contentment seems to hover over the family groups and parties of friends as they drift back to town.

The lay-out of the gardens, which were once a Chinese mining area, is much more varied than is possible in Singapore and Kuala Lumpur, and the lakes and streams which intersect them give a delightful appearance of

coolness. Moreover, the unfailing supply of clear water from the neighbouring hills prevents the lakes from becoming stagnant and ugly as the Sydney Lake in Kuala Lumpur usually is. Without the Ijau range in the background the Taiping gardens would lose half their charm, but this expanse of jungle towering up two thousand feet high is an inexhaustible delight.

The sun rises over this range, and I know of no more lovely sight in this country than the Taiping gardens when the rays of the early morning sun are shining obliquely through their clumps of bamboo, palms and isolated trees scattered on islands among the expanse of water. One receives in that glorious half hour an experience of light in foliage that is quite unobtainable in England. The same thing can be seen in any domestic Malayan garden, but at Taiping the picture is on the grand scale. In every direction trees are seen to be flooded with light, and the peculiarly intense greenness of their massed foliage is contrasted with the lighter shade of the surrounding lawns, the darker shades of the forested hills and the reflections on the crystal surface of the lakes.

Long residence in a town gives a sense of security and local affiliation that is not yet possible elsewhere, and one does unmistakably feel in visiting Taiping and meeting its people that here is a town that has progressed one stage farther than any other in the F.M.S. in social and civic evolution.

A town, like a wine, improves with age, and the outstanding quality of Taiping is mellowness. To those of us who are accustomed to drinking the rather vinegary vintage of Kuala Lumpur a visit to this old and charming town is a draught refreshing beyond description.

A Handbook of Early Perak

Kuala Lumpur, 2 September 1933.

I have lately been browsing in a faded, leather-bound volume lent to me by one of the oldest European inhabitants of the F.M.S. As I did so, recollections of a railway journey by the day mail from Taiping to Kuala Lumpur were fresh in my mind, and it was difficult to believe that the phase of civilisation reflected in this book existed within the memory of living men.

The countryside that had unfolded before my speeding train during a sunny Sunday morning and afternoon had been clothed with rubber forests as far as the eye could see, or devastated by the tin-miner as though giant artillery had played upon it. Roads and railways and busy little towns contributed to the modernity of the scene. Only on the distant mountains, frowning down upon Kinta and Batang Padang, the primaeval jungle survived, the jungle that covered nearly all this countryside at the time when my friend's book was published.

This book has an intimidating title. It is called "The Perak Annual Handbook and Civil Service List, 1892," and it can scarcely be recommended as a substitute for light fiction, but those who read it with imagination will see in its dull and formal pages a Malay State as it was after the period of transition from an independent Oriental kingdom to a British colonial protectorate had ended and before the hot-house development forced by the rubber boom had begun.

Between these two periods in Perak there was a lull, a phase of slow and cautious growth which, had it not been interrupted, would certainly have kept down to much more manageable proportions the non-Malay population that is settled in Perak today, and might – though the influence of the subsequent Federal bureaucracy makes this less probable

– have enabled Perak to advance as far along the path of Malay administration as Kedah has done. But this was not to be, and the failure is only worth mentioning here because it shows the irresistible economic forces that swept aside British idealist and Malay patriot alike in the richest and most accessible areas of the Malay Peninsula in the first three decades of the twentieth century.

Perak, in the phase which is reflected in this handbook, must have offered distinct compensations for the handicaps under which its small European community lived. For one thing, optimism and excitement were in the air. Roads and railways were being built as fast as possible, Chinese miners were pouring into the Kinta valley, and land in Lower Perak and elsewhere was being alienated at a rapid rate to Asiatic immigrants, although not yet to large European planting interests.

Then, despite this sense of change and progress, there was the pleasant leisureliness of life. It was no use being in a hurry, because a pony or a gharry would not travel faster than its natural speed, and there was only one short railway in the State. Work on the Kinta Valley railway, a line which played an important part in the economic history of Perak, was only begun in 1891, the respective contracts being let in that year for the section of the line beginning at Telok Anson and for the second section to carry the line as far as Ipoh.

The only other railway in the State was the Larut line, twelve miles long and connecting Taiping and Kamunting with Port Weld. The first eight miles of this famous little railway, as far as Taiping, actually took four years to construct – a fact to be noted with sympathetic amusement by anyone who took part in the building of the Pahang–Kelantan line. However, the railway engineers of that time had a good excuse for their delay in the almost continuous swamps through which they had to push the line.

The Port Weld railway was opened in 1885 and cost half a million dollars. It served northern Perak well for many years but recently an announcement was made that passenger traffic had ceased on this line. This was the fifth branch of the F.M.S. Railway to surrender to the motor-bus in the last five years, the others being the Kuala Kubu Lama, Kuala Selangor, Port Dickson and Bahau branches.

