GLIMPSES FROM SARAWAK'S PAST

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JOAN LO

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LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Illustrations by the kind courtesy of the Sarawak Museum Archives, Kuching, Sarawak.

FOREWORD

It gives me great pleasure to write a short Foreword on this excellent work which has been prepared by Joan on the history of Sarawak.

I am sure her anthology on the Brookes and her precis on other selected events and happenings in the colourful history of Sarawak, will be much appreciated by those who are interested in the history of Sarawak but do not have the time or opportunity to wade through the volumes of books that were written on the people and events that left us such a rich and colourful legacy.

This book should be particularly useful to students as it is prepared in a concise, accurate and wholly readable manner.

Joan is to be congratulated on her contribution to the enrichment of Sarawak Literature.

DATUK AMAR JAMES WONG KIM MIN

PREFACE

As its title suggests, this book is just a mere glimpse into Sarawak's Past.

A few of the articles have already appeared in Sandfly Magazine and, encouraged by the response from readers of the publication, I felt motivated to compile a book of events from the past. I realised that there are a number of people who can't find the time to read through the wonderful history books that have already been written on Sarawak; so, perhaps this collection of articles will give them an insight into Sarawak's illustrious past. In compiling this book this is what I hope to achieve.

I also hope that the book will appeal to the visitor to Sarawak who, in the limited time they might have, might want to learn a little about the history of the 'Land of the Hornbills'.

While I don't make any claim to being an expert where the history of Sarawak is concerned, my interest in its past is certainly not lacking. This interest led me to the archives of the Sarawak Museum where I enjoyed many interesting hours. For that I must thank Mr Lucas Chin, curator of the museum, and his wonderful staff of the archives; especially Mr Loh Chee Yin and Mrs Elizabeth Khoo, who were always most obliging when I needed any information.

At this juncture I would also like to pay special tribute to Dr Stephanie Jones, archivest of Inchape Co, London, and Datin Judith Satem, who allowed me the use of their valuable material which helped me greatly in compiling the articles "Gold Through the Years", "The Borneo Company" and "The Growth of Sarawak".

But this book would not have materialised without the expert work of the publishers, AGAS Sdn Bhd, and the many friends who urged me on to complete it; all of whom I am grateful to.

But most of all I owe a depth of gratitude to Robin, my husband, who always believed in me, encouraged me when I was lacking in confidence and never failed to see a light at the end of the tunnel where I couldn't see any: for that I thank him.

Finally, a special word of thanks to Ms Martina Quek for helping me with the typing, to Gertrude G for the impressive lay-out and to Jason and Sara-Jane who were often without a mother while I was researching and compiling "Glimpses from Sarawak's Past"

Joan Lo 1986

QUOTE:

"It is easy for men to perform fine feats with the pen; it is easy for the rich man to give yearly thousands in charity; it is easy to preach against the slave trade, or to roar against piracy; it is easy to bustle about London, and get up associations for all kinds of objects — all this is easy, but it is not easy to stand alone — to be exiled — to lay out a small fortune — to expend life and health and money — to risk life itself, when the loss would be without glory and without gain.... I am enabled to dispense happiness and peace to many thousand persons. I stand alone; I appeal for assistance and gain none; I have struggled for four years bearing my life in my hand. I hold a commanding position and influence over the natives; I feel it my paramount duty to gain protection and some power. I state it in so many plain words, and if, after all, I am left to my own resources the fault of failure is not with me." [James Brooke. 1844.]

BORNEO AND THE EARLY EUROPEANS

The first known European to have set foot on the island of Borneo was a Franciscan monk by the name of Odoric, who came from Perdenone in Italy. That was in the year 1302; but it was to be almost another three hundred years before Europe was treated to its first exposé of our tropical paradise. This was in a book written by a Dutchman, Jan Huygen van Linshoten, called "Seavoyage", published in 1596. I might add that the author had never set foot on the island but based his accounts on reports of travellers to the East and on the writings of Portuguese adventurers. However, his written account of Borneo, whether fanciful or real, planted dreams of a far off island paradise, richly endowed with lavish palaces, gold, pepper and other exotic goods that were there for any trader who happened to pass by.

This prompted many an adventurer to set sail for the mystical island in the tropics, in search of the wealth that awaited them once they reached their destination. None had made allowances for the drawbacks they might encounter and many returned home penniless.

At that time Borneo was not an island that one could pull into, drop anchor, and sleep soundly for the night. It was an island of dense forests, vast swamps and mud, and fierce tribesmen who kept any approach by outsiders to a minimum. It was considered an inhospitable island and was greatly lacking in natural harbors. This also proved a deterrent to a lot of explorers as ships had to take shelter in the mouths of muddy rivers across which there was a bar, too shallow to manoeuvre unless one used a canoe. Even inland, the hazardous and complicated river system was the only means of travel for miles and miles.

It wasn't until the 17th century that the first elementary maps of Borneo were produced by Dutch navigators, who braved the elements of the island to give the world more of a perspective of our rugged terrain. The unexplored island of Borneo held great fascination for the Europeans and even today, we still remain somewhat of an enigma to them. One of the earliest maps of Borneo, produced in 1601, was drawn by Olivier van Noort, who was the first Dutchman to circumnavigate the globe.

An Early Map of Borneo

As you can see from an early map shown here, it's quite unlike the map we have today. Identifying each place has proved a difficult task for those who tried as all the names are a mixture of Spanish and Portuguese. Not every town is on the map either; but that's understandable since many of the towns were not in existence then. But the areas that have been identified are where some of today's towns now stand.

Ride Burulo is where Bintulu is now situated. Puchavarao, or Puchauraon, is Mukah as we know it today. It was around this area too that a Portuguese Captain, who later became a Brunei Pengiran, was shipwrecked sometime during the 1500's.

Mont St Pedro on the map is now better known as Mt Kinabalu. It's had many name changes over the years ranging from Mt St Paul to Mt St Peter's and then Mt St Pedro. In many of the old maps the name Mt. St Pedro seems to have been the most commonly used one. The name of course came from the Spanish. Strangely enough though, the name Mt Kinabalu was well in existence before any of the other names. Kina Balu means the 'Chinese Widow', and it's said that there was a Chinese settlement established in Northern Borneo around the 13th century.

Another place identified on the map is Borneo, now better known as Brunei, which also gave its name to the whole island. Borneo, the then capital of the island, was the first place the Spanish and Portuguese dropped anchor at when they first visited Borneo in the 16th century, and when they wrote about it afterwards they referred to the island as Brunei. Before long the whole island became known as Brunei, or Burne, to the Europeans.

The earliest Englishman known to have visited Borneo was a Captain Cowley. It was written that in 1665 he spent some time at "a small island which lay near the north end of Borneo". Although he didn't actually visit the mainland there's a strong possibility that he may have been the first. In 1612, Sir Henry Middleton set off on a voyage to Borneo. He died in Java some time later and although there is no record of him having made it to Borneo, being one of a daring breed of sea-going men of that time, it's not unreasonable to assume that he would have attempted the easy journey from Java to Borneo.

In the book "A Collection of Voyages" published in 1729, its author, William Dampier, wrote that a Captain Bowry was in Borneo in 1686; and some English people were taken captive by the Dutch there in 1687. It's very likely that there were others before then but until 1773, no settlement

on the north and north-western shores of the island were effected by the English. That was the year the East India Company formed a settlement at Balambangan, an island north of Marudu Bay, but it came under attack in 1775 by pirates and the settlers fled the island.

The earliest recorded Englishman to provide a first hand account of Borneo was Captain Daniel Beekman, who managed to land on the island in 1718. From all accounts it appears that the Captain had a difficult time fighting off attacks from irate tribesmen who were still not too happy with the idea of foreigners trespassing on their shores.

A much earlier recorded landing was in 1507. The gentleman in question then was Ludovico de Varthema, an Italian, who landed somewhere along the south-east coast of Borneo. He described the inhabitants as being friendly, personable and enjoying an orderly government. But it wasn't until the mid-nineteenth century when British and Dutch control over Borneo brought law and order to the island, that foreigners were able to infiltrate what had until then been an island of mystery, and expose Borneo to the world.

But the interest in a far off tropical island that was stimulated hundreds of years ago still remains very much alive today. Even though the days of pirates, swamps, mud and inhospitable fierce tribes have long gone, we are still viewed by the world as a land of mystery, of unexplored jungle forests and caves, of lush tropical vegetation and plant life, with exotic birds and animals roaming our forests.

This is just part of the beauty that nature has given us and is what makes us so unique from the rest of the world. When people want to get away from the stress of modern day living and escape to a land that can provide all the beauty of nature, they are thinking of a place such as the island of Borneo, now better known as Sabah, Sarawak, Brunei and Kalimantan. The charm of the life we lead, plus the added attraction of our exotic island still retains the mysterious aspects of the unknown for many, and presents the more adventurous with the challenging aspects of life. We are loved by those who have conquered us, but we remain a mystery to those who have not learned to brave our rapids and mountains, jungles and wild life. Those are the ones who will be back in order to explore us in greater depth, so that future generations will known that we are not the inhospitable land we once were where fierce tribes roamed, but are now a land of plenty open to all who care to explore our inner workings.

HOW KUCHING GOT ITS NAME

Sarawak, a place that was once considered off the beaten track for tourists now seems to hold great fascination for visitors to the East.

Thankfully, while we are expanding and developing into a modern state, we still manage to retain all the mystical charm that attracts visitors to the East in the first place. Tourists are seldom disappointed when they come here and return home with wonderful tales of their adventures into the interior, or of visits to longhouses, many vowing to return again one day.

When visitors come to Kuching a lot of them are aware beforehand that the name of the town means 'cat' in the Malay language. Consequently, they tend to be under the illusion that cats are to be found roaming all over the place. A natural assumption I suppose because why would a town be called 'cat' unless it had a lot of the feline creatures running about! Of course they soon find out that this is not so, and their curiosity concerning the town's name leads to a lot of questions. Having been on the receiving end of some of the questions, and finding myself in the embarrassing position of not being able to answer, I decided to set about trying to discover how Kuching really came to be called just that.

I carried out a little innocent survey of my own and surprisingly enough, I soon discovered that not just tourists think that cats had a hand in Kuching's name; there are many locals who think like that also. One person related a story he had heard many years ago of how the town got its name. It appears that when James Brooke, who became the first white Rajah of Sarawak, made his first visit to Kuching he was sailing up the Sarawak River and as the town came into view, cats were to be seen everywhere along the river bank. Mr Brooke, trying to impress his fellow travellers with his knowledge of the Malay language, referred to the cats as 'Kuching'. Thereby, from then onwards the name for the town stood. An interesting tale but not correct.

It's true that in 1839, when James Brooke paid a visit to the town he was said to utter the word 'Kuchin' minus the 'g' on the end. It's thought though, that being a sea-going man, he was just using an old Indian or

Main Bazaar in 1864

Indo-China word for 'Port'. There is also evidence that travellers to the town in the 1860's referred to it as Kuching. The name was seldom used though, which caused many difficulties when it came to explaining where one came from. The river and country were known as Sarawak as was the main town (Kuching).

It wasn't until 1876 that the town became officially known as Kuching. This came about during the reign of the second Rajah, Charles Brooke. The Rajah travelled frequently into the interior and soon came to realise that when asked by a Dayak where he came from, the Dayak wasn't interested in the name of the town but the name of the river on which his house stood. Since the Istana stands on the banks of the Sarawak River, to say that he came from Sarawak would not have solved the problem at all so the Rajah had to do a bit of quick thinking.

Kuching in the 1870's was very much different from the Kuching we know today. The town used to have a little stream running through it which was known as Sungei Kuching. This flowed from the direction of the reservoir, east of Wayang Street, and emerged between the Chinese Temple and the Chinese Chamber of Commerce on Thomson Road (now better known as Jalan Tunku Abdul Rahman) to join the Sarawak River. On the hill behind the Chinese Temple, and where the Borneo Company grounds were, there was a very large growth of trees called Mata Kuching. It's thought that because of these trees the little stream got its name. It was filled in sometime during 1928. So, the Rajah decided to use the name of this little stream and from then onwards the town became officially known as Kuching.

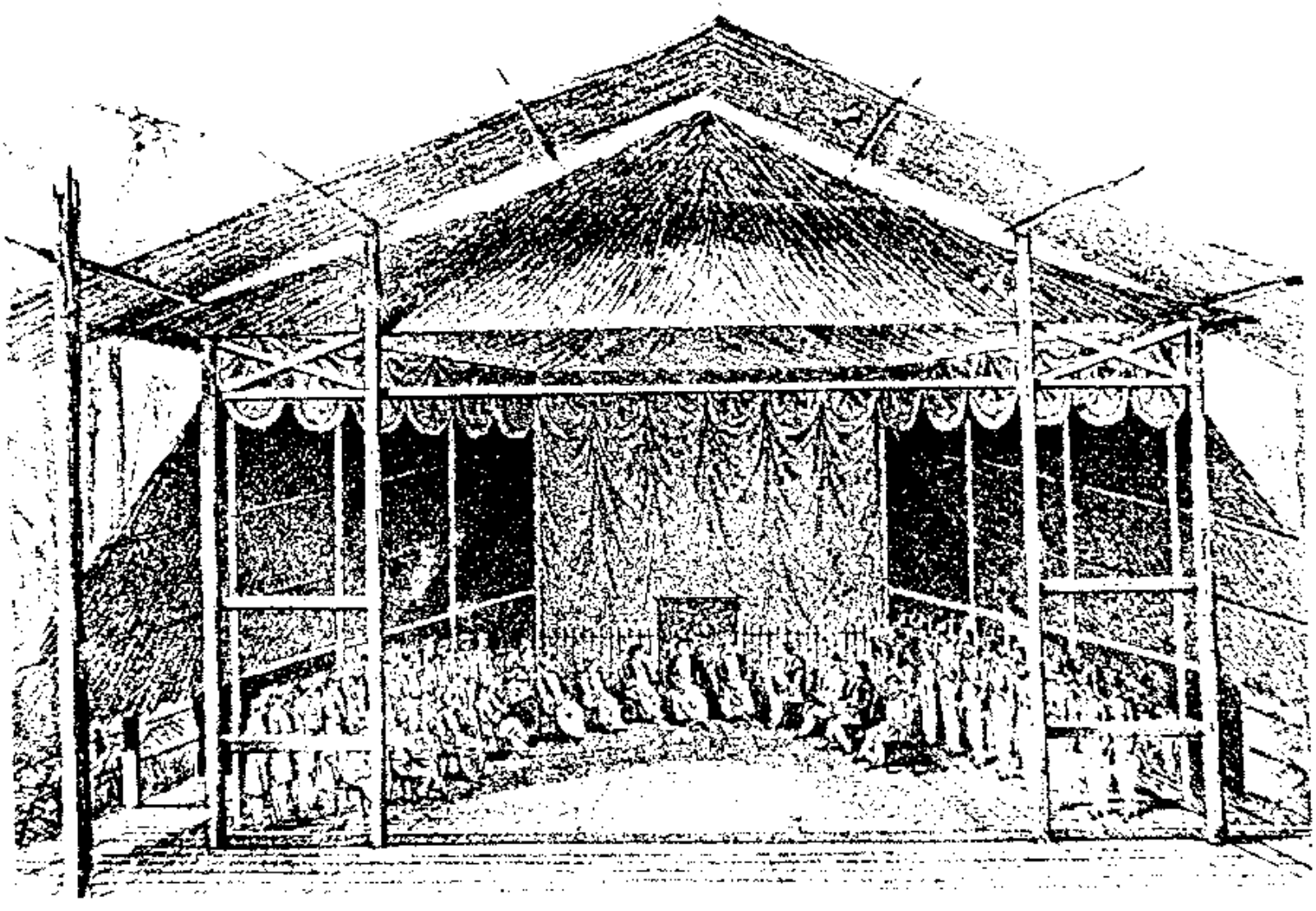
Chinese shops in Main Bazaar 1870

FRIENDS AND FOES: The Rajah Muda Hasim and Governor Makota

Before the arrival of James Brooke in 1839, Brunei rule was already well established in Sarawak. The Sultan of Brunei was Omar Ali Saifuddin, a small, thin, bald man of around fifty, who could neither read nor write and who was always looked upon as being "slightly weak in the head". Described as a madman by most people who encountered him, he was far from one; he was an unscrupulous, cool and very dangerous character. But because of his supposedly unsound mental state, coupled with the fact that he had an extra thumb on his right hand, he was stygmatized as being a deformed imbecile. He was, therefore, never formally invested as sovereign, and was deprived of ever being able to use the title "Iang di Pertuan" (the Lord who rules) which designated the ruler of Brunei. He had absoloutly no control over his numerous relatives, a fact which manifested itself when they selected one of his maternal uncles, Hasim, as Sultan Muda or heir and regent to the throne.

After Omar Ali's accession, the Pengiran Makota was sent to Sarawak to represent the Sultan as the first (and last) governor of the newly acquired province. The Sarawak Malays were then living mainly at the small village of Katupong up river, and also further up at Lidah Tanah. It wasn't until Katupong was attacked by the Saribas Dayaks, with many of its inhabitants left homeless, that the town of Kuching was founded by Makota just a few years before the arrival of Brooke. With the exception of a handful of Chinese traders, the inhabitants of the town numbered about eight hundred Malays. The greater part of Kuching was taken up by the palaces of the Rajah Muda and the governor, and those of their attendant nobles. The Sarawak Malay nobility still preferred to reside at Lidah Tanah.

But affairs in Sarawak were not running smoothly. Shortly after Makota's arrival a revolt had broken out against him and when the situation showed no sign of improving, the Rajah Muda Hasim was sent there to help restore order and to bring the province and its people back to allegiance. But the middle-aged Hasim was unsuited to the task as he neither possessed the energy nor the ability to cope with such a situation. Although he was a pleasant and friendly man with gracious manners, he



Muda Hasim's Audience Chamber, Kuching 1842

was also weak, easily influenced and lazy. Annoyed at what he considered to be his exile from Brunei, he was impatient to return to the capital where he enjoyed a much more congenial lifestyle.

Governed as it was by corruption and extortion, it was hardly surprising that there was a revolt in Sarawak. The Pengiran Makota was an unprincipled ruler; cruel, selfish and cowardly he became one of the most dangerous enemies of the Rajah James Brooke. Yet, when Brooke first met him he was impressed and wrote favourably of him. Describing him as a "good looking man" he went on to say that he was "the most mild, the most gentlemanly rascal you can conceive". What Brooke didn't know then was that Makota's exactions, cruelty and forced labour at the antimony mines had driven the Sarawak Malays and Land Dayaks into open revolt; a revolt that had been going on for some years before the arrival of Brooke to Sarawak. Under Makota's incompetent rule the district lacked any political order and was a prey to anarchy. The Brunei nobles, when not too occupied with plotting against each other, pooled their resources in extracting money and goods from the weaker indigenous people. As a result, the Land Dayak population, now rapidly declining, were reduced to a state of near starvation. Many fled to the safe confines of the hills where they hoped to remain out of reach of the extortionists. Consequently, the people of Sarawak were also proclaiming their independence of Brunei, reminding the rulers that their submission had been a voluntary one in the first place, and that the conditions laid down at the time had not been adhered to. Their struggle had been going on for more than three years with no hope of an end in sight, until the arrival of James Brooke.

Questioning the Rajah Muda and Makota about the revolt during his first visit to Sarawak in 1839, Brooke was informed that it was merely "child's play". When he returned almost a year later he was astonished to find the revolt still in progress. Muda Hasim then enlisted the help of Brooke in quelling the rebellion and in return for his effective assistance Hasim gave Sarawak to Brooke. Thus, he became the first Rajah of Sarawak. (While Hasim bore the title of Rajah, he was in actual fact not the Rajah of Sarawak. His real title was Pengiran Muda (Lord Prince) and Rajah was a courtesy title given to him by the people in recognition of his high birth right.) Makota was of course very much against Brooke becoming the Rajah of Sarawak, knowing that his own power over the people would diminish, and tried in every devious way he could to prevent it; even resorting to an attempt on Brooke's life. The Rajah Muda Hasim, although very disposed to Brooke, was afraid of Makota who had, through his influence at the court of Brunei, become a strong and powerful force to

Prince Muda Hasim

be reckoned with. Torn between the two, and frightened of the consequences, Hasim deferred the installation of Brooke as Rajah for as long as he could. But Brooke was persistent, and when he presented Hasim with sufficient evidence of Makota's crimes against the people, plus the threat that he was going to drive the tyrant out of the country, Hasim relented. He had little choice as, by then, Brooke also had the obvious backing of the people.

After Brooke was appointed Rajah, Makota was ordered to leave the country; but he managed to prolong his stay on one pretext or another for the next eight months. When he finally did leave, his departure was a sudden one. He joined forces with the piratical chief, Sherip Sahap at Sadong, and between them they wreaked destruction whenever and wherever they could. When Sahap's power was finally broken both he and Makota retreated to Patusan. On August 6 1844, Brooke's friend Kepple led an attack on Patusan. For four days the scene there was one of continuous fighting. Patusan was destroyed and Makota fled to the jungle and was subsequently arrested. With a long list of crimes stacked against him it was assumed he would be put to death but Brooke, for whatever reason of his own, spared his life. Makota then returned to Brunei but showed up in Kuching again some time later penniless and remorseful. He pleaded with Brooke for a loan of two thousand reals but was given only three reals. Back in Brunei he was soon putting his wiley ways to work for him and rose to great power, with the natives living in continuous terror of him. Using his influence over the feeble minded Sultan, he succeeded in poisoning his mind against the Rajah Brooke and the English. In 1845, he was commissioned by the Sultan to murder Brooke, but it was a plot he considered too dangerous to attempt at the time. He was appointed chief minister by the Sultan, who also transferred the government of Muka and Bintulu to him. Muka, a small Melanau port, was highly valued for its sago.

Muda Hasim had changed his mind about wanting to return to Brunei and was now very reluctant to leave Kuching. He was aware that his long absence had given his enemies in Brunei ample time to work against him, even more so since Makota's return to the court. He was now more fearful than ever of the man who had been deprived of his governorship in Sarawak because of the transfer of power to Brooke. Eventually, Brooke decided to journey to Brunei to confer with the Sultan on the question of his own position in Sarawak. While there he also discussed the possibility of Hasim being accepted back. He was assured by Omar Ali that Hasim would be welcome and given a position of authority. Hasim's enemies at court also expressed their desire for his return and their willingness to

accept his authority. When Brooke returned to Kuching the necessary arrangements were made and in 1845, Hasim, his brothers, their wives and concubines, along with a large retinue of relatives and friends, set sail for Brunei. Brooke had some misgivings about their return as he didn't trust the word of the Sultan. He felt responsible for the safety of Hasim and his family and realised that without the protection of the occasional English man-of-war in Brunei waters, Hasim and his brothers would be in constant danger. On arrival in Brunei they were well received, with the Sultan making an open declaration that the only adviser he was going to listen to in the future was Hasim. But during Hasim's long absence Omar Ali had allowed himself to fall under the influence of his nominal son, Hashim Jalal who had married the daughter of Pengiran Usop, one of the enemies of Hasim, and who was now being swayed by a scoundrel called Haji Seman. Seman was a devious, calculating man and didn't like Hasim who, shortly after his return, had been appointed Sultan Muda. The Sultan was also very jelous of Hasim and Haji Seman played upon this weakness until eventually, he was given permission to carry out an attack on the houses of Hasim and his brothers.

What followed was the dreadful slaughter of the princes and their families. Hasim's brother, Bedruddin, succeeded in fending off his assailants for a while but, with little hope of survival, he blew himself, his sister and one of his wives up with a keg of gun-powder. Only his slave, Japar, managed to escape to carry the news of the attack to Brooke. Hasim had managed to flee up river, badly wounded. His pleas to his nephew, the Sultan, were all in vain and when he saw the Sultan's boats coming after him he too realised that there was no escape. Deciding to blow himself up like his brother he failed; but his sons and three of his brothers were killed in the explosion. Badly wounded, Hasim was still alive floating on the remnants of his boat. But before his attackers could get to him he shot himself in the head with his own pistol. Only four of his brothers escaped; one was so badly wounded he never recovered and another, so affected by the horrendous slaughter of his entire family that he went insane.

It was several months before Japar, Bedruddin's slave, reached Sarawak with the news of the slaughter of Muda Hasim and his family. Rajah Brooke was enraged and deeply grieved by the loss of the noble family. The death of Bedruddin, whom he always regarded as a most sincere and trusted friend, devestated him. Brooke had given Bedruddin his ring before his departure to Brunei, telling him if he ever needed assistance all he had to do was send back the ring. Japar brought him the ring but it was already

too late. Of Bedruddin Brooke wrote:- "A nobler, a braver, a more upright prince could not exist. I have lost a friend - he is gone and I remain; I trust, but in vain, to be an instrument to bring punishment on the perpetrators of the atrocious deed --- My suzerain the Sultan!---the villain Sultan!---need expect no mercy from me, but justice he shall have. I no longer own his authority, or hold Sarawak under his gift....he has *murdered our friends*, the faithful *friends* of her Majesty's Government, *because they were our friends*."

The Rajah was now hoping that the British Government would intervene and take action against the Sultan. If they didn't, then he was going to make "one more determined struggle" to rescue the few survivors of Muda Hasim's family and to wreak vengence on the Sultan for such an unmerciful slaughter. Before he had a chance to do anything, Rear-Admiral Cochrane rushed to Brooke's aid from India with his squadron, having heard false reports that the Rajah was under siege in Kuching from the Sultan's forces. He arrived in Kuching at the end of June (1846), where Brooke joined him, and together they proceeded to Brunei. The Sultan, who had been expecting some reprisals from Brooke, was frightened, but he was also determined to oppose him as best he could. In anticipation of Brooke's arrival he strengthened his existing defences and added new ones. He also rounded up an army of 5,000 men to defend the capital. He proclaimed his intention of having no more dealings with the English and voiced his determination to drive Brooke out of Sarawak. But when the Admiral arrived the Sultan made every effort to get him into his power. He sent a gaily decorated prahu to welcome him with two, purportedly, pengirans of board. They brought with them a letter for the Rajah in which the Sultan pleaded with him not to believe all he was told by the slave, Japar. Brooke detained the two 'pengirans'.

On the 8th August, the Admirals steam frigate, *'Spiteful'*; the *Royalist* and the *Phlegethon* attacked Brunei. With only six hundred men, Brooke and Cochrane overcame the Sultan and his army of 5,000. The entire population fled from the town, along with the Sultan and his men, so that by night-fall Brunei was empty. The Rajah spent the next seven days looking for Omar Ali, who was hiding in the jungle. Slowly the population of Brunei returned and a Provisional government was formed by the Rajah with the Pengiran Munim and the Pengiran Muhammad at its head. Messages were sent from Brooke to the Sultan guaranteeing his safety if he would return to Brunei. The only stipulations laid down were that he must govern justly and wisely in the future, observe relations with the English and do all in his power to curb piracy. The Sultan was still too frightened to return. Another message was sent on August 19th saying that Brooke

Capture of Brunei forces in 1846

himself would answer for his safety. This seemed to reassure the Sultan and he sent a very humble sounding letter laying his throne and his kingdom before the Rajah. He returned and appealed for pardon for his actions but Brooke refused to see him until the murderers of Muda Hasim and his family were brought to justice. Furthermore, he sent a letter to the Sultan saying that he wanted convincing proof of his intentions to govern the country honourably, stipulating that his advisors be men worthy of trust. His pardon, Brooke said, must come from the Queen whose flag he had fired upon. Previous agreements were to be reviewed and agreed upon and the Sultan was to pay homage at the graves of his murdered uncles. In the most humblest manner he could conjure up, the Sultan then gave Sarawak unconditionally to the Rajah Brooke; but Brooke still refused to see him. At the end of August, Brooke returned to Kuching with a contingent of old women and children; the survivors of Muda Hasim's family. One of his surviving sons, the Pengiran Muda, remained in Brunei to set up a faction against the Sultan. Haji Seman had fled from Brunei to Membakut, near the Kimanis river, where he was attacked and took refuge in the interior. He surrendered himself in 1847 but by then, Brooke considered it unnecessary to make an example of him by ordering his execution.

Brooke did not return to Brunei again until 1855. He found that the Sultan had lost the support of most of the population; all because he had allowed himself to be misled and used by his cunning and greedy minister, Makota. Describing the condition of Brunei then, Brooke wrote; "Trade had become a monopoly and thus been extinguished; the exactions on the coast to the northward had produced distaction and rebellion; the unfortunate people of Limbang, which country is the granary of Brunei, were reduced to extremity, cruelly plundered by Makota and his sons, and attacked by the Kayans, sometimes at the instigation of Makota, sometimes on their own account; in short, what Sarawak was formerly, Brunei was now fast becoming; and when I pulled into the city in my little gun-boat of thirty-five tons, four of the Kampongs had their guns loaded and pointed at each other." The people of Brunei pleaded with the Rajah to stay and rule over them, but he knew that his intervention at that stage could do little to postpone the obvious downfall of the vicious and corrupt government. Dissension and decay were widespread. Makota was away on one of his plundering expeditions in Muka and the neighbouring districts and the Sultan, always ready to appear pleasing and agreeable, promised Brooke that he would recall Makota from Muka. Instead, he did the exact opposite; he gave him his full permission to do as he pleased. Tired of fighting such a losing battle the Rajah was determined "to manage Makota, and to leave the Sultan to rue his own folly."

Sultan Omar Ali Saifuddin

Makota was busy resuming his activities. He had now become very friendly with the Hueh (Secret Society) in Sarawak, who had also found friends amongst other Malays, such as the Sultan of Sambas and other nobles jelous of Brooke rule. He assisted and encouraged them in every way he could with their planned rebellion in Sarawak in 1857. But Makota's greed and cruelty eventually led to his untimely death. In November 1858, he was on one of his raids through the Bisaya region, terrorising the villagers wherever he went. After a raid on the village of Awang in the Limbang district, where he demanded that all the young Bisaya girls of the village be handed over to him to fill his harem, he settled down for the night on his boat which was moored to the shore. In search of revenge, the villagers climbed on board Makota's boat in the dead of night and slayed everyone in sight. After rescuing the kidnapped girls they then went in search of Makota only to find that he had escaped in a canoe with two of his men. He hadn't gone very far before he was sighted by those on shore. One of the men picked up a large stone and throwing with all his might, struck Makota on the head causing him to fall overboard, where the darkness of the water closed over him and he drowned. Upon hearing the news of Makota's death the Rajah wrote: "A greater villain it would be impossible to conceive, with heart blacker, head more cunning, and passions more unrestrained than those of anyone I have ever known. I say this deliberately of a dead man.

As for the Sultan, Omar Ali, he didn't cause any further serious trouble, having learned his lesson after the attack on Brunei by Brooke and his friends. He died from cancer in the mouth in 1852, and was succeeded to the throne by Pengiran Munim. Munim was the brother-in-law of Muda Hasim and only had remote connections with the royal family. He was a descendent of Muhammad Ali who had been the 12th Sultan of Brunei in the 1600's. Munim ruled for more than thirty years and died, at an old age, in 1885.

PIRATES AND PIRACY

Pirates have roamed the high seas for centuries and the waters around the island of Borneo were no exception. With their daring ways and the aura of adventure and excitement surrounding them, they got away with plundering, murdering and capturing those eligible to be sold as slaves. But it wasn't until the middle of the 17th century that piracy became an increasing and destructive menace to Borneo.

To understand why some tribes used piracy as a means of sustaining themselves, we have to look far back in history to realise the circumstances that drove them to such a paltry existence in the first place.

In 1595, the Dutch, said to be only interested in conquest and personal gain, arrived in the Malay Archipelago. They established themselves in Jakarta in 1611, and renamed it Batavia. With the downfall of Holland in the early nineteenth century the British took over Jakarta and by 1811, all Dutch dependents and settlements had passed into their hands. Banjermasin, which was one of the Sultanates of Brunei, was in demand by both the Dutch and the British. This was because of its reputation as a rich pepper growing area. (At that time pepper was very much a high priced item in the spice trade). It's known that as far back as 1606 the Dutch even tried to set up a factory there, which proved a disaster, and then seem to have left it alone for a time.

In 1747 they attempted a comeback but left again in 1810. Then the Sultan of Brunei approached the English to settle in Banjermasin which they did. But when they eventually evacuated Java they also left Banjermasin; leaving it free once more for the Dutch to take over and before long they had re-established their old stations in western Borneo and the Sambas district. With this accomplished they were able to extend their influence even further and in time, acquired control over two-thirds of the island of Borneo.

They then introduced a new system of trade which they totally monopolized that prohibited vessels of all other nations from pulling into port on the island. The result of this was that the produce of the country suitable for the Chinese market had to be sent first to the Dutch depot in

'some Historians claim 1619

Batavia (Jakarta) and then transported to China. Any direct or private trading with China was suspended, which in turn affected the prosperity of the ports, including Brunei. This rerouting system severely affected trade until it stopped altogether. The double cost of having to send goods for export, first to the depot and then on to China, made the business an unprofitable one; particularly as the goods did not fetch the high price necessary to make it a viable and on-going concern.

The suspension of direct trade with China had other far reaching effects. It put a stop to the steady flow of immigrants who were valued as hard-working and frugal men, needed for exploiting industry and natural products of the island. But the most devastating effect of all with the extinction of a means of honest trade and internal development presented a much more serious problem. A *'licence'* to increase piracy. With the Sultans and Rajahs no longer able to maintain their states and the people unable to meet their day to day requirements by honest means, they had no alternative but to resort to piracy.

The Dutch were rulers who considered only their own requirements with little thought for the future. They appeared blind to the fact that by their very actions they were destroying any chance of future prosperity for their dependent countries, including Borneo.

> Sir Stamford Raffles, writing in 1821, had this to say:
> "The Dutch had no sooner established themselves at Batavia then, not satisfied with transferring it to the emporium of Bantam, they conceived the idea of making it the sole and only depot of the commerce of the Archipelago ..... The destruction of the native trade of the Archipelago by this withering policy may be considered the origin of many evils and of all the piracies of which we now complain. A maritime and commercial people, suddenly deprived of all honest employment, or the means of respectable subsistence, either sunk into apathy and indolence, or expanded their natural energies in piratical attempts to recover by force and plunder what they had been deprived of by policy and fraud."

In Borneo and other places, the Brunei Malays had a long and notorious reputation as pirates. The Sea Dayaks, who also indulged in piracy, restricted themselves to the occasional raid to acquire a few heads. The Malay governors, strongly influenced by the Arab pseudo-sherips, encouraged many tribes to divert from their peaceful existence, eventually converting them to pirates and robbers. These tribes, who had previously cultivated their fertile lands which yielded rich produce for sale, for which they could find no trade, now decided to abandon them for the more

profitable venture of piracy. Consequently, the once fertile areas that produced an abundance of crops were neglected and allowed to grow into thick dense jungles. Among those who adopted the life of pirates were the people from the Sekrang and Saribas districts. When the "Malay Muhammaden princes" needed a few slaves, they would call upon their Dayak subjects to carry out the task of acquiring them. These same princes would lead attacks against other tribes or venture up river to prey upon passing vessels, plundering and murdering the crews and forcing anyone captured into piracy. An agreement was made in which the Brunei princes received two-thirds of the take and the Dayak pirates one-third, plus all the heads they took.

In 1837, G W Earl wrote in his book 'Eastern Seas':

> "The genuine Arabs are often high minded and enterprising men, but their half-caste descendeants who swarm the Archipelago comprise the most despicable set of wretches in existence. Under the name of religion they have introduced among the natives the vilest system of intolerance and wickedness imaginable; and those places in which they have gained an ascendency are invariably converted into dens of infamy and piracy."

The Sea Dayaks would follow their masters faithfully on piratical expeditions and, as long as it pleased them to do so, would obey only those masters.

There were also other pirates roaming the seas at this time who were equally notorious. The main ones were the Illanun, or Lanun, the Balenini, the Bajaus and the Sulus. These were all living to the north or north-east of Brunei which placed them well outside the jurisdiction of James Brooke, the first white Rajah of Sarawak. When Brooke arrived in Sarawak piracy was at its height and was one of the most pressing problems he had to face when he became Rajah. It not only interfered with trade but virtually cut off any contact with the outside world. He was determined to put an end to piracy which for so long had forced the coastal people to live in a continuous state of fear. His ally in this task was Captain Henry Keppel, a Commander in the British Navy. When Brooke gained control of Sarawak he described the condition of the country as such:

> "It is of the hill Dayaks, (Land Dayaks) however, I would particularly write, for a more wretched, oppressed race is not to be found, or one more deserving the commiseration of the humane. Though industrious they never reap what they sow; though their country is rich in produce, they are obliged to yield it all to the oppressors; though yielding all

Saribas Davak 1846

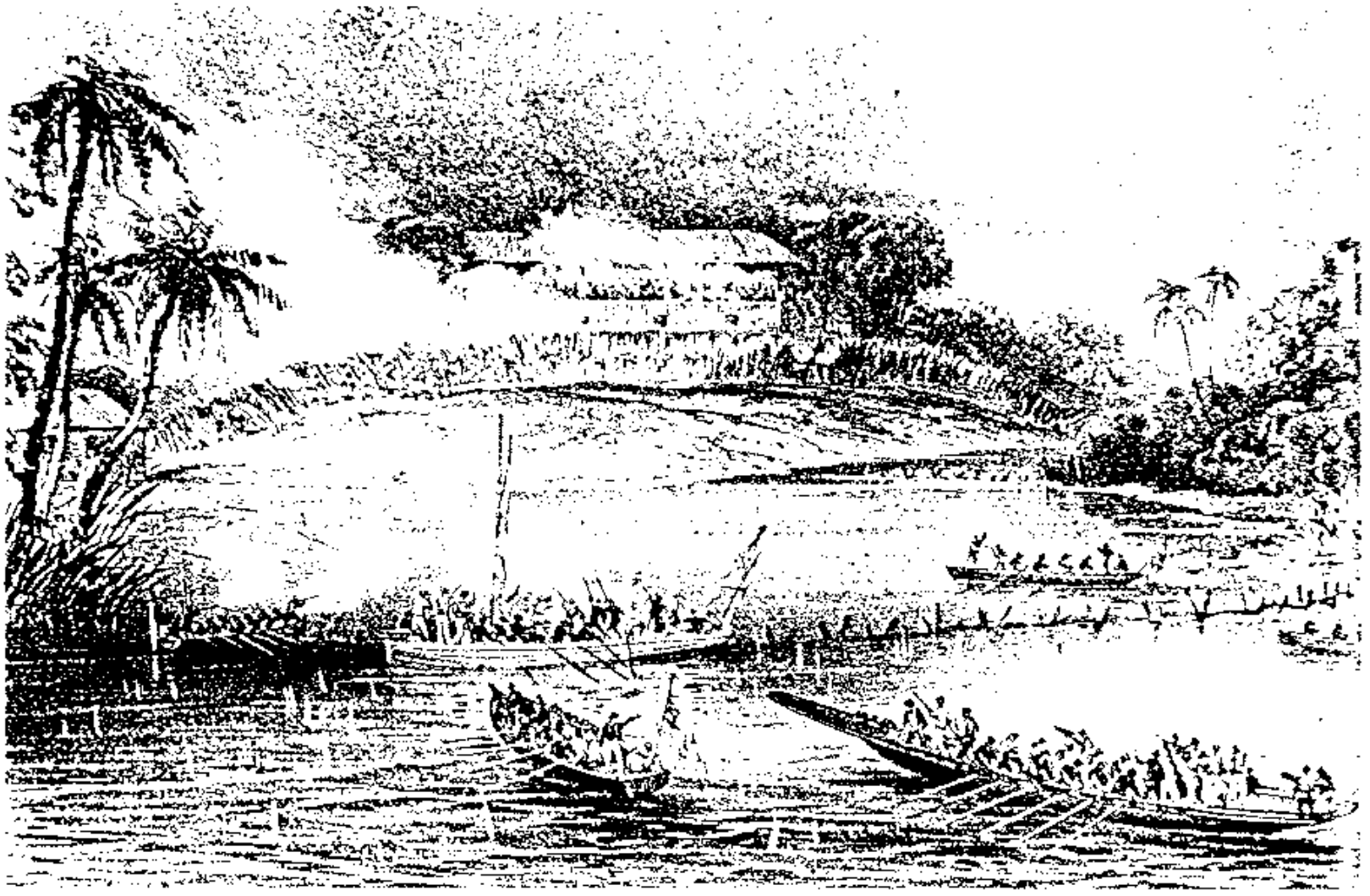
beyond their bare substenance, they rarely can preserve half their children, and often.... too often.... are robbed of them all with their wives."

The Malay rulers continuously oppressed the Dayaks, their own people and the Melanaus; by robbing, murdering and enslaving them. In Sarawak, the Dayaks were governed by Malay datus who monopolized trade. Rice, birds' nests, wax and other produce collected by the Dayaks had to be offered to the rulers first. The rulers would buy the produce at a price fixed by them; which was usually not enough to provide for the seller and his family. If it was felt that their produce was inadequate to satisfy the rulers' requirements, then young girls and children would be taken as slaves to make up the deficit.

One of the first tasks carried out by the Rajah Brooke was to acquire the freedom of the wives and children of pirates, who were detained by the Muda Hasim as a guarantee against further attacks. He then sought out the Sarawak Malays who were pirates but had now submitted to the Muda Hasim. Not trusting the word of the Malay Rajah the pirates had gone into hiding. When they were recalled by Brooke they, and the old Sarawak Malay datus who were ousted by the Brunei datus, were reinstated to their former positions. In 1843, with the aid of Keppel, successful raids were carried out on the Dayak villages in the Saribas area and a truce was established. With the Rajah's encouragement the tribes gave up piracy and once more took to honest trading. But there was still a long way to go before the Rajah achieved his ambition of ending piracy in Sarawak.

The year 1849 saw a revival of these free-booters of the seas as the Saribas and Sekrang Dayaks returned once more to what was regarded by some locals as an honourable profession. Sultans and Rajahs in the past had openly condemned it, while secretly supporting it and even sharing in the loot. Now, romance and adventure became associated with pirates which only served to glorify them in the eyes of many.