As for roads in Perak in 1892, it was possible to travel by gharry over a cart-road fully sixty miles from Taiping southwards to Kampar, but after that stretches of bridle-path and cart-road alternated until at Bidor the traveller entered upon seventy miles of six-foot bridle-path running through unbroken forest to the Selangor boundary at Tanjong Malim. Naturally halts were necessary much more frequently than they are in the

era of the motor-car, and there were five resthouses between Bidor and Tanjong Malim, as compared with one today.

People who know present-day Perak will be interested to hear of an alternative route from Larut to Kinta that was often taken by travellers who did not care to face the long and wearisome journey by gharry.

What they did was to take a boat at Kuala Kangsar, drift down the Perak River at night, disembark at the kampong of Blanja before daybreak the next morning, and ride twelve miles over a bridle-path to Batu Gajah. This roundabout route took about fourteen hours, as against ninety minutes by car today.

Another instance of the travel difficulties which our predecessors cheerfully accepted may be given. The quickest way of getting to Tapah, the centre of the Batang Padang district, in 1892 was to go to Telok Anson and then ride twenty-four miles over a bridle-path, through jungle the whole way.

If travel was difficult, it was also cheap. Gharries cost fifteen cents a mile or two dollars a day. The bullock-buses which ran (on second thoughts, "walked" is more appropriate) twice daily from Taiping to Kuala Kangsar charged 75 cents for a journey of 23 miles and of five hours' duration.

River travel was also remarkably cheap. Malay boatmen could be hired to make the three-day journey down the Perak River from Kuala Kangsar to Telok Anson for 35 cents per man per day, plus 20 cents per day for the boat. And these men had to face a seven-day journey up-river after they had delivered their passenger.

Much greater use was made of the rivers than is necessary today. Launches and five-ton boats regularly made the 50-mile journey down the Kinta River from Batu Gajah to Telok Anson, and two-ton boats went as high as Ipoh. He would be a bold man who would ascend this stream with craft of the same size today, silted up as it has been by many years of mining and planting.

The Perak taxpayer had an exceedingly easy time of it in the early nineties. The duty on alcoholic drinks was only fifty cents a gallon, which was scarcely an inducement to temperance, and the only other import tax was on opium. Nowadays, Perak's import tariff, as a member of the Federation, covers several pages in the official Book of Words. Exports were taxed slightly more heavily in 1892, duties being levied on dried fish, timber, rattans and – of all improbable things – oysters. In almost every part of Perak wealthy Chinese could be found waxing fat on the proceeds of revenue "farms."

The main financial support of the State was of course the tin-mining industry, and so valuable was this that with the exception of the first two

years of British administration 1875 and 1876, Perak more than paid its way right up to the time when its rich revenues were merged in the Federal purse.

In 1892, when the State Government busily engaged in building fifty miles of railway and completing the trunk road from Larut to Batang Padang, Perak had no public debt and was paying for these works out of its own surplus funds. Can anyone doubt, in the light of these facts, that but for Perak's act of faith in joining the Federation it would have been incomparably the most highly developed part of the Malay Peninsula today?

European planting had scarcely begun in Perak in 1892. The principal planting district was Krian, where there were twenty sugar estates and twenty thousand acres under this crop, but these were all Chinese properties with the exception of Gula Estate.

So far as one can gather from this handbook there were only two other European estates in the whole of Perak at that time, T H Hill's coffee estate at Kamuning and Graeme Elphinstone's Waterloo estate on the range between Taiping and Kuala Kangsar.

Kamuning is now under rubber, and the traveller by railway who sees its characteristic limestone pinnacle, like a giant molar tooth, should also note at the base of this cliff the steepest field of young rubber that ever broke a tapper's heart.

As for Waterloo estate, it is under jungle now, or possibly rubber. It was reached by a road leading off to the left from the main road on the pass between Taiping and Kuala Kangsar, and the elevation of the land was said to range from 3,000 to 4,000 feet. If that is correct it is difficult to see why planters seek much less accessible land for high quality coffee at Cameron Highlands today.

In this handbook there is an interesting example of history anticipating itself, in the shape of an advertisement proclaiming the merits of "Perak Tea". A similar advertisement is appearing in Malayan journals today, but whereas the latter product comes from Mr J S Ferguson's low-country estate the first Perak tea to be marketed came from two hill estates planted by the Government and leased to a Chinese.