By 1862, the Dayak pirates had once again been brought under control but the Illanun pirates still continued with their raiding and plundering. They were natives of the island of Mindanau, one of the southern islands of the Philippines, and were considered the most courageous and daring of all the pirates. They were the ones most dreaded and feared by the Europeans whom they constantly preyed upon; especially the Dutch,regarding them as white barbarians and not forgetting the injustice and inhumanities they suffered at their hands.



Attack by Captain Keppel on Saribas Iban Rebels in 1843

During an attack on Mukah in 1862, the Illanun pirates took many capitves, but the Rajah Muda was quick to give chase and during the resulting fighting the pirates were badly defeated. Bishop Mc Dougall, who accompanied the Rajah Muda on this expedition was to write afterwards:

> "When the pirates take a vessel, they kill anyone who offers resistance, and plunder and sink their boats and ships ..... Those who they spare are, when sufficiently tamed, put to the sweeps and made to row in gangs in relays night and day..... and to keep them awake, they put cayenne pepper in their eyes, or cut them with their knives and put pepper in their wounds.... It is a marvel how these poor creatures live at all under the terrible tortures and ill-treatment they endure, sometimes for months, before they reach their destination and settle down as slaves for the worst of masters."

This latest raid seems to have served as a lesson well learned. About nineteen of the pirates escaped and it's presumed that they spread the word of the strong force they were up against, because from then onwards the pirates gave Sarawak a miss. But about seven years later a large group of them decided to try their luck once again. No sooner had they reached land when they were attacked by the Bintulu people in Kedurong Bay. After that episode no more pirates were seen again off the coast of Sarawak.

But they didn't give up their piratical pursuits easily and continued their operations in other areas for many more years. In 1872 and again in 1874, they were still active along the east coast of Borneo and in the Sulu seas.

Once the pirate menace had been permanently dealt with the waters around Sarawak were again made safe and opened up to travellers. This resulted in a rapid increase in the volume of trade and the State was again able to flourish, prosper and grow with the reintroduction of honest and peaceful trading.

THE GROWTH OF SARAWAK

Sarawak today is made up of 48,050 sq miles. Its towns are expanding rapidly and the population continues to increase; but, with a vast land area at its disposal, the State can still accomodate such development. The flora and fauna, lush green forests and unique wildlife that form a great part of the attractions Sarawak has to offer, should flourish in comfort for many years to come. The very thought of an over populated State is still perhaps a long way off. But this was not always the case.

On 24th September 1841, When James Brooke was installed as the first white Rajah of Sarawak, the kingdom he inherited was made up of Kuching and its surrounding areas which consisted mainly of swampland and jungle. The total area was 3,000 sq miles, only about three quarters of the First Division, with a population of 8,000 people. A very far cry from the Sarawak we know today.

Sarawak had been, up till then, just one of the many provinces belonging to the Sultanate of Brunei. The province of Sarawak extended from Cape Datu in the South to the mouth of the Sadong River in the north, and it included the basins of three major rivers; the Lundu, Sarawak and Samarahan Rivers.

Beyond this area stretched the other provinces of the Brunei Sultanate. These provinces were governed by Malay Officials from Brunei but in fact, these officials very often had little real power over the people in their districts. For example, the Dayaks of Sekrang, Sarikei and Saribas acknowledged no government at all, and the war-like Kayans and Kenyahs of the Baram definitely held the upper hand over the Malay Chiefs supposedly governing them.

These Brunei officials were, anyway, less interested in governing their districts properly than in lining their own pockets. Under them piracy flourished and they demanded heavy tribute from their weaker subjects. The whole of the Sultanate of Brunei had declined and decayed since its days of glory when the whole of Borneo was under its sway. And it was to decline further still as more and more of its territory was to pass into

the hands of the Rajahs of Sarawak.

James Brooke was not a greedy man but he was far sighted and ambitious; aspects of his character that worked well in his favour. Although Brooke was made the Rajah of Sarawak he was only a feudatory Rajah and was still answerable to the Sultan of Brunei, Omar Ali Saifuddin, who was always looked upon as being a bit simple and weak in the head. Because of his mental state, plus the fact that he had an extra thumb on his right hand which was considered a bad omen, Omar Ali was never officially invested as the Sovereign of Brunei. His relatives selected his maternal uncle, Hasim, as the Rajah Muda, or heir to the throne.

The province of Sarawak had been conquered about two hundred years previously by Brunei and was very highly valued then on account of its gold and antimony mines. The Sarawak that James Brooke was to govern had lost most of that wealth and was in a very poor state indeed. However, the Rajah set out to return some form of law and order and to provide a just government for his subjects. His objectives were to put an end to piracy and headhunting, introduce new reforms and reassure the people that they would be protected from danger, be it external or internal. He finally managed to accomplish most of his objectives during the years he ruled Sarawak.

He remained a feudatory of the Sultan of Brunei for the next five years and although it's been said that the question of adding new territory to Sarawak was far from his mind at that time, perhaps this may be because he had another matter to 'iron out' first. James Brooke did not want to rule Sarawak owing allegiance to anyone. Each year he had to pay $2,500 to the Sultan for his governorship and he now wanted desperately to establish his position as Rajah of Sarawak and the rights accorded him. In August of 1846, the Sultan of Brunei gave Sarawak to Brooke unconditionally. Brooke proved so successful as a ruler that before long thousands of people from the neighbouring states of Brunei and Dutch Borneo arrived to set up home in Sarawak. Within just ten years the population had escalated from 8,000 to an estimated 50,000 people. It didn't stop there either. Outside of Sarawak and the Rajah's rule law and order was practically non-existant in the other provinces. The people wanted to be under a government that practised law and order and their demands to be incorporated into Sarawak grew greater day by day. Brooke welcomed anyone who wanted to live in Sarawak, and perhaps it's not hard to understand that he felt he had a mission in life; to bring a just and fair government to as many of the 'wild' people of Borneo as he could.

When James Brooke embarked on his programme for establishing a proper government in Sarawak and suppressing piracy and lawlessness, the neighbouring governors were not at all pleased, realising that he was becoming a threat to their power. They tried to make things difficult for him but James was prepared for them; several chiefs were captured and executed for attacking his subjects, and raiding parties were thwarted by his well-armed war-boats.

But, if Sarawak was to become peaceful and free from the threat of piracy, the districts beyond its boundary had to be pacified also. True to the fears of the governors, James embarked on this programme with enthusiasm after gaining the reluctant permission of the Sultan. With his friend, Keppel, of the British navy, he carried out successful raids against the piratical Dayaks of the neighbouring Saribas and Sekrang districts, and against the infamous Sherip Sahap of the Sadong. A tremendous battle with a priate fleet off Batang Maru was instrumental in reducing the pirate threat further and he established several forts to discourage raiding tribes.

Meanwhile, his relations with Brunei had undergone a change. When the Sultan of Brunei had ceded Sarawak to Brooke he had sworn eternal friendship. But he soon changed his tune when he discovered he was losing the profits he had been deriving from the pirates as a result of Brooke's interference. he retaliated by murdering his two uncles with whom James was very friendly; the Muda Hasim and his brother Badruddin.

As he had expected, this made James furious and he arrived at Brunei with a fleet from the British navy and, after the first exchange or two, the Sultan and his followers fled. Later the Sultan returned and begged James' pardon, promising to rule wisely in future. As a result of the Sultan's surrender Sarawak became properly independent of Brunei for the first time. In the year 1846, James Brooke became master of his kingdom. The Sultan of Brunei finally agreed to cede outright to him and his successors, the full sovereignty over Sarawak. Omar Ali died in 1852, and the new Sultan was Munim. Munims's greed was his downfall. His subjects soon had enough of it and pestered him with requests to leave Brunei and become citizens of Sarawak.

James soon approached the Sultan with regard to the problem of the lawlessness in the districts bordering Sarawak. These districts had brought in no revenue for Brunei; since what had been squeezed out of the natives had gone into the pockets of the governors. Since James wanted the area the Sultan saw no reason to disagree. Together they drew up a deed which

Signing of Treaty 1844 at Brunei

extended the area of Sarawak considerably. Brooke was given control over the Sadong, Batang Lupar, Saribas and Kalaka districts, an area about three times that of his former territory. In return he was to pay the Sultan half of any surplus revenue that might accrue. A few years later, this was altered to a fixed yearly sum.

Consequently, only twelve years after he had acquired the territory of Sarawak,James had succeeded in more than trebling its area. However, at the time, the new acquisition meant little more than much greater responsibility and much more hard work; as he sought to establish there the peace and order which had been achieved in his original territory.

One of the most ruthless of the first Rajah's enemies was probably the Sherip Masahor, the governor of the Brunei province of Sarikei. Master of intrigue and treachery as he was, it was nevertheless largely due to his plotting that Muka and its hinterland came under the control of Sarawak.

Masahor was at first in charge only of the district of Sarikei, but as his power grew, he had assumed the government of the Rejang as well. After 1852, when the present Second division had become part of Sarawak, he was a continuous source of annoyance to the Rajah, trying to incite the poeple of this area against him, and even supplying them with arms.

At this time there was a district to the north of the Rejang — Muka — which was of considerable importance owing to its production of sago. Raw sago was shipped from there to Kuching, where it was converted into sago flour and then exported to Singapore; and at that time it was one of the most important exports of Sarawak. But the Muka district was, like many of the Brunei dependencies, in a state of considerable disorder. By 1854, a bitter civil war had broken out putting an effective end to the sago trade.

The Sherip Masahor was quick to interfere in the troubles at Muka. When the Governor of Muka, long corrupt and oppressive, was assassinated, Masahaor took it upon himself to avenge his death. To this end, he led a large party of Dayaks to the area and they set about slaughtering a good many people and plundering the area while they had the chance. The mistake he made was including some Dayaks from Sarawak in his war party —— for this led the Rajah to take an interest in the matter. He fined Masahor for leading his subjects astray and meanwhile, the people of Muka begged the Rajah to deliver them from the tyranny of their Brunei ruler.

The Rajah set up forts at Sarikei and Kanowit to try to control the Sherip Masahor and the Dayaks, and then set off to Brunei to discuss the matter

with the Sultan. From the Sultan, he gained permission to establish order in Muka so that the sago trade might continue and for this purpose, he intervened on several occasions during the next few years.

But the Sherip Masahor was far from being subdued and continued with his plotting. In 1859, he instigated the murder of Steele and Fox, who had been in command of the fort at Kanowit. Proof of his part in the affair was not established at the time however, and outwardly he remained very friendly with the Rajah. But in reality, he was involved in a plot to exterminate all Europeans in Sarawak. The plot was complicated and had little chance of success; the Sarawak Government got wind of it and this time Masahor's part in the plotting was uncovered. He hastily fled to Muka.

Still reluctant to admit defeat he again rallied followers and, with his plausible tongue won the support of the Sultan of Brunei, who was by then very old and infirm. He was also supported by the Governor of Labuan; a misguided Englishman by the name of Edwards who became convinced that Masahor had been treated inhumanly by the Rajah. Carried away by all this support, and secure in his position at Muka, Masahor flaunted his power in the face of Sarawak. The sago trade came to a standstill. Rather than suffer his tyranny many people from Muka, Oya and Matu, abandoned their homes and moved down into Sarawak territory.

Rajah James was in England at the time, having left the government of Sarawak in the hands of the Tuan Besar and the Tuan Muda (later to become Rajah Charles). But on hearing the news he returned to Sarawak and as soon as possible went to Brunei. The Sultan received him cordially and he was able to persuade him of the true facts of the matter. As a result, the Sultan offered to hand over Muka and the bordering territories to Sarawak rule; they having been nothing but trouble to him. The Rajah then proceeded to Muka and occupied the town with no trouble. Masahor was exiled to Singapore, the sago trade re-opened, and the settlement put to order.

James then returned to Brunei and final arrangements for the transfer were made. In return for a sum down and a pension for the remainder of his life, the Sultan ceded the area stretching from the Rejang river to Kedurong Point just north-east of Bintulu, and the whole area drained by the Rejang and its tributaries to Sarawak. This included the whole of the sago producing area.

By 1861, the country of Sarawak was a great deal larger than it had been when James Brooke took it over in 1841. It now consisted of almost

the whole of the First, Second and Third Divisions as we know them today. It was a large area over which to maintain peace and order, and once again the Rajah was faced with the old problem: it was difficult to keep Sarawak peaceful when over the border districts were so chaotic and undisciplined.

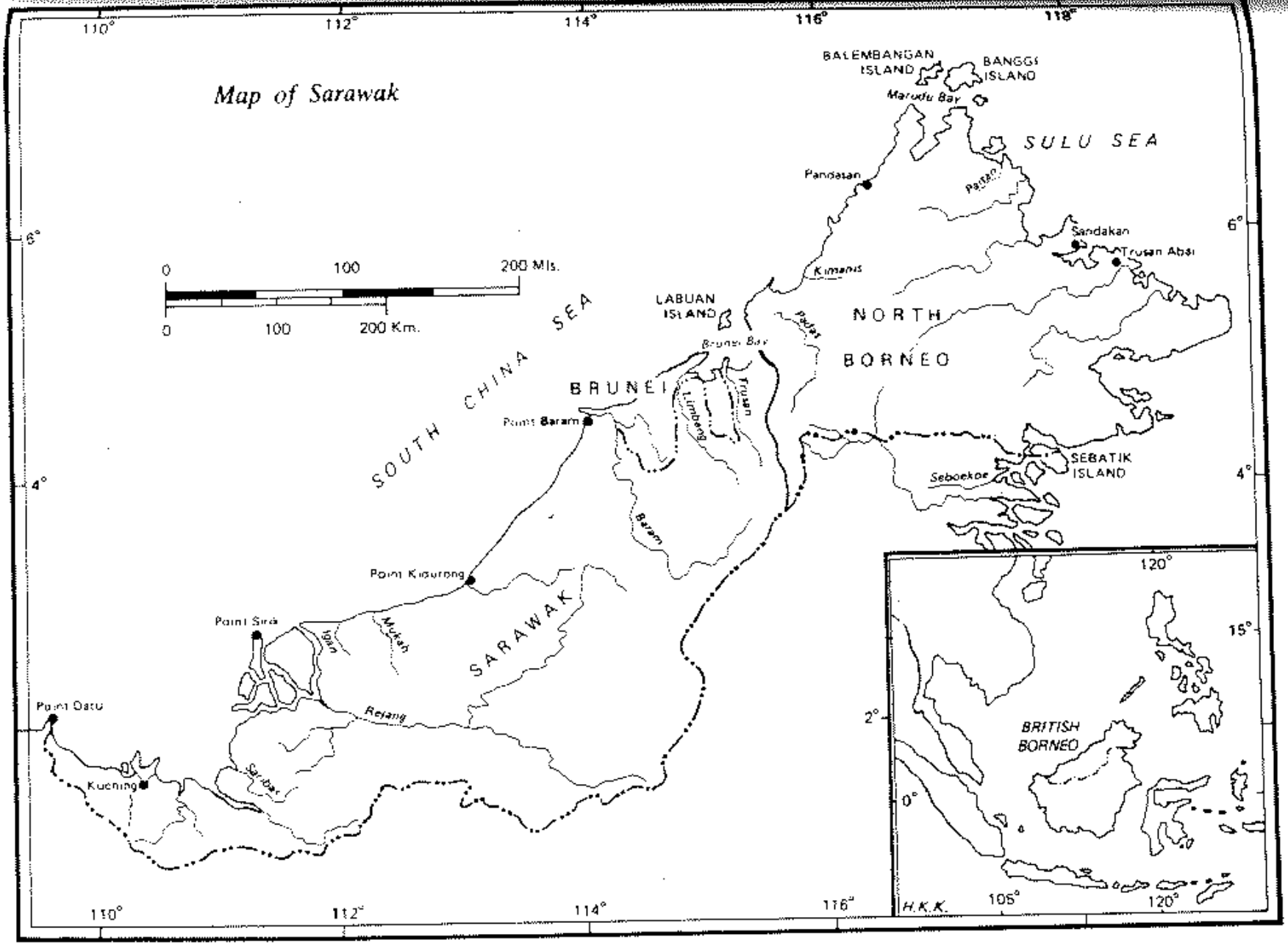
The main offender now was the Baram valley and, as early as 1868, Charles Brooke, who was very shortly to become the second Rajah, proposed to the Sultan of Brunei that he should cede the Baram district to Sarawak in return for a suitable payment. However, although the offer was reasonable enough and the Sultan was receiving very little from his possessions in the Baram, he declined to part with it.

The inhabitants of the Baram valley were Kayans and Kenyahs. Although they had never voluntarily submitted to the Sultan of Brunei, since he was in control of the mouth of the river he was in a position to control their trade. However, by the 1870's, they had become very tired of Brunei's demands on them and they rebelled against their rulers. Their rebellion was surprisingly successful — the Sultan could do nothing to restore his authority. Victorious and unrestricted by any sort of control, the Kayans began menacing settlements lower down the river. As a result there was a considerable influx of refugees into Sarawak to escape their raids.

The Sultan of Brunei now decided that he would be well rid of the area and offered it to the Rajah in return for a fixed sum. But this time opposition came from an unexpected quarter — the British Government. They decided that the Rajah had acquired quite enough territory. What is more, they were in a strong position to oppose the deal since, a number of years before, the Sultan had signed a treaty with them to the effect that he would not transfer any of his land without their permission. In vain did the Rajah plead his cause; they refused to listen when he declared that the area was hopelessly misgoverned by Brunei.

It took ten years for them to change their minds, but in 1882, they finally agreed to permit the deal. The next year negotiations were completed and the area covering the Baram, and the rivers and districts lying between that river and Bintulu, were ceded to Sarawak. Under the rule of the Rajah the area soon became peaceful and there was a great increase of trade. A fort was then built at Claudetown (Marudi).

The final two areas to be acquired by Sarawak were the present-day districts of Limbang and Lawas. A small area was added in 1885 when, on payment of a suitable rent to the Pengiran who held the feudal rights to the


Map of Sarawak
110°
112°
114°
116°
118°
BALEMBANGAN ISLAND
BANGGI ISLAND
Marudu Bay
SULU SEA
Pandasan
Patau
Sandakan
Tawau
Abai
6°
Kimanis
0
100
200 Mls.
0
100
200 Km.
LABUAN ISLAND
Padas
NORTH BORNEO
SOUTH CHINA SEA
Brunei Bay
BRUNEI
Tutong
Limbang
Trusan
Point Baram
SEBATIK ISLAND
Seboekoe
4°
Baram
Point Kidurong
Point Sirik
Igan
Mukah
SARAWAK
Point Datu
Rejang
Kuching
Sadong
120°
15°
2°
BRITISH BORNEO
0°
H.K.K.
105°
120°
110°
112°
114°
116°

district, the valley of the Trusan became part of Sarawak. A few years later the valley of the Limbang river was to be added. There had been a lot of unrest in the Limbang district culminating in a revolt against the Sultan in 1884. The inhabitants of the valley had compared the misgovernment of their own districts with the new rule in the Baram, and had found the former sadly lacking. For the next six years the matter remained undecided but finally, in 1890, the people took the matter into their own hands and raising the Sarawak flag invited the Rajah to take over their territory. The Rajah agreed and a year later the British Government approved the annexation.

This left the Sultan with a very small part of his former territory and for a short time there were some negotiations on the subject of the annexation of the rest of Brunei. However, the British Government stepped in and decided that the Sultan should lose no more territory..... his remaining territory should remain intact, but he should rule it with the help of a British Resident.

One more area was to come to Sarawak however, and this was the Lawas River valley. The Chartered Company of North Borneo had attempted to purchase this area but the Pengiran occupying it would yield his lands only to the Rajah of Sarawak. In 1904 the Company decided to retire gracefully and transferred the concession of Lawas to Sarawak and with this acquisition, Sarawak reached its ultimate limits.

Whether the Rajahs were morally justified in expanding their territory at the expense of Brunei has been often debated by historians. But it seems clear that the Rajahs genuinely believed that they had a duty in rescuing the native population of the areas they acquired from the misrule of the Brunei Pengirans; and that they acted on this belief.

A PORTRAIT OF THREE RAJAHS

A glimpse into Sarawak's past would not be complete without a glimpse into the lives and works of the three white Rajahs, whose rule spanned more than a century.

The first Rajah, James Brooke, ruled from 1841 until his death in 1868, at the age of 65. When he first became Rajah his kingdom covered but a small part of the Sarawak we know today. It was a country where law and order was lacking and came under constant threats from rebels and pirates. James expended all of his personal fortune on Sarawak during his reign and when his nephew, Charles, inherited, he gained a peaceful kingdom that had expanded somewhat but was totally depleted financially. He continued with the work his uncle had started and could perhaps be called the 'nation builder' of the three. Under his rule Sarawak grew larger and more prosperous and at the time of his death, in 1917, at the age of nearly 88 years, he was just nine months short of celebrating a half a century as Rajah of Sarawak. Charles' son Vyner, who became the third Rajah, inherited a flourishing and peaceful kingdom devoid of such problems as his father and the first Rajah had to cope with, but he faced problems of another kind. He ruled through a time when the world was on the brink of another war and there was little he could do as his kingdom struggled under the Japanese occupation which lasted from 1941 until the end of the war. After the war he offered to cede the country to the British Government and his offer was accepted, but not without its problems. He died at the age of 89 in 1963.

JAMES BROOKE
The founder of the Raj.

On August the 1st 1839, a 142 ton schooner entered the mouth of the Sarawak river and, as it slowly sailed along between the mangroves and nipah palms, a young man on board stood watching the scene before him unfold. He was James Brooke; a tall elegant looking Englishman with brilliant blue eyes who was just 36 years old.

Until the visit of James Brooke to Sarawak the area had attracted little attention from the outside world. Perhaps this was mainly due to the fact that the surrounding seas were infested with pirates who did not take too kindly to strangers, and any ships that ventured too close were likely to meet with a sad fate at their hands. Sir Stamford Raffles had already foreseen the possibilities of Borneo long before Brooke's arrival, but received little support for any exploration attempts he may have wanted to make from the British Government. Instead, he could only satisfy his curiosity by writing about the island and the possible riches waiting there. His articles captured the attention of the young James Brooke whose interest in Borneo was further stimulated after reading a book written by the noted traveller, George Windsor Earl, on his journey round the coasts of Borneo in 1834. Henceforth, James' main objective in life became Borneo and he was determined to go there to see the island for himself.

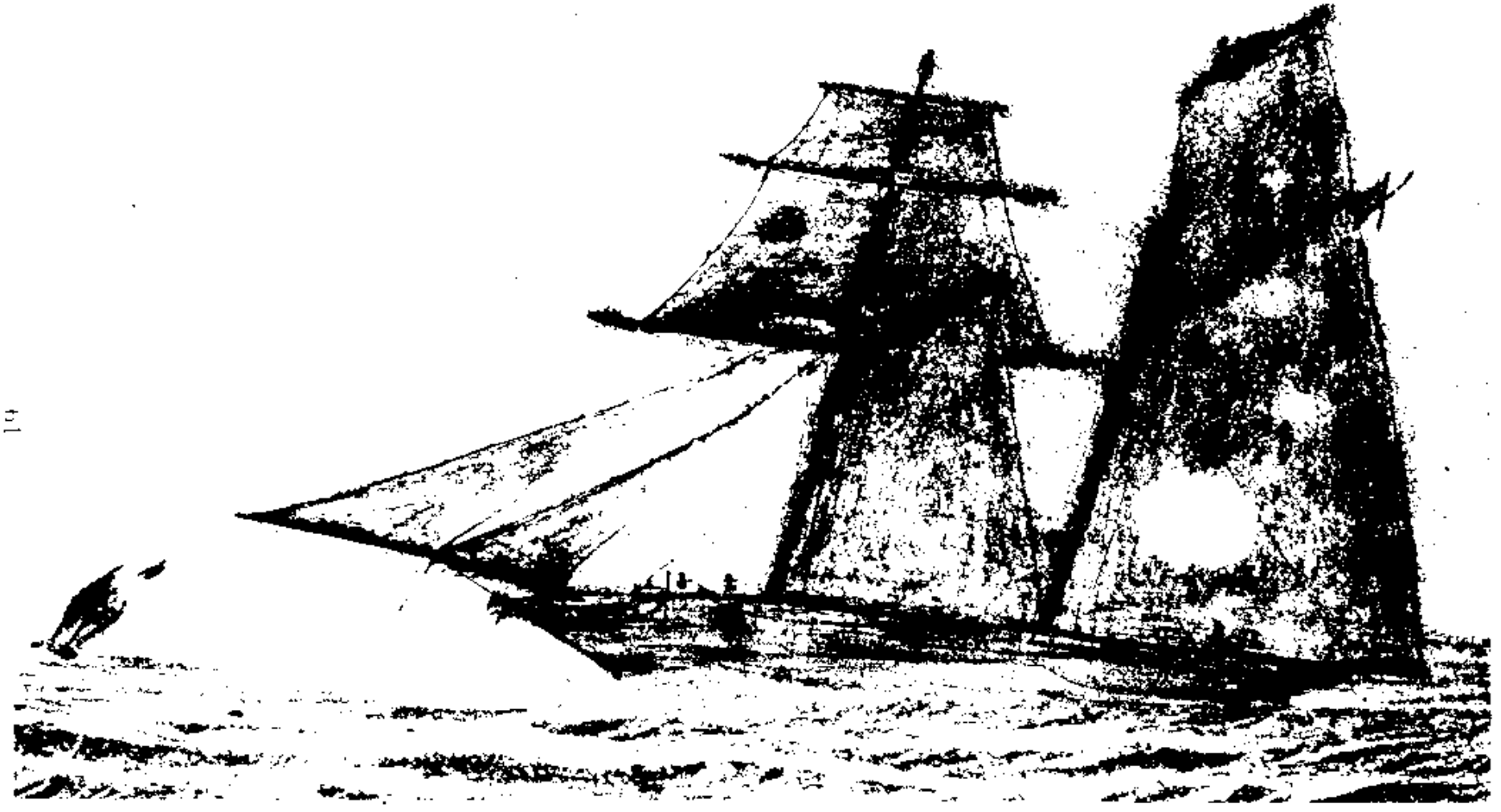
Born in India in 1803, James Brooke was the second son of a High Court Judge in the service of the East India Company. After returning to England at the age of twelve to complete his education James also joined the Company, serving in the armed forces. In 1819, at the age of sixteen and a half, he sailed for India. He was seriously wounded in the First Burmese War in 1824 and was sent back to England to recuperate, taking a five year leave of absence. An attempt to return to India in 1829 almost ended his life when the vessel he was travelling on, the '*Cairn Brae*', was wrecked off the Isle of Wight. His leave had been extended for a further six months and he had until the 30th July, 1930, to report for duty. But, due to continuous bad weather no boat was setting sail for India. It was March before James could finally manage to leave England on board the '*Castle Huntley*', which still left him with enough time to reach Bengal. But the Castle Huntley was

delayed on its journey by more bad weather and did not reach Madras until the 18th July. James was left with only twelve days before he had to report for duty.

Due to various circumstances which made it impossible to reach Calcutta within the specified time limit, James presented himself to the Adjutant-General's office in Madras. Asking for temporary employment there until he could continue his journey, he hoped that it might count as the time he returned to the service of the Company. His request was refused and, with his pride hurt - and rather than await his notice of dismissal - he wrote to Calcutta stating that he was resigning his Commission. He then returned to England where his interest in the East continued to be a constant source of frustration, as he did not have the finances to do anything about it. But when his father died, leaving him a considerable inheritance, he bought his schooner, the '*Royalist*', and made plans to sail for Singapore. From there he intended to sail to Marudu Bay in the north east of Borneo and make his way along one of the rivers. He would then proceed to the Celebes to see if a settlement could be founded there and then sail on to New Guinea, the Aru Islands and Port Essington on the North Australian coast, where the British had founded a settlement. The *Royalist* was prepared and set out to sea on the 16th December 1838..... a journey that was to last over five months.

Arriving at Singapore, and having fallen ill on the journey, James needed time to recover. The *Royalist* was also in need of repairs and so, for the nine weeks he stayed in Singapore, he tried to learn as much as he could about Borneo and its people. The more he learned the more impatient he became to proceed with his journey only now he had decided to head not for Marudu Bay, but for the Sarawak river. On 27th July, with his health fully recovered, James set off on his new course. The governor of Singapore, Mr Bonham, saw James' expedition to Sarawak as an opportunity to serve a good purpose.

In 1838 a British ship was wrecked off the mouth of the Sarawak river. Sarawak then was the southernmost province of the Sultanate of Brunei and was ruled on the Sultan's behalf by a governor, Makota. But Makota had so ill-treated the local inhabitants that a revolt had broken out against him and the Sultan had to send his uncle, the Rajah Muda Hasim, to try to restore order. Although relatively small, the country was considered a worthwhile possession because of its antimony mines. Hasim was anxious to quell the revolt and return to Brunei where he enjoyed a more congenial life. However, he was finding the task a difficult one and had by then been in Sarawak for several years. When the British ship was wrecked off Sarawak



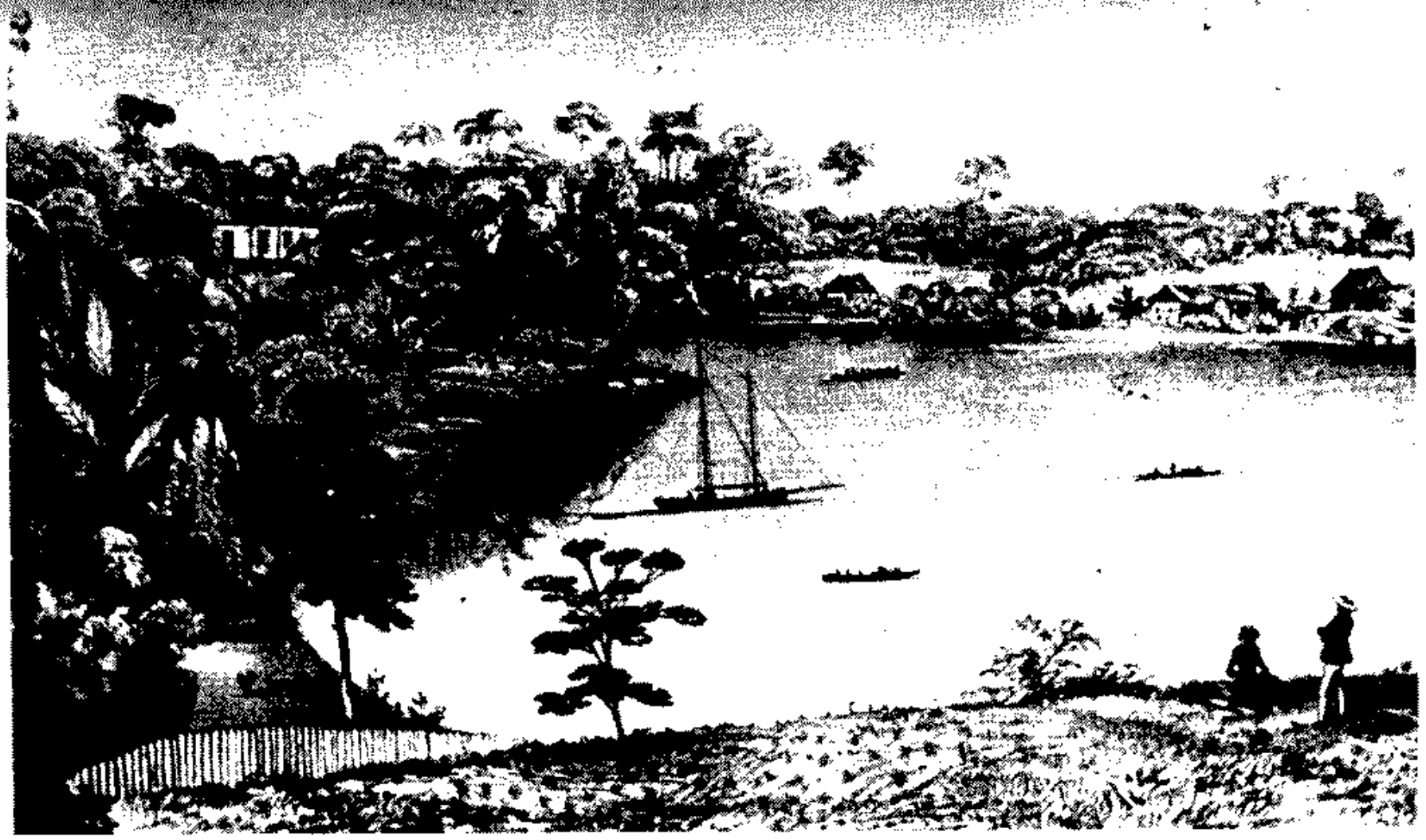
Sketch of the Royalist

he saw it as an opportunity to make friends with the British Government, in the hope of gaining their assistance, and treated the plight of the ship-wrecked sailors in a sympathetic manner. He housed and fed them before sending them back to Singapore at his own expense. The sailors were full of stories of praise for Hasim's friendliness and humanity and the establishment in Singapore was impressed. Mr Bonham, perhaps unaware of the limited power of the Rajah, was trying to establish a firm footing for British influence in the court of Hasim and requested James Brooke to convey his thanks -and that of the Singapore Chamber of Commerce - to the Rajah Muda.

On the 1st August, the *Royalist* dropped anchor off the western side of Tanjong Datu, the Cape which marked the western boundary of Sarawak. Due to stormy weather it was August 5th, before she rounded the Cape to anchor off the island of Talang-Talang. James spent a few days there surveying the coastline and ammending the Admiralty charts which had placed the island some miles off course. The *Royalist* then anchored beneath the mountain of Santubong which dominates the western mouth of the Sarawak river on the 12th August, and a boat was dispatched to the Rajah's residence twenty miles up river to inform him of the arrival of James Brooke. The next day the Rajah sent an official invitation to Brooke to proceed to Kuching where the *Royalist* dropped anchor on the 15th August, and James had his first glimpse of the town that he would eventually rule over. It was merely a collection of wooden huts founded some years earlier, and the greater number of its eight hundred inhabitants were Brunei Malays.

The *Royalist* fired a twenty-one gun royal salute for the Rajah who, together with Makota, welcomed James formally to Sarawak. James was then given permission to travel in several parts of the country, where he enjoyed the scenery and fauna and the simple pleasure of exploring the terrain. On the question of the revolt, both the Rajah and Makota assured James that it was nothing serious and so, at the end of September, he left Sarawak for Singapore hoping to pay a return visit as soon as the 'war' was over.

Brooke then followed through with the next stage of his plans and sailed for the Celebes in November. He found the trip an interesting one but nevertheless returned to Singapore in May 1840, in poor health, depressed and with his funds running low. He then decided he would like to return to Sarawak for one last visit before proceeding on to Manila, China and back to England. On arriving in Kuching on the 29th August, he was astonished to find that the revolt was still very much in evidence,



Kuching 1839

Because the rebel forces were now within thirty miles of the town James saw no hope of being able to travel into the interior and, with not much else to do in Kuching, decided to depart. But when Hasim heard this he begged him to stay; laying his problems before James he expressed "his resolution to die here rather than abandon his undertaking - to die deserted and disgraced." He pleaded with him to visit his army at Lidah Tanah up river, which was under the command of Makota; feeling his presence there would offer encouragement to the soldiers. This James did, only to find that Makota and his men were more interested in the supply of provisions on board the *Royalist* than listening to his advice. Brooke returned to Hasim again to tell him of his plans for departure but again the Rajah pleaded with him not to leave. James returned to the front, this time to lend assistance, and arranged to have the *Royalist's* guns brought into action. But he soon had to face the fact that his efforts were wasted. Makota would not attack the enemy and neither would he allow James to negotiate. In his own words he described the situation as such; "In a few days I witnessed such scenes of cowardice, treachery, intrigue and luke-warmness amongst his followers, such a determination not to take advice or to pursue any active measures, that I left them and returned to my vessel." Under such circumstances it's hardly surprising that the 'war' had been going on for so long!

Weary now of the situation James went to see the Rajah on November the 4th, and told him again of his decision to leave. But now the Rajah was desperate and in his desperation told James that he would invest him with "the country of Siniawan and Sarawak with its government and trade" suggesting that he would also give him the title of Rajah. Although hesitant about accepting such an offer, not quite sure if Hasim was sincere, James did not say no and there is no doubt that he found the offer a very tempting one. Returning to the scene of the war, having stipulated that he be given supreme command, James and his followers succeeded in quelling the revolt with many of the rebels fleeing into the jungle. They then sought peace and were willing to negotiate, but only with James Brooke. They offered to surrender if James could promise that their lives would be spared. Reminding them that the Rajah Muda would be the one to decide their fate he promised to do all he could to influence the Rajah. But Hasim, encouraged by Makota, did not want to spare the lives of the rebels and only agreed to do so when James threatened to leave again. None of the rebels were put to death.

With the revolt at an end James felt that the time was right to remind Hasim of the offer he had made and contrary to what he expected, the

Rajah Sir James Brooke 1847

Rajah had not forgotten his promise. But there were to be long delays before James' investiture as Rajah. To begin with, the Rajah Muda Hasim, as heir presumptive of Brunei who was only administering Sarawak on behalf of the Sultan, did not have the right to transfer the country to anyone without the authority of the Sultan. Now Hasim began to have doubts that the Sultan would agree to give away one of his provinces to an Englishman, regardless of the fact that if it hadn't been for Brooke the revolt would still be in progress. But he hoped in time to be able to persuade the Sultan as he was still willing to abide by the promise he had made. But Makota, fearing for his own position, did everything in his power to prevent the transfer of Sarawak to Brooke. The Rajah was torn between the promise he made and his fear of Makota's party in Sarawak, which had more powerful representatives in Brunei who could see a definite end to their rule of tyranny once a person such as Brooke, who was in favour of reform, gained control over Sarawak.

In order to appease Brooke, Hasim drew up an agreement intended to give the impression that James was being allowed to reside in Sarawak for pecuniary gain; explaining that it was not by any means a subsitute for his original agreement, but was just something to show the Sultan for now. Reassuring James that what he had promised was forthcoming, James agreed to accept this dubious arrangement temporarily. Again, trusting the word of the Rajah who promised to establish trade and communication relations with Singapore, he left for the island where he purchased a ninety ton schooner, the *Swift*, which he sailed back to Kuching with its hold filled with a general cargo; the arrangement being that the Rajah would exchange antimony and ore for the cargo. But the Rajah took the cargo and failed to uphold his end of the bargain. Hasim's attitude towards Brooke had changed and he grew distant, avoiding any form of discussion concerning the settlement of the country. He even went to the extent of denying ever having made the offer and closed his eyes as Makota plotted to involve Brooke in a dispute with the Dutch at Sambas. In an attempt to destroy Brooke's influence with the Land-Dayaks, Malays and Chinese, and to discredit him as their protector, Makota encouraged a party of 2,500 Sea-Dayaks from Sekrang to sail up the Sarawak river and massacre the Land-Dayaks, Malays and Chinese in the interior. He even managed to persuade the Rajah to give his consent to his cunning scheme. Brooke was angry when he got word of what was happening and prepared the *Royalist* and the *Swift* for action. The effect was dramatic and Hasim was embarrassed. "He denied all knowledge of it; but the knowledge was no less certain, and the measure his own." wrote Brooke. Blaming Makota, the Rajah yielded to Brooke's demands that he recall the fleet from up river. He

was left with no choice as Brooke's men were now in command of the route by which they would return. Unintentionally, Makota had enhanced Brooke's image amongst the people as a man who was determined, brave and powerful enough to protect them. Those who had feared Makota in the past now gave their loyalty to the Englishman who had dared to defy the scheming and powerful oppressor.

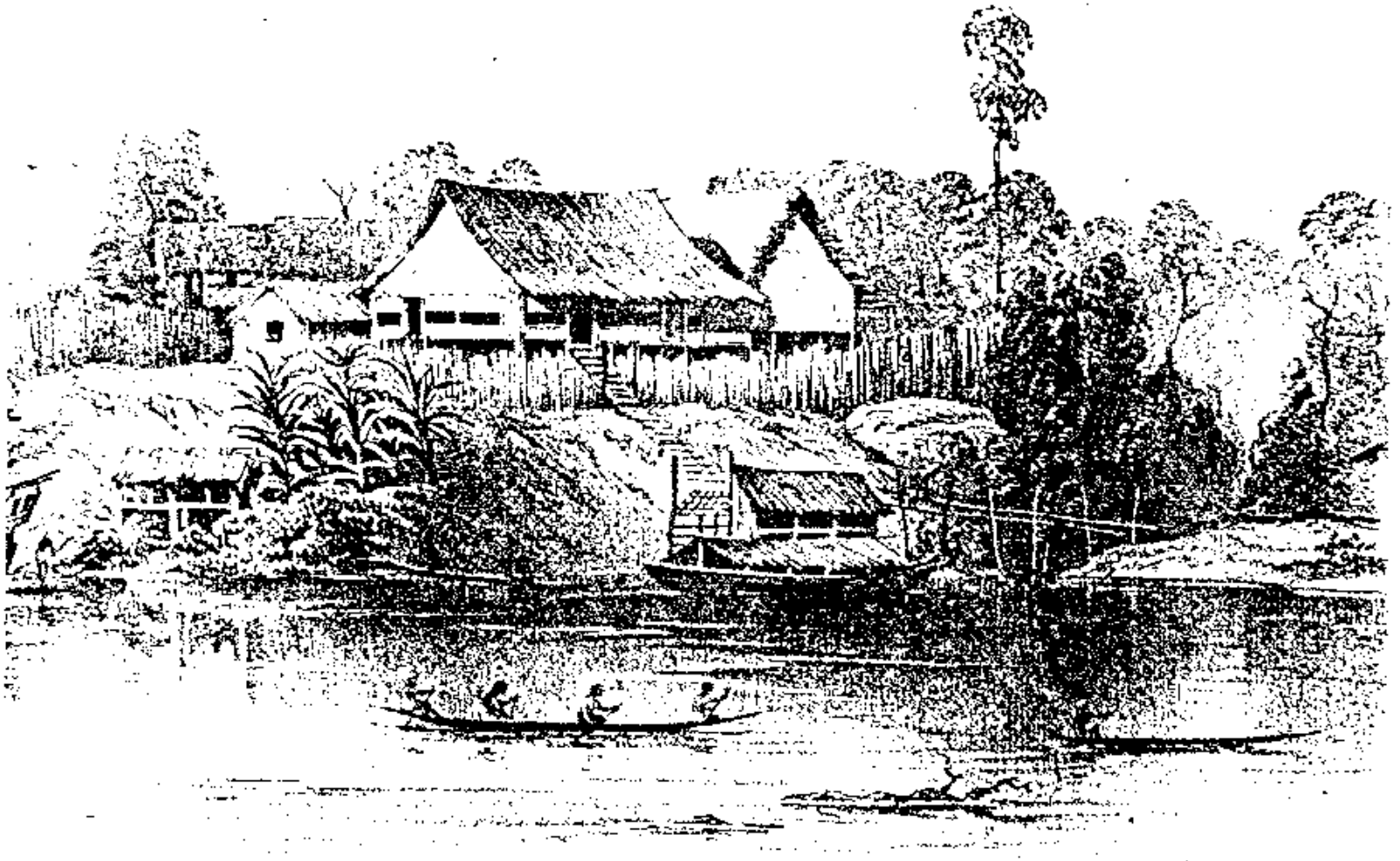
Five months had now passed and Brooke still waited for the Rajah to settle Sarawak on him. For six weeks he refused to speak to Hasim and wrote; "I have done this man many benefits; and, if he prove false after all his promises, I will put the mark of shame on him that death would be lighter." Sending a final demand to Hasim he warned him that he either make good his promise or repay him the money he had spent purchasing the *Swift*, the cargo and other necessities. If his warning was not heeded Brooke threatened to find some means of making him pay. Brooke's opportunity came sooner than he expected.