In view of the newspaper agitation that is now being made for another and a shorter road to Cameron Highlands, calculated to open up valuable hill land on the Perak side of the Highlands, it is worth while recalling that a very high opinion of the agricultural possibilities of the same area, then known as the Batang Padang mountains, was entertained by Perak officials and planters in the early nineties. Mr Oliver Marks, accompanied by a coffee planter, was detailed by the British Resident to explore these

mountains and "to reach the plateau described by the late Mr Cameron," and a full account of his expedition was published.

Starting from Tapah he reached the crest of the main range and climbed a peak from which he made the following observation: "Turning north-east we looked straight at what was probably pointed out to the Resident as Gunong Berembun, it being the highest mountain near us; to the north and west a great extent of easy, billowy land, delightful to the eye of a coffee planter; heavy forest, well watered and open to the morning sun . . . . . . The extent of the country seen may be safely put down at thirty miles long, and though as broad as five miles in places, owing to the broken nature of the country it would not be safe to estimate more than 30,000 acres available for cultivation, though when every separate valley of this large district is surveyed very likely three times this extent will be developed."

Mr Marks went on to express the opinion that on that peak he was very much south of the land described by Cameron and "it is just probable we saw it in the distance, and that it formed the extreme northern end of the country we looked into." His concluding comment was that this was unquestionably the coffee district of the State. Unfortunately, although eight miles of road from Tapah towards what was known as Cameron's Plateau was even then in existence, it made no further progress until Sir George Maxwell revived public interest in the Highlands in 1925.

If it were possible for anyone in modern Malaya to be translated back to the Perak of forty years ago one of the sights that would surprise him would be the appearance of bearded and turbaned Indian cavalry-men on the roads of the Larut district at night. These men belonged to the cavalry troop maintained by the 1st Perak Sikhs and were specially recruited for night patrols in the mining villages.

The Perak police force was then much more highly militarised than it is now. It was a thousand strong, and of that number four-fifths were Punjaubis. It had an artillery section armed with 9-pounder field-guns and it was also trained in the use of machine-guns. The European officers had all seen service in the British Army, and some of the rank-and-file were the original freelances recruited by Captain Speedy, one-time harbour master at Penang, to fight the battles of the Mantri of Larut during the phase of Chinese clan warfare.

That Perak had reached a relatively advanced state of development at this time is shown by a list of no less than a hundred European officials on its payroll. They were not generously paid, it is true. The Senior Magistrate of the State only received $400 a month, while the State Engineer was slightly better off with $450. Out of these salaries enough had

to be saved to pay for passages for the official and his family and to meet expenses on leave. It is no wonder that the majority of the men never married, or did not do so until late in life.

There were some interesting characters among them. The harbour master at Port Weld had served in the naval expeditions to the Linggi and Lukut rivers in 1874. The medical officer of the Perak Sikhs had been present at the storming of the Pasir Salak stockade and the taking of Blanja in the Perak War. The assistant commissioner of the Perak Sikhs had served in the Pahang rebellion of 1892. And various other forgotten little wars fought by Great Britain in the East are mentioned in the Civil List of Perak at that time.

It is often said that Perak (and also Selangor and Negri Sembilan) have been allowed to develop too fast, and that the British administration should have taken greater pains to help the Malay to adjust himself to changing conditions.

But this handbook of 1892 shows conclusively that even before the great influx of alien races began, with the commencement of rubber planting, the Malay was being rapidly outdistanced by the Chinese. The latter race numbered nearly half the population of Perak by the year 1892, and the official handbook goes so far as to say that "without them it is difficult to see how the Government could be carried on." Meanwhile the Malays were holding back and enjoying the benefits which accrued from the enterprise of the foreign miners, and the Perak Government was so depressed about their lack of pushfulness that it actually committed itself in print to the opinion that "it seems to be doubtful whether the Malays as a race are susceptible of much improvement in their own country."

This historical matter is all very well, the reader may say as he comes to the end of this article, but what is the relevance of it to the Perak of today, highly developed and equipped and populated, capable of turning out vast quantities of tin and rubber, and withal scraping and saving during the slump as though its territory were as poor as the desert of Sahara? What does history matter to us, absorbed as we are in economic problems?

Perhaps the only justification that can be advanced for distilling this article from obsolete official data is that it relates part of the history of Perak, and since we who are living through the Great Slump are involved in the process of history whether we like it or no, we may as well learn something about the past and hand on the fruits of our study to those who are to come.

The Eighth Moon in Petaling Street

Kuala Lumpur, 7 October 1933.

How strangely different are the modes of life of the Asiatic races of this country! The Malay is an independent peasant, living happily on his own land, working as and when he pleases and for no master except himself. The Tamil is a coolie, a wage-earner, living in barracks, cultivating great estates owned by shareholders scattered all over the world, and working under European control. The Chinese . . . . . well, he lives in half a dozen ways, but chiefly he is the race which populates our towns and carries on our retail trade.

Several nights ago I went to China. The journey only took ten minutes from my house, but I used no magic carpet or Aladdin's ring. On the contrary, I motored with Chinese friends to Petaling Street, the principal Chinese street of Kuala Lumpur, left my car in a side-street, and stepped over the threshold of the mysterious land of Cathay.

Preparations were afoot for the Festival of the Eighth Moon, and the shops were gay with fantastic lanterns. The night was drawing near when the spirits of the dead, which had been released from heaven on the fifteenth day of the seventh moon, would return to their celestial abode. The moon, hanging in misty skies over Kuala Lumpur, was growing larger and larger, and in the swarming Chinese country-side beneath her, in the heart of a Malay State, preparations for the festival were being made.

Even the poorest of the poor were obeying the tradition. Motoring in the Sungei Besi mining district one evening we saw a little Chinese boy framed in the lamp-lit door of a wooden hut, carrying a lantern that

glowed softly in the darkness. He was following an ancient Taoist superstition, did he but know it, but all he knew was that a festival was coming, in which jolly lanterns were given to children and grown-ups made presents to each other of moon-cakes made of salted almonds and sesame seeds and other savoury things.

Our little Chinese boy, a symbolic figure in a bare and ugly countryside wasted by mining, was not to be blamed for his ignorance of higher matters, for his elders were no better informed. An enviably practical and unmystical race, the Chinese, as we see the mercantile and labouring classes of their nation in the Malay Peninsula, worry little about life outside this world and appear to regard religion as a sort of colossal game of chance in which a visit to a horologer or a gift to a temple may, with any luck, influence the capricious powers of the universe in one's favour.

At any rate they are grateful to the gods for shutting up the spirits safely in paradise for eleven months out of the twelve, and they celebrate the return of these uncertain and uncomfortable beings in a manner that makes Petaling Street a thoroughfare of merriment and animation on the moonlight nights before the festival.

I asked my Chinese friends, as we sauntered down this street, whether they would know that they were in a Malayan town if they were to be suddenly transported from China and set down in Petaling street. They replied that the only differences between that street and a street in Canton or Foochow were its greater width, the absence of long gowns in the costume of the people, the quicker gait of pedestrians and their cleaner appearance. It is easy to understand that the Malayan climate makes people bathe more often than they do in China, but why they should walk more quickly is a mystery; still, my friends seemed to think that it was so.

Have you ever walked down a Chinese street with Chinese friends? By doing so one learns all sorts of surprising things. I confess I was not too pleased, being squeamish in these matters, to be shown a dish of congealed pig's blood in front of a butcher's shop, but I saw dried persimmons for the first time, learnt that Sungei Besi was supposed to grow the finest star-fruit (belimbing) in Malaya, tasted the curious black water-nuts that come down from China, and in short spent a fascinating hour in a country distant only two miles from my suburban dwelling and yet as strange and foreign to me as are the Eskimos of Alaska.

That is perhaps the most significant feature of our life in this country – that we all live in compartments, and only occasionally can we scramble over the dividing walls. People who learn one of the languages of the

country, planters, civil servants, missionaries and others, are lucky, for they can overcome this isolation.

But for those who live in towns, and whose work keeps them in towns, language study is usually not worth while. It takes three years to learn Malay properly, and even then it cannot be done without adequate facilities for practice – and where are those to be found in the average European household, staffed by a Chinese cook and a Tamil gardener? Among the Asiatic English-speaking population of the towns the English language carries one only a little way, for unclimbable social barriers have arisen and the exclusiveness of communities has given way to that of classes.

All we can do is to make the most of our opportunities – and our friends – and try to understand as much as we can. Even that effort, limited though it is in scope, is worth making, for there is no greater antidote to the restlessness and boredom of European life in Malayan towns than to meet the Malay peasant, the Tamil coolie and the Chinese shopkeeper, and to see with what gusto they live their lives in circumstances that make us look like millionaires.

Petaling Street, Kuala Lumpur, in the Thirties.

Half a Century at Rembau

Kuala Lumpur, 18 November 1933.

In April, 1883, there appeared in the Straits Times a report of the installation of a Dato of Rembau by Sir Frederick Weld at a durbar held at Malacca. In November, 1933, the Straits Times reported the investiture of another Dato of Rembau with the insignia of a Commander of the Order of the British Empire.

Only fifty years lie between the two ceremonies, but how much has happened in the interval! Dato Haji Sahil, who was deposed at the Malacca durbar, was an entirely independent potentate. He was alleged to have murdered fourteen persons, and there was no one to call him to account. His State had a population at that time of about nine thousand Malays, which is little less than its population today. It was entirely without roads, and although not so dangerous to strangers as it had been before the Sungei Ujong War of 1876 taught the Nine States the power of British arms, it was still as little known to Europeans as is the interior of Kelantan today. And yet its border was only twenty-five miles from Malacca!