Returning from a recent trip to Singapore he found that the people had once more thrown off their allegiance to the Sultan and were now in open revolt against Brunei. Offering their allegiance to Brooke and his followers, they also assured him of their support in any attempt to drive Hasim and his men out of the country; an offer which Brooke declined. But an incident occured which brought matters to a head and the prevailing situation could no longer be ignored. An attempt was made by Makota to murder Brooke's interpretor. The plot was discovered and James Brooke was incensed. Laying the facts before Hasim, along with other crimes against Makota, he demanded an inquiry. "The demand as usual was met by vague promises of future investigation, and Makota seemed to triumph in the success of his villainy, but the moment for action had now arrived, and my conscience told me that I was bound no longer to submit to such injustice, and I was resolved to test the strength of our respective parties." His patience with Hasim's procrastination and Makota's obvious treachery had worn thin. He took matters into his own hands. Loading up the guns of the *Royalist* and the *Swift*, he proceeded ashore with a detachment of fully armed men and demanded an audience with the Rajah. Before Hasim he openly denounced Makota's tyranny and oppression of the people, making his own intention clear of driving him out of the country. Brooke then told Hasim that the only way to achieve peace in Sarawak was to declare him governor. The Malays present on that day sided with Brooke and, with public opinion so obviously against him, Makota had to accept defeat and was deposed of his governorship. Then followed Brooke's immediate installation at which Hasim informed the people that he was now their new ruler.

The new Rajah's governorship covered a very limited territory. Extending from Cape Datu to the mouth of the Sadong river it included, besides other smaller streams, the Lundu, Samarahan and Sarawak rivers. The whole district of what was then Sarawak covered 3,000 square miles. Outside of this area and up towards and beyond Bintulu, were separate provinces with their own governors. Sadong was governed by Sherip Sahap, whose power extended right up to the head of the Sadong river, and his subjects were Land-Dayaks. Sherip Japar of Lingga, Sherip Mular of Sekrang and Sherip Masahor of Sarikei held only nominal power over their districts of which the main inhabitants were Sea-Dayaks who preferred to live independently acknowledging no government. The Saribas district was governed by Malay Chiefs, and Mukah, Oya and Bintulu, all inhabited by Melanaus, came under the control of Brunei pengirans.

Hasim continued to stay on in Kuching since the Sultan had not as yet given the official authorization for the transfer of power to Brooke. Makota also remained, stirring up trouble whenever he saw an opportunity. He still maintained a strong influence over the people and also in the court of Brunei, and his governorship had not yet been officially terminated by the Sultan who had appointed him in the first place. With Hasim's continued presence in Sarawak James was still in a precarious position, and although he never interfered with James' running of the government, the people were confused as to who was the authority in the country. James now looked upon Hasim as a friend, in spite of his faults and weakness of being unable to resist Makota's influence, but he did feel that it was time for him to return to Brunei and take over the responsibility of government there. But Hasim was now too afraid to go back aware that, during his long absence, some of his enemies had developed a strong influence with the Sultan.

Another British ship, the *Lord Melbourne*, wrecked off the coast of Brunei, decided for James that it was time to pay a visit to the Sultan. While there, he hoped to persuade the Sultan to make his position as Rajah of Sarawak a more official and legitimate one by giving his approval, as well as to discuss Hasim's return and to rescue the ship-wrecked sailors. Arriving in Brunei on July 21st, 1842, to a splendid welcome, he accomplished all three of his objectives. He was back in Kuching by the 15th August, with a letter inviting Hasim to return to Brunei, and the Sultan's signature on the deed to which the Rajah Muda had attached his seal on September 24th 1841.



James Brooke's first Residence in the early 1840's

The deed read:

> That the country and government of Sarawak is made over to Mr Brooke (to be held under the crown of Brunei) with all its revenues and dependencies, on the yearly payment of $2,500. That Mr Brooke is not to infringe upon the customs or religion of the people; and in return, that no person is to interfere with him in the management of the country."

But the Sultan had taken the precaution of adding another clause; making it impossible for Brooke to transfer Sarawak, or any part of it, to anyone else without his consent. James Brooke was still a feudatory Rajah but the confirmation of his appointment by the Sultan was executed on the 1st August 1842. At a public ceremony in Kuching on 18th December the deed was read out for all to hear.

Makota was ordered by the Sultan to leave Sarawak but it was another eight months before he finally left. Hasim remained in Sarawak for almost two more years where he felt safe, although James would have preferred not to have him around. His presence made the Malays hesitant about obeying orders from Brooke as they found it difficult to let go of the deep-rooted respect they had for royalty. Hasim finally departed for Brunei in October 1844.

James Brooke was to remain a feudatory Rajah for five years. They were years of turmoil, revolts and piracy, but towards the close of 1846, he finally obtained a deed from the Sultan granting Sarawak to him and to the heirs of his appointment. He was at last a true Rajah of his own kingdom owing allegiance to no one, free to do with his country what he felt was best for it. For more than twenty years he ruled through turbulent times until his health broke down in 1863. He left Sarawak for good in the same year, installing his nephew Charles Brooke, the Tuan Muda, as administrator of the country. He lived out the remaining years of his life in one of his favourite places — his house 'Burrator', which was situated on the edge of the Devonshire moors. His interests in his last peaceful years were riding, shooting, involving himself in the simple affairs of the parish and pottering about doing odd jobs to improve his little property.

Sir James Brooke died at 'Burrator' on June 11th 1868 at the age of 65. He had been the Rajah of Sarawak for twenty-seven years.

RAJAH CHARLES BROOKE: THE NATION BUILDER

On August 3rd 1868, a simple but moving ceremony took place in Kuching when Charles Brooke was installed as the second Rajah of Sarawak before a large assembly of the town's population. A proclamation was read and the new Rajah's flag was saluted as it was hoisted high above the town. His uncle had entrusted the responsibility of governing his beloved country to this nephew who clearly shared his devotion. It was the beginning of a new era for Sarawak.

It could be said that since Charles had taken over the administration of the government on his uncle's retirement from Sarawak five years previously, he was already Rajah in everything but name. Although he had by then lived in Sarawak for more than ten years, the people of Kuching knew very little about him and what little they did know did not reflect him in a very popular light. In contrast to his uncle, who was endowed with the gifts of charm and personality and was respected and admired by all who came into contact with him, the second Rajah was a much more reserved man. People respected him from a distance but rarely felt at ease in his company. He had spent most of his years living in out-stations where it was difficult to cultivate social graces and indeed, in his opinion they were hardly necessary. But what he may have lacked in charm he more than made up for in other ways. He had inherited a disorganised country that was in a poor financial state with a public debt of more than £15,000, which at that time was almost a year's revenue. James Brooke may have been a fine ruler but he was a poor administrator and little better in matters of finance. He had also sunk the whole of his personal fortune into the country and agricultural and commercial development in Sarawak had not progressed very far during his reign. Fortunately for the country, Charles Brooke was the opposite of his uncle in these respects. As Rajah Muda he had already set the wheels in motion by introducing various reforms in the administration on his uncle's behalf. Most notable was the formation of the Council Negri (or the General Council as it was known then) whereby rulers of the various communities were able to express their opinions in the making of some of the more important decisions on the national level. He was strict with his officers, expecting them to work as hard and as diligently as he did himself, instructing them to send him monthly reports

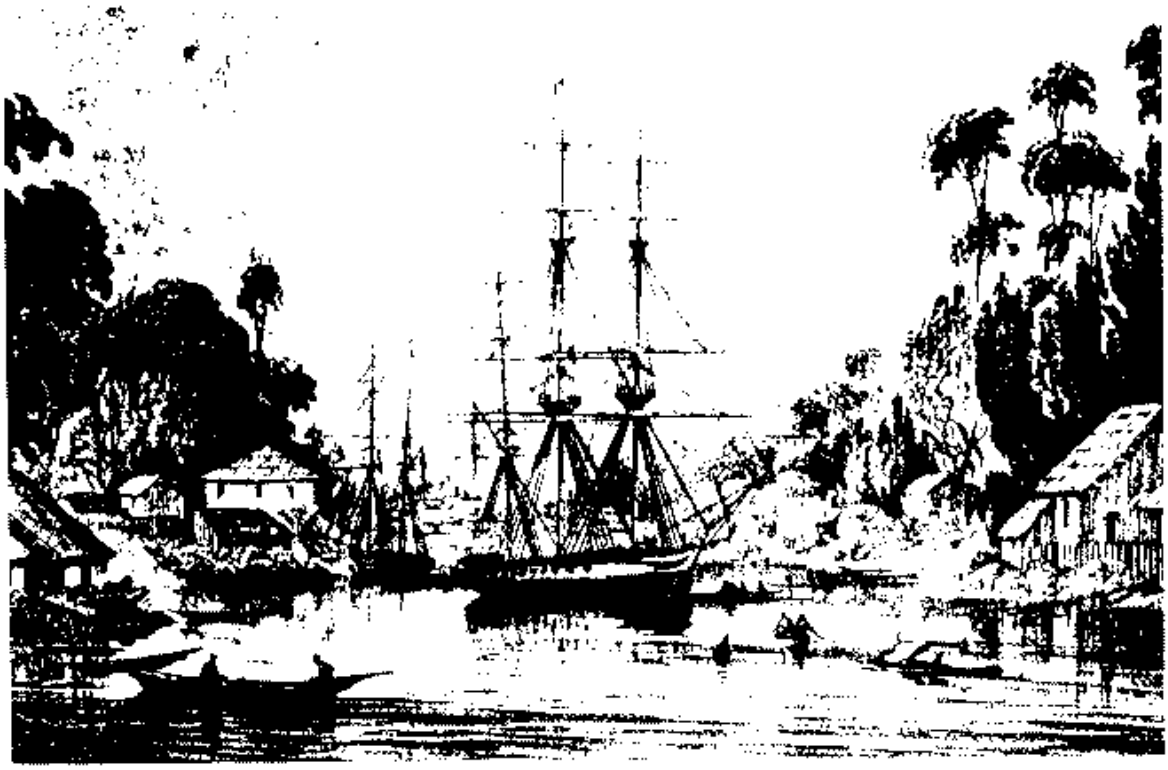
and to keep accurate accounts. He even laid down rules on how he expected them to behave at all times and periodically paid surprise visits to the outstations to make sure his orders were being carried out. These visits proved very trying for the officers concerned, as the Rajah frowned disapprovingly on any signs of luxury he came across. He also felt that when they were finished their days' work they should either spend their time reading or resting. His keynote was efficiency and he took it upon himself to supervise the administration of his country down to the last detail. To say that he ruled with an iron fist would not be far from the truth, but he got results.

Born Charles Anthoni Brooke on the 3rd of June, 1829, at Berrow Vicarage near Burnham in Somerset, his mother Emma was the second sister of James Brooke and his father was the Rev. Charles Johnson. He was educated at Crewkerne Grammer School and entered the Royal Navy on January 18th, 1842, when he was just over twelve years old. He joined the sloop the *'Wolverine'*, which was under the command of his uncle, Willes Johnson, as a volunteer of the first class. By 1844 he had graduated to midshipman and transferred to *H.M.S. Dido*, commanded by Captain H. Keppel, later known as Admiral Keppel, a close and supportive friend of the Brookes. His first visit to Sarawak was also in 1844, and, although only fifteen years old at the time, he took part in an expedition against pirates. He rejoined the *Wolverine*, this time under the Command of John Dalrymple Hay, and in November, 1847, transferred to the *'Meander'* as a sub-lieutenant, serving again under Captain Keppel. When Rajah James Brooke returned from England on the *Meander* in 1848, Charles was also on board the ship. In 1852, having already gained wide experience serving on a number of vessels, sailing mostly in the China seas, he became a lieutenant. The only active service he saw was against pirates in the Eastern seas, but he always maintained that his years in the navy was time well spent. The discomfort he felt on board various ships made the times he had to rough it in the jungles of Sarawak easy in comparison. He wrote that; "the naval education combines a little soldiering, a knowledge of artillary drill, and the management of guns, as well as skill in matters directly nautical. One acquires some idea of carpentering and last but not least, an eye for management and order."

After ten years in the navy he was granted two years leave in 1852, and decided to spend his time in Borneo. No doubt the fact that his brother and uncle were already there made the decision an easy one. His brother, James Brooke Johnson, had already joined the service of the Rajah in September 1848, having been chosen as heir and successor to the Raj, and

was conferred the title Tuan Muda. Both brothers were to take the surname of Brooke, James when he became the Rajah's heir and Charles when his brother was disinherited and the Rajah proclaimed him as his new heir. Resigning from the navy Charles then decided to remain in Sarawak. He spent the best part of his early years in the country living and working in the out-stations. Although the life was a lonely one, as sometimes months would go by without the company of another European, it was a life he grew to love. The lush jungle vegetation continued to constantly fascinate him and he developed a strong bond of friendship with the Ibans. He learned their customs and their language and came to know them better than any other European at that time. Living away from Kuching also kept him well out of range of the constant quarrels between his brother and his uncle, which eventually led to Brooke Brooke being disinherited. Through his experiences in the outstations he became and remained very much a man of the East, adopting Eastern manners and customs that were to remain an integral part of his character. He learned to live with few material possessions, feeling that a good book or novel and regular exercise to produce an adequate sweat, were all that anyone needed to maintain good health and happiness in Sarawak. He found it hard to conceive that any European arriving to live in the country should expect much more than that. He never made a secret of his interest in the opposite sex and particularly enjoyed the company of the native women. It was also a widely accepted belief, both in Sarawak and in England, that Charles had fathered at least one child by a native mother.

The years that Charles spent serving his uncle were by no means easy ones. Trying to maintain peace in Sarawak was a difficult task and Charles and his army of Dayaks were often called upon in defence of the country. Even though James retired in 1863, he still liked to keep a close watch on what was happening in Sarawak, and Charles always had to refer to him before making any major decisions or alterations in the government. Until the time of the first Rajah's death Charles Brooke was never sure if he was going to be proclaimed Rajah. Two of the Rajah's closest friends and confidants; Miss Angela Burdett-Coutts and Mr Spencer St John, didn't think much of his choice of heir. To Miss Burdett-Coutts, Charles was sadly lacking in the social graces of an English gentleman, of which his uncle had an abundance; and St John found him to be too reserved, fearing that he wouldn't be able to exert much influence over the Europeans in Sarawak. Both of them had been discussing plans with the Rajah of establishing a sovereign Sarawak Company to which, it's been said, the British Government was not opposed, but the plans failed to materialize. A constant fear among many was that when James died, Brooke Brooke



H.M.S. Dido anchored at Kuching 1841

Rajah Charles Brooke on horseback

might decide to return to Sarawak to claim what he still felt was rightfully his, and that a number of people might aid him in his attempt. In the opinion of many, the more cultured lifestyle and conventional ways of Brooke made him a far better prospect for Rajah than his brother. Since the rift with his uncle, relations between him and Charles had soured somewhat. But Brooke Brooke had been a favourite amongst the Europeans in Sarawak who found him charming and friendly, and felt that he had been unfairly treated by his uncle. Anyone who hoped he might return to Kuching was in for a disappointment as Brooke was very ill and died just a few months after his uncle. They had to be content with Charles whom they found to be very stern and sullen looking most of the time. Some of the views he expressed shocked them, and when it was published that he felt the most suitable population for a country such as Sarawak would be the offspring from marriages between Europeans and locals, he fell prey to some very heavy criticism. But Charles Brooke did have a soft side to him which very few were ever allowed close enough to appreciate. Arthur Crookshank, his uncle's oldest and trusted assistant, had a great understanding of Charles and developed a sincere respect and admiration for him ;as did Arthur B. Ward, who served for twenty four years in the Civil Service. Relating the story of a court case he attended where the Rajah sentenced a Malay — who had been a loyal servant to the Government for many years, but, who was now up on charges of selling fake jars as antiques — to two years imprisonment, he wrote: "We thought the sentence pretty stiff, but when we came out of Court I saw there were tears in the Rajah's eyes and, as he sank dejectedly into a chair, he murmured: 'I had to do it, these people must know I stand for justice.'" Indeed, throughout his long reign he developed many loyal and trusted friendships. These were the people who saw the occasional twinkle in his eye when he was trying not to show amusement at something, or who knew how devoted he was to the romanticism of French literature and music. But if he didn't have much time for socialising or cultivating his personality it's because he treated his position of Rajah as a very serious one.

The country Charles inherited was decidedly much bigger than that which was handed over to James Brooke in 1841. It had now grown to include almost the whole of the First, Second and Third Divisions. During the reign of Charles it was to expand even more to include the Baram Valley, Limbang and Lawas, until it grew to the Sarawak we know today. Not only did the country grow but it also prospered under his administration, thanks to his frugal ways with money. He kept a tight rein on the purse strings of the Sarawak Treasury making sure that every expenditure was a necessary one. The States revenue in 1870 was almost $123,000 but

by 1871 it had risen to over $157,000 and continued to rise until by the turn of the century it reached over one million dollars. Charles was also to play a major role in the establishment of the Sarawak Rangers and, through trial and error, he succeeded in eradicating head-hunting and slavery; not an easy task to accomplish as these practices were tied in with the traditions of the people. By the end of his first ten years as Rajah the country had reached a stage of peacefulness and prosperity it had never before experienced.

Although Charles disapproved of his officers marrying, feeling that a wife would only interfere with their work, he clearly saw it as his own duty to provide an heir for Sarawak. In fact, he probably would have been quite content to remain a bachelor for the rest of his days, as a wife involved conforming to a way of life he was never quite suited for. But his duty came first and shortly after he became Rajah. He returned to England in search of a suitable wife. He chose his nineteen year old cousin Margaret de Windt, who was to become a much loved figure in Sarawak, even though ill health forced her to spend much of her time in England. Her life was not an easy one. Her husband expected her to share the austerity of his own existence, continually reminding her to keep her expenditure to a minimum. But she accepted his reproaches with good humour and won his respect and admiration by her devotion to his country. While Margaret enjoyed gaiety and entertaining, for the Rajah it was just another duty. She spent all of seventeen years in Sarawak and produced three sons, by which time the Rajah didn't want her there anymore and she retired to England. "Chased away from the country owing to my health and having to reside in England to superintend the education of my sons, my absence from Sarawak was due to no fault of mine. On the other hand, it might be difficult to understand the motives underlying the Rajah's wish to keep me away. However, let any Englishman try for a moment to put himself in his position..... a position unequalled in independence by any of his countrymen. In Sarawak he was in every sense of the word, monarch of all he surveyed. His wife bored him, necessitating certain rules, certain modes of life which he could not tolerate. He wished to remain alone and supreme in the love and affection of his subjects, which he certainly possessed ...." wrote the Ranee. Charles and his wife saw little of each other from then onwards and in later life, when he paid yearly visits to England he lived alone hardly seeing her. But she remained loyal to him to the end and they corresponded regularly.

His daughter-in-law, the future Ranee Sylvia, gives a vivid, though perhaps slightly unkind, picture of what the Rajah was like in his later

The Ranee Margaret in later years

years when she knew him. Describing an incident when he had just returned from one of his trips outstation she went on to say; "We all seemed to turn into stone as he entered the Astana, and all I received was an icy peck on the cheek and Oliver (a friend from England)* an icy stare. Nobody seemed natural, the Government officers seemed to have shrivelled and no longer filled their clothes. There were no smiles upon the Malay boys' faces.It was as if a curtain had been drawn on all the comedy and that the drama was about to commence." But regardless of how she felt about Charles Brooke, even Sylvia had to admit that he had a strength of character that made him a great ruler. She wrote; "Even I had to reluctantly admit that he had a dignity so profound, an immensity of power so amazing that it was not surprising the Malays and Dyaks looked upon him in his advancing years as the very mainspring of the country. He seemed to be a tradition to these people as mysterious as a page of the Koran. This intangible old man who sat upon an iron bench, with his deafness and his single eye, filled the Malays with wonder and with awe. They knew in their simple hearts that he had dedicated his life to them, and whatever one may say of Charles Brooke, one cannot deny that he 'kept faith' with his people."

Despite some of the eccentricities of his later years, Charles was just the sort of Rajah Sarawak needed. His uncle recognised the qualities he possessed to make him a great ruler, and writing in 1866,he said of him; "It is a great gratification to me to acknowledge my nephews devotion to the cause to which my own life has been devoted. It is well that his strength has come to supply my weakness and that his energies and his life (if needed) should be given to establish the governorship, and promote the happiness of the people of Sarawak. My career draws to its close, but I have confidence that no consideration will turn him from the work which I shall leave for his hands to do." Such trust was rewarded by Charles' lifelong devotion to the interests and needs of the people he was destined to govern. On his accession he did not make any changes in the already established wise and liberal policy of his uncle. Any reforms and improvements he made were consistent with that policy. The country he bequeathed to his successor was a prosperous one and efficiently administrated and almost all due to his untiring efforts. Few rulers have achieved as much as he did in his life time. To many he may have appeared as an enemy to progress but he had his own ideas on this subject. Progress was good but not at the expense of the people and culture of Sarawak. His policy was "to veto such native usages as are dangerous or unjust, and to ingraft Western methods onto Eastern customs by a gradual and gentle process . . " An idealistic approach perhaps, but one that spared Sarawak

* *my own insertion*

Charles Vyner, Harry, Rajah Charles and Bertram

many of the indignities and problems suffered by other colonies. But again he was following his uncle's belief that the Brookes must rule on the peoples behalf and protect them from exploitation. Charles wanted progress to be slow and gradual preserving as much as possible.

At the outbreak of the First World War Charles was in England but returned immediately to Kuching, where he remined for most of the war. He was now growing frail but he still enjoyed his favourite past-time of riding. A fall from his horse in 1916, which rendered him unconscious, forced him to decide never to ride again. The local people considered it as a sign that the end was near for him. He delivered his last Council Negri speech in that year at the age of 87, when the Council met for the eighteenth time. In a voice filled with a mixture of emotion and sentiment, feelings that were considered alien to him, he said; "There will be others who will appear after my time with soft and smiling countenances to deprive you of what I solemnly and truly consider to be your right and that is the land. It is your inheritance on which your flesh and blood exists, the source of your self existence which, if lost, no amount of money could ever recover. After my life the future will remain with you to be independent and free citizens, or be a humbled and inferior class without pride in yourselves or in your race. You must choose between the two, the owner and the master on one side or the dependant and the coolie on the other. It is for you to see whoever rules this land the land is not granted away to strangers. This is the danger after I have passed away. I am now old and cannot live many years, if any, I have had a long life, but my cord must have nearly reached its end. I now bid you goodbye." With that he sat in silence, almost as though he knew he would never be back, before rising to leave for the last time without another word.

A swelling in the Rajah's ankle, which quickly spread up his entire leg, rendered him seriously ill in October. It's said that he became delirious at times, muttering away to himself in Malay and French as he wandered up and down the verandah of the Astana dragging his blanket along. The town waited and watched every day for the flag on the Astana tower to be lowered signalling his death. Amazingly, he recovered sufficiently to return to England but upon reaching London he became very ill again. He requested to be taken to his house in Cirencester where his illness overcame him and he died on 17th May 1917, less than three weeks before his 88th birthday. He had expressed a wish to be buried in Sarawak "to rest just here, among the people I love best. Remember that," he told his friend A. B. Ward who was Resident of the First Division." To the Tuan Muda's wife, Caldys, he confided; "I love to think of myself embalmed in the form

in which my subjects knew me and borne back on a ship to my own country. Lying under the earth in my own land, I shall be satisfied at last. Sarawak is my honour and my pride. In any baser earth I should perish, Gladys. But Sarawak is part of myself; there my spirit will be free to return, as the natives have often told me, and wander at will through the Astana." But because the war was still in progress circumstances did not make it possible to ship the Rajah's remains back to Sarawak. Instead, his body was embalmed and placed in a mausoleum where it remained for several months. Finally it was decided to bury him in the little churchyard in Sheepstor, next to his uncle.

Much was written afterwards of the desolate and lonely life of Charles Brooke in his final years. He was indeed alone and lonely with most of his friends already dead, and he hardly ever saw his wife. But in life he was always a loner and it's only when he grew old and frail that people took pity on him. But even then, he was not adverse to letting his temper flare from time to time. He remained a Rajah to the end and could be well satisfied with what he achieved for Sarawak during his forty-nine year reign.

Of the three Rajahs, Charles' reign was perhaps the most significant. His uncle, who created the State, had the right drive and qualities for such a task but lacked the necessary gifts needed to maintain and establish his creation. Charles was ideal for this task and his talents in this respect, combined with the number of years he ruled, established a tradition that his heir would find hard to emulate. So it was —— with some trepidation —— that the people of Sarawak were once again facing a new era under the rule of the third Rajah, Charles Vyner Brooke.

Quote:-

"When a forest king falls to earth, the vibrations stun our senses for some while after the trunk has lain inert. It is the same when a great man dies; we cannot at first adjust our shaken feelings to the blank he filled. The Rajah was part and parcel of Sarawak. The keystone was gone. Would the fabric hold together? I went across the river to the Astana. Little groups of men stood about the Government Offices. They had already surmised the worst.

Charles Vyner Brooke came out on the verandah to meet me. "I have bad news, Rajah," I said. At the unwonted title he turned red. "It is all over, then," he whispered, and sank into a chair -- silent .... The bells tolled; flags hung half-mast. Sarawak had lost a loving ruler. I had lost my hero, and benefactor."

A.B. Ward. (Rajah's Servant)

THE LAST RAJAH
CHARLES VYNER BROOKE

Of the three Rajahs, it's interesting to note that Vyner Brooke (as he was more commonly known) was the only one groomed to inherit what the first Rajah gained through fortuitous circumstances and the second Rajah inherited as a result of a family squabble. Upon his birth, on the 26th September 1874, Vyner was proclaimed Rajah Muda and on the 24th May 1917, just one week after the death of Charles Brooke and in accordance with his wishes, he was publicly declared Rajah of Sarawak. His formal installation took place the following year on the 22nd of July, by which time his brother Bertram, the Tuan Muda, and the new Ranee had arrived to witness the event. With dubious vacillation Sarawak and its people embarked on what transpired to be the last twenty-nine years of Brooke rule in the country.

Vyner Brooke was already a familiar figure in Sarawak having first arrived in the country at the age of two. After some years spent with a private tutor he returned to finish his schooling in England; and his next visit was when he was twelve years old, followed by another when he was seventeen. In August 1897, at the age of twenty-three, he joined the Rajah's staff permanently. He then spent several years serving his time as Resident of different districts until, on May 12th 1904, he was proclaimed the Rajah's heir before the Council Negri. Charles then decreed that his son would reside in Kuching and share his duties. His new position empowered him with the control of outstation affairs, to deputize on behalf of his father in the Supreme Court and the Supreme and General Councils and to use the Rajah's flag and the royal umbrella. From 1904 onwards, Charles had sufficient trust in his son to leave him in charge of the affairs of the country whenever he returned to England.

Vyner was the opposite of his father in every respect. Handsome, charming and sociable with a genteel manner, he bore a strong resemblence to the first Rajah. The generally held opinion among many was that because of his easy-going and unconventional ways he did not possess the qualities necessary for a life of devotion to Sarawak and that, once the novelty of his position of Rajah faded, he would lose interest in the country. His love of adventurous innovations such as cars and motorcycles, and his

Rajah Charles Vyner Brooke at his Official Installation 1918

liking for smoking and other unacceptable escapades added to his unreliability. As Rajah, he seldom took others into his confidence preferring to keep his own council, projecting him as somewhat of an enigma to his officers. During his early years of service his relationship with his father, who was not an easy man to please, was a satisfactory, if at times strained, one. But as time passed even Charles began to have doubts about the reliability of his heir. His feelings were to become even more obvious with Vyner's marriage to Sylvia Brett. Charles never made any secret of how he felt about his daughter-in-law nor did she ever hide her feelings towards him. In reference to the second time she met him, which was on her first visit to Sarawak, she wrote; "I had only seen him for a moment at my wedding and I had forgotten how starkly supreme he was, how gaunt and unapproachable; a stern figure with a hawk-like nose, one glass eye from which a constant trickle of water dripped on to his snow-white moustache, and a heart of stone." A description perhaps tinged with a touch of malice! Although not averse to the charms and beauty of women, Charles never really cultivated a relationship of much worth with Sylvia. His dislike of her probably stemmed from his feelings towards her father, Lord Esher. From the moment they met Charles disliked and mistrusted the man; he was the type of person that stood for everything Charles loathed. Lord Esher was a very influential person with friends in all the right places. He was a model citizen, very wealthy, circulated amongst the right business and political figures and was said to be a close confidant of the King of England. Charles became convinced that once Vyner gained power in Sarawak, Lord Esher would use his influence to persuade him to abdicate, or to allow him a firm footing in the commercial development of the country.

That the Rajah would have preferred to be succeeded by the Tuan Muda was no secret to Vyner, having lived all his life with the knowledge that his parents had a greater preference for their second son. Being quiet and reserved Bertram, although not as formidable as is father, bore more of his characteristic traits. Whenever he was in Sarawak he spent his time in the outstations enjoying, as his father had before him, the peace and tranquility of the country and the simple life he led amongst the natives. When Bertram married Gladys Palmer, the only daughter of Sir Walter Palmer M.P. in July 1904, the Rajah was extremely happy with the union. In comparison to his relationship with Sylvia, he was on excellent terms with Gladys who wrote: "I became devoted to the Rajah, and some of the happiest days of my life were spent talking and walking with him in his grounds." With Vyners marriage in February 1911, the breach between father and son widened.

In 1912, shortly after the arrival of Vyner and his wife in Sarawak, the Rajah issued the following proclamation:

> "I Charles Brooke, Rajah of Sarawak, do hereby decree that my second son Bertram Brooke, heir presumptive to the Raj of Sarawak, in the event of my eldest son, Charles Vyner Brooke, Rajah Muda of Sarawak, failing to have male issue, shall be received on his arrival in the State of Sarawak with a Royal Salute and honours equivalent to his rank. I further decree that he shall be recognised in future by all inhabitants of Sarawak as being part of the Government of the State and such recognition shall be duly registered in the records of the Supreme Council of the Raj of Sarawak."

While the Rajah had no real reason to disinherit Vyner, he had contrived this subtle plan so that although Vyner would still be the future Rajah, a certain amount of control would be given to his brother. Perhaps if the Rajah had confided his intentions to the Rajah Muda before making the proclamation the trouble that ensued could have been avoided. As it was, the Rajah was tactless in this latest move of his. Vyner was upset and deeply resentful. With his pride hurt, his sense of duty so openly insulted and the slight on his and his wife's ability to produce a son and heir (they already had one daughter), he reacted spontaneously with little thought to the consequences. He wrote to his father and in the reply he received the Rajah said that the only word that could explain Vyner's feelings was "Jealousy". With that, Vyner wrote again stating that if the Rajah persisted with his proposal of the new Bill "I shall be reluctantly obliged to make a public protest against your actions, and to leave the country until things are more satisfactorily arranged." The letter also pointed out that "The position you propose to put me into must inevitably degrade me in the eyes of the population, and amounts to admitting that you do not consider me fit to govern this country without the sanctions and approval of my younger brother." He then expressed a hope that the Rajah's reply would bring the news that the proposals for Bertram's elevation in status in Sarawak were being reconsidered. Such a declaration of opposition and defiance stunned the Rajah, whose word had always been law. His official reply to Vyner on the 10th June, 1912, read; "As your letter reiterates your disobedience to my commands, I hereby officially inform you that in consequence of these acts, I give notice that I shall not in future require your service in the Government Offices nor in the Supreme Council." He went on to say that "obedience to the Rajah" had always been the rule and would remain so as long as he was Rajah. He then suggested that Vyner should leave the country as soon as it was convenient to do so. Enclosed with the official letter was also a personal one in which the Rajah told his son that he had

almost decided to resign in his favour "and leave it to you to hold the Raj with your present title until after my death." He hinted broadly that he was still willing to transfer the Raj at the end of the year.

This latest turn of events greatly shocked the people of Sarawak. As far as Vyner was concerned the personal letter from his father did not alter the situation in the slightest, and, in spite of Sylvia pleading with him to stay in the hope that things would sort themselves out, his mind was made up. "My father never changes his mind and neither do I." he told his wife. Having spent hardly a month in Sarawak, Vyner and Sylvia packed their bags and set sail for England. Before leaving they left letters for Bertram who was on his way back from England, the contents of which were not very pleasant. Vyner, uncertain of the role his brother played in the setting up of a State Committee in London of which he also was the President, wrote; "I am to do the dirty work out here, whilst you and your gang are to say what I am to do and not to do. No thank you." The letter Sylvia left for her brother-in-law was "rude beyond reason". In fact, Bertram had agreed to the Proclamation acting on the belief that Vyner had already been informed of its contents. It's questionable as to why the Rajah deemed the Proclamation as a necessary one. Perhaps he felt that his son would never be as loyal to Sarawak as he was and he was determined to preserve the Brooke tradition. But for now, Vyner was not prepared to accept the throne under the conditions imposed by the Rajah. As he clearly stated in his letter to his brother, "I do not return to Sarawak again unless with full power. By full power I mean absolute control over the country."

When Bertram arrived back in Sarawak the Royal Salute and Guard of Honour were there to welcome him. Amidst pomp and ceremony he attended the meeting of the Supreme Council with his father. Back in England, Vyner's wife gave birth to a second daughter. When the Rajah had heard the news that there was another child on the way he prepared Kuching for a big celebration. Flags and banners were raised and the bell-ringers were standing by in anticipation of a grandson. With the birth of another girl the flags came down and the bell-ringers were sent home. "It was the thought of those bell-ringers that prevented me ever giving birth to a son and heir. I could visualize the grim old Rajah sitting in his palace, his glass eye glittering as he tapped the floor impatiently with his stick; and the Chinese bell-ringers hanging on the bell ropes, waiting for the signal that never came. It was enough to put anyone off." wrote Sylvia. However, when the Rajah returned to England towards the end of 1912, the quarrel between him and his son was patched up. Both Vyner and Sylvia had taken steps to write letters of apology which the Rajah grudgingly accepted,

agreeing to consider the matter over and done with but "there are hard things to forgive, and impossible to forget."

By now Charles had made up his mind to keep control of affairs until his death, although in 1913 he did consider again abdicating by the end of that year but changed his mind. Promises of abdication and family quarrels were traits the Rajah and James Brooke seemed to have in common! Charles created a Committee of Administration which was to act as an advisory body in Sarawak and was composed of senior European officers. A Sarawak State Office was also set up and the intended purpose of these institutions was to prevent and defend unfair treatment of the country after his death. Vyner returned to Sarawak early in 1914, only this time he was alone as the Rajah had requested he not bring Sylvia with him. With the Rajah Muda back in the country Charles then made plans to return to England, leaving such detailed instructions for Vyner which led to the assumption that he did not intend to return to Sarawak. He laid down rules that Vyner was not to undertake important projects without his permission, that he would preside over the Advisory Council — which in his absence would be presided over by the Tuan Muda — and that, with the aid of the Council would oversee matters relating to affairs of State. He would receive a salary of £6,000 a year and a $200 monthly entertainment and travel allowance while in Sarawak. Any indulgences such as cigarettes, cigars and wines he was to pay for himself, but his food would be provided for by the State. The old Rajah's rein on the purse strings of the Sarawak Treasury was as tight as ever. However, the outbreak of the First World War brought the Rajah back to Sarawak and Vyner returned to England on leave. In December 1915 his wife gave birth to her third and last daughter. This time there was no letter of congratulations from the Rajah. Perhaps the question of an heir no longer concerned him as Bertram's wife Gladys had already given birth to a son, Anthony Brooke, in 1912.

Vyner and his wife travelled out to Sarawak in 1916 and the deterioration in the Rajah's health and physique was now plainly visible. "His body was so frail that you could almost see through him," wrote Slyvia, and after his death in England the following year, Sarawak had a new Rajah; but not under the terms Vyner wished for. Even from his grave Charles Brooke was determined to have a say in the control of Sarawak. His determination that the Tuan Muda have an equal amount of say in the running of the country manifested itself in his Will. He considered that "two heads are better than one" and aware of the fact that Vyner and his wife might not want to spend all of their time in Sarawak, appointed Bertram "to hold a position of authority in the Raj second only to that of my

Rajah Charles Vyner Brooke and the Ranee Sylvia

***Rajah** Charles Vyner Brooke with the Ranee and their daughters*

eldest son Vyner." He also directed that when Vyner was away from the State, Bertram should assume the position of Vice-President in the Supreme Council and other councils in Sarawak. When Bertram was in England he was to be President of the Advisory Council in Westminster. In Sarawak, Bertram was to be shown the same respect as the Rajah and could use the Astana as his residence if he so wished. Charles hoped that by placing his son in this position it would be "an additional safeguard" against speculators who wished only to make profits from the country with little concern for its welfare. Another clause in the Will was that no changes were to be carried out in the State or Government by Vyner without first consulting with his brother; "And I fervently hope that my sons will see the necessity of acting together to keep intact and develop the resources of the country which has been brought to its present state by myself and my faithful followers after so many years of devotion to it." The Will also reiterated that the policy and methods of Government of Sarawak which had been adhered to by Charles and the first Rajah were not to be departed from. He worried that his sons would not devote themselves to a lifetime in the East and for that reason,urged his successors to establish themselves in Sarawak immediately after accession. He hoped that the attractions of life in a Western country would not divert their attention from the more pressing needs in Sarawak. He impressed upon the new Rajah the need to spend eight months of each year in the country, stating that the task of Rajah was to be "the slave of his country and people." He then went on to point out that; "The Rajahs of Sarawak should have but one home and that Sarawak. As the first Rajah used to say to me; 'The head can not be long separate from the heart'." Lastly, he directed that Bertram was to receive the title Tuan Besar.

One can only assume that the terms of the will must have been a great disappointment to the new Rajah, as Charles Brooke was still standing by the Proclamation of 1912 that had caused such an uproar between father and son. But in view of his mistrust of his son and their strained relationship, it s hardly surprising that he decided to try as best he could to safeguard his country after his death. Bertram, who couldn't quite adjust to his new title, was happy to continue to be known as the Tuan Muda. He was as devoted to Sarawak as his brother but was satisfied to let Vyner control things. If the new Rajah was hurt by his father's obvious trust in his brother it never showed. But Vyner was never one for harboring resentment or ill feelings and he and his brother got along quite well. However, he seldom, if ever, followed through any recommendations put forward by Bertram and rarely consulted him on matters or affairs in the State. Perhaps if Bertram had been a little more aggressive during the early

days of his brother's rule the family quarrel brought about over the cession of Sarawak might have been avoided. As it was, Bertram had perhaps waited too long to remind Vyner of the terms of their father's will and was not included in the more important discussions concerning the cession of the country.

Contrary to everyone's fears Sarawak did not change drastically over-night. The system of government remained the same and the European officers who had served his father continued to serve Vyner with the same responsibilities and trust. Perhaps the only obvious change during the first few years was in the general atmosphere. Charles Brooke had been stern, feared and hardworking, whereas Vyner was dignified, gracious, courteous and easy-going. But he did not take too kindly to over-familiarity and a chill glance from his sometimes cold looking blue eyes would be all it needed to nip it in the bud. At first the Rajah did not spend as much time in the country as his father had hoped and he came and went often. But later on he settled down to a more regular routine: spending the spring and summer months in England and the autumn and winter in Sarawak. The new Ranee took a great interest in her adopted country. She was entertaining and clever and, for the first time since the Ranee Margaret left, parties were again being held at the Astana. Life for the Europeans in Kuching was suddenly much more interesting. The Ranee loved to enjoy herself leaving people with the assumption that she thought only of her own pleasure. The Ranee decided that in a limited government society the safest course to follow was to treat everyone equally. The gossip that went around was something she had to learn to live with and try to ignore. Vyner, who had a weakness for women, found some of his officers wives "pretty and alluring" and the Ranee felt that some of the women made use of this weakness. She on the other hand had her fair share of handling the attentions and flattery of the men who were trying to "advance themselves with Vyner through me." She felt that for people who had "as we did, absolute power" temptations were inevitable. Kuching was much quieter when the Tuan Besar was in control whenever Vyner was back in England. There were no parties and Bertram didn't even live in the Astana, preferring instead a more humble abode close by.