The only white man alive today who was present at that durbar of fifty years ago is Sir Frank Swettenham, then Resident of Selangor. Another man who may have heard about it at first hand is Mr Paul, a Negri Sembilan planter, whose father was present as Resident of Sungei Ujong.

The event must have been one of the most remarkable that has been seen in the old Stadthaus, for the chiefs and retainers who met the Governor were of the old type, habitually carrying weapons, strangers to modern methods of government or just beginning to come into contact with them.

Among those present on that day were Raja Dris of Perak, the Yam Tuan of Sri Menanti, a son of the Sultan of Selangor, the Dato Klana and

Dato Bandar of Sungei Ujong, twenty-four heads of Rembau tribes and many lesser folk, as well as British officials from the Colony. The importance of the State of Rembau in those days is clearly shown by the number of distinguished Malays from other States who were summoned to attend the durbar.

My early predecessor on the Straits Times has left a detailed account of the ceremony, and it was all very different from that which I saw last week, when the present Dato of Rembau received the Governor of the Straits Settlements at his house.

This ruler has been educated at the Malayan equivalent of an aristocratic English school and moves easily in European society. He is a member of the State Council of Negri Sembilan and the Federal Council – institutions undreamt of when the Rembau tribesmen elected a new ruler at Malacca half a century ago. The present Dato is a man of peace, although he has received military training, and he is a keen agriculturist, as the visitor learns when he passes through the grounds of The Berkat, planted with coffee bushes and many kinds of fruit trees.

By an ironic twist of history the State of Rembau, which once held sway over Tampin, is now only a sub-division of the Tampin district, and has a population of ten thousand, seventeen kampongs and the little town of Rembau as the headquarters of its Assistant District Officer. Its Malay population is probably very much what it was a century ago, for there were then six hundred houses at Chembong, the locality in which the present Dato lives, and there are three thousand Malays in it today.

Curiously enough we possess a full description of the first visit ever made to Rembau by a Governor of the Straits Settlements. That was in 1832 and the administrator was the Honourable Mr Ibbetson. He was accompanied by Brigadier Wilson. This was a distinctly enterprising expedition, for it was only five years since the first Englishman to travel in the State of Rembau, or at any rate the first known to the people living in Malacca at that time, had returned safely to British territory.

This traveller was a Mr Gray, who went overland from Malacca to the headwaters of the Jempol river, where he dragged his boat over the Malayan watershed – here only a quarter of a mile wide – placed it on the waters of the Serting river, and floated down into Pahang, where he bartered opium for gold dust. He returned to Malacca by the same route, only to die of fever a month later. In view of the bad reputation which the Rembau Malays bore in later years it is worth noting that Mr Gray reported that "he met with great kindness and hospitality from the inhabitants of the different States through which he passed".

To obtain the full flavour of Governor Ibbetson's visit one must contrast it with that paid by Governor Clementi. The latter covered the eighteen miles from Seremban to Rembau in a Rolls-Royce, over a road which was carried across the beautiful padi valleys of this part of Malaya by high embankments. Even among the rural Malays, who made a dream garden of the Dato's estate as they massed into splashes of brilliant colour under the trees or walked in little groups along the shady paths, there were signs of the times.

This may not have been apparent to the distinguished visitors, but I discovered it as soon as I arrived. Being uncertain as to where to go, I was hailed cheerily by a young Malay who recognised me as a Kuala Lumpur scribe and forthwith took me under his wing. "H.E. is received here," said this friendly young man, "and then he goes in there and Does His Stuff!" Thus spoke the Modern Malay.

There were other tokens of the twentieth century, more easily observed. The Yam Tuan Besar was attired very much as his grandfather, Tunku Antar, was at Malacca in 1883, but . . . . the present head of the Negri Sembilan confederacy is a barrister-at-law. Again, the Dato Klana wore his ancestral costume but was partnered by a British agricultural expert wearing the white uniform of the Colonial Service when he took part in the investiture.

In many other details we were reminded of the modern aspect of Rembau. Volunteers and Boy Scouts were on parade. Members of the State Council and State heads of departments were there, and so were British planters and miners and their wives. Indian and Chinese business men from the neighbouring town of Rembau reminded us that the Dato's subjects are no longer entirely of his own race. Only once, when the silk umbrellas of the Yam Tuan and the Undang were seen bobbing about above a dense crowd of Malays, could the spectators delude themselves that they were back in the Rembau of the olden days.

Having read these comments on the ceremony performed last week, let us now contemplate Governor Ibbetson splashing his way through rice-fields on his way to Rembau a century ago. He started from a camp at the village of Tabor, in Malacca territory, and travelled on horseback over native paths until he came abreast of the Angsi range, then known as "Gunong Rumbowe". Lieut. Newbold, who accompanied him, has left the following notes:

> "After pursuing a miserable path, over a very extensive and well-cultivated sheet of rice-ground, where the horses were frequently up to the saddle flaps in mud, then fording another

> stream, and finally traversing a broad swampy plain, from the grassy tufts of which flew the startled lapwing and the whistling plover, the cavalcade halted before the mud fort of Bandar.
>
> "From its gate issued a motley crowd of well-dressed Malays, brandishing spears, muskets, pemurasses (a sort of blunderbuss), and umbrellas of state – white and yellow – headed by the Muda of Rumbowe and one of the sons of the Yang dipertuan Besar, Rajah Ali.
>
> "The fort at Bandar consists of low mud walls, now covered with grass, enclosing a space of ground about eighty yards square. Around and outside of the walls runs a strong and high palisade. Six high cavaliers of wood, roofed in with attap, overlook the faces of the work. On each of the platforms two iron guns are mounted, except that over the gateway, where there is a serviceable brass gun bearing the mark of the Dutch East India Company, the date A.D. 1756, and the maker's name, Peter Seest. Besides the twelve guns in the cavaliers were eighteen or twenty jinjals lying about the parapets. The houses of the Rajah and his personal attendants are within the walls of the fort."

The motorist passing along the trunk road through Rembau today sees long, narrow padi valleys divided by higher ground on which rubber is planted. There is nothing to show him that he is in a little Malay State four centuries old, but if he knows the wealth of tradition and legend that has collected around these valleys he cannot but respond to the note of deep and genuine patriotism sounded by the Dato of Rembau in his speech the other day.

"I will do everything in my power," said the Dato, "to uphold the Adat, because I am fully convinced that it is the custom that has made my State of Rembau what she is today – an essentially Malay country, thickly populated by democratic and hardy Malays of peculiarly independent outlook, who subsist on their ancestral rice-fields that yearly yield them an abundant crop, and live an undisturbed life of peace and contentment in kampongs that their ancestors founded hundreds of years ago."

The Dato has reason for pride. Men of his race, immigrants from the Menangkabau region of Sumatra, are shown on a Portuguese map of the early seventeenth century as living in Rembau, and they were probably there a century before that. By both the Portuguese and the Dutch the State of Rembau was regarded as the principal power in the Malacca

hinterland, and both had many a battle with the "rebellious Menangkabowes". The grave of a Portuguese soldier killed in one of these skirmishes is a boundary mark between Malacca and Tampin to this day.

The Dutch were the first European power with which the Dato of Rembau signed a treaty, and he agreed that "the tin of Sungei-Ujong, the produce of Lingie, Rumbowe and Calang, without reservation will be delivered to the Company at 38 Spanish dollars a bar of three piculs, and this price will always continue without its ever being enhanced". Shades of tin restriction in 1933!

Historians disagree as to when the first Dato of Rembau lived, but Wilkinson tells us that the seal of the second Dato is still to be seen on old documents. It bears the date A.D. 1707 and the inscription "by the grace of the Bendahara Sri Maharajah". Thus are we reminded that Rembau was under the suzereignty of Johore until 1773, when a Sumatran prince was proclaimed Yam Tuan Besar of the Negri Sembilan confederacy at a ceremony held in Rembau.

Those were turbulent times, and we hear of five Datos of Rembau in twenty-five years in the eighteenth century. Internecine warfare went on for a hundred years, until the first shadow of British intervention fell across the Nine States with the appointment of an Assistant Resident in Sungei Ujong in 1874. That officer stayed only a short time, but we should honour him by recording his name. He was Captain Tatham, of the Royal Artillery. He was succeeded by Captain Murray, of the Royal Navy, who stayed six years and was the real pioneer of British administration in Negri Sembilan.

Rembau remained aloof at this time but did not fail to see the significance of the happenings of 1876, when British infantry, bluejackets and terrible little Gurkhas (feared by the Malays far more than the white troops) poured over the mountain pass into Sri Menanti and forced the Yam Tuan to renounce his claim to leadership of the Nine States.

Obviously a new force was at work in Negri Sembilan politics. Already in 1874 a British gunboat had steamed up the Linggi River and destroyed the fort at which the Rembau chiefs levied toll on tin coming downstream from the mines at Seremban. Then came the British expedition against Sri Menanti two years later.

Obviously it behoved the other States to be cautious, and they were suspicious as well. "When the Resident of Sungei Ujong pushed his travels beyond his borders," says Sir Frank Swettenham, "he was greeted by the same old tales of oppression, of squabbles for position and power, and he was warned, not always politely, to mind his own business and not come where he was not invited."