One of the first changes that came about under the new Rajah was the disbanding of the Sarawak Rangers which was then turned into a constabulary force. This was in line with his policy of gradual modernization without disrupting traditional customs and slowly a gradual change did occur in Sarawak. The country continued to progress both economically and socially and more public services were developed. Vyner undertook

the reorganization of the railway, which had been set up by his father, and by 1920 it was possible to travel along its full length of ten miles after dark. More wireless stations were added, so that by 1927, there were stations throughout the country. The hospital service was improved and a government dentist was appointed. A leper settlement was founded in honour of the late Rajah; and a printer from England was engaged to improve on the only newspaper—the Sarawak Gazette—which was set up in 1870 but only appeared sporadically. More European women arrived in Kuching to join their husbands and a Club was opened in 1920 for their pleasure. The first cinema in the country was opened by the Rajah and named after his wife. It proved a profitable venture and shows were held there regularly. Kuching was also undergoing a period of relaxation under the easy-going rule of the new Rajah. Office hours were not as strenuous as they used to be but the officers in the outstations still had to work as hard as ever. New offices were created; there was a new Department of Trade and, in 1929, a Secretary for Chinese Affairs was appointed. Most of the officials from the days of Charles Brooke had either died or retired and very soon there wasn't anyone left who remembered the difficult and troubled times of the early reign of the second Rajah. Sarawak prospered and flourished and looked forward to a bright future; but family quarrels, which seemed to be part and parcel of the Brooke tradition, loomed ominously on the horizon.

When the Second World War erupted in Europe Sarawak felt little of its effects at first. To help Britain along with its war effort the Rajah presented its government with a gift of one and a half million dollars in 1940, followed by another million in 1941, from the Sarawak Treasury. This should serve as some indication of how prosperous the country had become. The gift was in deference to the Treaty of 1888, in which Britain agreed to protect Sarawak against enemy attacks. Celebrations commemorating the Centenary of Brooke rule were held in 1941, with week long festivities from the 20th to the 28th September. Six months earlier the Rajah had announced publicly his proposal to divest himself of absolute power and his intention of establishing a Constitution for Sarawak. The Rajah delegated his authority to a Committee of Administration, which was set up on 31st March, until the new Constitution came into force. He also signed an agreement that would provide financially for his future and that of his family dependent on him, and he was to receive compensation for the loss of his rights. The Constitution was issued on the 24th September, to coincide with the Centenary celebrations. But under the terms of his father's Will, the line of succession to the Raj had already been laid down and the Rajah should consult his brother before making any changes in the

government or administration of Sarawak. The Rajah, who had sworn on his accession to honour his father's Will, failed in his duty to carry out that promise. The Tuan Muda's consultative rights had been ignored and Bertram could see no reason to alter the plan of succession laid down by his father which bequeathed the succession to his sons and their male issue, according to the rule of primogeniture, and, failing them, to the son of his late younger brother Stuart. Bertram was already the legal heir presumptive but owing to his failing health, it's likely that he would have denounced his rights in favour of his son, Anthony, should he outlive Vyner. The Rajah did not trust Anthony Brooke whom he had appointed Rajah Muda in 1939, but subsequently revoked the appointment due to a minor incident. The Rajah announced the Tuan Muda as his heir but, under the new Constitution, should Bertram die before his brother then the question of an heir for Sarawak would be turned over to the Committee of Administration. Under such terms the future position of an heir for Sarawak would remain uncertain.

Perhaps the fact that the Rajah did not have a son and heir of his own was the driving force behind the deviation from his father's will. Neither Vyner nor his wife were too pleased with the idea of Anthony Brooke becoming Rajah of Sarawak and Sylvia tried to have the line of succession changed so that her daughter's son could inherit the title, but nothing came of her efforts. It seems ironic that throughout his life Vyner had to accept his parents' preference for Bertram and, if the Brooke rule continued in Sarawak as it had done, Bertram's son would inherit the Raj. If Vyner had had a son of his own perhaps his feelings towards the preservation of the Raj would have been stronger! As matters fared, Anthony Brooke was never given the opportunity to prove whether or not he would have made a good ruler for Sarawak.

It will never be known either how the country would have adjusted to the new Constitution because by Christmas day, 1941, the Japanese had invaded Sarawak. The country and its people struggled under the Japanese occupation which lasted almost four years until, on the 11th September, the Australian forces entered Kuching and on the same day received the formal surrender of the Japanese soldiers. Military rule did not come to an end until April 15th 1946, when civil government was once more restored to the country. The administration was then handed back to the Rajah, who had arrived a few days before with his wife. The scene in Kuching was one of enthusiastic rejoicing and many thought it strange that a man, who had already decided to abandon his country, could still command so much devotion. But the issue between Vyner and his brother

Rajah Charles Vyner Brooke

had still not been resolved and letters of anger and protest passed between them. The Rajah decided to re-appoint Anthony Brooke as Rajah Muda but dismissed him again after some months. Vyner Brooke was now giving some serious thought to ceding Sarawak outright to the British Government. The country could never return to its free and easy-going pre-war days and although outwardly things appeared unchanged, the collapse of the British Army in 1941, the loss of prestige felt among the Europeans in the East and the humiliation and suffering of the internees during the dark days of the occupation altered the general atmosphere in the country. In spite of efforts by the Tuan Muda and his son to preserve the Raj, and the many anti-cession arguments put forward by them, the Rajah decided to cede the country outright to the British Government. On 6th February 1946, he publicly informed the people of Sarawak of his intentions. The following year was to prove a tense time for the country as a lot of pro and anti-cession feelings were voiced; but on the 1st July 1946 the rule of the white Rajahs came to an end when Sarawak was incorporated as one of His Majesty's colonies.

Vyner Brooke, who was then seventy-two years old, returned to England with his wife. Although they kept in close contact they settled down in different houses and led totally separate lives. He had not lost his weakness for women, many of whom had to meet with the approval of his wife before he would continue with a relationship. Sylvia, still as fond of life and enjoyment as she always was, spent much of her time travelling abroad visiting relatives and friends - in search of happiness. The family endured constant financial difficulties as Vyner, like the first Rajah, was never good with finances. The one million pounds he received when he left Sarawak was practically exhausted during his remaining years.

The last Rajah of Sarawak died peacefully in his sleep on the 9th of May 1963, aged eighty-nine years. With his wife living in Barbados, he had grown too old and infirm to take care of himself. The London house, where he spent his remaining years, had become a shabby dilapidated dwelling not fit for a pauper; yet its walls had just witnessed the death of a king. When his Will was read there was much to bequeath save a pitiful sum of little use to anyone. Flippant and dignified, he was a Rajah to the end. A glimpse into the more illustrious days of his rule in Sarawak bears little resemblance to his lonely, forgotten and neglected end. Thus minus the pomp and ceremony of bygone days, the curtain fell on the last Rajah of Sarawak: Charles Vyner Brooke.

THE RAJAH'S "GUARDIAN ANGEL": Angela Burdett-Coutts.

The Baroness Angela Burdett-Coutts may be an unfamilar figure to many people in Sarawak today, although the more avid reader of its history will be acquainted with the significant contribution she made towards the maintenance of the State during the reign of the first Rajah, James Brooke. One of the richest women in England, she became the chief creditor of Sarawak and came close to inheriting the country when the Rajah appointed her his heir and successor. Had he died before establishing the line of succession in his own family she would have become the Ranee of Sarawak. She was a close and trusted confidant of Brooke's and her influence over him played a major part in many of his decisions concerning Sarawak and its future.

The Ranee Margaret, who had met Miss Burdett-Coutts on several occasions, wrote of her as a friend who played a great part "as James Brooke's helper in his noble achievement" while others felt she was interfering and a bad influence. She has only gained a brief mention in the history books of Sarawak, mostly in reference to her generosity towards the country. Ranee Margaret, writing in her forward to Owen Rutter's book "Rajah Brooke and Baroness Burdett-Coutts", commented; "I have often wondered how it came to pass that her name has been so little mentioned hitherto in any literature dealing with the foundation of the country." Perhaps writers of the time felt that discretion was called for when referring to her, as many suspected that her friendship with the Rajah was of a more romantic nature. But this was not so; theirs was a purely platonic relationship and from the numerous letters that passed between them during the last ten years of the Rajah's life, nothing could be more evident. They never addressed each other by first names and perhaps the closest the Rajah came to any term of endearment was to address her as "My Dear Lady."

Angela Georgina Burdett was born in 1814 into a wealthy family. She was the grandaughter of Thomas Coutts, who founded the banking house of Coutts, and his first wife, Elizabeth Starkey, who was his niece's maid. Her father, Sir Francis Burdett, was a politician and a courageous advocate of reform, who endured imprisonment on more than one occasion for his

radical views. His marriage to a wealthy woman enabled him to buy a seat in the House of Commons in 1796, which he lost in 1806 because of an election dispute. He was returned the following year by Westminster voters in what was said to be the first unquestioned radical victory in a British parliamentary election. Angela was the youngest of his four daughters. Her grandfather's second wife, Harrite Mellon —— a well known actress of her time —— inherited a vast fortune of almost two million pounds when Thomas Coutts died. When the second Mrs Coutts died in 1837, she left all of her wealth, including a number of prestigious houses, to Angela on condition that she assumed the name and coat of arms of Coutts, which she subsequently did.

Angela was an attractive woman who entertained lavishly and no doubt her wealth added to her attraction. But she was also shrewd and cautious and very capable of judging the motives of those she came into contact with. She received many proposals of marriage which she declined, preferring instead to devote herself to more humane pursuits; and only married several years after the death of James Brooke. Her husband was William Ashmead-Bartlett who assumed the name Burdett-Coutts. She held a remarkable position in Victorian England and in 1871, became the only woman to be created a peeress solely in recognition of her services to humanity. She was very much like her father in that she was a public-spirited young woman who fought for people's rights and freedom of speech. The emancipation of Catholics was one of her prime causes and her interest in politics led to her becoming the Member for Westminster, where she became one of the pioneers in denouncing corporal punishment in the British Army. Her money had little effect on her character and outlook and was put to use in helping others. Both at home and abroad she helped to build churches and establish missionaries. She provided help and assistance for the poor and worked towards clearing up the slums in London. Her deeds and actions projected her as a woman ahead of her time and although she could be strong and dominating, she was also capable of extreme compassion. It's been said that had she contributed as much to the Catholic Church as she had to the Church of England, she would surely have gained for herself an echelon among the saints. When the opportunity presented itself she willingly lent her assistance to James Brooke and Sarawak, and it's doubtful that without her financial backing Brooke rule could have sustained itself.

The circumstances surrounding her initial meeting with Brooke are vague, but it's thought they were introduced when he was on his first visit back to England in 1847 after he became Rajah. When he returned again

Angela Burdett-Coutts

ten years later to negotiate with the British Government for support in terms of a Protectorate, or recognition of his own position as sovereign, they renewed their acquaintance. Depressed and worried at the time, his anxiety to safeguard his country and the rights of his people, and his realization that no money or support was forthcoming, were part of the burden that lay heavily on his shoulders. To add to his worries, the Borneo Company were also pressing him for repayment of £5,000 they had lent him to rebuild Kuching after the rebellion of 1857. To Angela he confided all of his problems along with his hopes and dreams for Sarawak. His very action of taking upon himself the task of delivering the people of Sarawak from a rule of tyranny and oppression convinced her that his aims were genuine and that his cause was a just one. She viewed his ambitions for his country as virtuous and became his closest friend and greatest supporter. Captivated by his charm and personality she fell in love with him. Whatever his feelings were for her their relationship never developed any further than a close friendship. Her main objective became Sarawak and its people and it was due to her tireless efforts of persuasion that the recognition of Sarawak in England was brought about during the first Rajah's lifetime. He remained to the end exceedingly grateful to Miss Burdett-Coutts, whom he referred to as his "guardian angel".

While still in England, James suffered a stroke in 1858, taking several months to recover. Sarawak was then under the administration of his heir and nephew, Captain J. Brooke Brooke, who, upon hearing of the Rajah's illness, returned to England. The Rajah had already decided to retire but Brooke Brooke was finding it hard to continue payment to him of a monthly allowance from the already depleted Sarawak Treasury. It was suggested that a Testimonial Fund be set up to raise the necessary funds to enable the Rajah to continue with his plans for retirement. The Rajah was still negotiating with England for terms and support for Sarawak, but Brooke Brooke felt that to transfer the country and its people for a sum of money was beyond the Rajah's power. He informed Miss Burdett-Coutts that the move was also "in opposition to my rights as the Heir, and moreover has been already most strongly protested against by the people of Sarawak". Brooke Brooke was in favour of the Testimonial Fund as a more suitable means of raising money but the Rajah had to first wait for the opinion of his friend before coming to any decision about it. Angela disliked Captain Brooke Brooke; in fact she seemed to dislike most of the Rajah's friends and family. Her dislike of the Captain, and her influence over the Rajah, is said to have prolonged the quarrel that eventually erupted between uncle and nephew.

In 1859, she made an interest free loan to the Rajah of the £5,000 needed to pay off the Borneo Company; it was the first of many. The fund in question didn't raise all that was expected and the Rajah, not getting very far with Britain, opened negotiations with France on the subject of a Protectorate for Sarawak, in 1860. This was a move that Angela was not in favour of as she did not want Sarawak to go to a foreign power other than England. She was now very interested in the welfare on the Rajah's country and as a gesture of her support and friendship, she offered him a steamer. The *'Rainbow'* was to act as a gunboat and also to facilitate communication between Kuching and Singapore. Sarawak at last had its own steamer. Negotiations with France were broken off, mostly due to Captain Brooke Brooke's representations, but the Rajah still planned on abdicating if the fund raised the necessary money, failing which he would return to Sarawak. In the meantime, Miss Burdett-Coutts continued on with her noble campaign to gain support and recognition for Sarawak and the Rajah.

Unmitigated circumstances forced the Rajah to return to Sarawak in 1861, by which time also relations between Captain Brooke Brooke and himself were undergoing a serious strain. Before leaving England, Miss Burdett-Coutts had made another loan to the Rajah and by March of that year he appealed to her for a further loan of £2,000. This money enabled him to take over from Brunei the sago district of Muka and its bordering territories, in return for an annual payment of cession money, which added some rich territory and some 120 miles of coastline to Sarawak. Before returning to England the Rajah installed Captain Brooke Brooke as Rajah Muda, by which time also Belgium had expressed an interest in the country. But the Rajah was unwilling to commit himself to any sort of arrangement as he still clung to the hope that the British Government would give Sarawak the support it needed. By 1863, when the Rajah was back in England, matters between him and his nephew were brought to a head when the Rajah Muda terminated negotiations with foreign powers and also the British Government as far as Sarawak becoming a British Colony. He wrote to his uncle; "I hesitated not one moment, but resolved to take my own course, and assert my rights and those of the people of Sarawak". Such impudence from his nephew forced the Rajah to turn once again to Miss Burdett-Coutts for advice and consolation. She urged him to leave for Sarawak immediately and lent him the money to pay for his passage. Before setting off on his journey he made a new will leaving the sovereignty of Sarawak to Angela. She was made his general heir both of the rights acquired under grants from the Sultan of Brunei and of all his pecuniary claims on the State of Sarawak. This was seen as a strange move

by some people; but in view of the fact that she had been the principal creditor of Sarawak, and was a close and trusted friend who had proved her loyalty towards the country on more than one occasion, she was in actual fact the logical choice. The Will stated; "I do hereby nominate and appoint her to be my true and lawful successor in the dignity and office of the Rajah of Sarawak now vested in me, to be held by her, the said Angela Burdett-Coutts, as a public trust for the good of the people together with the public property in which I have an interest appertaining to the State of Sarawak, in implicit confidence that she will arrange the future Government of Sarawak for the welfare of the people and for the security and permanency of the liberties they now enjoy." He also bequeathed to her "the two seperate Deeds of Cession of Sarawak and the various Rivers now united under the same Government in my person....."

The Rajah left England on January 15th 1863, with Charles Brooke (Captain Brooke Brooke's brother), and confronted his nephew in Singapore with the latter finally agreeing to leave Sarawak. Further conflict between uncle and nephew eventually led to Brooke Brooke being disinherited. Angela considered the behaviour of Captain Brooke Brooke to be "outrageous". She claimed that he openly violated the constitution of Sarawak and his very actions in handling affairs in the State were tantamount to treason. Her feelings on the situation were conveyed to the Rajah, who held everything she said in high esteem. She would not entertain any notion the Rajah may have had of weakening his resolve and due to her influence, the feud between him and his nephew became a very bitter one. St John, writing in "Life of Sir James Brooke" said; "had mutual friends both in England and Sarawak been more conciliatory, the enstrangement between uncle and nephew would never have gone as far as it did." Angela was fearful that the Rajah would allow Brooke Brooke to return to Sarawak and did everything she could to try to discourage such a move. She never had much of a good word to say about the Captain and warned the Rajah to be careful and not place too much trust in those who had been close to his nephew. She was relieved when the Rajah finally disinherited Brooke Brooke and banned him from Sarawak.

In 1863 the Rajah borrowed another £3,000 from his benefactor to build a gunboat — the "*Hearts-Ease.*" In August of the same year it was announced at a Cabinet Meeting in London that the British Government had decided to recognize Sarawak as an independent State under the rule of Rajah Brooke. The first British Consul in Sarawak, Mr G.T. Ricketts, was appointed on the 19th January, 1864. Miss Burdett-Coutts had indeed played a major role in achieving what the Rajah had always dreamed of.

Leaving Sarawak in the capable hands of his nephew, Charles Brooke, the Rajah left Sarawak for the last time at the end of 1863. Miss Burdett-Coutts was not too happy with the Rajah's choice of Charles Brooke as administrator of Sarawak as she didn't like him any more than she had liked his brother. She had a change of heart when she received a letter from Charles making it clear that he recognised her as heiress to the Sarawak Raj and assuring her of his loyalty.

In 1864, Angela conceived the idea of taking up some land in Sarawak to set up an experimental area to explore the agricultural possibilities of the country. The farm was set up near Quop and she selected as its manager Mr Sewell, who already had plenty of planting experience in the East. Towards the end of that year her long friendship with the Rajah underwent a serious strain. Some years earlier the Rajah had terminated a long association with Mr J. C. Templer, a director of the Borneo Company, when the latter had made some serious statements against him and also accused him of being mad. At the time, Mr Templer and the Rajah did not agree on certain matters concerning Sarawak. But when Mrs Templer wrote to the Rajah seeking a reconciliation, he softened and agreed, if her husband would retract the former statements he had made. Angela was against any form of reconciliation, her attitude being that an enemy would always remain an enemy, but the Rajah had made up his mind and agreed to Mrs Templer's proposal. He wasn't going to allow the renewed friendship to return to its original one of trust and closeness but his policy was that it never cost much to be civil to someone. "I can pass through the decencies of social life, if it become requisite, with calmness, but without kindness of feeling, and in saying that confidence is gone, is to say it cannot be regained. I am not pliable by nature, and my capacity of forgiving is the work of art." (The Rajah to Miss Burdett-Coutts) Angela felt the Rajah was making a big mistake and was highly suspicious of Mr Templer's motives. She was sure that because he was a director of the Borneo Company he only wanted to reconcile with the Rajah because Sarawak was now more worth having than ever before. During the long years of their association the Rajah had always seeked and respected the advice of Angela. This was perhaps the first time he had gone against her. Unlike her, he found it difficult to harbor grievances and resentment for long. But she viewed this aspect of his character as a sign of weakness. Their feud resulted in a coolness between them for several months but by early 1866, it had resolved itself.

Angela continued with her efforts to induce the British Government to settle the question of Sarawak's future during the Rajah's lifetime. By then

Rajah James Brooke in 1860

James Brooke had made his nephew Charles his heir (Angela gave up her rights as heiress in 1865) but there was still the worry that Brooke Brooke would return to Sarawak after the Rajah's death to claim the succession. The Rajah was also anxious on this point and he probably had good reason to be. Writing in "Life" St John commented; "I myself thought there could be little doubt about the result, and that Captain Brooke would have been received by all, as the natives in general could not understand why he had ceased to be heir to the Rajah." Fortunately this never came about, as it would probably have resulted in a clash in Sarawak.

With the Rajah no longer in Sarawak, and the country steady on its feet, Angela felt that it was time her role as creditor came to an end. She wrote; "Upon two occasions I think I may say I have been the means of preserving Sarawak for the Raja to English interests, and now the 3rd has arisen, for the original steamer is worn out and sold. The money I had advanced has all been repaid me....." Procuring the new steamer was, she felt, to be her last act towards Sarawak. With the exception of her farm and the money she invested in it, her relations with the country were over. She felt it would be unfair if she were to go on "deluding the Raja with an idea of advancing the interests of his poor people, and deluding myself with the idea I am fostering English interests, whilst in fact I may be only gathering a harvest for the Stranger." The Rajah perhaps summed up her role towards Sarawak very well when he wrote; "the aid she afforded strengthened the position of Sarawak, and prolonged her existance. The territory has been extended, order has been further and more firmly established, the revenues have increased. Piracy has been extinguished, and a steamer gunboat placed on the coast. Above all the recognition of England, of the United States, and Italy has been given." All noble achievements which would probably not have been so forthcoming without the valuable assistance of Miss Burdett-Coutts.

On December 24th 1866, at his house, Burrator, the Rajah was stricken with paralysis for the second time but recovered sufficiently to be moved to Angela's house in Torquay. He never made a total recovery and lost most of the use of his hands. The question of a foreign power for Sarawak was still uppermost in his mind and Italy was next to be approached. But, like England, Belgium and France, Italy also declined the responsibility. The Rajah had to finally resign himself to the fact that he was not going to interest any foreign power in his country before his death; but it was a wish he hoped would come about eventually. He returned to Burrator when he was well enough but he suffered another stroke in October 1867. Again he went to stay with Angela but differences of opinion arose between them

and he moved to a lodging house in the nearby town. By Christmas they were friends again and resumed their correspondence. On June the 9th the Rajah suffered a fatal stroke and died two days later. He never regained conciousness.

By his last will, dated April 15th 1868, the Rajah bequeathed the sovereignty of Sarawak to his nephew, Charles Brooke. Angela was appointed executer of the sovereignty of Sarawak clause in the will, along with her friends Mr T. Fairbairn and Mr John Abel Smith. She held this appointment until 1898, by which time her co-executers were already dead. By execution of a deed-poll she had her husband; Spencer St John and Earl Grey appointed as executers. Her interest in Sarawak waned after the death of the Rajah and she sold her Quop Estate in 1872. By doing so she finally severed her links and long association with Sarawak. It was with good reason that the Rajah had christianed her his "guardian angel" for she had given him what every monarch and foreign power had refused; her devotion and loyalty to his task and her financial support for the growth of his country.

The Baroness Angela Burdett-Coutts died in 1906 at the age of ninety-two. Her active role in helping Sarawak was not as well publicised by writers of the past as that of more popular figures in its history, so we are perhaps to be forgiven if she has faded somewhat from memory. But without the help of his "guardian angel" James Brooke could not have steered Sarawak on its course to make it the flourishing State it has become today.

MARGARET: THE RAJAH'S QUEEN
Marriage

Perhaps one of the most remarkable early European women to set foot on the shores of Sarawak was the Ranee Margaret, wife of Charles Brooke, who was the second white Rajah. She was loved by all who knew her, and during her years in Sarawak, developed a deep love for the country and its people.

She was born Margaret de Windt on the 9th October 1849 in Paris, where she lived with her parents for the first ten years of her life. These seem to have been the happier years of her childhood and she formed a special bond with France and its people, that was to stay with her throughout her lifetime. It was here also that she developed her love of music, having first laid her fingers on the keys of a piano at the tender age of four. Little was she to know then that she would one day compose the National Anthem for a country such as Sarawak.

By the time Margaret was ten years old, France had become a country of political unrest under the instability of Napoleon III's government. This brought about the decision by Mr and Mrs de Windt to return to live in England and although Margaret continued to miss France, she did manage to adapt to her new way of life in England.

The year 1863 brought tragedy to the family when Margaret's father was killed in a riding accident. The family was grief stricken at his untimely death especially Margaret's mother, who was never again able to remain in any one place for long after the death of her husband. Thus began a new way of life for Margaret and her brothers. The family roamed all over Europe, hardly settling in one place for long before Mrs de Windt became bored and restless and the urge to move on would overtake her. So it is hardly surprising, that with such a nomadic lifestyle, Margaret had very few friends her own age. This was the pattern of her life when she met the Rajah Charles Brooke in 1869.

The de Windts had returned to England in June of that year for a short holiday. It wasn't so long after their return that Mrs de Windt received a letter from her first cousin, the Rajah Charles, advising her of his intended

trip to England and his desire to pay her a visit. He also sent a package containing a few large Sarawak diamonds. This of course was all done to impress Mrs de Windt in the hope that she would marry him. It appears that the finances of Sarawak were at their lowest ebb and the Rajah James Brooke had, just before his death, advised his nephew to proceed at once to England and propose marriage to his rich cousin, Mrs de Windt.

Margaret's first encounter with her soon-to-be husband came about as she was having tea in the garden with her family. She was almost twenty years old then and the Rajah was in his forties. This was a time when most young girls her age would have already married. She had met a few men but none had impressed her enough to consider marriage.

When first presented to the Rajah, Margaret was very much in awe of the rather short, but handsome man that stood before her. From the frock-coat and top hat that he wore it was obvious that he was not up to date with the fashions of the day in England. His strikingly piercing eyes peered out from beneath bushy eye-brows and his firm, set, mouth was hardly visible beneath the bushy moustache that covered his upper lip. It seems that her younger brother Harry was the only one not put off by the Rajah's rather reserved manner and they took to each other right away. Harry's interest in Sarawak brought forth many tales of adventure from the Rajah who was otherwise a man of few words, as Margaret was about to find out. She was sent out riding with the Rajah the next day and they rode for almost three hours, returning without having exchanged a single word between them. These 'silent' rides were to form the roots of their relationship.

Not long after the arrival of the Rajah the urge to travel again overtook Mrs de Windt so arrangements were made for the family to depart for Innsbruck. Since the Rajah had so few friends in England with whom he could spend the remainder of his stay, he was invited to join the party of travellers.

By the time they reached their destination Margaret had read the Rajah's book, "Ten Years in Sarawak", and through it she developed a deep admiration and respect for this quiet unassuming man. She became aware of how seriously he viewed his responsibilities to his country and its people and she no longer felt uncomfortable when in his silent presence.

While in Innsbruck Margaret spent a lot of her time playing the piano. She would rise well before the rest of the family to practise her music. It was on the first morning of her stay there, as she sat playing, the Rajah

entered the room. He seated himself near her and placed a grubby piece of paper on the piano keys. "Read that" was all he said. Written with pencil on the paper were the following words:

"With a humble demean
if the King were to pray
that you'd be his Queen,
would not you say Nay?"

Margaret's first reaction was to laugh and the Rajah was rather upset and cross at her attitude. He assured her that he meant every word that was written on the note. He told her that she could do a lot of good in Sarawak and if her answer was yes, he would be very happy. Weighing up her life as it had been and seeing herself as not being of much use to anyone in England, Margaret decided to say yes. She knew that the Rajah couldn't possibly be in love with her but perhaps realising his chances of finding another woman to marry — apart from her mother — were rather slim, she would do as well as anyone. She was not in love with him either although she respected and admired him for the great man that he was and felt that by marrying him she might be of some use to someone after all.

Her mother and relatives were aghast at the idea of Margaret marrying a man so much older than herself and as if that wasn't enough, she was being taken off to live in some uncivilised country at the other end of the world. However, the Rajah was determined to marry her and his silent determination finally overcame all opposition. They were married quietly in Highworth Church, in England, on the 28th October 1869, when Margaret was just twenty years old. Apart from her mother and brothers only a few friends and neighbours were present. Her relatives and the Rajah's parents decided to stay away.

After the wedding the Rajah and Ranee left to spend the night in Exeter before proceeding to "Burrator", where they were to spend their honeymoon. This was a small house in Devonshire left to the Rajah by his uncle James Brooke. Before boarding the train for Exeter the Rajah purchased a copy of the "Times" and "Punch" magazine. He settled his new bride in one corner of the compartment with "Punch" and settled himself in another corner, where he became totally immersed in his paper until they reached Exeter.

They arrived at the hotel just in time for dinner which unfortunately, the Rajah felt was too expensive to indulge in. Instead, he ordered grilled pheasants legs, bread and butter, tea and a half bottle of port. They sat

Rajah Sir Charles Anthoni Brooke

Rajah Charles Brooke

down to eat the Rajah consuming the pheasants legs and washing them down with port, while the Ranee had to fortify herself with the bread and butter washed down with tea. How very strange it all must have seemed to her at the time.

At mid-day the next day they set off on the remainder of their journey. Their means of transport was a modest vehicle drawn by a single, rather elderly looking, horse. Having travelled for about an hour the Ranee was overcome with pangs of hunger and suggested a stop for lunch at one of the many Inns along the way. The Rajah quickly put paid to that idea saying that the food at these places was not up to standard at all. Instead, they pulled in at the first bakers shop they came to and the Rajah dutifully purchased five shillings worth of plain, dry biscuits. They continued on their journey the Rajah munching happily away, while the starving Ranee couldn't even bring herself to touch one of those awful biscuits.

Margaret found that life at "Burrator" was by no means a whirl of social events. The one time they received an invitation to a dance the Rajah declined saying his mother and sister were due to arrive for a short stay. He then informed Margaret that he would never allow her to dance with another man especially if it meant the man had to put his arms around her waist. Furthermore, she was not allowed to wear one of those low cut gowns that were so much the fashion of the day. So far, married life for this vivacious out-going woman of twenty was proving rather dull. She loved to dance and could only console herself with the thought that perhaps in Sarawak there wouldn't be any dances. That way the longing to dance wouldn't be so great.

The Rajah's mother and sister finally arrived and proved to be rather uninteresting company. It seems that the silent type was a family trait. Margaret's mother-in-law was quick to point out that everything she, Margaret, thought she owned belonged to the Rajah. The only thing she had that she could really call her own was her wedding ring. Margaret, being the high spirited witty woman that she was, informed her mother-in-law that if that were the case then she would appear at dinner wearing nothing but her wedding ring. One can almost imagine the shock the Rajah's mother must have been in when spoken to in such a manner — especially in 1869.

Christmas at "Burrator" was celebrated on a rather stringent basis as the Rajah couldn't see the need for any unnecessary expenditure. In the new year Margaret received the first quarters allowance of her four hundred pound marriage settlement. When she went to the Rajah to have

her cheque cashed he took it from her, declaring it would come in useful to cover their marriage expenses which would otherwise have fallen on the Sarawak Treasury.

I suppose the general impression we have of the Rajah to date is that he was a very mean man. He wasn't really. It's just that the country he loved so much was in such a bad state financially and if he had to cut corners to save money for Sarawak he would do it. No matter what sort of corners he had to cut. It was about this time too that Margaret became fully aware of why she was chosen as the wife of a Rajah. He wanted an heir for Sarawak and the fact that she was young and healthy worked very much in her favour when it came to choosing a bride. She also became aware of the fact that the Rajah was a man who had lived in the East most of his life and his ideas and way of thinking were Eastern. As was the custom of Eastern men, their wives were their property and the Rajah certainly did not want a wife who might prove an unnecessary expenditure to the State.

Not being the type to endure quarelling Margaret let the Rajah have his way — and her money.

Sarawak at Last

The day at last arrived when the Rajah and Ranee were to leave for Sarawak. They set out for Marseilles where they boarded a P&O liner that was to take them to Singapore. By this time Margaret was expecting their first child and with the sea being so rough she suffered throughout the journey from sea-sickness. The Rajah proved very sympathetic and understanding and did all he could to ensure the comfort of his wife.

Among their travelling companions was the newly appointed Bishop of Sarawak, Dr Chambers and his wife. When she wasn't feeling too ill Margaret would make her way up on deck to feast her eyes on the beauty of their surroundings, as they slowly treaded their way through the Malayan Archipelago to Singapore. She would make light conversation with Mrs Chambers until sea-sickness would once again overcome her and drive her back to her bunk.

Finally, after the long voyage they docked in Singapore where they spent three days before boarding the Rajah's yacht, the '*Heartsease*', for the forty eight hour journey to Kuching. After some further bouts of sea-sickness it was a great relief to Margaret when they finally reached the Sarawak river. Looking out the porthole she could see small houses scattered along the river bank and men, women and children moving about on the beach; while others paddled canoes up and down the river. But the most awesome sight of all to greet her was the great mountain of Santubong. Rising majestically up towards the sky it was covered with green trees right up to its peak. Margaret found the beauty of so much green a very refreshing sight after the long days spent at sea. As they sailed along she delighted at the sight of monkeys swinging from tree to tree while down below, crocodiles reared their ugly heads with jaws open wide in search of food.

As they rounded a bend in the river Margaret had her first view of the town that was to be her new home. She noticed a whitewashed bungalow up on a hill which she later learned was the Borneo Co. house while down below, close to the river bank, there ran a long row of shop-houses which made up the Chinese Bazaar and was also the main street in the town.

Across the other side of the river there was a small landing stage where a group of people had gathered to welcome the Rajah and his wife. At the top of the road leading from the landing stage stood the Residency. This was occupied by Mr and Mrs Crookshank and was where the Rajah and Ranee were to spend a few days before their furniture arrived from England, at which time they would then move in to the newly built Astana.

Waiting to receive them were the Crookshanks, Mr and Mrs Helms of the Borneo Co, and Mr St John, the Treasurer of Sarawak, plus a number of other gentlemen who were members of the Rajah's government. The people who most impressed the Ranee though were the four Malay Chiefs who turned out to greet them and who were also members of the Rajah's government. Dressed in robes of flowing silk with matching turbans on their heads, Margaret found them a splendid sight.

The Sarawak flag was flying from a tall building nearby and guns were fired in salute, clashing with the sound of fire-crackers being let off all over the town. Everywhere was colourfully decorated with streamers and bunting. The new arrivals and the welcoming party then proceeded to the Residency for lunch before which Margaret was introduced to the attending company. She loved the Haji's whom she found to be most gracious and courteous whereas the Europeans, who were inclined to ignore her anyway, left her feeling cold.

After lunch she found herself alone with Mrs Crookshank and Mrs Helms as the men had adjourned elsewhere for brandy and cigars. She felt that Mrs Crookshank perhaps resented her slightly and may be rightly so. Up to the time of Margaret's arrival Mrs Crookshank had held the lofty position of 'first lady' in Kuching —— a position that was now being taken away from her by a young girl thirteen years her junior. However, the big question on the minds of the two ladies was how to address this young woman. They didn't feel it would be proper to call her 'Ranee' because, as they pointed out to Margaret, people might think she was a Malay. Margaret, remembering that the Rajah had asked her to be his queen, astounded the women when she told them that she would like it very much being taken for a Malay. That put the women quiet on the subject for the time being.

When they moved in to the Astana the Ranee was happy that they were at last in their own home. It was a beautiful home built on a low green hill overlooking the Sarawak river. It was made up of three bungalows supported by brick pillars and stood twenty feet above the ground. The largest bungalow in the centre contained the reception rooms, dining and

sitting rooms which were large, airy and cool. The smaller bungalows had two bedrooms each with bathrooms attached. The Rajah and Ranee lived in the western bungalow reserving the eastern one for visitors. The one feature of the Astana that Margaret loved was the large verandah and this was where she was to pass many of her happiest hours in Sarawak. The big garden with its beautiful green lawns, bamboo trees and exotic plants, was surrounded by many paths which led off into the thick jungle that seemed to stretch for miles and miles around.

The bathrooms, the likes of which she had never seen before, were a surprise to her. A short flight of wooden steps led from the bedroom down to the bathroom which was very dark due to the absence of any window. The bath was nowhere in sight, at least not the type she was looking for. But she soon became quite attached to the large stone tank filled with water and before long was an expert in the use of the water dipper. The name by which Margaret was to be known was still a cause for some concern among the English ladies. However, the matter was soon settled when a bottle of medicine was delivered to the Astana with the name 'Mrs Brooke' on it. The Rajah was furious and ordered the medicine bottle sent back immediately to have the correct title of his wife 'The Ranee' put on it. From then on the English women knew her as the 'Ranee'. Her Malay friends went a step further by insisting on addressing her as the 'Rajah Ranee'. The Rajah did not want his wife to become too familiar with the English women in Kuching which was a wish she herself was quite willing to go along with. She did not want to concern herself with the gossip they seemed to take so much delight in.

With the passing of time Margaret began to admire her husband more and more for the way in which he governed his country. She knew he always held the interests of his people at heart and he was forever looking for ways to make things better for them. The only thing she felt sad about was his cold reserved manner and his obvious lack of any sense of humour.

Margaret soon settled down to life in Kuching and every Tuesday she would hold a reception for the English community in the Astana. She found their conversation lacking though, and was rather surprised to find they showed little or no interest at all in the affairs of Sarawak. They seemed more interested in the well being of their shrubs and plants which they had sent out to them from England. Their lives seemed full of petty quarrels and she found it very sad to see such a small group of English people, settled so far from home, who seemed to derive great pleasure from rowing with each other. They appeared to her ignorant of the world and of society in general and finding themselves in a remote faraway land, began to think of

themselves as people of some importance. She had found herself a good friend in Talip the butler, who had also served the first Rajah faithfully for many years.

By now Margaret felt it was time for her to make the acquaintance of all the Malay women in Kuching. She realised that all the Haji's she'd met since she arrived just had to have wives or sisters tucked away somewhere. But, as was the custom of the day, local women were not allowed to appear in public unless accompanied by a male. With Talip's help she decided to arrange a party to meet all the wives of her much cherished Malay Haji's. Talip was also instrumental in instructing her how to behave like a Ranee and when the day for the party arrived, he insisted that the Ranee wait until all the guests had assembled before making her entrance.

The prospect of meeting her subjects was perhaps just as daunting to Margaret as it was to them. However, when she made her grand entrance it's questionable as to who was more nervous, the assembled party of Malay women or the young Ranee, who so desperately wanted to be a part of their culture and society. When she entered the reception room Margaret was overawed by the scene before her. They were all there — all the Malay women of Kuching — looking like a sea of colours in their beautiful sarongs, scarves and mantillas, bedecked with gold ornaments that jingled each time they moved and, combined with the swishing of silk, — sounded like music to her ears. The party was a great success and with the help of Talip, and her Malay/English dictionary, she was able to converse with her subjects. They all loved her and made her promise that should she ever feel lonely or sad she was to send for her Malay friends. Datin Isa, who was the oldest of the ladies and seemed to be the spokeswoman, soon took Margaret under her wing.

The Ranee loved the dress of the Malay women so much that she soon took to wearing it quite regularly; a move that pleased the Rajah greatly along with the party she had given. For the first time he didn't even complain about the expense. The most satisfying feeling she got from wearing a sarong was that it made her feel like a Malay. Her first sarong was made from cheap cotton and silk bought from the bazaar. When Datin Isa saw how much the Ranee loved to dress in a sarong she rounded up the other wives and between them they proceeded to weave a sarong and scarf of gold thread. A dark blue satin jacket with gold plaques and rows of gold buttons on the sleeves, and a gauze veil which came from Mecca were added to enhance the outfit. This ensemble was then presented to the Ranee who was completely overwhelmed with such a gift and the care shown to her by the ladies.

Ranee Margaret with Mrs Maxwell and Malay ladies

Before the birth of her baby Margaret had spent a lot of time travelling up and down the country with the Rajah, one of the very few European women of her time to have done so. She made many friends during these trips and felt quite sad when her adventurous sojourns into the interior were restricted with the birth of her baby. Her daughter Ghita was born in September 1870, an experience which Margaret found rather unpleasant and which the Rajah was rather disappointed about as he had hoped for a son and heir for Sarawak. Mother and baby were both doing well so the day after the birth the Rajah decided to take himself off for a cruise to call on some of his residencies.

Feeding the baby proved a slight problem. The Ranee couldn't nurse the infant and at that time Kuching didn't have any cows — the only answer was goats milk. Datin Isa spread the word about the town that a strong healthy goat was required to feed the new arrival. Almost everyone who owned a goat in Kuching brought their animal to the Astana. The front lawn was covered with goats but only one was needed. The doctor went out to inspect the animals thoroughly and eventually settled for one that looked healthy and strong. The other disappointed goat owners removed their animals and baby Ghita thrived on her goats milk. Datin Isa loved the baby and was a frequent visitor at the Astana as were the other Malay ladies.

By now a few more European women had arrived to add to the population of Kuching and Margaret was able to resume her weekly gatherings. Some, like her, had young babies which provided the topic of conversation, but she was still amazed and disappointed at the lack of interest the European women showed in the country which was to be their home for the next few years. They spent most of their time reminiscing about England and never bothered much about anything or anyone local.

It's not difficult to understand that the Ranee led two very different lives; one with her very proper and conservative English friends and the other with the people she found so warm and sincere — her local friends. She always encouraged the local women to come and go freely to the Astana but they never abused that privilege and always showed her the respect she earned as the wife of the Rajah. She was very happy when they came to visit and loved to watch them as they viewed their full length reflected image in her mirror. If the evenings were fine they would stroll through the well kept lawns smelling the roses, gardenias and the exotic plants and flowers known only to the tropics. A gentle breeze would blow in from the sea to mingle with the sweet smelling blossoms filling the Astana with an exotic aroma.

It saddened the Ranee greatly that many of the women of Kuching couldn't read or write so she made up her mind to do something about it. She was herself a very well educated woman and wanted to impart some of her knowledge to the local women. The Ranee had a hard task ahead of her as she had to teach the women in the Arabic script. There was no woman in the town who could teach Arabic but there was a man, Incik Sawal. As Malay women then were not supposed to be seen in the company of a man, other than their husbands or male relatives, Margaret had to learn Arabic from Incik Sawal and then, after each lesson the women would arrive at the Astana and she would pass on what she had learned to them.

This method of learning was proving very successful but there were the older sceptics who still felt that women were not meant to learn to read and write. Datin Isa considered it a dangerous precedent for women to know how to write. She felt that it would be no time at all before the young virgins of Kuching would be writing love notes to their desired ones. 'Dangerous', she said. However, Datin Isa's misgivings were put to rest when the Rajah himself approved of what his wife was doing. If it was good enough for the Rajah then of course it was also good enough for Datin Isa.

By this stage of their marriage the Rajah was hardly ever in Kuching. He was always going off into the interior for months on end to mingle with his people leaving the young Ranee to fend for herself. Margaret, however, understood this and continued with her own life in Kuching. Her garden parties, her visits from her Malay friends and the simple pleasures she derived from being in a land with such exquisite sunsets and beautiful people were life enough for her. By now she was pregnant again and contented and happy with her situation.

The Ranee gave birth to twin boys in February 1872. James Harry and Charles Clayton were healthy babies and brought great joy to the Rajah and Ranee. The local people weren't too happy about the birth of the twins as twins meant bad luck in the East. In early 1873 when the Ranee gave birth to a still-born son the local people felt that the twins had brought the bad fortune to the family. Unfortunately, after this last birth Margaret was also very ill taking a long time to recover. As the baby had not been christianed the Bishop would not allow it to be buried in the portion of consecrated ground that had been set aside in the Astana grounds and, where some years before, two of the wives of Capt. Brooke Brooke were buried. This upset the Ranee greatly but there was no way the Bishop was going to consider finding a tiny grave in so holy a plot of ground. When her friends the Malay Datuks heard about this state of affairs they were

Datin Isa and her daughters

outraged and indignant at such an act. Although good Muslims themselves they went to the Astana, placed the tiny baby in a coffin, and carried it to a plot in the cemetry in the dead of night where it was buried with affection and dignity. Margaret was forever grateful for this very honourable and caring deed which endeared her friends to her more than ever.

The Rajah, although a silent and undemonstrative person, was greatly alarmed by the Ranee's illness and hardly ever left her side during this time. He fed and cared for her with great tenderness and would sit alone for hours on the verandah awaiting an improvement in her condition. Finally Margaret began to gradually improve and when she was in a reasonable state of good health again the Rajah decided that she needed a complete break. So, after almost four years in Kuching during which time the Ranee had delivered four babies in a climate that had sapped all her energy and strength, the Rajah arranged for their return to England for a year or so. In the Autumn of 1873 they boarded a P&O liner in Singapore, '*Hydaspes*,' that was to take them back to England.

Unfortunately, life deals some cruel blows and it wasn't to be long before the vibrant young Ranee was to face so much tragedy.

Tragedy Befalls the Family at Sea

The prospect of returning to England was a very pleasant one for Margaret. While she loved Sarawak and all her friends there, there were occasions when she would sit alone crying and wonder if she were truly happy or not. The Rajah now spent more and more of his time travelling about his domain leaving the young Ranee to fend for herself. Had it not been for her treasured friends she would have been very much alone. However, four years in a tropical land had taken its toll on her and she was happy to be returning to England.

In the autumn of 1873, the Rajah and Ranee, with their three children, set sail for Singapore. There they spent two nights before boarding the P & O liner that would take them to England. During their stay in Singapore there was a Cholera epidemic but the Rajah's family continued to maintain good health — until they reached Aden. The events that occured from then on were a nightmare. In the short space of three days the children were all stricken with cholera. The Rajah and Ranee spent frantic hours tending their sick children. There were other ill passengers on board the ship but everyone chipped in to nurse the little ones praying that they would pull through the terrible sickness. Sad to say, all their efforts were in vain. The children died one by one within a few hours of each other and were buried in the Red Sea. Little Ghita was just three years old while the twins, James and Charles, had not yet reached their second birthday. It shouldn't be difficult to perceive the sorrow and misery the Rajah and Ranee must have felt at losing their three babies and having to bury them at sea.

When the news reached Sarawak the State was plunged into mourning. Everyone was shocked by the tragedy and there was much sympathy felt for the young Ranee. Datin Isa was devastated by the loss. She had adored the children as though they were her own. Many were concerned as to how the Ranee would cope in the face of so much sorrow. The Rajah was deeply concerned for his wife's well-being and when the ship docked in Alexandria, the chief port of Egypt, he decided they should disembark and remove themselves from the vessel that was so full of painful memories. They made their way to Cairo where the Rajah felt that a little sight-seeing would help Margaret to recover and face up to her great loss. Charles did

everything possible to help his wife accept the fate that had befallen them. Strange as it may seem, being in Cairo among the old ancient pyramids had its own calming and soothing effect on Margaret. Soon she was recovered enough to travel on to London where she and the Rajah quickly found themselves caught up in the hustle and bustle of city life. The young Ranee enjoyed socialising in London much more than the Rajah who very quickly became bored with the whole scene. He hated London and being a rather reserved and shy man who had spent most of his years abroad he was like a fish out of water.

It wasn't long before the subject of money had to be broached once more as the Ranee was in great need of some warm winter clothing. After much "wheeling and dealing" she finally managed to 'squeeze' out of the Rajah two day-dresses, a best dress for Sundays and one evening gown with a modestly cut 'V' neckline. The Rajah, with his Eastern way of thinking, wouldn't allow Margaret to shop alone and insisted on going with her. Consequently, the few clothes she bought were all chosen by her husband whose taste in ladies fashion left a great deal to be desired. But Margaret, never being one to dwell on minor issues, was actually able to see an amusing side to her husband's cautious ways with money. She knew that in his own strange way he was very fond of her and at times he even spoke very highly of her. They rented a house in the country and before long settled down to an enjoyable life shared with close friends and relatives. This was a very happy time for Margaret as she had at last made friends with women of her own age. The Rajah busied himself as always with his horses and hunting trips.

When winter was over Margaret found, much to her annoyance, that there was another baby on the way. Having babies was never a pleasurable experience for her and she was upset with the latest news. She cried a lot and it was only with the help of her Aunt that she managed to resign herself to her condition. The Rajah insisted they move back to London where they would be close to a good doctor and, on the 21st September 1874, the Ranee gave birth to her son Vyner, who was destined to be the third white Rajah of Sarawak. His arrival proved a source of great joy to both the Rajah and Ranee and was some consolation for the great loss which they both still felt.

The second winter in England proved to be every bit as enjoyable as the first. The Rajah pursued his love of hunting with great gusto and his young wife was enjoying herself once again with her friends. She felt that the trip to England had done them both a great deal of good. But all too soon it was

time to say goodbye and return to Sarawak. The parting was a particularly sad one as they were leaving their young son behind. Margaret consoled herself with the fact that Vyner was under the good care of the McDougalls. Bishop Mc Dougall and his wife Harriette were old family friends and had themselves spent many years in Sarawak during the reign of James Brooke, the first white Rajah.

So, almost two years after they had left, the Rajah and Ranee set sail once again for Sarawak. The journey was quite uneventful but must surely have brought sad memories flooding back as the P & O liner treaded its way through the sea that had become the watery grave of their little lost family. Their arrival in Sarawak was every bit the joyous occasion as the first time and when they rounded the bend and Margaret sighted the waiting crowd, she knew that she was again back among friends. All the Europeans and officials of the town were there to greet them but most important of all to the Ranee, her local friends turned out in full force. Once all the formalities had been dispensed with Margaret sat with Datin Isa on the lawn of the Astana, shaded from the glaring sun by the trees and enraptured by the smell of her tropical plants.

Datin Isa was anxious to hear the news of England but even more so, she wanted to hear all about the young Rajah Muda. Remembering the difficulty they had trying to find suitable goats to feed the other babies the Datin knew that Vyner was better off in England. Even more so since he was under the care of the Mc Dougalls — a couple she knew very well and approved of whole-heartedly. It wasn't to be too long though before the young Rajah Muda would be arriving in Sarawak, which was where the Ranee felt he rightfully belonged.

Now Margaret was again able to enjoy an occasional trip into the interior with her husband. Being of an adventurous nature she seemed happiest when she was trecking through jungles and swamps. When the Rajah decided to travel up the Baram River and venture into what was then Brunei territory he brought the Ranee along. She was the symbol of peace whenever he ventured into uncertain territory! Travelling about through the jungles, swamps and rivers of Sarawak was something that most people read about in novels. Margaret was living the real thing — but unfortunately without the danger. She longed for a little excitement and adventure to 'spice' up her life. But it seems that the closest she ever came to danger was when the 'Sri Sarawak' had to drop anchor for two days at the mouth of the Baram River due to strong winds, and, when she was holed up in the fort at Simanggang surrounded by a party of Kayans. They

said they had come to join the Rajah but Margaret wasn't quite sure about their intentions so,with a little bit of socialising, drinking and bluffing, she managed to keep them happy until the Rajah put in an appearance.

Back in Kuching Margaret kept herself busy with the daily happenings of life around her. She looked forward to the rare occasions when a passing ship would pull into Kuching and the Captain and Officers would be entertained at the Astana. The Rajah was quite accommodating whenever anyone happened to pass by — at least until the Italians put in an appearance! It seems that one of the young Italian sailors spent most of the evening serenading the Ranee with love songs while she accompanied him on the piano. The Rajah stormed off to his rooms in anger and his wife quite happily played on well into the night. Charles was indeed furious that his wife could sing "love duets under his very nose". Her reply to that was "The fact of your very nose being present made it all so safe". The situation between them remained cool until the Italians departed. It was one of the rare occasions when the Rajah allowed his feelings to surface. How Margaret wished he could have extended his sympathy towards her when the news of the death of her brother George reached her. But she knew her husband well and she also knew that it was asking too much for him to care about matters not concerning Sarawak. She grieved alone for her brother.

Margaret's son Vyner was brought out to Sarawak and soon after she found she was having another baby. A second son Bertram, was born in 1876 which pleased the Rajah very much. The following two years saw a decline in the Ranee's health. She suffered frequent attacks of malaria which left her miserably thin and weak and in 1878 the family returned again to England. Once there Margaret's health improved greatly. Unfortunately she was a little distressed to find that there was another addition to the family on the way. In November 1879 her third son Harry was born — an event which she felt spoiled her holiday. The Ranee was a good mother and loved her children dearly, but the inconvenience one had to go through to have them was a side of motherhood that just didn't appeal to her. After Harry's birth they all enjoyed what remained of the holiday. Her task of supplying healthy heirs for the Raj was completed and before long it was time to set sail once again for Sarawak.

The Ranee felt a strong sense of duty towards her husband and his kingdom and knew she must return. But she was faced with the problem of her children. It was widely believed in those days that a tropical country wasn't a healthy place for growing children. With the memory of the deaths of her last family still very much alive she decided to leave them behind in

England, a decision she found very painful. There were times when she would sit and wonder that had she been able to forsee the requirements her husband expected would she have been so eager to become his 'queen'. Their's was a strange marriage. The Rajah was probably never in love with his wife who was twenty years younger, nor she with him. She admired him and he wanted a young healthy woman who would provide him with heirs. But Margaret felt that perhaps no one person could or should ever attain total happiness out of life. If they did it wouldn't do any good because without the usual hurts how was one going to understand the problems of everday life. She certainly had her share of problems. She was married to a difficult man who saw her every expenditure as an extravagance and she had survived the loss of her young family. Even then hard years lay ahead of her.

The Final Years

Back in Sarawak life once again returned to its normal routine for the Rajah and Ranee. He, busy as usual with his affairs of government and she, with her much loved local friends who were always eager for news of her three sons in England. The weekly tea-parties with the European women of the town were resumed and gossip was still as petty as ever. The Rajah took to spending even more of his time away from Kuching and Margaret missed her sons very much. Having to leave children behind at school in those days was very common for parents living overseas so she wasn't alone in that respect.

The Ranee loved being back in Sarawak but, as time passed, her health broke down again and she became very ill. It was then the Rajah decided that his wife should return to England for some years and give herself a chance to regain her health. She could set up home with her children and he would visit from time to time. This arrangement pleased the Ranee as she wanted to be with her children — but it also frightened her. Since her marriage she never had any money of her own to spend and now she was being sent back to England to set up home and take care of her own finances. She knew she couldn't expect to get very much from Charles as he would not want to deplete the Sarawak Treasury for the sake of his family. They were his responsibility; and she was right. He agreed to pay her £2,000 a year and hoped she would manage it carefully and not exceed the amount.

When Margaret sailed from Singapore in 1882 Charles handed her six five pound notes to cover incidental expenses. She was also to pay for her passage from Marseilles to London and the thirty pounds would be deducted from her first months allowance. On arrival in London she rented a fairly decent house and was very happy to be able to set up home with her sons there. Having to count her pennies constantly was a great strain. If the choice had been left to her she would gladly have stayed with the Rajah's sister and her husband. But Charles wouldn't hear of it as he didn't want his family involved in his private affairs. As Ranee, she couldn't live a 'mean' existence as she felt it would only damage the prestige of Sarawak so she had to live a 'penny pinching' life and at the same time give the

The Dayang Muda and her son Anthony Brooke

The Ranee Muda

The Dayang Bungsu

impression that she well off. Even her brother wasn't aware of her financial problems. She was reduced to selling some of her jewellery in order to make ends meet. Despite all of this Margaret soon began to enjoy living back in England very much. She made a great many friends among the literary and artistic personalities in London and was enjoying a modest social life.

The Rajah purchased a house in England and he soon took to spending two months of the year living there during the hunting season, but the Ranee rarely stayed there. In 1887, she returned to Sarawak with her sons for a visit. During their stay the Rajah spent most of his time outstation and she saw very little of him. However, he did return to England with them when they left and, once there, they enjoyed a little entertaining and attended a few social functions together. Shortly after their return Bertram, the Tuan Muda, suffered a very serious back injury while playing football and was confined to bed for the next four years. Being involved with the care of her son made it impossible for Margaret to return to Sarawak. Charles still paid his yearly visits to England and they would sometimes see each other if the occasion called for it. Margaret had now accepted the fact that her husband was simply bored with her. He was very comfortable living his bachelor lifestyle once more and had no need of her in Sarawak. But when Bertram recovered and she was in good health herself, she had a great longing to pay a visit to Sarawak. She wrote to the Rajah expressing this desire but his reply was not a very encouraging one. He did give his permission though, provided she paid for the trip out herself. This she did, and in May 1895, Margaret once again rounded the bend of the Sarawak River and was as overwhelmed as ever when the majestic mountain of Santubong loomed before her.

The Rajah, waiting at the landing stage, was not very enthusiastic in his welcome making it most obvious that he didn't want her there. But Margaret decided not to be put off by this and was overjoyed when, by the afternoon, all her Malay friends were swarming the Astana to welcome her back. Some cried, some laughed, and many pleaded with her to live again in Sarawak. They talked until the stars came out and then it was time for each of them to get into their sampans and paddle their way home. She had missed all of this. Her friends, her garden with its exotic plants that filled the air with their aroma, and the glorious sunsets of Sarawak.

After a few days the Ranee began to sense that she was not very well liked at all by the Rajah's officials, a fact that did not surprise her very much. The attitude the Rajah had towards his wife in public didn't do much

Ranee Margaret and the Grey Friars Orchestra

to elevate her in anyone's eyes. She knew he would much rather live alone now. He had his heirs well secured so she was no longer needed. Apart from that, having a wife around necessitated certain rules and a way of life which he couldn't tolerate. In spite of this they never quarrelled and their mutual interest in Sarawak and its people formed a very strong bond between them. She would never allow a word to be said against him in her presence.

Margaret and Bertram had only been back in Kuching a short time when the Rajah left to do some hunting in England. This was both a surprise and a disappointment to her but she decided that it wasn't going to stop her from enjoying what was to be her last trip to Sarawak. She and Bertram visited several places including Sibu and Kapit, and travelled up the Rajang River where they enjoyed the excitement of shooting the Belaga rapids. There was a hidden streak in Margaret that loved flirting with danger — and going through the rapids, with huge rocks and boulders coming at them from all sides, was a very exhilarating experience. When she was in Kuching she spent her time with her many friends. They sat talking about the old days and laughing over the good times and the experiences they had shared together. But the time was drawing near for the Ranee to leave and everyone was feeling very sad. Margaret knew that once she left this time she would never be back. It was an impossible thought to expect the Rajah to ever agree to her living in Sarawak again and the chance of another holiday also seemed out of the question. Her husband had reached the stage where he couldn't even remain in her presence for very long. The fact that he departed for England soon after her arrival was evidence enough of this. So it was, with a very grief stricken heart, that Margaret bade farewell to Sarawak and all her loyal friends for the last time in 1895.

In England she soon got on with her life again. She was back with her musical, literary and artistic friends and before very long she had set up her own orchestra. Her youngest son Harry lived with her for a time; while Vyner was in Sarawak and Bertram was in the army. She corresponded regularly with her husband keeping him informed of the happenings in England. When her three sons eventually married the weddings were occasions for the Ranee and Rajah to appear in public together. The Rajah retired to England in December 1916, where he lived alone, hardly seeing his wife, until his death on May 17, 1917, just before his 88th birthday. Before his death he had bought the Ranee a little cottage of her own in the country where she could spend her winters.

When she wasn't living there she spent her time in a rented house at Ascot called 'Grey Friars' which the Rajah eventually purchased and willed to his son Vyner. With her children married the days were indeed lonely for Margaret. The death of her youngest son Harry at a very young age saddended her greatly. He was always a great friend to her. His wife had died a few years before leaving a son, James, behind.

Margaret felt that she had led a good life. It saddened her that her marriage wasn't all it should have been. She had a lot of understanding and patience with the Rajah's ways. She saw him as a rather jelous man who wished to bask alone in the love and affection of his subjects. He didn't want anyone sharing it with him least of all a wife. He inherited a kingdom from his uncle that was in a very bad state financially. She understood this and knew it was the reason for his concern with money. He loved Sarawak more than anything else but his wife felt that if he had taken the time to become friends with his family his life would perhaps have been very different. But it seems that he didn't want it that way. Neither of them ever loved each other but the day he handed her the scrap of paper asking her to be his Queen, Margaret just couldn't resist the offer. She grew to love Sarawak for its beauty and its people and years later when she wrote her book 'Good Morning and Good Night', she talked about the poetry and romance of a land that was embedded deep in her heart. She wondered many times during the last years of her life if anyone even remembered her name any more apart from her Malay friends, their children and their grandchildren.

The married life of the Rajah and Ranee was a strange one. But Charles was forever grateful to his wife for the love she showed for Sarawak and its people. She did a lot of good during the seventeen years she lived here. Her admiration for the way her husband governed his land never faltered. It's sad to think though, that in their old age when they could have brought each other so much comfort they chose to live out their final years alone and lonely.

Margaret Brooke (nee de Windt) the first white Ranee of Sarawak, died in England on December 1, 1936. She had just celebrated her 87th birthday and it was 40 years since she had been in Sarawak. She lived a long life that was filled with uncertainty, adventure, heartache and loneliness. It was a life that very few women of her time would have travelled half way round the world for. For a young girl of twenty to undertake such a lifestyle in a land that was then considered uncivilised was a great achievement. She was indeed a very remarkable woman and if her name has been

pushed to the back of our minds perhaps this 'glimpse into the past' will remind us of her once again.

The Ranee Margaret Brooke

SECRET SOCIETIES AND THE REBELLION OF 1857

When James Brooke became Rajah he soon realised that the small colony of Hakka Chinese living in Sarawak could prove to be a great asset, and so set about encouraging the immigration of more Chinese to the State. It wasn't long before a number of Hokkien shopkeepers and merchants arrived to settle in Kuching while others, particularly the Chinese from Swatow, set about establishing themselves as farmers and market gardeners in the First Division. The Hakkas had, long before Brooke rule, already settled in Sarawak living in accordance with their own laws and customs. Hence, the relationship between this group and Brooke was a very amiable one.

By the 1850's, the number of Chinese living in the country was still quite small; but that was soon to change with the arrival of thousands of Chinese from the Dutch territory of Borneo over the border, who fled to Sarawak to escape the tyranny of their more powerful and stronger rivals ——— the Chinese of Montrado. This latest influx consisted mainly of gold-miners plus a few farmers. The miners quickly established themselves at Bau, Paku and Tundong, and came under the control of a Kongsi, or Company. The farmers branched out and settled at Siniawan and Segobang, living a peaceful life until they were forced into the rebellion by the more rebellious and aggressive miners, many of whom were all that was left of societies which had been driven out of Dutch territory. The principal village and headquarters of the Kongsi was Bau.

It was by now a well known fact that a Secret Society had been forming in Bau for many years with its leading members still loyal followers of the Brunei nobels. The Society was known as the Sam-Tiau-Kiau-Hueh, and was an offshoot of the Thien-Ti Hueh ..... or Triad Society ..... of China. The Triad Society was already firmly established in Singapore and its far-reaching impact was felt throughout the East. It was easy to sense when the Society was about to become active as it left a trail of some very strong evidence in its wake ——— a series of murders of the Chinese who refused to join it. Those who wouldn't join were considered untrustworthy and put to death. Their blood was drunk and an ear cut off and sent to the leader of the Society to show that the *'traitor'* had been taken care of.

The Triad Society was established in China in the 17th Century with the object of restoring the Ming dynasty that had been brought to an end around 1628. The original origin of the Triad Society was a political one; but over the years it lost its political character becoming socialistic and anarchical. The motto of the Triad was "Obey Heaven and Work Righteousness" —— objectives which the members of the Society seldom worked towards. The punishment for being associated in any way with such a Society in China was decapitation, or worse still, persecution and torture so unbearable as to make death a merciful release. In Sarawak, the Brooke Government had introduced the death penalty as punishment for being the leader of any Secret Society.

By early 1850, the Sam-Tiau-Kiau Hueh was soon gathering strength among the gold-miners, its members and leaders becoming more offensive and stubborn as it did so. Chinese were being forced to enrol by persuasion and death threats and an agent was brought over from the Triad Society in Singapore to help further the ambitions of the Society in Bau. The agent, *Kah Yan*, soon came to the attention of the Government and was subsequently arrested and sentenced to death. Any others who tried to influence and encourage the Society in Bau after that were fined and flogged.

In 1852, when a government officer was sent to arrest a criminal in Bau who was also well known as a member of the Society, the Chinese from the area who had, on more than one occasion, proved their aggresiveness and rebelliousness, prevented the officer from carrying out his duty. The Tuan Muda, Charles Brooke, was quickly despatched to Bau with a strong force but although the Chinese were well armed, they did not at that time consider themselves strong enough to put up a fight and with humble apologies handed the wanted man over to the Tuan Muda. The Chinese Kongsi was then ordered to build a fort at Belidah, below Siniawan, and equip it with arms and ammunition. They also had to pay the wages of the fortmen. The purpose of the fort was to maintain a check on the Chinese. It was put under the command of Sherip Matusain with a small garrison of Malays.

The next move on the Rajah's part was to prove a grave mistake. Brooke was aware that the Chinese were, slowly but steadily, building up their collection of arms and ammunition, which in actual fact was totally unnecessary. Living as they did amongst the peaceable Land Dayaks, they had no need of weapons or firearms to protect themselves. The Rajah ordered them to hand over one hundred muskets but he later changed his mind. The Society saw a useful lesson in this move and as a result, decided

to feign submission to the Government until they were better equipped and more prepared for what they had in mind. The Tuan Muda was of the opinion that, by retracting his original order to confiscate the weapons, the Rajah had made a serious mistake, and he commented afterwards:

> "It is a fault to be too severe; but either the one course or the other should be adopted, forgiveness or punishment".

Charles viewed the Chinese as an enterprising and energetic people who were in favour of progress and improvements in the State, having the foresight to see the advantages that could be gained. Although, when he first arrived in Sarawak he was of the common belief that the Chinese were 'all rascals and thieves', he soon realised that they were as honest as most other people, and he said of them:

> " .... a poor show these Eastern countries would make without their energetic presence".

By 1857, although there were only about 4,000 Chinese in Sarawak located mainly in the mining areas - there were many gold-miners in settlements over the border in the territory of the Sultan of Sambas. The leaders of the Society in Bau were confident that when they carried out their plans they could depend on their neighbours to come to their aid. The Sultan of Sambas was also willing to offer every encouragement in any attempt to overthrow the Government of Sarawak. He was insanely jealous of how prosperous the State was becoming under Brooke rule, and irritated by the fact that many of the Dayaks from his territory had fled from his own misrule to the safe confines of the Brooke Government.

Trouble flared up in China in 1856, which accelerated when Commissioner Yeh offered a reward of $30 for every English head taken and brought to him. By the time rumours of the troubles in China reached Singapore they had greatly magnified in detail, stirring up the sentiments of the Chinese there and resulting in a rebellion. When news of the disturbances in China and Singapore reached Sarawak, it stimulated feelings of unrest amongst the Chinese living in the State. At the same time, a Commission of Inquiry was being held in London into the conduct of the Rajah. The British Government refused to offer any assistance to Sarawak and the Chinese believed that this was positive proof that England looked disapprovingly upon the rule of the Rajah. Unfortunately also, the gold-miners had been recently convicted of illicit trade in opium and were fined £150, a small amount if one were to take into consideration the amount of money made by the Kongsi from smuggling opium. The Government held the monopoly on the opium trade in the State and the

A group of Davaks

consumption in Bau at one time reached as much as sixty balls a month. But when the demand for opium dropped to one half that amount, due to the smuggling activities of the Kongsi, the Government demanded that the Kongsi continue to pay the taxes on opium at the same rate as they had always done. Consequently, although they were no longer using the same amount, they were still forced to pay for sixty balls. These incidences provided sufficient reasons to encourage the Chinese to revolt.

The Kongsi in Bau were now well involved in planning their surprise attack on Kuching. Since they did not want to give an excuse to the British Government to interfere they decided to massacre the Rajah and his officials only, sparing the lives of the few English missionaries and merchants resident in Kuching who were not members of the Rajah's staff. The Land Dayaks in the State were a peaceful and timid people indisposed to war, while the handful of white men living there were loyal to Brooke rule. But there was also a group of disloyal Malays who were still under the strong influence of the Rajah's old enemy, the Pengiran Makota, who now held a position of supreme power in Brunei; governing the mind of the mentally ill Sultan and watching carefully for the slightest opportunity of disrupting Brooke rule in Sarawak.

By the end of 1856, the Rajah was in Singapore trying to recover his health and strength after a bout of illness. Charles, the Tuan Muda, was in Sekrang, busy supervising the construction of a new fort there, when news reached him requesting his immediate return to Kuching for the coming Chinese New Year festivities. He was also informed of rumours of an attempt by the Chinese to overthrow the Government and establish their own independent rule. The Tuan Muda went to seek the aid of Abang Aing, the principal Sekrang chief, who could offer little assistance as he was ill with smallpox; but he promised Charles that if trouble did break out he would send his brother with an army of Dayaks to help defend Kuching. The Tuan Muda then rushed back to Kuching only to find that all was quiet there and presented no cause for alarm. Satisfied, he returned to Sekrang; but Mr Arthur Crookshank, who was in charge of the Government during the absence of the Rajah, the Tuan Muda and the Tuan Besar who was in England, decided to take precautions anyway. He ordered the small stockades manned with a sufficient garrison which provided the only defence for the town.

February 14, 1857, just four days before the insurrection, saw the appearance in Brunei of a Chinese man from Sarawak who had been expelled from the State for joining a secret society. He was discovered trying to tempt the Chinese servants of Spencer St John, Consul General in

Brunei, to go to Sarawak and participate in the general massacre of the white men there. It's also suspected that this same man was actually an agent of the Kongsi in Bau sent to inform Makota of the coming insurrection. Another discovery was that proposals had been made to a few disaffected Malays in Sarawak to just keep their eyes closed if they did not want to participate in the coming rebellion.

The Rajah returned to Kuching a couple of days later and was briefed by Mr Crookshank on the rumours of a revolt and the steps he had taken for the protection of the capital. Mr Middleton, the Inspector of Police, informed the Rajah that he was also of the opinion that precautions should be taken, but the Rajah refused to believe that any cause for concern existed. He ordered that the garrison from the forts be dismissed; which was an unwise move as from then onwards no watch was kept for the impending attack.

So it was, that on February 18th 1857, while the townspeople of Kuching went about their daily business, the head of the Kongsi in Bau was assembling more than six hundred of his most capable men; providing them with arms and ammunition and marching them to Tundong on the Sarawak river; where a fleet of large boats was waiting to carry them to Kuching. On their slow journey down the river they were seen by a Malay who actually overtook them in his canoe. Seeing how well armed they were he realised that they were going to attack Kuching. Paddling as fast as he could the Malay went straight to the town to warn of the danger. He informed his relatives of what he had seen but they were inclined to disbelieve him and told him not to go telling the Rajah such a ridiculous story. However, one of the relatives rushed off to tell the Dato' Bandar who, according to Spencer St John, said, "The Rajah is unwell, we have heard similar reports for the last twenty years..... don't go and bother him about it. I will tell him in the morning what your relative says." St John went on to say that the reason for this secure attitude was caused "by the universal belief that the Chinese could not commit so great a folly as to attempt to seize the government of the country, considering that they did not number above 4,000, while at that time the Malays and Dayaks within the Sarawak territories amounted to 200,000 at least.It is strange however," "St John continued,"and was an unpardonable neglect of the Bandar, not to have sent a fast boat up the river to ascertain what was really going on. Had he done so, the town and numerous lives would have been saved".

Shortly after midnight on the 18th, the Chinese squadron made their way unnoticed into Kuching. They divided into two parties, one proceeding to attack the government buildings and the other the stockades. The

Rajah's house was then attacked and the Rajah and his steward, Mr Penty, managed to escape out the bathroom door. The rebels were too busy trying to kill whom they thought was the Rajah; but it was a seventeen year old young man, Mr Nicholetts, who had just arrived from Labuan on a visit to Kuching and was staying with the Rajah. His head was severed from his body, placed on the end of a long pole, and paraded around the town with the rebels shouting triumphantly that they had killed the Rajah. Meanwhile, the Rajah had escaped by diving under one of the Chinese boats and swimming across a little creek beside his bungalow, where he lay exhausted on the bank at the other side until he was finally able to reach the bungalow of a Malay official. Mr Penty, unable to swim, escaped by running into the jungle surrounding the house. A brave group of Malays, led by Haji Bua Hasan, the then Datu' Imaum, rushed to the aid of the Rajah ——— unaware that he had already escaped ——— but were driven back by the rebels. Mr Crookshank was severely wounded in the attack and his young wife left for dead. Mr Middleton's house was attacked but he managed to escape, while his wife hid in a large water jar in the bathroom where she was trapped. The rebels seized her two children. A young man, Mr Richard Wellington of the Borneo Company, who was staying with the Middletons, was murdered trying to protect the children. The eldest child was questioned as to the whereabouts of his father and his mother could hear him desperately pleading for his life. She heard him scream in terror as his head was about to be severed from his body, and watched as the decapitated head was kicked around like a football. The rebels then set fire to the house and the youngest boy shrieked as he was tossed into the flames and burned to death. Frozen with fear, Mrs Middleton stayed in her hiding place until the flames forced her to leave. She then jumped into a pond close by and managed to escape the certain death that awaited her at the hands of the rebels.

The stockades were next to be attacked. Mr Crymble, the Government Treasurer, lived in the one which housed the prison and contained the arsenal; and although he tried to prepare a defence when he realised what was happening, he had only four Malays with him. But between them, the brave Irishman and his inadequate 'army' of Malays tried to defend the stockade until, in the end, they had to make a run for it all seriously wounded. The other stockades held their positions but when they saw that the whole town was now in the hands of the rebels, decided to open the gates and charge. The few Malays who manned the stockades were severely wounded in the ensuing battle. "The confusion which reigned throughout the rest of the town may be imagined, as, startled by the shouts and yells of the Chinese, the inhabitants rushed to the doors and windows, and beheld night turned into day by the bright flames which rose in three

directions where the Rajah's, Mr Crookshank's, and Mr Middleton's houses were all burning at the same time." [St John]

The remaining English people whose houses had not come under attack gathered in the Mission House. They numbered six men in all, with women and children. Convinced that the Mission House would soon be attacked they were all armed with guns, deciding to try and keep the rebels at bay so that the women and children could escape into the jungle. But when daylight came a group of seven Chinese men arrived at the Mission reassuring the people there that they had no quarrel with them only with the Government. They then asked Bishop McDougall to go with them to the hospital to attend to the wounded.

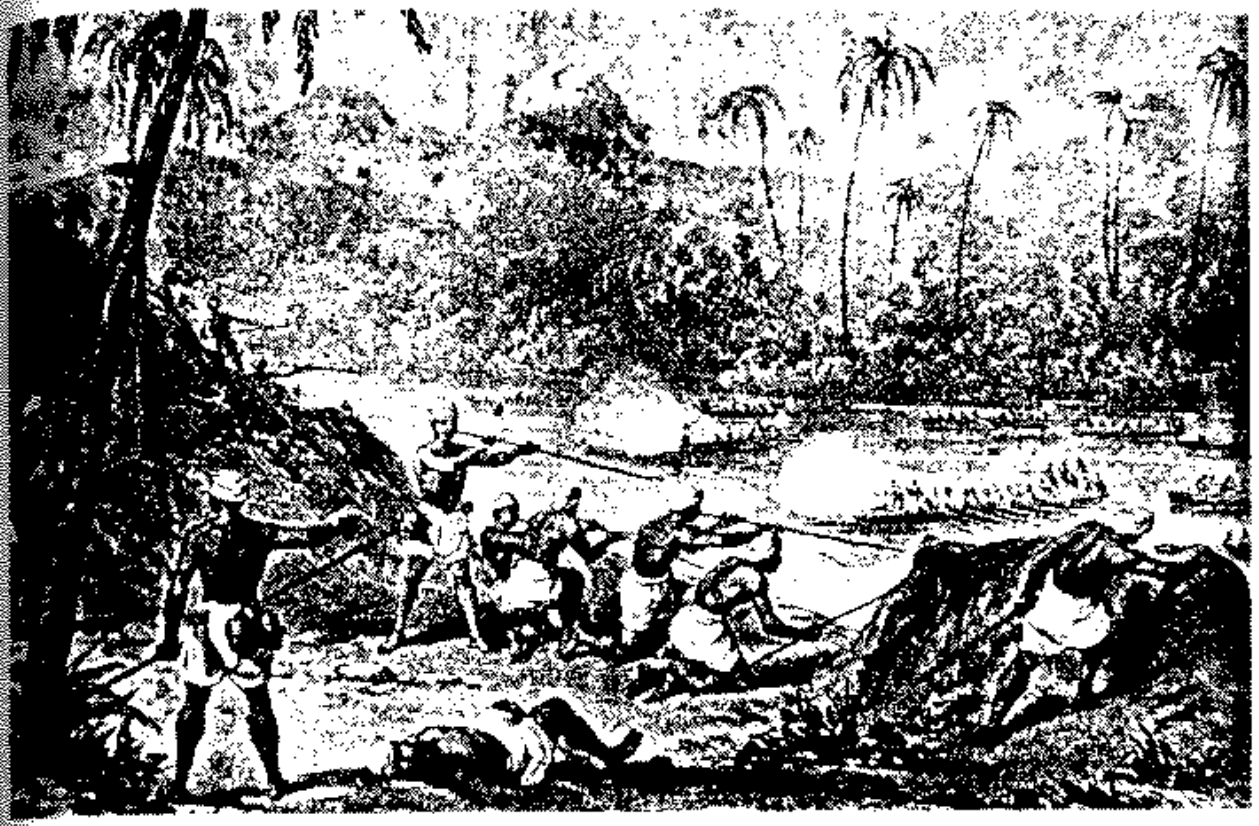
The Rajah, who had by now been joined by a number of his officers, was all in favour of organising a force with intent to suprise the victorious rebels. His efforts were to no avail though because as soon as the men volunteered, their wives and children refused to be left alone. They were not properly armed either and the Rajah had to eventually face the fact that all he finally managed to round up was a panic stricken mob. He then decided to move the women and children to an area where they would be safe from further attack. Once that was accomplished, the Rajah was joined by a Saribas Malay Chief, Abang Buyong, with a group of Malays and together they proceeded to Samarahan. Their intention was to make their way to the Batang Lupar where they could organise a force from the well equipped forts there to drive out the rebels.

Early next morning the leaders of the Society summoned the Bishop; Mr L.V. Helms, Manager of the Borneo Company, Mr Rupple, a merchant, and the Datu' Bandar to be present in the Court House. The head of the Chinese Society was seated in the Rajah's chair flanked by his secretaries. He issued the order that Mr Helms and Mr Rupple were to rule the foreign portion of the town and the Datu' Bandar was to rule the Malays. All would be answerable to the Society who had set themselves up as supreme rulers. Bishop McDougall then warned the Chinese that they were playing a dangerous game. Soon, he told them, the Tuan Muda would come to attack them with his group of Sekrang and Balau warriors, as he would most certainly want to avenge the death of his uncle the Rajah ——— whom he assumed dead. The rebels knew that the Bishop's words were not just a mere threat. They were aware of how popular the Tuan Muda was with the Sea Dayaks, and that he could very easily muster an army of thousands against them. They sent word to Charles telling him that they would not interfere with him as long as he did not interfere with them. They had also now realised that the person they had killed, and whose head they so

victoriously displayed in the town, was not the Rajah at all. They offered a large reward for the capture dead or alive of James Brooke, and, realising the danger they were in from him and his nephew, were now anxious to leave Kuching. Before doing so they forced the Malay and European chiefs present to swear allegiance to the Kongsi, threatening them with death if they did not do so.

By noon the following day the Chinese headed back up river with the spoils from their raid and attack on Kuching. As soon as they had taken their leave of the town the Malay Chiefs held a meeting in the Datu' Bandar's house. The Datu' Temenggon's son, a young man by the name of Abang Pata, was eager to avenge the attack on Kuching and expressed his determination to remain faithful to the Rajah. The other Malays present, all who were as loyal to the government as Abang Pata, realised that it just wasn't the right time to carry out an organised attack on the rebels. To begin with, most of the Malays were now scattered in all directions making sure that their womenfolk and children were moved to a safer place, but the sturdy young Plata was still eager to seek revenge. He rounded up about a dozen men and together, in a small boat, they succeeded in capturing one of the Chinese boats and killing five crew members.

When the rebels heard about this, - and that the Malays in Kuching were now preparing to resist them, - they rounded up hundreds of Chinese from upper Sarawak, forcing the agriculturists from Siniawan and Segobang to join them, and headed back to Kuching. In the meantime the Rajah was also on his way back to the capital, having been persuaded by the Malay chiefs to return and lead them in an attack against the rebels which he knew would prove futile. Upon arrival in Kuching the Rajah found the Malay houses burning away furiously, the remaining Europeans preparing to evacuate and the town in the hands of the rebels. But all was not lost for when the Malays sighted the rebel boats on the river just above the town, they bravely attacked them and were rewarded by successfully capturing ten of their largest barges which were filled with the valuables they had taken. But the most valuable plunder on board was the large supply of arms and ammunition which the Chinese had taken from Kuching. The Malays suffered heavy losses against the larger number of —— and better armed —— rebels and were eventually forced to retreat. But they secured the barges to a large trading vessel which was anchored in the centre of the river and from this vantage position were better able —— and more suitably equipped —— to resist the rebels and succeeded in forcing them to retreat somewhat. This brave and gallant group was led by the Datu' Bandar Muhammed Lana, a man known for his gentle and placid nature but whose courage came to the fore at this desperate time. But in spite of all



Attack on Rebels

Return of war prahus to Kuching

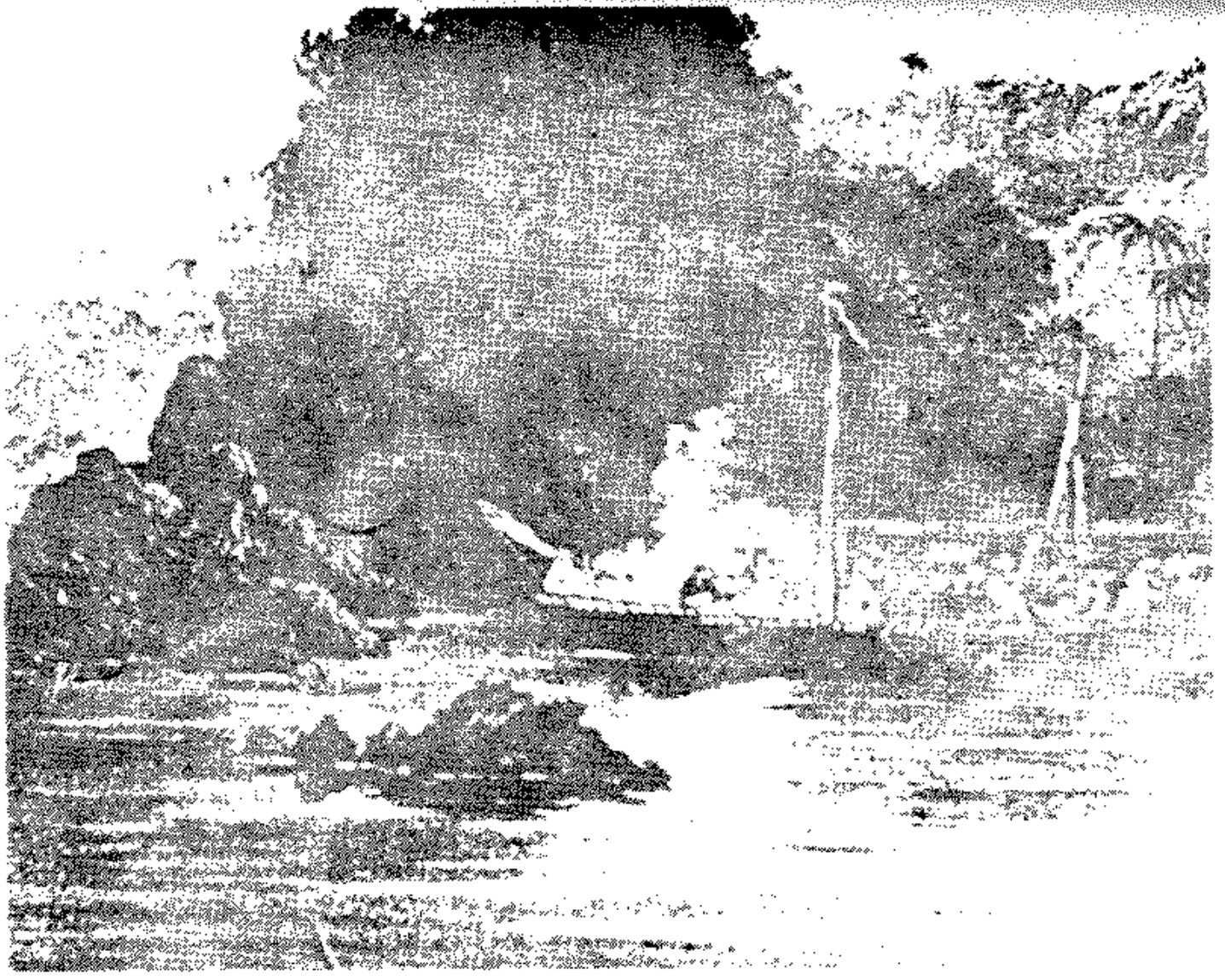
the brave attempts the rebels still held control of the town.