It took nerve for a white man to travel alone in Rembau at that time. One man who did so was Mr A.R. Rathborne, who walked from Seremban to Malacca at a time when the intervening territory of Rembau was entirely free and independent. He has left an interesting picture of Rembau kampongs as they were then.

> "The houses in which the principal families of each village dwelt were protected by forts and stockades, which had been erected to prevent their being rushed and looted during the inter-tribal and internal fights which were so constantly occurring. The defences in every case were similar and consisted of a dry moat, the earth from which had been thrown up so to form a bank, and into this a palisade of split logs was firmly planted, and the tops were strongly bound together, and, being constructed of the hardest wood procurable, lasted many years and formed an excellent protection, behind which those inside could shoot at an approaching enemy. The weapons used were old flint muskets and small cannon – made in the last century and not much larger than an ordinary blunderbuss – and spears and krises."

A little later the British administration at Malacca was following the rather remarkable policy of giving large sums of money to the neighbouring chiefs to make roads and open up their territory. Not unnaturally the money was misused, and the Malacca authorities accordingly gave Mr Rathborne the contract for making these roads. He was "welcomed in Rembau, once it was known that he had no political objectives, but was regarded with great suspicion in the other States".

On one occasion a Negri Sembilan chief sent Rathborne a warning that if he entered his State he would be murdered. But Rathborne was a man of cool courage. "As I walked through the village of this chief a day or so afterwards," he says, "the men were sitting at the doors of their houses watching me as I passed by. They were all fully armed, for in these independent States no one moved about without a weapon of some sort on his person, to be used on the slightest provocation." Fortunately Rathborne met a Malay who had worked under him on a coffee estate on Gunong Berembun, and all was well.

Another traveller in Rembau at this time was D.D. Daly, who was instructed by the Straits government in 1875 to explore the Nine States and the overland route into Pahang. However, he got only a short distance into Rembau.

"The natives of these States," he says, "were determined not to allow me to pass through their country. They fancied that there was some occult design in my mission beyond the mere unmeaning (to them) occupation of looking through a telescope and sketching in hills, rivers, villages and valleys. The Dato of Muar, an influential Rajah in that part, said to me, "If we let the needle in the thread is sure to follow", meaning that if an Englishman was allowed to enter their country British annexation would be the natural sequence."

But the new, peaceful and progressive era of Rembau history was near at hand. In 1883 the Malacca durbar was held, a new Dato was elected, and the tribal heads agreed to refer their disputes to the Governor of the Straits Settlements. Curiously enough, some of them asked for a British Resident on that occasion, and were told by Sir Frederick Weld that they were not ready for it and did not fully realise what it would mean.

Four years later, however, they unanimously agreed to accept a British officer, on condition that they were paid one-third of the Rembau revenue, an arrangement which is honoured to this day.

Whether a British officer was appointed immediately we do not know, but in 1889 the three States of Tampin, Rembau and Sri Menanti were given a British Resident, and eight years later the old confederacy of the Negri Sembilan was revived under a Yang di-pertuan Besar living (as before) at Sri Menanti and a British Resident stationed at Seremban. And so we come to the Rembau of today. Unfortunately there is no space left in which to discuss the characteristics of this historic little State, with its rigid tribal and family system, its monogamous marriage custom, its restriction of ownership of padi and orchard land to the female sex, and its tenacious conservatism.

One of the loveliest places in all Malaya is a road embankment across a certain valley in Rembau. Here, at this season of the year, the traveller can halt and see the ethereal green of the padi crop stretching away and away until it blends imperceptibly with the distant hills. In that place, with the history of Rembau in his mind, he will not find it surprising to believe that in this little State a new Malay patriotism is finding its home.

But something even finer than patriotism may come out of Rembau, for a member of the Malayan Civil Service, Mr de Moubray, in a discussion of matriarchy in Malacca and Negri Sembilan, has written that "this is one of the few parts of the Peninsula where the growth of a truly Malay civilisation rests upon the Adat." As Mr de Moubray believes that it does, we may be sure that it is safe in the hands of the young and able Malay chief who is now the ruler of Rembau.