The Rajah also forced to retreat, decided to revert to his original plan of rounding up a force from the well equipped forts at Batang Lupar; but first of all he had to see to the evacuation of the European women and children and the wounded. This he did by sending them to Lingga in a schooner under the care of Bishop McDougall. Dejectedly, he set off to follow them himself the next day with a small fleet of Malay boats but, much to his relief, when he reached the mouth of the river he met up with a welcome sight: the Borneo Company's steamer, 'Sir James Brooke', arriving from Singapore. He wasn't aware of it then but also rushing to his aid was a large army of Dayaks led by the Tuan Muda.

When the tragic news of the attack on Kuching had reached the Tuan Muda in Sekrang he was told that the Rajah and Mr Crookshank were killed along with most of the other Europeans. He rounded up his army of Dayaks - who were eager to wreak vengence - and within an hour was on his way to the capital with hundreds of war boats accompanied by his friend and ally Abang Aing and his people. Early next morning he met up with the schooner filled with the European refugees and from them heard the good news that the Rajah and Mr Crookshank (and the other Europeans presumed dead) were still alive. Arriving in Kuching Charles discovered the town in flames but the Rajah was now back in control of the situation, although he was still on board the 'Sir James Brooke'.

The rebels, still holding the town, thought they were sitting pretty until they spotted the Borneo Company's steamer and the army of Dayaks coming up its rear. Panic stricken they fired a few wild shots and then fled the town. The Datu' Bandar and his brave army of Malays had remained on board the trading vessel and in the war boats and, despite heavy attacks from all sides, stood their ground. Earlier that morning a large party of Chinese had crossed the river to destroy the Malay Kampung (Village) on the other side. Now they were trapped there and discovered that their boats had been seized by the Dayaks who chased after them when they fled into the jungle. It's unlikely that any of them could have escaped. Those who did ended up wandering in the jungle and dying of starvation or eventually hanging themselves; which they knew to be an easier death than that which they might have to endure at the hands of their captors. The Dayaks went eagerly searching for bodies, many of which were found with money, silver and other valuables from the plunder.

The main group of rebels fled by road to Segobang from where they were able to retreat up river in their boats. The Rajah was injured and



Fight Off Tanjong Datu between British forces and Iban pirates

Kuching lay in ruins "...a mass of ashes, and confusion and ruin lay around. Half habitable debris of houses only were left. The trees for many hundreds yards around the fires were nearly all burnt black and leafless, and those remaining alive were drooping," wrote the Tuan Muda.

But the rebels' flight from Sarawak was not destined to be an easy one. They had set up a stockade at Lidah Tanah, a location which covered the right and left hand branches of the river, but an organised attack by the Sekrang and Saribas Dayaks with a small force of Malays was carried out on the stockade with much success. Arriving back in Kuching, the Chinese merchants there were gleaming with satisfaction when they saw that amongst the many prized possessions taken by the Dayaks were the heads of some of the principal leaders of the rebels. The Rajah and Tuan Muda proceeded on to Belidah, a few miles above Lidah Tanah, where they found the fort there in ruins and the inhabitants dead, wounded and dying.

An army of Malays and Dayaks was then despatched to attack the rebels at Bau and their other villages; but they had already abandoned the areas deciding to head towards the border where they thought they would find safety once in Dutch territory. But their journey proved treacherous at times. The Dayaks continued to chase them for several days, many losing their lives in the process. They succeeded though in making the Chinese fearful of their own lives, afraid to stop night or day, to eat or sleep, as they were never sure when their pursuers might come upon them. "They now arrived at a point which must[sic] have ended their career, if it had been properly held. This was Gambing Hill, which forms the frontier between Sambas and Sarawak: here was a long Dayak house, past which the Chinese could not go unless the inhabitants were favourably disposed to them." But the Dayaks were eventually bribed and the survivors of the rebel group escaped over the border where they expected to find shelter ; instead, they received their just punishment.

Those Chinese in Sambas who were not members of any Secret Society, and who were filled with hatred for the rebels who had brought so much disgrace upon them by involving their race in such a disaster, attacked and killed the majority of the large group of rebels. Of those who crossed the border, it's said that only about thirty or forty survived. According to Spencer St John, the Dutch authorities confiscated whatever arms and valuables the rebels had brought with them and returned the plunder to Kuching.

To give an exact estimate of the number of rebels killed during the insurrection is no longer possible, but it's thought to be around one

thousand. St John said that around two thousand must have escaped over the border, half of which were women and children, but this figure is said to be an underestimate.

Of the rebellion the Rajah wrote afterwards: "It was the madness, the stark staring folly of the attempt that caused it to succeed". St John wrote that the rebellion was; "the direct outcome of the loss of prestige and strength which followed the appointment of the Commission sent to try the Rajah for high crimes and misdemeanours, the favourable findings of which had never been brought home to the native mind by any act of reparation made by the British Government". This left the Chinese very much aware of the fact that England had left the Rajah to his own fate.

The English newspaper, 'The Times', had this to say, "... had they (the Chinese) had the opportunity of reading recent debates in the British Parliament, their more subtle spirits might have received further encouragement from the belief that we were not only an ultra-peaceful, but an ultra-punctilious people, and that the cutting of the Rajah Brooke's throat and the burning of the town might be considered matters beyond our cognizance, until the precise colonial status of Sarawak was determined, and whether a Kunsi Chinese (sic, Chinese Kongsi) was under the jurisdiction of any British court".

Charles, the Tuan Muda, took a more liberal view of the events that had occurred and writing after the rebellion his obvious common sense prevailed: "... their good qualities, in which they are not deficient, should be cherised and stimulated, while their bad ones are regulated by the discipline of law under a just and liberal government. They are a people specially amenable to justice and are happier under a stringent than a lenient system. But there is moderation in all things, and the Chinese soon gnash their teeth and rebel against anything like bullying and harshness."

An historical day for the Brooke Government was April 15th 1857, when the drama of the previous months finally come to an end. The entire population of Kuching and its surrounding areas lined the banks of the Sarawak river for a victorious celebration. A boat, gaily decorated with flags flying from it fluttering in the breeze and the symbol of authority, the yellow umbrella, held high was sailing up and down the river. The sound of a beating gong rebounded on the river and from amidst the splendour of decoration a lone figure stepped out to tell the people that peace had been restored to Sarawak. The rebellion had been brought to an end and the Brooke Government were again back in control of Sarawak.

THE AFTERMATH OF THE INSURRECTION

With the rebellion brought to an end and peace restored to Sarawak, the road to recovery was to prove a tedious one. The Government was now in a very serious condition and fraught with difficulties. All existing records of the past were destroyed —— burned when the rebels made a bonfire of Kuching. The excellent library in the Rajah's house which he treasured very much, was also totally destroyed and where once there stood a town, now all that was left was a heap of ashes and ruins. With the exception of the Mission House and one or two others that had not been burned by the rebels, Kuching was totally devestated.

A great number of people were left without clothes to wear and for a time, the Rajah went around in native dress which he borrowed from his friends. In England, Brooke's friend's rallied round to try as best as they could to collect enough books to replace the valuable library he had lost. Crates of books were shipped out to Sarawak and, while they would never replace those that were lost, were sufficient enough to provide a basis for building up the library again.

With his kingdom lying in ruins the Rajah, filled with despair and resentment and deserted by the British Government, contemplated appealing to a foreign power to take over Sarawak. But he soon resolved to face the difficulties that lay ahead with the help of his European assistants; the encouragement of the local people and the staunch support of his two ablebodied nephews, Charles Johnson the Tuan Muda, and Captain James Brooke Brooke the Tuan Besar. They had faced difficult situations before and could do so again; although nothing they had previously encountered could compare with the total destruction of Kuching and the loss of so many lives, valuables and property.

The State's revenue was already depleted leaving Brooke to wonder where he was going to find the money to rebuild the town and pay his officers. The Borneo Company, established just the year before the rebellion, came to the rescue and very generously lent the Rajah £5,000 to help him rebuild Kuching and a £1,000 for his own personal use. But the most encouraging gift of all was that given by the local people. The Rajah,

writing to his friend Mr Templer after the rebellion said; "their sympathy, their kindness, their entire willingness to do what they could, are all balm to a wounded spirit. We have lost everything but the hearts of the people, and that is much to retain". The loyalty of the people of all races during the rebellion was in itself an example of their feelings for the Rajah's Government.

The task of reconstructing the town was soon under way. The Europeans were housed in temporary dwellings until the government could rebuild houses for them. They were a little more fortunate than the locals because, although they too lost most of their possessions and valuables during the rebellion, they had relatives in England who were soon shipping crates of clothes and other necessities to them. The few remaining Chinese in Sarawak who had thought it best to leave after the rebellion, now returned to rebuild their old homes. The Malays were also busy restoring their section of the town and when St John paid a visit to Kuching four months later, he was surprised to see that very few traces of the catastrophe that had befallen the town remained. With the gradual influx of more Chinese from over the border, from the Straits and from China, Sarawak was soon restored to its former prosperity.

The strain on the Rajah during this period was noticed by his close friends and according to St John, he had lost his old "buoyancy and spirit". The attack on Kuching, coming as it did when the Rajah was still suffering from a bout of Malaria, and the horrible slaughter of his friends and subjects took their toll. The knowledge too that the Bishop and Mr Helms had hinted that his behaviour during the rebellion was cowardly upset him greatly. He changed from the out-going and optimistic person that he was to a man prone to bouts of moodiness and depression. Although still friendly and generous by nature he became suspicious at times of peoples' motives and angered easily.

Captain Brooke Brooke, who had been in England during the rebellion, returned to Kuching in April with his young bride Annie, whom the Rajah took an instant liking to. He settled them in his house which he had rebuilt on the site of the previous one, while he himself moved into a bungalow close by; and for the next few months he passed many a pleasant hour in the company of Annie.

To show how grateful he was to the Malays for the part they played in quelling the rebellion, the Rajah decided to pardon the leading offenders, among them the old Datu' Patinggi, Abdul Gapur, who was again allowed to take up residence in Kuching, and the Sherip Masahor who returned to Sarikei. In October James Brooke sailed for England for his first visit home in four years.

Arthur Crookshank

The Chinese had once again greatly increased in numbers and if it was thought that they should have learned a valuable lesson from the outcome of the rebellion, it did not inhibit them in any way from forming another Hueh (Secret Society). But while this new Hueh was busy growing in numbers so too was the Brooke Government growing in strength and power; and if the new Society had ever nurtured any hopes of opposing Brooke rule again they quickly vanished as the power of the government became more noticable. Though it had a perfect organization the Hueh, who had now taken over the headquarters from its predecessors in Bau, lay dormant for many years.

The year 1869 saw signs of activity within the Society as it once again prepared to oppose the government and barbariously murdered an informer. The Rajah (then Charles Brooke) was absent in England but Mr Crookshank, administering the government during his absence and not willing to take any unnecessary risks this time, took a stern view of the situation and arrested all the head-men of the Hueh. They were sentenced to be flogged and to serve long terms in prison, and when they had served their sentences were banished from Sarawak with a death sentence awaiting them should they ever decide to return. But the Hueh in Dutch Borneo, of which that in Bau was a branch, quickly reorganised the Bau Society, appointing new office-bearers whose identities were difficult to discover.

During the years 1884 and 1885, the Secret Society in Dutch Borneo was in active revolt against the government. They raided, plundered and murdered as they had done in Kuching, inciting the people to rebel, killing Dutch officials and seizing the towns. But their victory there was also short-lived as the Dutch were soon joined by reinforcements and the rebellion was brought to an end. A principal leader of the Society escaped to Sarawak where he was arrested, but the day a Dutch gunboat arrived to take him back he was found hanging in his cell, preferring to take his own life rather than face the fate that awaited him.

In 1889 at Segobang, which was the centre of a large number of Chinese pepper planters, another Hueh was established consisting mainly of criminals and members expelled from Society's in Dutch territory. Their purpose was to raise another rebellion only this time they had all taken an oath to kill everyone without queues (Chinese pigtails). Their well laid plans were disrupted on July 15th when they were surrounded, searched and taken prisoner by the Rajah's men. Documents seized at the time of their arrest attested to the objects of the Society. Six of the leaders were executed while eleven others were sentenced to life in prison. One of the

leaders who had played a principal part in the rebellion in Dutch Borneo was turned over to the Dutch authorities.

A Secret Society also existed along the Rejang River which came to light following the murders of two Chinese in 1906. Anonymous letters to the government, sent by the more law-abiding Chinese in the area, led to the arrest of many of its members. Incriminating documents were also found which linked the Society (the Lily Society) with the Triad in China whose supposed purpose was for the reinstatement of the Ming dynasty, when in actual fact all they were doing was robbing and murdering everywhere they went. Of those arrested in 1906, eight of the principal leaders were executed while ten others served long terms in prison.

But in spite of all the setbacks Sarawak suffered during those years, it still continued to prosper and grow under Brooke rule, especially so under the rule of Charles Brooke, the second white Rajah, who said of the Chinese shortly after his arrival in Sarawak;

> "A poor show these Eastern countries would make without their energetic presence".

That he was of the same opinion after the rebellion was obvious when he wrote;

> ".....their good qualities, in which they are not deficient should be cherished and stimulated."

Thankfully, Kuching was never again struck by a disaster of such magnitude; although it came very close to being burned to the ground for the second time during the great fire of 1884.

CHINESE IMMIGRATION TO SARAWAK

As a direct result of the insurrection of 1857, Chinese immigration to Sarawak came to a complete standstill. Of those already living in the State many decided to leave fearing reprisals for the way the Chinese, who were involved in the rebellion, attacked Kuching and brutally massacred innocent people. Once peace was restored most of them returned and were soon joined by more immigrants who slowly added to the growth of the Chinese community.

The Rajah James Brooke realised that if Sarawak were to continue to prosper it needed frugal and enterprising people such as the Chinese. But he was still cautious about reintroducing Chinese immigrants on a large scale whose "antecedents are far from inspiring confidence." He therefore decided to allow Chinese immigration on a small scale at first in the hope that the numbers could grow as and when they were readily accepted. By 1871 the number of Chinese living in Sarawak had reached almost five thousand. Much of the commerce was back in their hands and the sago refineries also came under their control. In 1873 a Chamber of Commerce was established in Kuching of which the Chinese formed the leading section. In 1878, the second Rajah, Charles Brooke, allotted a large area of land to the Chinese for pepper growing.

Most of the immigrants came directly from China, but the Chinese Imperial law banning immigration from the Empire made the process a slow and fitful one. The law had never been very strictly enforced from around 1860, and in 1894, it was revoked. In 1880 the government set aside sufficient land for settlers on the lower Rejang. Five hundred Chinese were settled there with a monthly allowance of rice and salt. Communications with Kuching were kept open by the monthly visits of a steamer and the government also undertook to transport goods to them at a reasonable price; to contruct a police station for the protection of the settlement, to provide them with interpreters and to see to their overall general welfare. In return the Chinese had to make the settlement a permanent one. Under these terms the settlement prospered and by 1887 there were around seven thousand Chinese in Sarawak. Some had already moved further up the Rejang towards Sibu, but by 1883, there were only about 30 Chinese living in that area.

Impressed by the industrious and hard-working settlers the Rajah then embarked on a programme to recruit more Chinese to Sarawak to help open up the country. In 1900 he met with a Chinese from Foochow, Wong Nai Siong, and an agreement was signed for Mr Wong to introduce one thousand settlers into the Rejang area, and also for farming purposes in the Sibu district, over the following eighteen months. On arrival in Sarawak, each adult emigrant was to receive an advance from the government of $30 plus $10 for each child. Their passage from China would be paid; and upon reaching Sarawak they would each receive not less than three acres of farming land where they could produce what they wished, but rice was to be given priority. The loan would be paid back over a period of five years at the rate of one-fifth a year.

Mr Wong then paid a visit to Sibu and chose as the site for the settlement the area we now know as Sungei Merah close to Sibu town. It was a good location having the advantage of a stream close by suitable for irrigation, drinking and washing purposes. He then headed back to China to recruit the settlers, which did not prove too difficult a task. The first batch of seventy-three arrived early in 1901, all of them Christians glad to leave China. The anti-Christian movement there connected with the Boxer rebellion had made things difficult for them. Also, an unusual drought had made food very scarce at the time. In spite of having to leave their homes and parents behind many of the younger Chinese were very glad to accept Mr Wong's offer of a new life in a new land; and amidst tearful farewells the prospective colonists boarded the junk that was to take them to Sarawak.

During the six days it took to reach Hong Kong many had already suffered so much from dysentry that they wished to return home. But in Hong-Kong they met a Methodist bishop, Bishop Warne, who persuaded them to continue on with their journey, even volunteering to go with them to bless their new colony. The rest of the journey proved easier and they soon reached their new land and the small settlement at Sibu. Five-hundred more followed a few days later in February and another five-hundred in March. In 1901 the government made another agreement to introduce Cantonese to the Sibu district and five thousand of them arrived altogether in ten batches of five-hundred. In addition to this organised immigration, successful settlers were also sending for their relatives to join them and very few ever returned to China. Soon children were being born to them in great numbers and by 1920, the Chinese population of Sarawak exceeded more than ten times its original number.

Chinese Immigrants

The early years of the settlers was to prove a difficult and trying period for them. Their rice crops were not growing as successfully as they had expected as the land was so unlike that which they had been used to in China. The small crops were also further depleted by heavy rains and rats from the jungles. The settlers themselves suffered greatly from sickness, loneliness and attacks from their none too friendly Dayak neighbours; not to mention the attacks they had to endure from the ever abundant insect life in the area. They lived in attap huts, which were provided for them, and many died from the bites of snakes and scorpions. The original plan had been that they would be self-supporting in six months but with all the draw-backs they suffered, they were forced to continually seek the help of Mr Wong. His funds were also growing short and in an attempt to get the loan money back from the settlers he decided to start taxing them. This resulted in the Chinese raising a strong protest and eventually Mr Wong fled the country and returned to China.

The government then appointed a young Methodist missionary, Mr Hoover, to lead the settlement; without whose help it may well have collapsed. Under his guidance the situation started to improve and he finally persuaded the Rajah to waive the repayment of the loan. The settlers then found that planting rubber and pepper was far more profitable than padi and they soon entered into a period of high prosperity. The settlement had by now spread along the banks of the Rejang and as less land became available there, new settlements were formed up river at Song, Kanowit and Kapit, and in the lower reaches of the river at Binatang and Sarikei. Each new settlement was organised under its Kang Chew who was appointed by the local Resident to act as a liaison between him and the people. The Chinese were allowed to keep their customary laws in most matters but they were not yet given any official part in the government.

There were to be many set-backs before Sibu was to reach the expanding commercial centre it is today; among them the great fire of 1928. Hoover reported then that five hundred wooden houses were burned to the ground in three hours with prosperous people reduced to living in shacks. However, the town was soon rebuilt and was also provided with a more up to date drainage system.

Many of the early settlers in Sarawak were Foochows with nearly all of them from the Wong clan. Sibu town today is still rapidly expanding and the fact that it is still a predominantly Foochow area is a constant reminder of the part they played in establishing the basis of the prosperity the town enjoys today. That struggling young colony of settlers eighty-six years ago have indeed come a long way.

Mr Ong Ewe Hai

GOLD THROUGH THE YEARS

The Borneo Company, which commenced operations in Sarawak in 1856, operated mainly in the areas now known as Malaysia, Indonesia and Thailand. The Company's vital contribution at that time towards the development and expansion of trade in these regions with the rest of the world was unequalled. They held a prominent position among other local and foreign trading firms as general merchants and import/export agents. But their most remarkable achievement was the monopoly the Company secured in the economic exploration of Sarawak. The unique relationship between the Borneo Company and three generations of Brooke rule proved an asset which helped the firm to thrive in many ways. But the most successful venture undertaken by the Company was its exploitation of the gold deposits in Sarawak; the profits of which dominated the Company's revenue from the mid 1880's to the closing of the principal mines in the 1920's. Such a large return from their investment allowed the Company to survive temporary losses in other regional activities and enabled them to expand their operations considerably.

In a letter written in 1869 by the manager of the Borneo Company in Kuching; Ludvig Verner Helms, to the President of the Royal Geographical Society in London, he said; "The soil in the entire limestone district is more or less impregnated with gold from veins which have been washed away and become decomposed. The limestone hills, some of which are nearly a thousand feet in height and contain grand and extensive caves, are traversed in various directions by mineral dykes of great extent, running for miles in an east and west direction. The ore is richest when still undisturbed and solid in the limestone...."

But the Borneo Company were to encounter some problems in their efforts to extract these riches. The main stumbling block was a group of over a thousand Chinese immigrants who had settled in the gold mining district of Bau before the arrival of James Brooke; where they laboriously washed the ores to produce the gold. They formed a totally seperate community with their own culture and habits and enjoyed a cordial relationship with Brooke when he was made Rajah. They worked hard and played hard, unlike the less active and enterprising Dayaks who, according to Helms, "work little and require little."

That there was gold in Sarawak had been known for hundreds of years, but the earliest records of large scale mining date back only to the mid-nineteenth century. Then the mining did not take place in Sarawak but over the border in the Sambas district of Dutch Borneo. Many Chinese immigrants came to the area to work the gold and many went back to China with the wealth they had acquired. But many also stayed in the area content to send what they earned back to their relatives. Since the gold area stretched over the border into the Brunei province of Sarawak, it was inivitable that some Chinese should move over the hills to work it there. However, they met with resistence from the local and Brunei Malays and it was not until Brooke took over Sarawak that they could work in peace.

The centre of the goldmining area was the settlement of Bau, which by 1850 was quite a sizeable bazaar with over one hundred shophouses. Some interesting accounts of how the gold was obtained from the Bau area have been handed down to us by writers of the time. One, writing in 1847, said that the Chinese were not the only ones to have worked the gold. He declared that the mineral occured in three main conditions; in crevices in the limestone hills, in the alluvial soil at the foot of the hills, and in the gravel and sand at the bottom of the river. The Malays, he said, preferred the easier way of obtaining the gold. They worked especially in the crevices of the limestone hills and would not allow the Chinese near these. Obtaining gold in this way was relatively simple. The crevice or hole was widened until the miner could pass through. Inside there was almost invariably a cave and the earth on the floor of the cave contained the gold. It was simply carried out and washed and the result was sufficient gold to make it a "very gainful speculation."

The Chinese on the other hand worked with the alluvium at the foot of the hills; much harder work but more rewarding in the end. Another writer has left us a detailed account of how they went about working the alluvium. To begin with they dammed up the end of a valley forming a large reservoir of water. When they opened the sluice gates, allowing the water to flow through the ditches, they threw baskets of earth into them. The rushing water carried away the mud and sand and the gold particles sank to the bottom of the ditch. About every three months the ditch was cleared out and the residue at the bottom was washed for the gold it contained. The observer was not very impressed at the efficiency of this method for he said that the women and children who were allowed to wash the earth swept away by the water also found a considerable amount of gold that had escaped the men. Another drawback was that this method of mining required a lot of labour and cooperation between the workers; thus, the working was done by companies or kongsis, consisting generally of a few hundred members.

Gold Miners in Bau

Towards the latter part of the century areas where gold could be obtained so easily were getting scarce. By 1870, some of the Chinese miners were tackling deposits of ore instead of alluvial deposits, using the time consuming practise of crushing it by hand and then panning it. The Borneo Company gave some assistance with equipment and, in 1882, erected a stamp mill to crush the gold ore. Later, they also provided pumping engines so that deep alluvial deposits below the water level could be worked. By the end of the century most of the gold deposits suited to the cruder methods of panning and sluicing had been exhausted, although there was still gold remaining in very fine particles. It was then that the Borneo Company took over with a revolutionary new process necessary for its recovery.

The Rajah James Brooke, anxious to develop his territory commercially and especially to recoup part of his personal fortune which had quickly expended in his early years as ruler, was reluctant to disturb the Chinese, particularly as their vices made them so easy to tax. They were taxed at a rate of one hundred percent on sixty balls of opium a month. When consumption fell to half that amount due to the smuggling activities of the kongsi the Rajah demanded the same monthly payment as before. This, together with some other incidences, contributed to a bloody uprising in 1857. After the murder of a young consultant metallurgist attached to the Borneo Company (whose decapitated head was suspended from the ramparts below the Borneo Company flag at the Rajah's wooden fort in Kuching), the Company despatched a schooner from their Singapore branch with arms, ammunition and food supplies. This helped considerably in quelling the insurrection, leaving the Borneo Company in a strong position to negotiate and eventually take over the gold workings at Bau. By 1884 they had bought out the largest and last of the Chinese syndicates at the gold mines. The Company agreed with the government on a fixed annual sum to be paid during the period of their working the gold.

The Borneo Company then enthusiastically pioneered the development of an experimental process involving the use of cyanide in dissolving the gold from the ore. Their engineers improved the practical application of this invention, making them the first in the Far East to employ it. This replaced the previous costly and time consuming process by which microscopic grains of gold were washed from the ores. In the 'cyanide process' the gold is dissolved from the ore in huge tanks containing a dilute cyanide solution. Then later it's deposited into shavings of zinc from which it can be recovered by smelting.

Certain difficulties were apparent during the first few years —— some were overcome but others proved more difficult —— for example, certain

types of ore proved unsatisfactory for the method used. Nevertheless, gold to the value of almost twenty six million dollars was extracted during the period 1898 to 1921. To the original plant at Bau were added new plants at Bidi, shaft mining at Jambusan and the great opencast mine at Tai Parit, which alone yielded gold to the value of two and a quarter million dollars, producing 496,225 fine ounces from two million tons of ore. In order to make the mine a large opencast working, large quantities of overlaying rock had to be removed first. By 1920 the mine had reached proportions of two thousand feet in length with a depth of over two hundred feet in one spot. But by this stage the danger of flooding had become very great and the large pumps could not cope with the enormous volume of water involved. It was also felt that the mine was practically exhausted and so it was closed down in 1921. After that other plants decided to give up their mineral rights in the area.

The Borneo Company's gold activities in Sarawak bestowed considerable benefits on the community. At that time gold was the most profitable single venture in Sarawak, both to the government and the Borneo Company. During the peak years of production between the 1880's and the 1920's, the government received over £200,000 in royalties and workers in the gold mines were paid more than £2 million in wages. The annual gold production during the years 1901 to 1916 exceeded one million dollars in value. The success of the Company's efforts helped to stimulate further activity in the region including the extraction of other minerals such as antimony, diamonds, silver and cinnabar (mercury ore), which occured near the gold. As Helms wrote, "Such a variety of valuable minerals within so small a district is unprecedented."

But the search for gold went on. Perhaps it was no longer viable for the Borneo Company to continue but others saw the mines as a good source of income. Small but rich deposits were stil known to exist and the Chinese, many of whom worked for the Company, decided to work these deposits using the simple cyanide process they had learned. Some worked the tailings dumped by the Borneo Company plants, which contained a lot of gold-bearing ore not properly broken up, made more amenable to treatment by weathering. Gold production increased and by 1930, exports of gold were resumed, though on a much smaller scale than before. During the Japanese occupation the labour force was dispersed to grow food and most of their equipment was taken away from them. In post-war years recovery was slow but later began to rise a little. Prospecting was made difficult by the terrain but occasionally there was a rich find, usually stumbled upon by accident. In one such case a tree was torn away from a slope during a storm exposing the entrance to a small cave which turned out to be very rich in gold.

Gold no longer plays an important part in the economy of Sarawak but its historical role has been very significant. Not only did it bring considerable revenue to the State during its peak production years in the first two decades of the century, but it was also responsible for attracting Chinese settlers to this part of the world.

THE GREAT FIRE OF KUCHING 1884

By the year 1884, Kuching had not only prospered but had also grown considerably in size; so much so, that by 1888, it's reported to have included the whole area within a two mile radius of the Court-House. But its expansion was about to suffer another setback. As with the insurrection of 1857, Kuching came very close to being reduced to a pile of ashes in the fire of 1884.

On a sunday morning, the 20th January 1884, fire broke out in a shophouse on the corner of Carpenter Street and China Street and within minutes, the flames had burst through the roof. The alarm was raised at 1.15 am and the clanging of the fire-engine's bell, as it raced through the stillness of the night, roused the residents of Kuching from their slumber. By the time the fire-engine reached the scene the flames, fanned by a strong breeze, had already spread down the row of shophouses on China Street with almost amazing rapidity. Within minutes sparks had landed on the roofs of the shophouses on the other side of the street, which were all wooden structures and housed the gambling dens, so that very soon both sides of the street were ablaze.

The residents of the town were all out in full force and lent a hand by passing buckets of water around to quench the blaze; but nothing could stop the fury of the flames as the fire continued on its journey towards Main Bazaar. The shophouses along the Bazaar were fairly new brick structures built in 1872, but they were soon consumed by the flames and the scene was one of total chaos. The owners of the shops, trying desperately to salvage their goods, threw as much as they could out on to the roadside but the goods were very quickly carried off by looters.

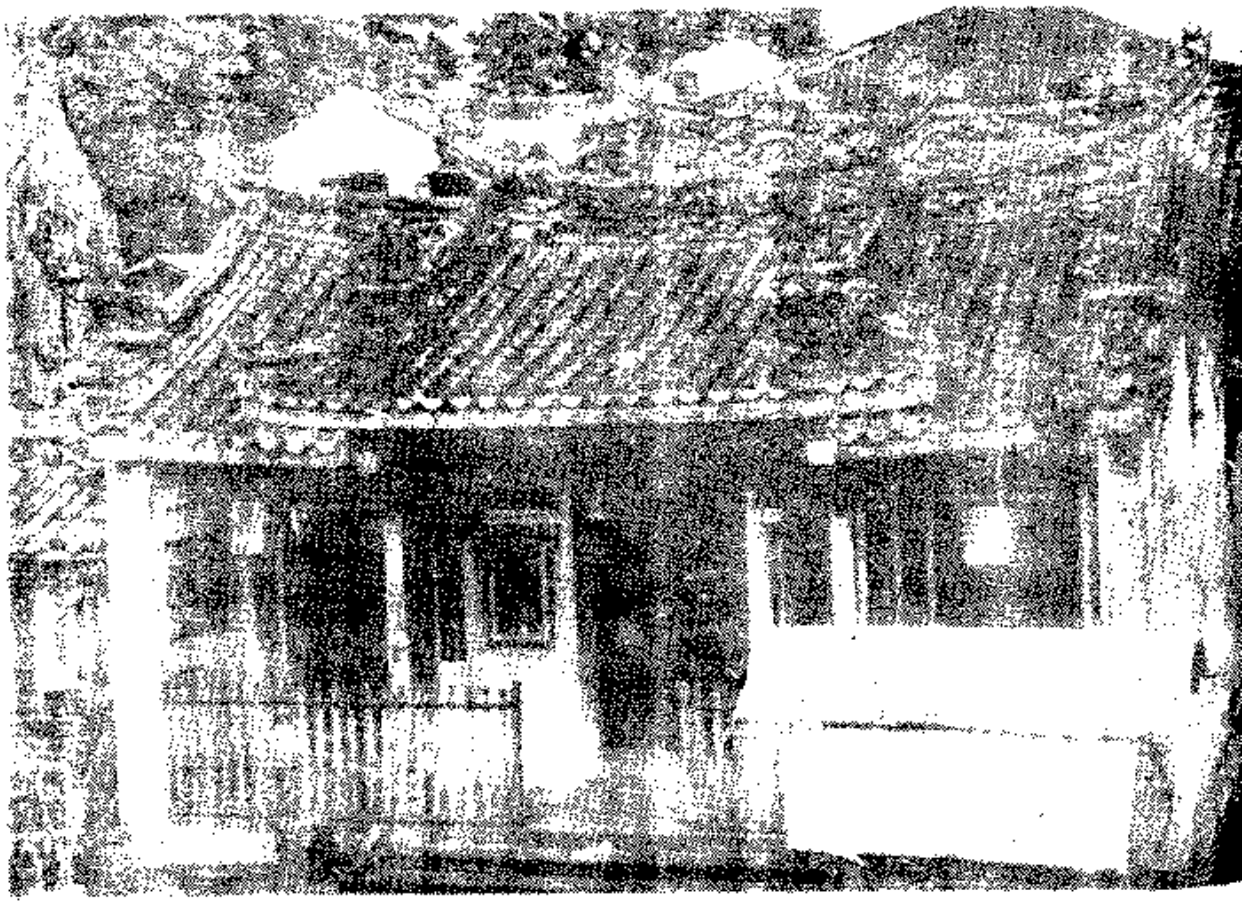
It seemed apparent by then that no human effort could save any of the houses that lay in the path of the flames. The scene was 'indescribable' as the flames continued on their trail of destruction along Main Bazaar. A sudden change in the wind caused the fire to change its direction and it spread back towards Carpenter Street, burning everything in its path, and was now on a straight course for the Police Station. Following a suggestion, the main drains and ditches at the corner of the Dispensary were blocked

with bales of gambier. This provided a supply of water around the town and, with the water from the hospital well, the fire-engine was able to hose down the Police Station in the hope that it wouldn't go up in flames. The flames continued down Rock Road heading towards the Court House. The Rajah's stables were now in danger of being consumed by the fire and, after the horses had been evacuated, the belian shingled roof was pulled down, as bilian is a highly inflammable material. The situation was now critical and a general exodus of the contents from the houses in the area was carried out. Medicines, bandages, bottles and other stores were cleared out of the Dispensary and the green around the Court House was piled high with the salvaged goods from all around. It was then suggested that one of the houses near the Dispensary should be blown up, which would cause a gap in the line of the fire and curtail the flames in that area. The gun-powder was sent for but fortunately, it was not necessary to use it. Had it been used, it would have resulted in many casualties. Fate intervened and a heavy downpour of rain soon put out the fire along Rock Road. The danger to that part of the town was over but the fire still raged in China Street, Bishopsgate Street and Main Bazaar. It was now feared that the whole of the Bazaar would soon be up in flames. But miraculously, another sudden change in the wind, followed by heavy rain, made it impossible for the fire to sustain itself. By 6 am the fire was virtually extinguished but the fire-engine, manned by prisoners under the supervision of Mr Mathie, kept spraying water on the smouldering ruins until all signs of the danger had passed.

During the five hours Kuching was burning it was almost reduced to ashes. At the final count of the damage done, one hundred and thirty shophouses were completely burned to the ground while another six were partly destroyed. Both sides of Carpenter Street, from Bishopsgate Street to the Police Station, were destroyed. Both sides of Bishopsgate Street, from the mission gates to the Main Bazaar, were also destroyed; as was China Street, from Carpenter Street to the Main Bazaar. Fortunately, no lives were lost in the fire.

A few interesting tales have been told as to why the wind suddenly changed, preventing the fire from doing further damage and from spreading along the whole length of Carpenter Street to the Chinese temple at the end. A lot of people believed that it was the boy God, Kuek Seng Ong, from the temple that saved the town from ruin. The Chinese in Kuching who had immigrated from the Swatow district in China are said to have brought with them a black flag; a symbol of their temple God in their home country. A number of people claimed to have seen a young boy

Old Kuching Fire Station in 1938



Chinese Temple in Wayang Street

dressed in red, standing on top of the roofs of some attap houses in the area we now know as Ewe Hai Street, waving a black flag about. It was believed that he was Kuek Seng Ong and because of his presence, the fire stopped there and the wind suddenly changed saving the rest of the town from destruction. The temple, at the corner of Wayang Street and Ewe Hai Street, had not been a very popular one before the fire but after the 'miracle' performed by Kueh Seng Ong, more people took to worshipping there. The temple was rebuilt in 1897 in his honour, and he was given the honoured position of principal God.

Incidentally, that was not the first time Kuek Seng Ong had been honoured for extinguishing a fire. During the reign of Emporer Hun Hong, in the Ching dynasty, the Royal Palace of Peking was almost reduced to ashes in a fire. The boy God appeared and put out the fire. In return he was awarded the yellow dragon robe by the Emperor, and conferred the title of 'Prince'. He then became known as 'Poh Kong Teck Choon Ong'.

In the months following the fire the Court-House in Kuching was a busy place as many of the looters were caught and brought to trial. The police were constantly on the watch for any signs of a change in the living standards of the local people and rounded up a number of law-breakers. One was the local pawn-broker who claimed to have been ruined during the fire, with all of his goods destroyed. But he aroused suspicion when he continued to live in style. He was arrested while trying to leave for Singapore and when his luggage was searched, it revealed gold and silver jewellery, silver bars and other valuables. Some were found in boxes while others were found in bundles at the bottom of a bag of durians. He was sentenced to a long term in prison.

Over the next two years Kuching was rebuilt with around seventy shophouses completed in 1885, and the remainder in 1886. Temporary attap houses were constructed for the homeless while the work was carried out and it was at this time too that Ewe Hai Street, with forty shophouses, was added to Kuching. As ordered by the government, all new buildings were brick structured, and when the Rajah issued the order that many found amusing, he said; "In future, all wooden shop-houses shall be built of brick". Thankfully, Kuching never again suffered a disaster of such magnitude.

THE BORNEO COMPANY AND SARAWAK

With the recent take-over of the trading activities within the Borneo Company by Sebor Sdn Bhd, perhaps it's an appropriate time to look back over the years and get an insight into the part the Borneo Company played in the history of Sarawak.

The Rajah James Brooke had always been very reluctant to allow any form of foreign enterprise to invest in Sarawak. He did not want outside interference in the State as he had seen the results of unscrupulous activities elsewhere. The Rajah was not a businessman and came under some very heavy criticism over the way he ran the country; a fact that was recognised by his good friend Mr John Templer. It was Templer who finally persuaded the Rajah that Sarawak could only benefit through the introduction of a foreign company with enough capital to secure the development of the State.

Templer succeeded in interesting Mr Robert Henderson of Messrs R & J Henderson, London, in the matter. Mr Henderson was persuaded to raise the necessary capital to set up a company to be known as the Borneo Company. The purpose of the Company was to exploit the government-controlled monopolies such as antimony and coal, to organize sago and gutta-percha trade, and to offer further financial assistance to governmental commercial schemes. It was also to be the only foreign public company to operate in Sarawak.

In May 1856, when negotiations were finally completed, the Borneo Company Limited was registered. Its Directors were Messrs R. Henderson (Chairman), J.C. Templer, J.D. Nicol, John Smith, Francis Richardson and John Harvey (Managing Director). The Rajah was keen to have his private secretary, Spencer St John, as the Managing Director of the Company in Sarawak, but the Board had their own ideas and insisted on having a trained businessman to act as its local director. Mr Ludvig Verner Helms, a man of Danish origin, who had been in charge of the antimony mines in the State since 1851, was nominated for the post. He was a capable, although complacent, man whom the Rajah never liked, mainly because he had no say in appointing him. But the Company managed to soothe the Rajah's hurt feelings by purchasing a steamer that was to ply between Kuching

and Singapore and naming it 'Sir James Brooke'. The steamer was well armed as a necessary precaution against pirates.

In 1857, not long after the formation of the Company, the Chinese insurrection took place. That incident, coupled with the various political intrigues that the Rajah had to contend with due to the question of his heir and successor, left the future prosperity of Sarawak and the prospects of the Company looking very bleak indeed. But the Borneo Company decided to struggle on, and if it was not for the help they gave at the time of the insurrection in the form of ammunition, arms and stores, the Rajah might not have been able to drive out the rebels and quell the rebellion as hastily as he did. The Company also lent the Rajah £5,000 for the necessary repairs to Kuching which were needed after the rebellion, and also £1,000 for his own personal needs, as it was now well known that the Rajah had exhausted all his own private funds on Sarawak.

About this time, the Borneo Company almost decided to withdraw from the State as they had suffered severe losses. A coalmine which they tried to set up on the Sadong river, operating without trained mining engineers, resulted in a very costly failure. They very soon had to start pressing the Rajah for repayment of the money they had lent him, and the situation developed into a rather upleasant one in which the Rajah described the behaviour of the Borneo Company as 'discourteous and avaricious'. As he couldn't afford to pay back the money himself he borrowed it from his friend, Miss Angela Burdett-Coutts. But he never forgave the Company for pressing him for the money when he was in such need himself, and neither did his successors. During the depression of 1931-32, it was suggested to the third Rajah, Vyner Brooke, that he advance money to the Borneo Company. He replied that since it had done its best to ruin his great-uncle he didn't see why he should help it now.

Until 1898, the Company showed no balance of profit from Sarawak. They were using the profits from their operations elsewhere to cover their heavy losses in the State. Since its formation, the Company had paid out more than £200,000 in mining royalities to the government, and workers in the mines were paid more than £2m in wages, which was a prosperous advantage to the State. But the decision by the Company to persevere in Sarawak eventually paid off forty years later, when they reaped the benefits from their successful extraction of gold in the State. Most of the Company's revenue came from government mining interests and from the farming out of monopolies, many of which were held by the Company. It still remained the only European Company in the State, and until the setting up of the Chartered Bank in 1924, all banking facilities were carried

Miners at work

Borneo Company Premises Sarawak established 1856

out by either the Borneo Company or the Government. In spite of the feelings the Brookes had for the Company since they pressed the Rajah for repayment of the loan, they still looked upon its role as a valuable asset to Sarawak, as is evident from a speech made by the Rajah Charles Brooke during celebrations to mark the thirtieth year of the Raj.

> "The Company has held fast and stuck to its work through the perils and dangers and the adversity which Sarawak has experienced and encountered. It has shown a solid and stolid example to merchants, and has formed a basis for mercantile operations; and the importance of the presence in a new State of such a large and influential body as the Borneo Company cannot be overrated."

The role the Company played in the import and export trades of Kuching was not only profitable to them but also to the inhabitants as a whole. Besides the import of goods from Britain, local products were also sought out and marketed by the Company. The minute books, kept in London, record that the firm dealt in sago, oil, pepper, tea, hides, coconut, rubber and rice. In developing these trades, the primitive nature of the commercial life in Sarawak in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was such, that backward linkages in any commodity export took place as a matter of course. These usually involved complex and time comsuming processes as in the manufacture of sago for example. From the early 1860's, after wresting control from immigrant traders as happened in the case of the gold mines, the sago plantations of Mukah were taken over by the Borneo Company. Sago was originally obtained from palm trees growing in salt marshes, which had to be cut down and the trunk split in two. The sago, at this stage a creamy, sticky substance, was scraped out from the heart of the tree, dropping on to a wooden platform floating on top of a canoe. Water was then poured over it and it was well trodden upon, producing a thick liquid which flowed through a perforated mat covering the platform into the canoe below which, when full, was taken to the Company's refinery (Founded by Helms). It was then purified for export to the English market, where it was used in glucose and the traditional sago pudding.

The export of oil was also an important source of income. Unfortunately, earnings from particular commodities cannot be separated in the surviving accounts, but correspondence on the subject with the Rajah suggests that local oil springs yielded large quantities of this valuable mineral. In a letter dated 1903, the Rajah Charles Brooke forwarded to the Company 'a 5 gallon drum of oil, lately discovered in the Brunei river' requesting a report

on its quality and value, revealing that 'about 10,000 gallons' were available, and he intended to ship it to Kuching 'to your care for sale, and also send it to Singapore'. The Rajah helped maintain the Borneo Company's monopoly in this commodity by instructing the local authorities to prevent any interested parties, native or European, from visiting the oil spring. For this he expected to play a large part in the business, sending a copy of the way he proposed 'to manage the sale of oil in the market'. He pointed out the need to obtain extra smiths and iron to make the necessary 5 and 10 gallon drums and insisted that 'one tenth of all oil turned out belongs to the Government'. The Borneo Company was subsequently to act as agents for the Dutch Oil Co. of Sarawak.

The Borneo Company also formed the Sarawak Planting Co. and Sarawak Rubber Estates Ltd. These ventures helped in developing the local economy not only by marketing of products, but also in the exploration and clearing of unknown parts of the island for settlement and agriculture.

Ludvig Helms, the Borneo Company manager in 1870, also acted as British Consul. The other principal British inhabitants numbered only eleven — the Resident, Mr Crookshank and his wife, the local Bishop, Mr Chambers and his wife, St John, the Government Treasurer, Major Rodway, who commanded the native forces, three young men who formed the Rajah's staff, and the Rajah Charles Brooke and his wife the Ranee Margaret. The benevolent rule of the Rajah James Brooke (and particularly that of Charles, the second white Rajah) and the direct access to him that was enjoyed by even his most humblest subjects, created ideal circumstances for the flourishing of the Borneo Company in this region. Despite occasional differences of opinion, the Rajah continued to maintain that the presence of the Borneo Company was a great asset to the State. He attended many company business meetings, revealing his close contact with, and increasing dependence upon, the firm.

So strong was this link with the Rajahs, that the monopoly of the Company managed to survive outside competition until the end of Brooke rule and the granting of independence. Evidence of competing companies has proved elusive. A directory of trades and professions in Sarawak in 1873 lists the Company's branch officers and the employees at the cinnabar and antimony mines and the sago factory. Local merchants ran general stores, sugar, pepper and gambier estates, farms and kilns. The Borneo Company managed the wharves at Kuching and the coal depot. Oya was the base of The Sarawak Trading Company run by Messrs Walters, Crocker & Co with native assistants, which was established in 1870, but no other record of this company has been discovered. A local

firm, Tiong Bee Ann & Co. shared the Borneo Company's sago manufacturing rights from 1893. However, the Company's prominence in this area compared with their other branches was remarkable. The Borneo Company were awarded the prestigious Lloyd's Agency in Sarawak in 1874, an honour they already held in Singapore and Bangkok.

The activities of an informal group of merchants, based in Liverpool, Glasgow and London in the 1830's, 40's and 50's had thus spread to Calcutta and Bombay, to Singapore and thence to seize the new commercial opportunities offered in Sarawak and Siam, where thriving businesses have been developed and maintained. They survived two world wars, and contributed dramatically to the recent growth of the Inchcape Group of Companies. In many respects their story is similar to that of other elements of the Group; their involvement in the import/export trades and shipping in Sarawak, Siam and Singapore, and many of the ports of India and British Malaya. That they were directed and sponsored from London makes them comparable with the shipping agencies established through Sir William Mackinnon and the B.I. which were held together and strengthened by the entrepreneurial drive of the first Earl of Inchcape, and later by his grandson. Yet, although their activities were in many ways similar, they ventured into new regions and new commodities. The overall policy, or *modus vivendi*, of the Inchcape Group, is that they would venture into a new country following traditional business activities, or try a new operation in familiar surroundings. Thus, it may be seen that from early times, this hallmark of the Group was already being employed. From their original bases, Anglo-Siam and the Borneo Company struck out. The former into teak, and the latter from an established footing in Sarawak into a new activity — gold-mining.

This specialisation in one particular commodity, and the backward and forward linkages they made to exploit to the full the commercial potential of these two valuable trading goods, marks them out from the other Inchcape Companies in the years before the Second World War. Yet, the total disruption of the Far East during the years 1939 to 1945, and the successes of the independence movements led to a reduction in the commercial autonomy of these firms. This has caused their diversification almost back to the informal 'anything goes' days of their origin. It was inevitable that the role of the Borneo Company in Sarawak would change over the years. As the economic development of the State was broadened the Company was to relinquish many of its original functions. But the work it did during the first half century of its existence was in keeping with the aims of the 'White Rajahs' of Sarawak; to develop the country slowly while protecting it from speculation and ruthless exploitation.

LEISURELY PASTIMES OF THE PAST

Have you ever wondered how people passed their leisurely hours more than one hundred years ago? There weren't any of the modern coveniences we enjoy today such as TV, video, cinema or even golf and tennis; so other means of enjoyment had to be found.

The most popular crowd-pulling event of the 1870's was the annual regatta held every New Year's day in Kuching. The programme would commence very early with breakfast served at the Rajah's Arms Hotel. About 60 or more distinguished members of the community would be invited to attend, and if the Rajah and Ranee were in town they would grace the occasion with their presence. When breakfast was over everyone would make their way down to the river-side to await the boom of the cannon which signalled the start of the regatta. The wives and children of the government officers would sit on the verandah of the Astana and hundreds of local women - all dressed up in their best clothes - would hide themselves in small covered boats by the side of the river. Their aim of course was to watch the regatta without being seen themselves. The local women of that time were rarely, if ever, seen around the town.

This really was the most exciting day of the year for everyone and it was also a public holiday. Public holdays were few, and apart from the birthdays of the Rajah and Ranee, the only other holidays were Hari-Raya and Christmas. It's easy to understand why people would journey from miles around to be in Kuching for this great event.

About twenty principal races would be held during the day. These were for boats of unlimited size and number of crew. In 1918, a gentleman by the name of Encik Abu Bakar entered a very long boat called the 'Ayeshah'. It was a hundred and eight feet in length and had ninety-nine men paddling away furiously. Unfortunately, it came in last each time. The winning boat in the same year was an entry by a group of Dayaks from the Second Division. It was ninety feet long with a crew of fifty-four.

The races were each held over a two mile course and it's been said that there can be nothing more exciting or exhilarating to watch, as the sight of

all those long boats swishing down the river on the tide. There were a lot of attractive prizes to be won but the most coveted prize of all was the Rajah's Trophy. Between races there were lots of activities organized to keep the crowd entertained. One of the most popular games was called the 'greasy boom'. Young men, out to impress the ladies, would take on the daring task of walking across a greasy tree trunk, often with some very amusing results. There were also games for the children to participate in making the annual regatta a most enjoyable family outing.

The First World War almost brought an end to this much enjoyed event when it was suggested that the regatta should be suspended for some time; but such a suggestion was not at all popular with the locals. They felt that it would bring bad luck if the new year was not given its traditional start and pleaded with the authorities to allow the regatta to continue. And so it carried on as usual and became an annual event for many years dating back to the time of the Rajah James Brooke.

Another annual event which proved very popular was race-week. Racing arrived in Sarawak during the 1890's and the race-week was always held during the month of August. Once it was known that racing was such an attraction for most people race days very soon became public holidays.

For weeks before the event race-week provided the main topic of conversation for miles around. For those people working in the out-stations it provided a much needed break from the monotony of rural life. All officers that could be spared would attend the races and practically the whole population of Kuching, not to mention the arrivals from out of town, would flock to the race-course to watch the events.

There was a small grandstand for local and European dignitaries with a bar situated close by for the men and a tea room for the ladies. The Rajah, who was a very punctual man, would arrive in his carriage before the first race and as he entered, the National Anthem, which was composed by the Ranee, would be played. All the local men would be sitting along the few benches provided while the women would find themselves some secluded spot where they could watch the race and not be seen. The riders were usually officers on their own mounts which were mainly small ponies brought in from North Borneo.

Race-week wasn't just confined to racing though. There would also be tennis and croquet tournaments and a dance would be held at the end of the week to round off the festivities. A portion of the Esplanade (Central

Racing in progress 1910

Kuching Race Course 1890

Padang) was set aside for a croquet lawn. It was a game that never really caught on in Sarawak as it was mainly confined to the ladies and way back then, no local woman would be seen dead playing games of any sort. It was quite a common sight then to see the few European women there were in Kuching playing croquet in their long dresses and heads adorned with big wide-brimmed hats to keep the sun from their faces.

Tennis had put in an appearance around the time the Sarawak Club was opened in 1876. There wasn't anyplace else to play except the Club's courts. Ladies were not allowed on them at all. In 1908 though the ladies were to have their own tennis court when a club was set up which later became known as 'The Ranee's Club', and was close to where the old museum building is located in Kuching. This club had one tennis court open to the gentler sex only. It was put to very good use and it was not an uncommon sight in those days to see one or two ladies keeping a look out for unwary men making their way down into the town. They would then be dragged in to play a game of 'forbidden' mixed tennis. Most of the men were delighted to oblige but there were the few who objected strongly to the womens' behaviour. It was felt that they were leading the men astray and that before the advent of so many European women Kuching had been a more restful and peaceful place! Incidentally, there were in all, about 14 European women living in Kuching around this time.

Golf came into fashion in Kuching around the early 1890's and was introduced by the expatriate community. There wasn't any golf course to play on which proved a great handicap to those who liked to keep in practice. The Rajah Charles Brooke was sympathetic to the plight of the golfers and allowed them to use some of the government grazing land to practise on. The Rajah loved to ride and kept a number of horses and, since the Astana supplied all the milk requirements to the people of Kuching, cows were also to be found grazing on the 'ad hoc' golf course. Trying to avoid horses and cows while practising their drives was no easy task for even the most experienced golfers. So, after numerous requests, and the realization that golf was here to stay, the Rajah finally agreed to lay a golf course at government expense. In the mid 1890's the first golf course in the country was declared open in Kuching. It was only a six hole course and extended across what is now known as Crookshank Road.

Soon the popularity of the game grew, not only in numbers but also in status, and it became obvious that the course was too small. Once again the Rajah was approached for more land so that the course could be extended to nine holes. A pepper garden located close to Central Road had to be cleared to provide the extra three holes.

The Ladies Club in Kuching

Kuching Regatta Early 1900's

The new nine hole golf course was very much enjoyed by all who could play the game, but it wasn't to be for long. Once the construction of Crookshank Road got under way the course once again had to revert back to six holes. In order to accommodate various other projects the whole golf course was more or less re-located. It wasn't until the 1950's though that the six holes were once more converted into a nine hole course. All that moving about finally produced a nine hole golf course for the Sarawak Club in Kuching. Since then golf courses have sprung up throughout Sarawak and the game has tremendous appeal for a lot of people.

Tennis has also grown in popularity since those long ago days when there were very few courts to play on. Perhaps one thing remains unchanged. The fact that lady players still have to try enticing the men to join them for a game of mixed doubles! It's been some time now since we have had a regatta but no doubt they too will come back into fashion one of these days. As for croquet — it just died a natural death.

When it was considered proper for local women to appear around town and take part in various sporting events they showed their strong competitive spirit. Not for them a gentle game like croquet where all you did was putt a ball through a hoop!

Sports in Sarawak have come a long way indeed. So too have ways and means in which to spend one's leisure time. But in spite of all that we have now, the carefree days when people had to make their own entertainment and enjoyed the simple pleasures in life, surely has to be envied!

TRANSPORT THROUGH THE YEARS

Kuching in the year 1839, with a population of only 600 to 800 people, might sound like paradise to some in this day of mushrooming buildings, modern shopping complexes, good roads to travel on and transport — be it public or private — readily available. It's easy to envision a small town with so few people that getting from one end to the other couldn't possibly present any difficulties, and must surely have been a pleasurable experience? That was my train of thought until I decided to research the various modes of transport used then. I now realise that transporting one's way about town was no less a frustrating experience in 1839 than it is today.

Kuching more than one hundred years ago was made up of a few houses which stretched along main bazaar, with some others scattered a little further away and also across river. The town was surrounded on all sides by thick, dense jungle, through which riding paths had been cut to enable the more affluent members of society to exercise their horses. During the wet season these paths turned into muddy swamps that were impossible to manoeuvre. Along the main bazaar, which was then just a dirt road, the rain also played havoc. So it goes without saying that in 1839, if one wanted to conduct any sort of transporting of goods it all had to be done in the dry season. Very few people could brave the elements of the mud to transport their ware.

Transporting heavy goods was no easy task either and when the 'bullock carts' put in an appearance in the mid 1800's they were welcomed by many. Those who couldn't afford this mode of transport had to suffice with carrying their goods in two big baskets, supported by long bamboo rods across their shoulders from which the baskets were suspended. It's not unusual today to see hawkers still peddling their ware in this manner. Of course for the general public to get about was a different matter altogether. They had to walk everywhere. Those fortunate enought to own a horse and carriage were the lucky few.

The bullock cart remained popular in the town for many years but the

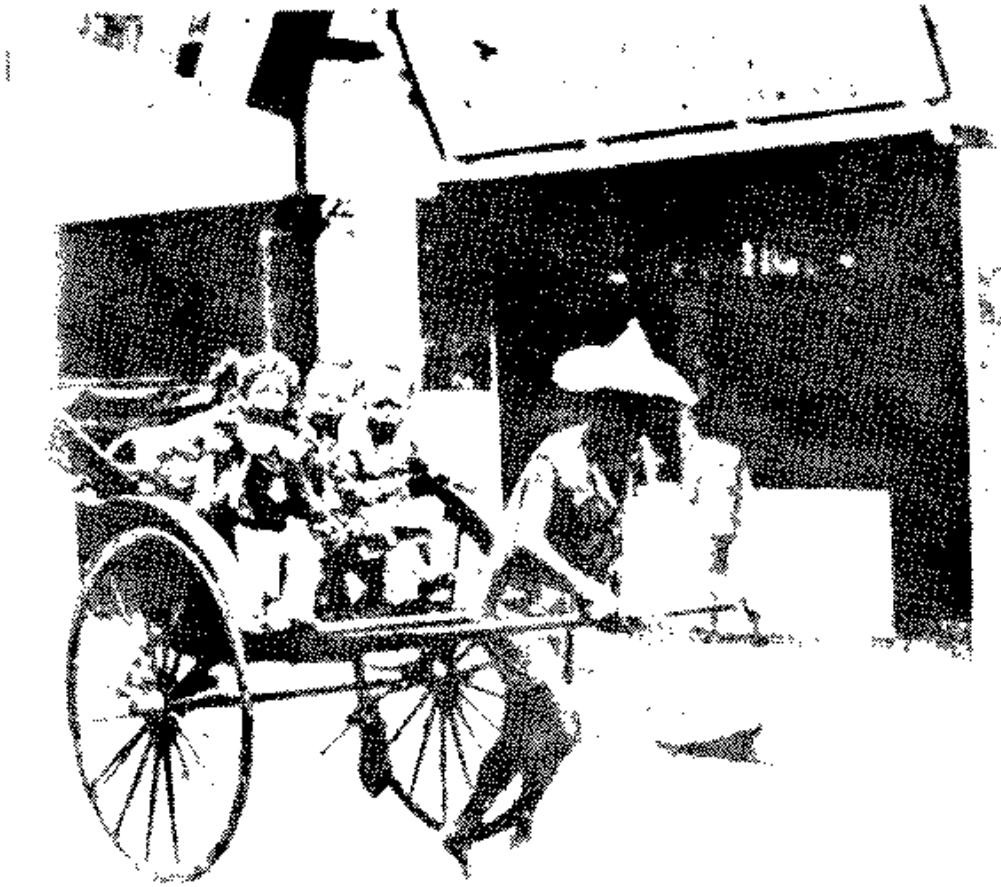
innovations of man knows no bounds. It wasn't long before the next popular mode of transport was introduced in the year 1895. This was of course the Rickshaw which was brought in on a moderate scale at first but proved such a success, that before long there were about three hundred plying for business around town. By this time too Kuching had expanded greatly which added to the popularity of the rickshaw.

Unfortunately, the rickshaw proved to be a complete menace on the roads. Rickshaw pullers rushed about the town with complete disregard for their own safety — not to mention the safety of the passengers they were carrying. It was not an uncommon sight to come across passengers of overturned rickshaws strewn all over the road. The most dangerous part was going up and down hills. If a rickshaw puller was unfortunate enough to end up with an overweight passenger he was also the one most likely to lose his fare on the way. Some rickshaws had two pullers leaving the lighter passengers for the single pullers. The hill on Reservoir Road was a good place for accidents. Almost all passengers were deposited on the road at this spot. Of course, if one were fortunate enough to get an experienced puller who knew all the 'nooks and crannys' of Kuching there was no problem. The rich people of the town had their own private rickshaws and pullers. Vanity aside, they were sensible enough to know that if they were a bit overweight it was to their great advantage to employ two pullers.

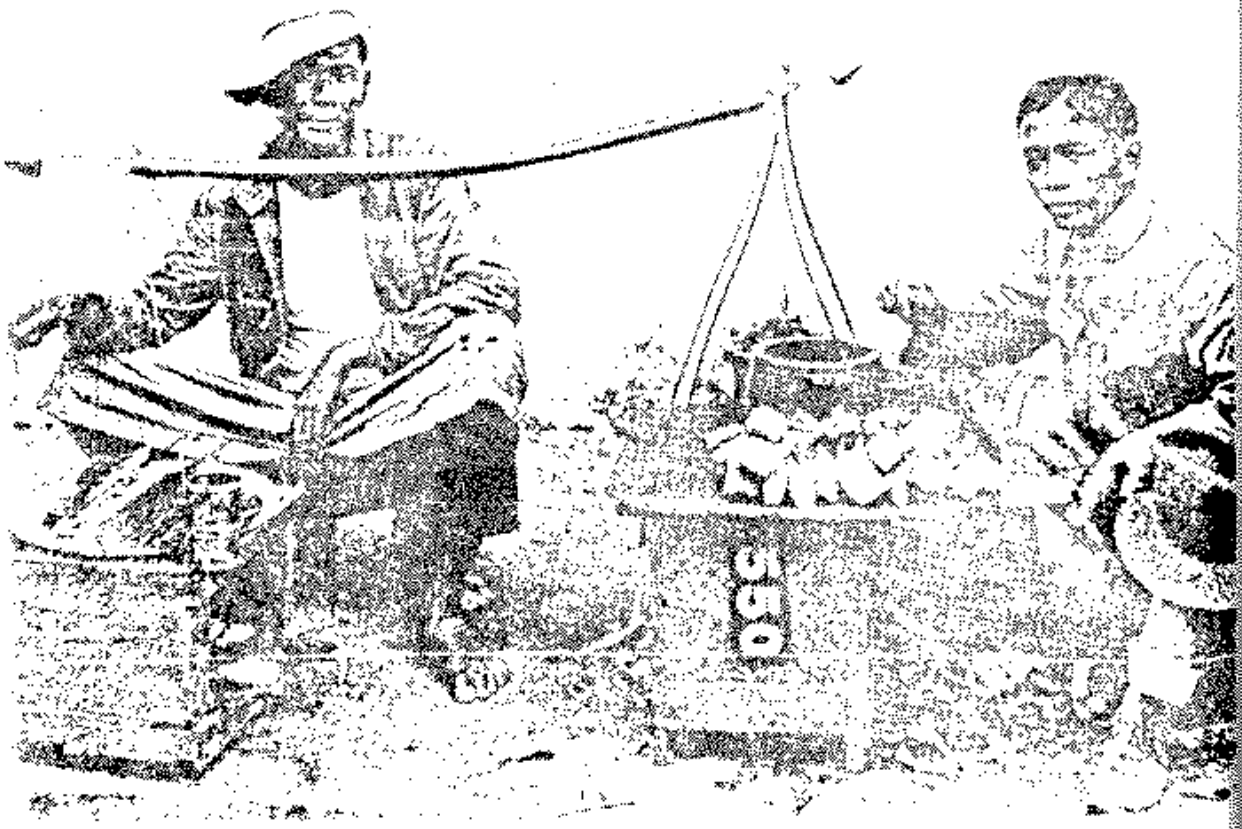
After the rickshaws had menaced the roads for some time the authorities realised they had to do something to restrain them. They couldn't ban them as they were the only means of public transport in the town, so instead they passed laws which enforced a certain amount of caution on the puller. Rickshaw stands were also conveniently located at various positions throughout the town. There was a stand in India Street, one in China Street and another at Gambier Road, plus a few more at major junctions around town. A journey of one mile would set the passenger back twelve cents while ten miles cost one dollar.

When bicycles put in an appearance in the early 1900's they were considered very dangerous vehicles. Even though they provided a cheap and easy means of transport many of the townsfolk decided it was still safer to walk, or even travel by rickshaw. Those who conformed to this latest mode of transport did so in a rather 'wobbly' manner.

With bicycles wobbling their way about and rickshaws careening all over the place, accidents were on the increase as these two modes of transport competed with each other for control of the roads. Fortunately, all were rather minor ones. But sadly the days of the faithful rickshaw were



Rickshaw puller and passengers 1915



Hawkers in Kuching 1915

numbered when in 1907, the first motor car arrived in Kuching. The reaction of the general public to this power driven vehicle was one of total shock and disbelief. "*Where will it all end?*" asked some. "*It will never last*" was the general feeling among the older, more sceptical generation, while the younger folk could hardly wait to get behind the wheel of this latest innovation. Many people still opted for the safe and secure transport offered by the rickshaw. It was much safer to be dumped on the road from a moving rickshaw or bicycle. With the latest new power driven invention it just kept on going whether you fell out or not. As far as Kuching people were concerned motor cars were a dangerous means of transport and a complete menace to other road users. But, they were an exciting and progressive menace that has lasted to this very day.

It's questionable as to who introduced the first motor car to Kuching but from what I can gather, it was brought in by Mr J M Bryan, who was the then Manager of the Borneo Company. The car was a 10-12 HP Coventry Humber and could seat two people. It also had a luggage platform on the back and the day Mr Bryan embarked upon his maiden voyage through Kuching town, the entire population turned out to see the latest 'craze'. Some liked it and some didn't. There were complaints all round and many people were afraid of it.

It wasn't only in Kuching that people were against the latest mechanical creation but also in other parts of the world as well. In England for instance, the railways and owners of horse drawn carriages did all they could to stop the advancement of power driven road transport. An act of Parliament was passed by the British in 1865 stating that power driven vehicles must have a man walking in front of them carrying a red flag by day and a red lantern by night. This act was in force until 1896, and was meant to cut down the danger and risk to other road users. By the time cars arrived in Kuching they didn't need a red flag or lamp to guide them any more.

Not to be outdone by the arrival of the motor car the Rajah Muda, Charles Vyner Brooke, brought the first motor cycle into the country. His father, the Rajah Charles, was very annoyed at this move on the part of his son. He didn't like the idea of the Rajah Muda racing about town in a manner unbecoming an heir while everyone else used a simple means of transport such as a horse, rickshaw and bicycle, with the exception of course of Mr Bryan and his Coventry Humber.

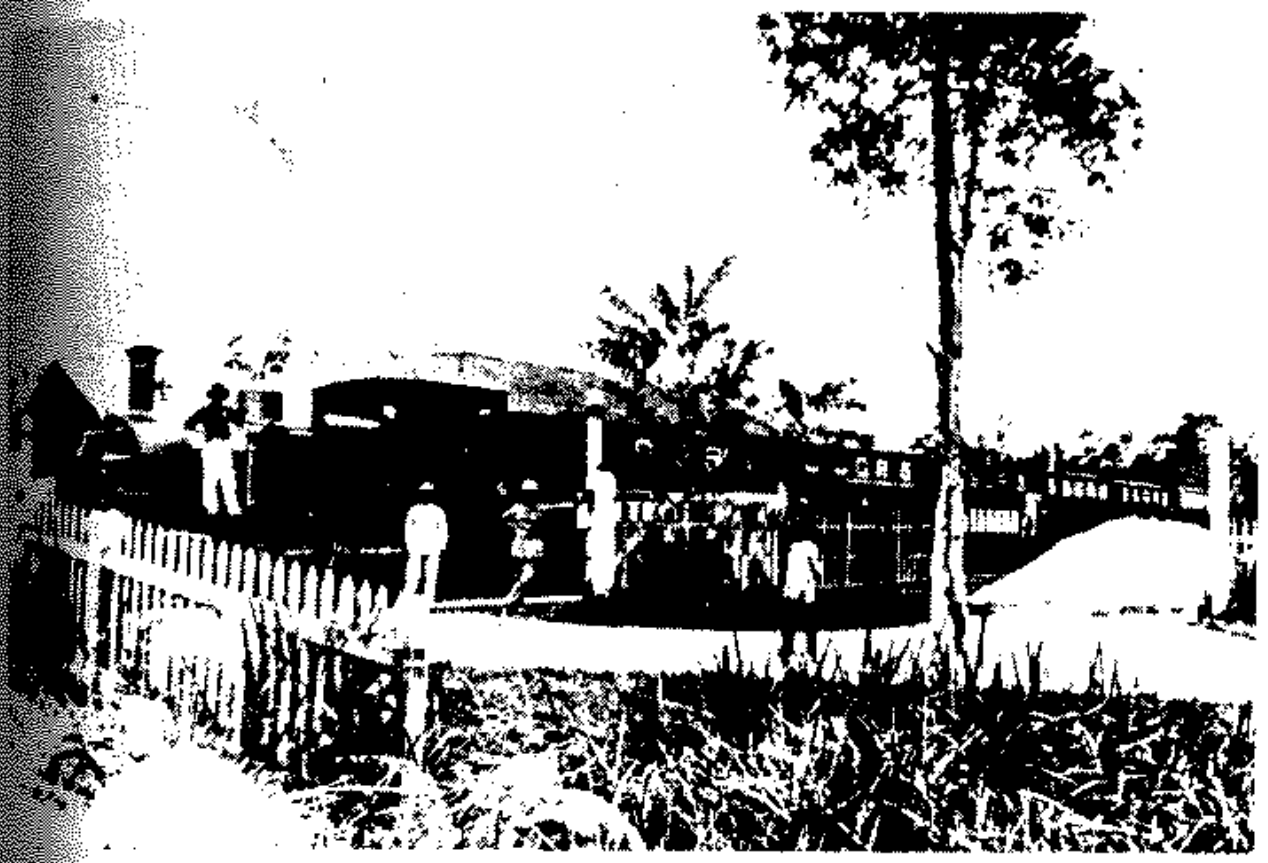
By the year 1926, the records of registration showed that there were fifty registered motor cars in Kuching. Buses and lorries had also put in an appearance by then and there were sixteen of the former and fifteen of the

latter. Since the time the Rajah Muda introduced the motor cycle these too had grown in number. There were now thirty-three of them around town. For those who couldn't afford to purchase their own means of powered transport Kuching had thirty-one motor taxis. Of course there were plenty of bicycles to be seen on the roads but the rickshaw, although still serving a useful purpose, wasn't doing as much business as it had before all these inventions *'invaded'* Kuching and Sarawak.

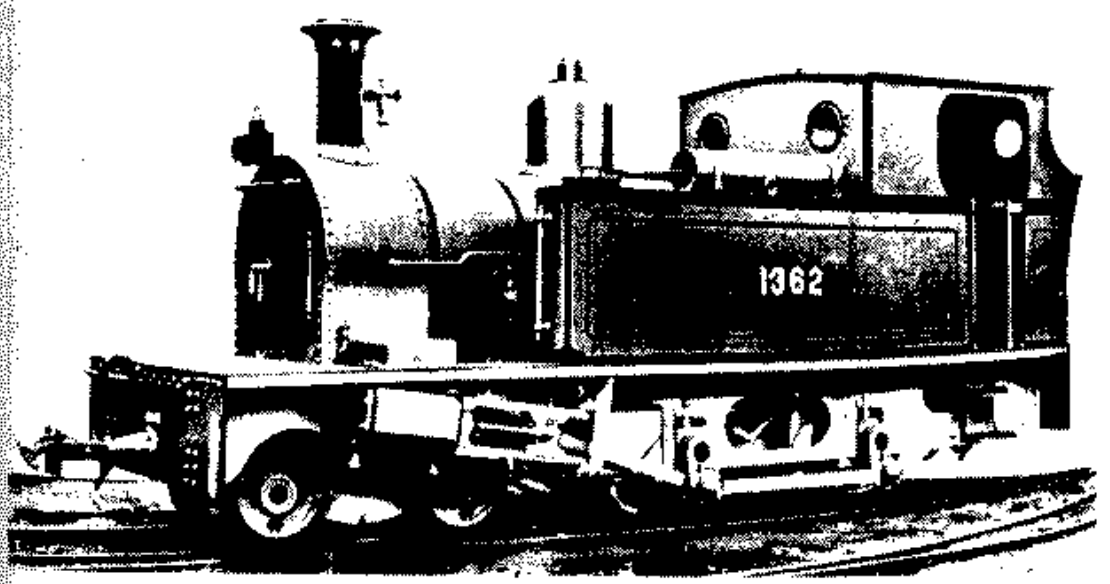
The first public bus service was set up in 1912 by a local trader. This in no way resembled the buses we see today. The 'bus' was a two ton 20 HP industrial lorry that travelled up and down Rock Road and could only ever attain a speed of 14 miles an hour. However, out of that venture, with a lorry as public transport, grew the bus services we have today.

Early transport wasn't just confined to roads but extended to rail and air as well. The Rajah Charles had a great fascination with railways and it was his ambition to set one up in Sarawak. This he did in the year 1912. The railway was used for the purpose of transporting freight as well as passengers; and also to transport to Kuching vegetables and other products from out of town. There was a tale told about when the Rajah made enquiries in England on the possibility of constructing a railway in Sarawak. Upon consulting one of the top railway engineers in England, and informing him of the projected size and length of the project, the engineer told the Rajah that he would do better if he went looking for advice from a well known toy shop in London. It remains doubtful whether such a tale is true or not because the Rajah was the type of man that few dared to take liberties with. And even if the story were true, it did not deter the Rajah from doing everything he could in order to fulfill his dream of a railway for Sarawak.

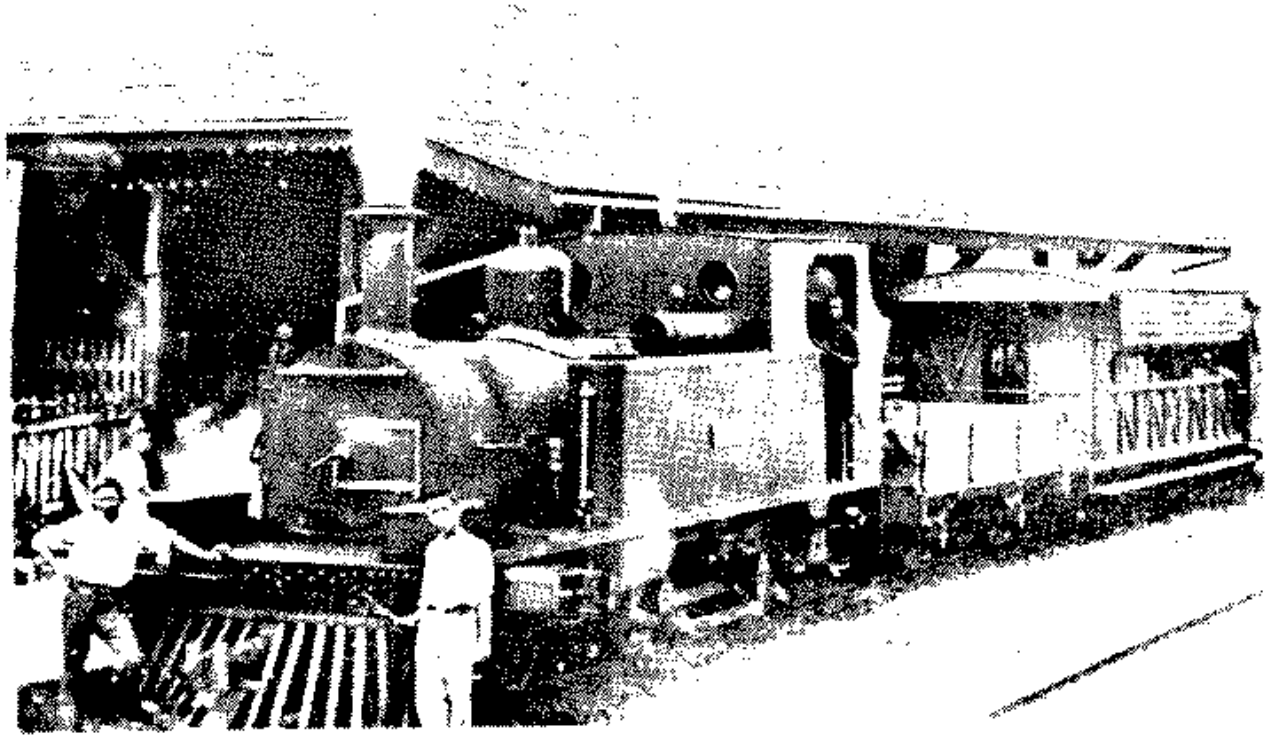
By 1912 work started on the first phase of the railway and in the year 1916 the Rajah took his first train ride from Kuching to the tenth mile. That was as far as the track extended. The rail terminal was along Mosque Road and the route the train took ran almost parallel to Rock Road. It took thirty-five minutes to journey from Kuching to the tenth mile and the service ran five times a day. There were three steam engines that were the pride of the Sarawak Government Railway and these were called *Bulan*, *Jean* and *Bintang*. The trains hauled between them five passenger coaches, five open eight ton wagons, five covered five ton wagons and two break vans. Whenever the trains started out on a journey they were waved off by the large crowd that would gather each day to feast their eyes on this incredible invention. Some couldn't ever afford to try the train journey,



Sarawak Government Railway Locomotive Bintang at 3rd Mile Railway Station



Locomotive Bulan, sister to Bintang



The Railway: the pride of the Rajah Charles Brooke

although the ten mile trip cost just twenty cents. However, they would gather about the station envying the passengers sitting proudly upright inside the carriages, little realising that the seats were as hard as cement, and inside the carriage it was as hot as an oven. But those people that could afford the journey never let on to the watching crowd that it was really a very uncomfortable means of transport.

The engines were powered by coal from the Sadong colliery at Simunjan, and were an awesome sight to see. They were painted in bright green with lots of brass fittings and adornments to enhance their image.

When the Railway was first operational the inaugural journey was a reason for great celebration in Kuching. But, if the story is correct, all did not go well. It seems that at the Green Road level crossing the train ran over and killed a young child. The engine driver and fireman fled the scene and were never again found in the country. A new crew was promptly rounded up and the various invited dignitaries were able to continue their journey on Sarawak's first railway. The service was running at a loss though, especially since the bus sevice had expanded their route as far as the seventh mile and so, in 1933, the railway was closed to passenger and goods traffic. After that it was used occasionally to transport stone from the quarries at seventh mile down to Kuching. The Japanese capitalized on the railway during the war years for the same purpose and by the end of the war the engines *Jean*, *Bulan* and *Bintang*, had outlived their usefulness and were in such bad need of repair that they were sold for scrap.

That wasn't the end of the railway though. A new modern invention, the diesel engine, had by this time put in an appearance and one was promptly purchased so that the stone for the construction of the new airfield could be hauled down to Kuching. Sadly, this engine also outlived its usefulness, and the first and only Sarawak Railway came to a stand-still in 1960. Most of the track was pulled up and sold for scrap but there is still a remaining piece to be found today.

The diesel engine had also served its purpose well before its retirement. It played a big part in the construction of the Kuching air-field which opened for traffic in 1938. Up until that time all planes that arrived in Kuching were sea-planes.

An historical day in aviation was the 26th of September 1938, when the air strip at Batu Kawa was declared open and the first planes arrived from Singapore. These were Vildebeest planes and were packed with officers and men from the no. 36 Torpedo Bomber Squadron. In the year 1939,

sometime after the first landing, a four engined DH 86 from Wearne's Air Service brought over from Singapore a box of ice-cream and another of oysters to the Ranee Sylvia, wife of the third white Rajah of Sarawak. A few days later the Ranee Sylvia made aviation history in Sarawak by becoming the first woman in the State to fly by aircraft to Singapore. Because of very strong headwinds the journey was treacherous and took four hours. Nowadays of course we can fly there in a quarter of the time with modern aviation.

Transport through the years has proved a hard and challenging experience for those who were brave enough to embark upon such an ambition. Look around and ask yourself where we would be without buses, cars, boats and planes. But has the introduction of new inventions reached a standstill? They most certainly have not, as was made evident by the introduction of the first Hover-Marine craft in Sarawak last year. For those who don't like, or can't afford, to travel by air the Hover-Craft is your next best bet.

EARLY AVIATION IN SARAWAK

On the evening of August 14, 1922, as the inhabitants of the quiet little town of Belaga in the Third Division were sitting down to their evening meal, a great roar filled the sky. Since it wasn't the sound of thunder, or any other familiar noise that they could identify, everyone rushed outside to see what the disturbance was. From behind the clouds appeared a grey, boat-shaped flying vessel which flew very low over the town. It flew slowly around Fort Vyner, and as it did so, it fired what appeared to be a light which lit it, and the whole area up, and then disappeared leaving nothing behind but a trail of white smoke. The shaken and bewildered people of Belaga gathered around to discuss this phenomenon, wondering if they had done something to bring the wrath of God down on them. It wasn't until later that they discovered that the mysterious flying object was nothing more than a Dutch flying boat on a test flight for a feeder service. Since this was the first time a flying object of this kind was seen in the skies over Sarawak, it could perhaps be classified as the beginning of aviation in the State.

It was to be another two years though before the next plane was sighted again over Sarawak, and the experience was equally as frightening as the first.

On the morning of the 16th October 1924, a great crowd had gathered in front of the courthouse in Kuching to witness the unveiling of the Rajah Charles Brooke memorial. Again, the sound that filled the sky was an unfamiliar one for those present and looking up they saw a strange flying object circling around. Some superstitious people were convinced that it was the spirit of the late Rajah, who had died in England seven years earlier, that had now decided to return to Kuching. What it was however, was a sea-plane from *H.M.S. Pegasus*, which was on its way from Singapore to Miri. The plane was soon joined by two others and they put on a dazzling display for the assembled crowd, flying low over the town and eventually landing on the Sarawak river in front of the main bazaar. By now the people were no longer frightened and many of the younger ones jumped into the river to swim out to the planes for a closer inspection. Not since the first motor car was seen in Kuching had so much excitement been generated.

Twenty-three years later the following eye-witness account of that memorable day appeared in the Sarawak Gazette; by which time people were no longer overawed by the sight of airplanes flying back and forth. "... they don't pay much attention to 'em nowadays, except when they look like falling down or dropping things. But I remember the first one that ever came over, little bit of thing it was too with snow-shoes on, not like these big B--, they fly around nowadays. It was in October '24, on the very day Rajah Vyner unveiled the memorial to his father in front of the Government Offices.

I had just come out of the Pavilion Building with K--, District Officer, Bintulu. It was the P.M.O's Office and Dispensary then and we had been in for the usual morning 'tonic' it being Race Week. I stopped dead. 'Hear that?' I said 'that's an aeroplane!' K--said something very rude in reply, and then, as I pointed out the plane, K-- pulled me back with a yell just as a lorry tore by almost out of control. The driver was coming down Rock Road full-belt with his eyes gazing upwards and sticking out like chapel hat-pegs. He had seen it too! Well, it circled the town a couple of times and then pushed off. But you couldn't spit for people in the streets. You would not have got 'em out of the bazaar into the streets quicker if you'd shouted, 'Fire!' It was the same in the Kampongs, so I was told, women and girls out without their *selava*, or *tudong* of any kind, almost unheard of in those days. Well, that wasn't the end of it. This seaplane had come from a carrier out at sea, Rajah Vyner sent 'em a wireless message thanking 'em for sending over a plane especially on this auspicious occasion. Well, back came a reply, the Commander had no idea it was a big day and he was sending a couple more to fly around and land in the river and then fly back to the ship again.