Notes

a) *Sakai Reserve:* The word 'Sakai' is no longer used. It has been replaced by 'Orang Asli' — Aborigines. The word Sakai was used to refer to subject people who did not speak Malay as their native tongue. Areas of forest were gazetted by the government in the 20th century as Reserves for these people. Only aborigines could live, or hunt there or take forest produce. Similar reserves are still maintained by the Department of Aborigines.

b) *Sri Menanti:* When Raja Melewar was elected, by the four principal ruling chiefs in Negeri Sembilan, in 1773, to be their 'overlord' — 'Yang Di Pertuan Besar' — he selected a remote valley in the centre of the state, for his residence, and he and his successors, to this day, maintain a palace there and reside there on ceremonial occasions. The place is now linked to Seremban and Kuala Pilah by metalled road, but in the early years of its existence could only be reached by forest paths. Sri Menanti. 'Seri' means charm: the place is also referred to as the 'motherland of royalty'.

c) *Yang Di Pertuan Besar:* A title introduced into Negeri Sembilan from Sumatra by Minangkabau immigrants in the 17th. century. It was a non-royal title, held by a major chief in Sumatra, but in Negeri Sembilan it was conferred on the person who was elected by the four non-royal major chiefs, to be their leader and head. The title is different from Sultan, and carried few powers, little income and was not hereditary. Each successor is elected by the four ruling chiefs, but they are obliged to elect a member of the family of the deceased Yang Di Pertuan Besar, though not necessarily his son.

d) *Astana:* More often spelt 'Istana' — a Sanskrit word meaning 'residence of royalty', and thus Palace. 'Istana Negara' is the name of the palace in Kuala Lumpur where the Yang Di Pertuan Agong resides.

e) *Hari Raya Puasa:* Falls on the first day of the month after the fasting month — Ramadan. The day begins with Hari Raya prayers in all

mosques, which are attended by the majority of Muslims, dressed in their festival clothes. The rest of the day is usually occupied in visiting relatives and friends and receiving visitors at home. It is not connected with the New Year.

f) *Raja Sir Chulan:* The second son of Sultan Abdullah of Perak. Educated at the English School in Malacca and at Kuala Kangsar. He and Raja Mansur, his elder brother, were given appointments as Junior Administrative officers in Perak after they completed their schooling. Raja Mansur accompanied Sultan Idris to England in 1888 as his A.D.C. At about the same time Raja Chulan took up a junior post in the State Secretariat in Taiping. In about 1900 the ancient Perak title of Raja Di Hilir was conferred on Raja Chulan and he resigned from his government post. He held the position of Raja Di Hilir until he died in about 1934. He was for many years an Unofficial Member of the Federal Legislative Council and took a lead in urging the government of the F.M.S. to set up a Malay Regiment. The first Experimental Company of the Malay Regiment was set up at Port Dickson in 1933 about a year before Raja Chulan died. He left many daughters but only one son, Raja Azman. His principal wife was Raja Puteh Kalsom, a daughter of Sultan Idris. He spoke impeccable English and was a fluent orator.

g) *Sultan Abu Bakar:* Eldest son of Sultan Abdullah of Pahang. Was installed Sultan of Pahang in Pekan in 1932. Continued to rule in Pahang until 1974. He took a keen interest in his subjects and travelled to every district each year, staying for several days in each district headquarters. He was a strong supporter of the Malay Regiment and was Colonel in Chief of the Regiment. In his younger days he was a keen sportsman and played polo and tennis with above average skill. His eldest son, Sultan Ahmad Shah is the present Yang Di Pertuan Agong.

h) *Raja Bot:* The son of Raja Jumaat, a Riau Raja who possessed a flair for business and tin mining, and became wealthy and influential in Selangor. He owned the tin mines in the little state of Lukut, on the Linggi River in the area now known as Negeri Sembilan but which was formerly part of Selangor. He lived in a fortified timber house on a low hill above the town and mines. Raja Bot, his son, was a mild and much less enterprising person. He was deprived of Lukut, in the process of negotiations over the state boundaries of Selangor and Negeri Sembilan, and received a payment of $20,000 in compensation. He went to live in Klang and became a leading Malay unofficial in the Councils of Selangor, where his advice was often accepted. He left two sons, Raja Musa, who became the first Malay Judge, and Raja Ayoub who served in the Malayan Civil Service.

i) *The Straits Settlements:* Singapore, Penang and Malacca combined in 1826 to form the Straits Settlements. In 1832 Singapore became the capital of the Straits Settlements in place of Penang.

j) *The Federated Malay States*: Perak, Selangor, Pahang and Negri Sembilan constituted the Federated Malay States (FMS) and each State had a British Resident. When the States were formed into a "Federation" in 1895, the Rulers of the four States agreed to accept a British Resident-General and to follow his advice except on questions touching Malay religion and custom. The four Residents were responsible to the Governor of the Straits Settlements, who would in future be High Commissioner for the Federated Malay States.

k) *The "Unfederated States"*: The five States — Kedah, Perlis, Kelantan, Trengganu and Johore — were not included in the Federation, and were therefore referred to as the "Unfederated Malay States".

(Items a) to h) contributed by Tan Sri Mubin Sheppard).

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