They arrived over in the afternoon in the middle of the races. The crowd streamed off the course down the straight heading for the river, Padungan Bazaar wasn't built then. Luckily there was no race actually in progress at the time or the jockeys would have had a surprise and had to do some quick thinking coming round Padungan corner into the home stretch! Well, they both landed and one touched the sand bank opposite Pangkallan Batu and stove in a float. That one had to stay and wait for a new float and was moored just below the Fish Market all next day. T'other one went home with the news."

The Sarawak oilfields were the first to use sea-planes on a practical basis. They contracted two planes from the Air Survey Company in London to complete an aerial photographic study of Sarawak and Brunei. The Rajah Vyner Brooke saw some benefit in these planes and he had them carry out an aerial survey of the Rejang Delta. By the year 1927, the people of Sarawak had become used to the occasional flying vessel which graced the skies from time to time, and no longer lived in fear of them.

The Royal Air Force were next on the list of daring men who took to the air and flew over Sarawak. This occurance took place on November 1, 1928 when four flying boats - under the command of Group Captain Cave-Brown-Cave-touched down at Pending. They were on a training flight to Hong Kong via Borneo. Their arrival was a cause for great excitment and they stayed in Kuching for four days.

This was a time of great celebration, and the townspeople had plenty of opportunity to visit and inspect the planes. They admired the men who had the courage to fly them but many were adamant that they themselves would never go up in one.

Soon the government, aware now of the advantages of flying boats, purchased two Gypsy Moths which they named *'Royalist'* and *'Jolly Bachelor'* (later changed to *'Venus'*). These were to be used for aerial surveys and reconnaisance of Sarawak to facilitate land development, and also for the purpose of transporting mail. A hangar and a landing strip were then constructed on the river-side near Satok suspension bridge. The service commenced operations on the 1st December 1928, and the Commissioner of Trade and Customs was declared Director of Government Air Services. Mr W. H. Phililips was appointed Flight Lieutenant, and Mr J. W. Goodban was to be the leading Aircraftsman. Unfortunately, it wasn't to be long before disaster was to strike the first Sarawak Air Service.

At 6.20 am on the morning of January 12, 1929, the *Royalist* left Kuching with the first air-mail of the Sarawak Government. At 7.25 am, on arrival at Simanggang, it struck an air pocket while travelling at 80 miles an hour and crashed into the river. The plane was a total write-off.

The *'Venus'* continued to operate alone but after only one year the Government Air Service came to an end. The Rajah, disillusioned over the loss of the *'Royalist'* and worried about the high cost of maintenance, decided to terminate the service altogether. He gave the *'Venus'* as a gift to Mr Phillips, the pilot, who took it to Kuala Lumpur and earned some money from it by operating pleasure flights. Mr Phillips eventually sold it to the

Selangor Flying Club who exchanged the floats for wheels and used it as a trainer plane.

But that was not to be the end of 'flying-boats' in Sarawak.

By 1932, the 205 Squadron of the Royal Air Force, based in Singapore, frequently flew into the State. This was also a time when the film world of Hollywood started to take an interest in Sarawak. The Ranee Sylvia, who was keen to make a movie on the life of James Brooke the first white Rajah of Sarawak, had been to Hollywood to drum up interest in her idea, and wanted the actor Errol Flynn to play the part of Brooke.

This brought a deluge of movie people to the State and the first of them arrived in the sea-plane *'Flying Carpet'* in October 1932. The Ranee, always a daring and adventurous woman, went for a ride in the *'Flying Carpet'* making her the first woman in Sarawak to overcome the fear of flying and take to the air. In describing her experience afterwards she had this to say:

"My only consolation had been that at any rate I should have the pilot to cling on to. Picture my embarrassment when I was pushed into a tiny seat in front of the pilot -- alone! .... I saw all our 'boys' waving from the Astana garden and I tried to wave back, but the wind nearly tore my hand from my wrist, and one of my rings blew off my finger .... then we started to turn. How easily one uses the phrase 'paralysed with fear'. There were two iron hoops in front of me. I crooked my fingers in those and shut my eyes .... As Moye and I clambered from the plane, after alighting, I asked him if those iron hoops were really for hanging on to. 'Oh that', he replied, 'is the crash bar - if you do crash, you don't get the engine in your stomach!'

The Ranee became very keen on flying after that experience and did so at every available opportunity. In 1939, she made history by becoming the first woman in the State to fly by aircraft to Singapore: a journey that was treacherous and took four hours because of very strong headwinds.

Incidentally, the movie on the life of James Brooke was never made and the 'Hollywood crowd' soon packed up and left for home.

Another historical occasion in Kuching occured in September of 1934. For the first time, newspapers that were printed in Singapore in the morning were being read in Kuching on the evening of the same day. This was thanks to the R.A.F. who flew the papers over to Kuching as soon as they were 'hot off the presses'. The year also saw the arrival in Kuching of a man who was to play a crucial role in aviation in Sarawak. He was Mr C. W.

Ranee Sylvia beside her Aircraft

Bailey, Works and Buildings Inspector with the R.A.F. He supervised the construction of the Kuching and Miri airfields, and the Bintulu landing strip, which didn't get completed before war broke out. But he returned to Kuching after the war and supervised the construction of the old airport at seventh mile. Ironically, Mr Bailey was killed in an air crash in Singapore in 1958.

By 1935, speed was becoming an important part of air travel. The Government planes of 1929 only travelled at 80 mph and now, the latest R.A.F. flying boats were capable of reaching speeds of 115 mph cutting the journey from Kuching to Singapore down to four hours, depending on the headwinds.

In conjunction with the Rajah's birthday in September 1938, the Kuching landing ground along Batu Kawa road was declared open. It was 700 yards long and 300 yards wide, and the 36 Torpedo Bomber Squadron, flying Vildabeest planes, were invited over for the occasion. They dazzled the assembled crowd with their impressive display of formation flying. Sadly, the entire squadron was wiped out by the Japanese only two years later. In early 1939, shortly after the first 'landing', a four engined DH86 from Wearne's Air Service in Singapore carried out an experimental flight from Singapore to Kuching. This resulted in negotiations for a twice weekly service which was due to start in the next three months. The service never 'got off the ground' though, as the government would not pay the necessary subsidy required.

By now most of the people in Sarawak were used to 'flying-machines' but there were still some remote areas that had never seen a plane; such as Tebedu near the Indonesian border. In 1939, the residents in that area had a terrible scare when a Dutch seaplane, which was off course, flew over the village. Many of the inhabitants ran scared and screaming to hide in the woods thinking that an evil spirit had come to attack them.

On December 23, 1941, just before the fall of Kuching, it was decided to blow up the airfield and deny it to the enemy. Aviation in Sarawak was practically brought to a standstill during the war years but shortly before the war ended the Japanese decided decided to reconstruct the air-strip. But just as it was completed it was bombed by the allied forces. On March 25, 1945, planes were seen once again over Kuching for the first time in three years. On August 15, food and clothing were dropped from a Douglas plane for the prisoners of war.

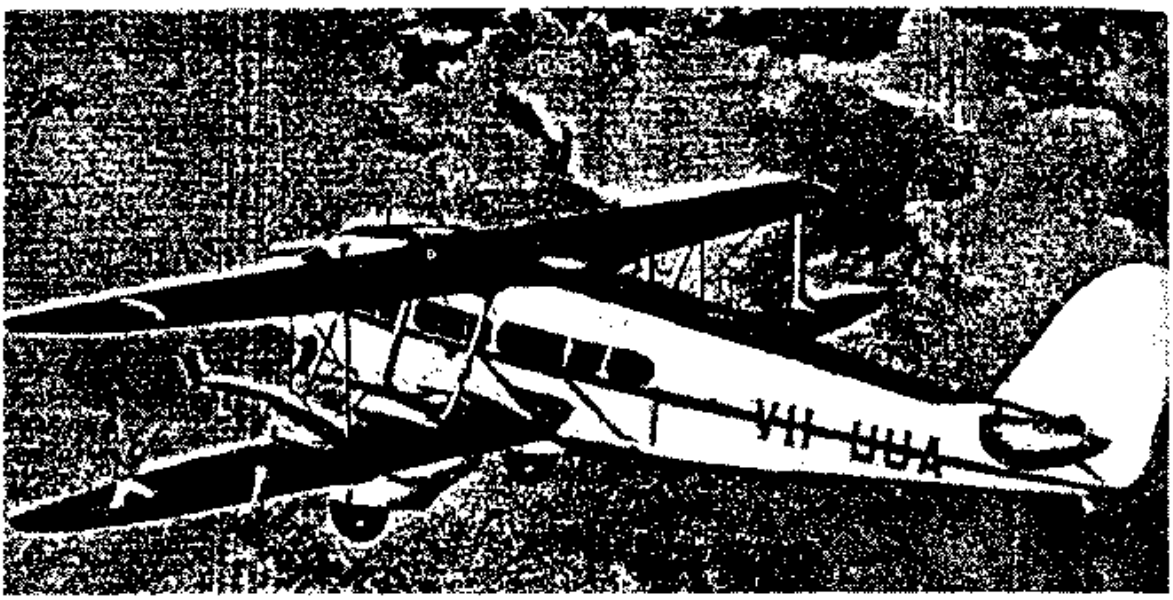
Once peace was restored to Sarawak, the R.A.F. operated a weekly courier service with Sunderland flying boats and the airstrip, which was

still functional, was also used by the R.A.F. and other private planes but it was considered unsafe to accommodate commercial aircraft. Another air-strip had been added to Sarawak during the war years and this was in Lutong; a legacy from the Japanese. It was upgraded and used by the British Malayan Petroleum Co. Ltd. (BMPC) which was a wholly owned subsidiary of the Shell International Oil Co. Ltd. They operated their own aircrafts from the airstrip at Lutong. One of the first planes used by the BMPC arrived in Sarawak in September 1949. It was a Viker Submarine Sea Otter which was converted into a passenger plane with facilities to seat five people. The company used it mainly for ferrying their personnel as well as for exploration and survey work. The Sea Otter was soon replaced by the Percival Prince, due to the growing demand for an aircraft with larger freight and passenger facilities. This latest plane, piloted by the famous World War II fighter ace pilot, Group Captain Douglas Bader DSO. DFC. touched down in Lutong in June 1950.

When the Council Negri met in May 1948, the Governor, aware of the danger posed by the unsafe landing strip and the need for bigger, faster and heavier aircraft, announced the approval of a large sum of money by the British Government for the construction of a new airstrip and airport. Shortly afterwards, Mr. W. Bailey, who had overseen the construction of the first airfield, was called upon once again to lend his expertise for the construction of the old airport at seventh mile.

Another celebrated day in the history of aviation in Sarawak was on 26th September 1950, when the Kuching airport was declared open. The time was 10.00 am and a large crowd had gathered to witness this memorable occasion. A Malayan Airways Dakota arrived from Singapore and landed on the old airstrip with members of the Press and other important officials aboard, and took off again to land on the new runway. The Governor, Sir Anthony Abell was the first to disembark and his opening speech was brief. "I declare the new Kuching Airport open. May all who pass this wasy do so in peace and safety." Shortly after he uttered those words disaster almost struck.

The first flight from Kuching to Singapore was filled to capacity with government officials and other dignitaries. Between them their insurance for this inaugural flight amounted to almost $2 million. The flight to Singapore, although rough in comparison to today's flights, went well. But when they reached Singapore the weather was too bad to attempt a landing and they were diverted to Kuala Lumpur. Unfortunately, the weather in KL wasn't suitable for landing either so the pilot was instructed to return to Kuching. On arrival the pilot soon realised that foul weather made a landing at the new airport impossible also. By now the passengers



Early Aircraft used in Sarawak

were in a real state of panic; made worse by the fact that the pilot had no alternative but to land at the air-strip in Sibu Laut. This was an old airstrip used by the Japanese who had left a few relics behind in the form of bomb-craters. But the pilot, with his fuel supply now almost exhausted, was forced to attempt a landing there. Fortunately for all on board, the aircraft touched down safely. A few days later when the aircraft was returning to Kuching the passengers were again offered a seat on the flight back. Only a few could be contacted ..... the rest had opted to return by a safer means of travel ..... boat!!!

Such hazardous experiences are behind us now, and Sarawak took another giant step in the development of aviation conveniences when the new 40 million dollar airport was declared open in Kuching in August 1983. With its modern up to date facilities, we have surely come a long way from those far off days in 1922, when the terrified people of Belaga saw the first 'flying vessel' in the skies over Sarawak!!

EARLY POSTAGE HISTORY IN SARAWAK 1858 - 1963

It was not until the end of the reign of the first Rajah, Sir James Brooke, that Sarawak got its first postage stamp. But even so, letters had been sent out from Kuching long before then. The first recorded letter to Singapore was sent by James Brooke and hand-dated 20th August, 1839. Since this was just shortly after his arrival, it's likely that the contents of that letter contained his first impressions of Sarawak.

The Rajah was the type of person who wrote often to his family and friends and, with the increasing influx of more Europeans into Sarawak, it was inevitable that a stamp of some description was necessary. So it was that the 'hand-stamp' made its appearance. In a circular form, the new hand-stamp bore the inscription "Post Office---Sarawak". The earliest known date for use of the hand-stamp is 31st May, 1858, and the earliest known surviving envelope bearing the hand-stamp was sent to Bombay in May 1858. It seems likely that there was a post-office of sorts in existence before then but all records were destroyed during the rebellion of 1857.

The Rajah was anxious for Sarawak to have a proper stamp and negotiations were soon under way to provide one. "If it please God to permit me to give a stamp to this country which shall last after I am no more, I shall have lived a life which Emperors might envy". [James Brooke] On 1st March, 1869, the Rajah's wish came true; unfortunately, though it's thought he may have seen the proofs before he died, the stamp was issued nearly nine months after his death. Simple and dignified in design, it was light brown in colour and bore a portrait of the Rajah, Sir James Brooke. Only one stamp to the value of three cents was issued, but it set a precedence for the stamps that were to follow for the duration of Brooke rule in Sarawak.

The tenure of that first Sarawak stamp was to be a short one as, just ten months later, on 1st January 1871, a new stamp was issued. Similar to the first stamp, it was slightly smaller in size, but its colour and value were the same as its predecessor. It bore the portrait of Sir Charles Brooke, the second Rajah of Sarawak. A three cent stamp was considered sufficient enough then as Sarawak stamps were not, as yet, valid for international

postage. They only became valid when Sarawak joined the Universal Postal Union on 1st July, 1897. Meanwhile, the stamp was only good for carrying mail locally and also to Singapore. Should a person wish to send mail overseas, then it was necessary to affix two stamps to the envelope; the Sarawak stamp to take the letter to Singapore and a Straits Settlements Stamp to carry it beyond. An arrangement had been made with the postal authorities in Singapore, and stocks of Straits Settlements Stamps were kept at the post-office in Kuching. An envelope bearing the two stamps still exists. It is addressed to H.H. The Rajah, c/o The Borneo Company, London, and was despatched from Kuching in December 1869. The three cent stamp only carried letters not weighing more than half an ounce. Sending a heavy letter, a book or a small package involved the laborious task of sticking on the appropriate number of stamps. Therefore, if anything weighed, for example, eight ounces it required sixteen stamps, leaving little space to write the address.

The problem of having to affix so many stamps on one small packet was partially solved when the third issue of Sarawak stamps took place on 1st January, 1875. This consisted of a set of five stamps of the same design as the stamp in 1871, and were valued from two to ten cents with each denomination in a different colour. Another issue of stamps was released in November 1888, and this time there was a new portrait of the Rajah. The stamps ranged in value from one cent to twenty-five cents and were all exactly alike. Probably the first time a whole set had been identical as the previous stamps had contained many errors, with no two stamps the same.

Stocks of the more popular denominations seemed to run out much quicker than others and, rather than print additional stamps, a surcharge system was implemented. Stamps of a less popular denomination were overprinted with a different value. This system was found necessary in 1889, and again in 1892. Another new set of stamps was issued on 1st January, 1895, where the Rajah had his portrait changed again. In 1897, four more stamps of different denominations were added with the Rajah's portrait of 1888 on them. It must have been the picture he liked best because he never again changed it. The 1897 issue of stamps was important because, for the first time, Sarawak had a one dollar stamp. The one dollar issue was necessary because that was the year Sarawak joined the Universal Postal Union and discontinued the use of the Straits Settlements Stamps.

As well as being used for postage purposes, Sarawak stamps were also used as revenue on the registeration of deeds, Government business papers and many other documents. On 10th November, 1899, a set of

stamps was issued which were valid for postal usage only. Business documents retained the use of the old stamps and this practice was adhered to until 1934. In 1901, a new two cent stamp was issued. This was an important stamp as it was the first one to have the Rajah's water-mark of multiple rosettes. No more new stamps were issued during the second Rajah's lifetime. After his death in 1917, the third Rajah, Charles Vyner Brooke, issued a new range of stamps valued from one cent to one-dollar. Bearing the portrait of the new Rajah, they were issued on 26th March, 1918. With the exception of a few minor additions of various colours and value, no new stamps were issued again until 1928. Apart from a few additional denominations in different colours, these new stamps were the same as those issued in 1918, with one exception; it was the first complete set of Sarawak stamps issued with the multiple rosettes water-mark.

A new set of stamps issued on 1st January 1932, also bore a new portrait of the Rajah. This new set was very elaborately designed with orchids, palm leaves and scorpions surrounding the Rajah's portrait; giving the overall effect a distinct Sarawak look. These were replaced in May, 1934, with a new set bearing another change of portrait of the Rajah, surrounded by native carvings. It was the last time the design of the stamps was changed and this latest issue remained, even after the country had been ceded to Britain. This issue also saw the emergence of the first ten-dollar stamp in Sarawak, with four more additional values in between. A few additional stamps of the same design and value were added in 1941 with some changes in colours. When Sarawak was invaded by the Japanese, the postal services in the country went through a chaotic period. While some of the earlier issues were still in use, it seems that the Japanese may have also used Japanese stamps which would have carried Sarawak post-marks. In 1942, some Sarawak stamps were overprinted with the Japanese characters "Imperial Japanese Government". Since this over-printing was done with a hand-stamp, it ended up all over the envelope and not always on the stamp. In 1943, the Japanese decided to print their own stamps which were issued in April of the same year and only consisted of two stamps; a four cent stamp with a view of Mt Kinabalu and an eight cent one with what was described as a 'Borneo Scene' on it.

Before and after the Japanese surrender in 1945, the stocks of Sarawak stamps had run very low and, with many people reluctant to use Japanese stamps, two of the Rajah's enterprising young officers decided to issue their own stamps. One of the officers was stationed at Baram; Mr C.B. Murray, who was serving with the British Borneo Civil Affairs Unit, and the other, Mr J.C.B. Fisher, was in Sibu as officer commanding the administration in

A collection of some Early Sarawak Stamps

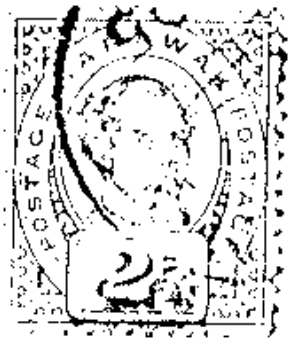
the Services Reconnaissance Department. It appears neither was aware of the others' intention. Letters despatched from the Baram district had a square piece of paper stuck to them stamped with the seal of the District Office, endorsed for the amount paid and initialed. In Sibu, the procedure was slightly different as it was the actual envelope that was endorsed. Those 'ad hoc' stamps issued in the Baram district became known as 'Marudi Labels' and are now a collectors item. Unfortunately, none of the Sibu envelopes seem to have survived.

With the British Military rule in Sarawak after liberation, the 1934 and 1941 issues of the Rajah re-appeared in December 1945. They were overprinted B.M.A. (British Military Administration). With the resumption of the Rajah's Civil Government in 1946, the 1934 and 1941 issues were back again in circulation, unaltered. At this time also, a set of stamps commemorating the centenary of Brooke rule was issued. The original intention was to issue them in 1941 but the war prevented this. The stamps, printed in various colours of four denominations, bore the portraits of the three Rajahs.

When Sarawak was ceded to the English King in 1946, the Rajah's stamps remained in use until April 1947. That was when the Royal cypher stamps, 'G R' surmounted by a crown, were issued. There were fifteen of these new stamps of different value, with the original design and colours of the Rajah's stamps issued in 1934 and 1941. Some of these can be found with the Rajah's multiple rosettes water-mark, as a few of them were the remains of the pre-war issue. The bulk of the cypher issue have the Crown Agents for the Colonies water-mark, multiple script C.A. (Crown Agents).

October 25th, 1948, was a memorable day in Sarawak's stamp history as that was when the first set of stamps was issued bearing the portrait of a ruler other than the Rajahs. These stamps were to commemorate the silver wedding anniversary of King George VI and Queen Elizabeth, of England. Two stamps were issued and were valued at eight cents and five dollars respectively. In common with most other international countries, four stamps were issued in October, 1949, to commemorate the seventy-fifth anniversary of the Universal Postal Union.

The last issue to appear in Sarawak with a portrait of King George VI was on 1st February 1952, but one of the original set was changed. This was a ten cent stamp with a scaly ant-eater on it. There was much criticism on the stance of the animal and it was said that he could not possibly stand up in such a manner. This was quickly replaced by a map of the country, which was thought to be equally absurd.




SARAWAK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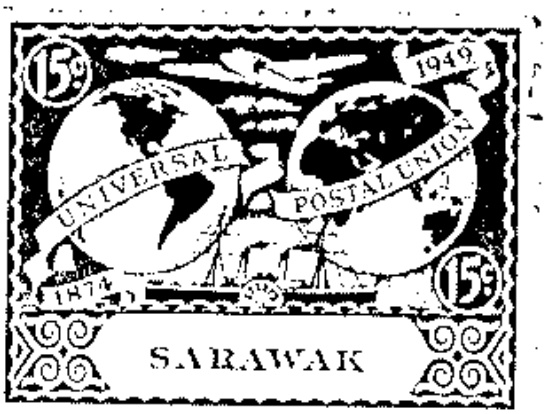
SARAWAK


15c
1949
UNIVERSAL POSTAL UNION
1874
15c
SARAWAK


SARAWAK
4
CENTS


SARAWAK
15
CENTS
POSTAGE REVENUE
15
CENTS


SARAWAK
50
CENTS
POSTAGE REVENUE
50
CENTS

Queen Elizabeth, who succeeded to the throne after the death of her father, King George VI, made her first appearance as 'Queen' on a stamp issued in Sarawak, and many other countries, on 2nd June, 1953. This was a ten cent stamp to commemorate her Coronation in London. A thirty cent stamp bearing the Queen's portrait was issued on 1st June, 1955. It was very similar in design to the Rajah's issue of 1934. The Queen's portrait, surmounted by a Crown, had the same native carving surrounding it. A complete new set of different design and colour was issued on 1st October, 1957, and was very well received.

But perhaps the most memorable issue in the present day history of stamps in Sarawak is that which appeared on 16th September, 1963, when Sarawak became a State of the Federation of Malaysia. Issued in different colours and denominations, the stamps bore maps of East and West Malaysia with the sun rising, spreading the warmth of its rays over all of Malaysia.

HEIRS TO THE RAJ

On September 14th 1848, Captain James Brooke Brooke of the Connaught Rangers arrived in Sarawak. He was the eldest son of the Rajah James Brooke's sister, Emma, and the Rev Charles Johnson. The Captain changed his name by deed poll to Brooke when his uncle chose him as his heir and successor, and received the title of 'Tuan Besar'. Although everyone looked upon the Captain as heir-presumptive, it was not made official until 1861 in a public ceremony, when the title 'Rajah Muda' was bestowed upon him. Brooke Brooke (as he became known) was a moody type of person, but seems to have been reasonably well liked by the locals and the Europeans. He concentrated his efforts on trying to organise the administration and the financial affairs of Sarawak. His uncle, who was never any good at such matters, was grateful to have someone do them for him. Whenever the Rajah was absent from the state Brooke took charge of the government and handled matters admirably.

Brooke left for England towards the end of 1855 with his friend Charles Grant, and in the summer of 1856 was introduced to Charles' sister, Annie. One week later he proposed to her and shortly after, on the 9th September, they were married. By this time the Rajah had confirmed in a letter to Brooke's father-in-law John Grant, that Brooke's position as his heir and successor was well secured. Not only in the legal sense but also in the confirmed acceptance of the people. Needless to say, with that sort of confirmation Captain Brooke felt very secure indeed. But he was unable to bask in his security for long because without warning, the Rajah publicly announced the existence of an illigitimate son, Reuben George Walker. This occurred in 1858 when the Rajah paid a visit to England by which time Brooke Brooke was back in Sarawak.

James Brooke never married and, apart from his platonic relationship with Miss Burdett-Coutts, no one had ever known him to have had a relationship of any serious intent with a woman. It has been said though that he once toyed with the idea of marrying the daughter of a clergyman. The fact that he never married, and the controversy concerning the exact part of his anatomy injured during the Burmese War, has formed a veil of mystery around the life of James Brooke. In the introduction of his book

"*Rajah Brooke and Miss Burdett-Coutts*" Mr Owen Rutter relates an interesting story told to him by Mr John Dill Ross, whose father was an intimate friend of the Rajah's. Mr Dill Ross clearly stated that James Brooke was "wounded in the genitals by a musket ball", an explaination that Mr Rutter felt he had good reason to believe in as it explained the discrepancies in Brooke's character, including why he never married. The claim by many writers who researched Brooke's life is that if such a story is true it was rather odd that his mother should proudly display the offending bullet for all to admire saying it was removed from her son's lung. But there really isn't anything odd about that at all. There aren't many mothers who would advertise the fact that their sons had been deprived of their manhood —— yet, there are a number who would go to great lengths to protect them from the snide remarks which could result if such a claim were believed. Maybe that's what Mrs Brooke was trying to do —— we'll never really know now though. On the other hand, the appearance of Reuben George Walker on the scene and the Rajah's absolute conviction, backed up by his sister's, Margaret Savage, that Reuben was his son makes his mother's claim even more plausible. But James also had a reputation for taking an interest in the lives of young men, perhaps with the intention of grooming them for service in Sarawak. His friends believed that Reuben was another one of his *protegés* and in order to justify his great interest in him, decided to pass him off as his son; having been tricked by Reuben into doing so. But that also seems strange because of all his protegés, why did this one merit the rank of 'son'? What's even stranger is that he provided adequately for this young man and his family in his will. Many of the Rajah's friends at the time were amazed that he believed so fervently that Reuben was really his son. Some even went so far as to suggest that he was losing his mind.

From evidence that exists though, it would appear that James had known about his son for some time and so did Margaret Savage. An indication of this was an incident which transpired when Brooke Brooke was in England. Shortly before his marriage the Rajah wrote asking him to pay a visit to a young man by the name of Reuben Walker. He claimed that the boy had been in his service in England and that he was concerned for his welfare. When the news about Reuben being the son of the Rajah was made public, Brooke Brooke then realised that it was the same young man he had gone to see in England. He was hysterical when the Rajah suggested considering Reuben for a position in Sarawak and was clearly embarrassed and humiliated by the revelation. He had convinced himself that the Rajah would now change his mind and make his 'son' the heir. Although the Rajah did his best to reassure his nephew that this wouldn't

Captain James Brooke Brooke

Anne Brooke, wife of James Brooke Brooke

happen, angry words were written from Brooke to his uncle in England, leading the Rajah to have doubts about the loyalty and common sense of his chosen heir. As matters developed, Reuben never did arrive in Sarawak and he died when the liner he was travelling on was ship-wrecked on its way to Australia. He was 40 years old. His father, who had died before him in 1868, left Reuben, his wife and children £5,000 in his will.

There are many that still doubt that Reuben was ever the son of James. If he was, then why was he never made his heir and successor? That seems to be the million dollar question that will perhaps always remain unanswered.

Brooke Brooke's behaviour throughout the whole affair was quite typical of the man at the time. He was undergoing his own personal problems which very likely clouded his judgement, thus possibly planting the seeds that were to eventually lead to the 'cold war' between him and his uncle. On his return to Sarawak with his young bride he set up house with her close to the Rajah's residence. Annie, a gentle and kind person, was popular and well liked by all who knew her. Living on the other side of the river was a lonely existence for her as she only saw her friends from time to time. She gave birth to an heir, Basil, on the 11th September 1857, which brought great joy to Brooke and the Rajah. Shortly after the birth the Rajah left for England leaving Brooke in charge of the State. For quite some time now the Rajah had been promising to retire in favour of his nephew. He never seemed to get round to it though, and even when he was in England he continued to rule Sarawak through his letters.

Whether it was his problems or his moodiness that changed Brooke is hard to say, but he slowly became more and more withdrawn. Before long he had stopped receiving visitors to his house, a move which led to a considerable decrease in his popularity. The people of Sarawak were used to the freedom of the Rajah's rule which allowed them to drop by to see him any time they liked. This move made life for Brooke's wife even more isolated. She gave birth to another son Hope, on the 13th November 1858, but died from a fever just twelve days later. She was 24 years old. Annie's death was a sad loss for her husband and all who knew her. She was laid to rest in a little plot of land behind the Rajah's house. Because of her love of flowers her grave was planted with a great deal of them, so that it looked like a mound of flowers rather than a grave.

The Rajah, still in England at the time of Annie's death, had recently suffered a stroke. So, a few days after his wife's death, Brooke, worrying about Reuben George, rushed to England to be with his uncle. On the way

there he received a letter from the Rajah, the contents of which sounded quite hopeful. If James could be paid the sum of £10,000 with a yearly pension of £500-£700, he would abdicate in favour of his nephew. In the event of his death he requested that Brooke continue to pay Rueben the sum of £200 a year. The result of this letter was that Brooke arrived in England in February 1859, very confident that he was soon to be Rajah. All that was left to be done was to come up with the money; not as easy a task as it seemed. Money had been a constant problem to both the Rajah and Brooke. The Rajah had put all the money he had inherited from his father into Sarawak and Brooke Brooke had put whatever money he had into the State also. Under such circumstances James Brooke was very dependent on the Treasury of Sarawak for what they could spare —— which was almost nothing. Most of the money had already been used to repair the damage done to Kuching during the Chinese rebellion of 1857. Pressure was also being put to bear from the Borneo Company. They had advanced £5,000 for repairs and since they weren't doing so well, needed their money back. Brooke realised that if he could just get his hands on £20,000 for his uncle, James would be able to retire anytime without having to depend on the Sarawak Treasury for money. All sorts of ways to raise money were looked into and Brooke felt enthusiastic about each one. In the end he settled on a 'Testimonial Fund' which, as it turned out, didn't raise all that was expected.

However, Brooke was to be deprived of his aspirations through the kindness of Miss Angela Burdett-Coutts, a great friend of the Rajah's who lent him the £5,000 to pay off the Borneo Company. She took an immediate dislike to Captain Brooke, and anyone else connected with the Rajah, and managed to persuade James not to abdicate in favour of his nephew. She felt that if he held on to Sarawak it might eventually come under a British protectorate making it Britain's financial responsibility.

By this time the Rajah was confused by all that was going on. Miss Burdett-Coutts was considered by all who knew her and Brooke as a bad influence. But the Rajah, grateful for her generosity towards Sarawak, respected her judgement and listened to her advice. If it wasn't for this woman's influence over James Brooke, the whole history of Sarawak might easily have taken a different turn. With everyone making demands on him and telling him what to do James really didn't know what was right anymore. He knew he had the choice of abdicating in favour of his nephew or to hand over Sarawak as a gift to the British Government. The influence of Miss Burdett-Coutts, plus some unfavourable reports on Brooke's conduct in Sarawak, added to the Rajah's doubts as to the suitability of his

nephew as administrator of Sarawak. This led to a lot of arguments between Brooke and his uncle. In the meantime, events in Sarawak, which was under the care of Brooke's brother Charles Johnson during his absence, were rather tense at this time. Rumours of various plots to oust the Brooke rule were widespread and the situation was extremely delicate at times. Charles handled matters without too much bloodshed or fighting, and peace was restored once again. The Rajah was impressed at his younger nephew's handling of the situation.

After this incident, which was not the first, the Rajah and Brooke agreed that it would be better to find a protecting power for Sarawak. Negotiations with the Netherlands on the matter fell through and the Rajah decided to approach France next. By now Brooke, who had corresponded with his brother Charles on the matter, decided that Sarawak should not be offered to any foreign power. This annoyed the Rajah greatly, making him disapprove even more of his chosen heir. The arguments and disagreements were to continue for some time to come and Brooke left England for Sarawak in April of 1860, still very unsure of where he stood in the State. Not long after his arrival he received a letter from the Rajah saying that he was again trying to raise money in order to retire and that he was having his abdication papers drawn up by his solicitors. Shortly after that there was another letter from the Rajah; this time he said that as long as he was alive Brooke would never be free of his control. It's no wonder Brooke was getting annoyed and impatient with the attitude of the Rajah.

Things weren't going too well in his personal life either. His three year old son Basil died of dysentery in 1860, and was laid to rest next to his mother Annie. While in England, Brooke had met and became engaged to Julia Welstead who was to become his second wife. He changed his mind after his return to Sarawak and wrote telling her their engagement was off, but Julia had already left England. They married in Singapore in 1861 and for the short duration of their marriage, were very happy.

A daughter, Agnes was born on the 5th May 1862, but just four days later Julia died and was buried alongside Annie and Basil. The tropical climate, with no running water or other facilities, quickly took its toll on those too weak to withstand it. In the short space of four years Brooke had lost two wives and his eldest son. His daughter Agnes was now being cared for by Bishop and Mrs Mc Dougall, and his son Hope was sent back to the Grant family in Scotland. With so much personal sorrow the next year was to add greatly to his troubles.

In 1861, before the death of Julia, James Brooke Brooke was officially

declared the Rajah Muda of Sarawak. Relations between him and his uncle had improved somewhat and when installing him as Rajah Muda, James Brooke told the gathered assembly of officials that in future, the burden of administrating the affairs of government of Sarawak would be carried out by his nephew. He would be leaving for England for what he thought was to be for good, but would keep a 'watchful eye' on things. In view of such a public announcement Brooke Brooke thought the Rajah had abdicated in his favour. It wasn't too long before he realised his mistake as James continued to rule the State through his letters. After the death of Julia, who had been a steadying influence in Brooke's life, all his old suspicions and resentment were once again aroused. Brooke had seen some papers which indicated that the Rajah was going to allow the British government to take over Sarawak and was convinced that his uncle was again trying to deprive him of his inheritance. He wrote a strong accusing letter to the Rajah and another to the British government informing them that negotiations concerning the future of Sarawak were terminated. In this second letter he signed himself as Rajah of Sarawak!

Miss burdett-Coutts, who had never considered Brooke a fit person to be ruler, persuaded the Rajah to disinherit him and to leave at once for Sarawak. She even paid for his passage out. Before departing from England with his nephew Charles, the Rajah changed his will. He left the succession to the title of Sarawak to his good friend Miss Burdett-Coutts or, failing her, to Charles Johnson who had now changed his name to Brooke. He left instructions that if he should die she was to offer Sarawak to Britain. Should they refuse she was then to offer the state to France. A strange turn of events it would seem. But when you consider that for some years now Miss Burdett-Coutts, one of the richest women in England was one of the principal creditors of Sarawak —— it's perhaps not as strange as it seems at all!

The confrontation between the Rajah and Brooke Brooke took place in Singapore in 1863. With his brother Charles acting as the go-between Brooke offered his submission to the Rajah. He returned to England with a pension of £500 a year and a promise from the Rajah, with a lot of persuasion from Charles, that his position be reviewed at some future date. Brooke never saw the Rajah again. On the long journey home he had a great deal of time to regret his submission and with encouragement from his mother and in-laws, circulated statements in England concerning his position in Sarawak. He also threatened to sue the Rajah for the return of the money he had invested in Sarawak during the fifteen years he was living there. When James Brooke got word of what his nephew was doing

he was very annoyed indeed and completely disinherited him. He had him banned from the State, deprived him of all his rights and declared him an outlaw. Only one European official at the time, a Mr Hay, resigned in support of Brooke. Charles Brooke sided with his uncle and so did his younger brother Stuart Johnson.

James Brooke sailed from Sarawak for the last time on the 24th September 1863, twenty-two years after his proclamation as Rajah. He left his nephew Charles to govern in his name. Eventually, in 1865, Miss Burdett-Coutts gave up her rights as heiress to Sarawak and the Rajah settled the State on Charles. James Brooke died on the 11th June 1868 and was buried not very far from his beloved house in Devon, "Burrator", which he left to Charles in his will. Although he never spoke to Brooke Brooke again, one or two polite letters had passed between them during their remaining years. Strangely enough, just a few months after the Rajah's death his nephew Brooke also died. Brooke's son Hope would have become the third white Rajah of Sarawak if things had turned out differently. As it was, he was left an orphan with no money of his own. He eventually received £1,000 tax free from the Sarawak government and lived to the ripe old age of seventy-seven. He married and fathered ten children.

Charles Brooke continued to rule as Rajah of Sarawak until his death in 1917 at the age of eighty-seven years. He had devoted sixty-five years of his life to Sarawak of which forty-nine of those years had been spent as Rajah.

THE END OF A DYNASTY

When James Brooke died in 1868, he left the succession of Rajah of Sarawak to his nephew Charles Brooke, to be entailed to any sons he may have. If Charles failed to beget sons then the title would pass on to the sons of his younger brother Stuart Johnson. If he wished to do so, Charles was also empowered to nominate his elder brother's son Hope Brooke as his heir.

Before his death the Rajah appears to have suffered pangs of guilt regarding the ten year old Hope. If things had been different Hope would very likely have become the third white Rajah of Sarawak. His father, Captain James Brooke Brooke, had been the Rajah's first choice as heir until disagreements drove James to disinherit his nephew. Now the late Rajah had given Charles the option of making Hope his heir when the time came. Charles had his own plans though which included finding a wife who would bear him sons. He did not intend passing on the Raj to a nephew he seldom saw and knew very little about.

Charles journeyed to England in 1869 for the sole purpose of making his rich cousin, Mrs de Windt (who was a widow) his wife. Since Charles had inherited a very impoverished State that needed a lot of money to get it back on its feet, Mrs de Windt seemed like a good prospect. However, instead of proposing to the lady in question he proposed to her nineteen year old daughter Margaret. Perhaps he viewed the younger woman as being more suitably qualified, after all, Mrs de Windt was in her forties with her child-bearing years almost behind her. So it was that Charles married Margaret who proved herself the right choice by producing three sons. Charles Vyner Brooke was born in September 1874 in England and was immediately proclaimed the Rajah Muda — heir apparent — of Sarawak. His brother Bertram was born in Kuching in August 1876 and another brother, Harry, was born in England in 1879.

The Rajah's relationship with his eldest son Vyner was not very good at all. Not surprisingly, since the Rajah saw very little of his sons during their growing years. He considered Vyner to be too extravagant and flighty and if there was one thing the Rajah abhorred, it was anyone who was

Tuan Muda Bertram Brooke

Rajah Muda Vyner Brooke

Tuan Bungsu Harry Brooke with his son James

travagant and wasted money that could have been put to good use in rawak. It was no secret to Vyner that his parents had a greater ference for his younger brother Bertram. This caused some friction tween the brothers. Bertram was as much devoted to Sarawak as his ther and brother, but had no desire or great ambition to rule it. He was uite content to serve under his brother. Unfortunately, Vyner couldn't elp suspecting that his brother was in league with his parents and that hey were all against him.

With Vyner's marriage to Sylvia Brett in 1911, the situation between him and his father worsened. The Rajah never liked his daughter-in-law nor she him. Their mutual dislike of each other never changed through the years. Charles viewed Sylivia as being a bad influence on Vyner, while Sylvia later wrote of her father-in-law as being 'unscrupulous and inhuman', a man who was 'hated and feared, flattered and cajoled, until he lost all sense of the outside world'. Consequently, the Rajah did all in his power to keep Sylvia Brooke from visiting Sarawak while he was alive. In contrast to Vyner's wife, the Rajah was very much impressed with Bertram's wife, Gladys Palmer. When Gladys gave birth to a son, Anthony (also known as Peter) the Rajah was thrilled and there was great rejoicing in Kuching. Sylvia produced three healthy daughters, whose birth's seemed to pass unnoticed, but no heir for Sarawak.

The family situation came to a head in 1912 when Bertram was returning to Kuching after some time away. Vyner was outraged when he heard that orders had been given by the Rajah that Bertram's arrival was to be accorded the same ceremonial honours that were normally reserved for the heir apparent. he immediately suspected a plot to disinherit him and neither he, nor his wife, could manage to hide their enraged feelings. They wrote angry letters to the Rajah, which of course they regretted later on. The Rajah grudgingly accepted the apology that followed but he decided that Bertram, the Tuan Muda, should be involved as much as possible with the governing of Sarawak after his death.

Coincidentally, when it came to a decision about retiring the Rajah was no different than his uncle, James Brooke. He couldn't quite make up his mind about leaving the country where he had spent most of his life, in the hands of someone he didn't trust. One minute he would talk about retiring and the next he would be talking about ruling until his death. When the Rajah was absent from Sarawak he left Vyner in control of the State, but not before he made sure that his functions and his income were very carefully controlled.

The Rajah's youngest son Harry, was completely cut off from all that went on in Sarawak. He lived in England but also managed to cause problems for his father with his love of spending. He married and had one son, but his wife was weak and ill and a lot of money had to be spent on her care. Both harry and his wife died at a young age, leaving their young son James to be taken care of.

On the 17th May 1917, Charles Brooke died. He was nearly eighty-eight years old. A week later, on the 24th May, Charles Vyner Brooke was declared the third white Rajah of Sarawak. Exactly one year later the new Ranee arrived in Sarawak. But even though he was dead, the old Rajah wasn't going to let go easily and he still intended to have a say in the running of the State. His main worry before his death was that Vyner, when he became Rajah, would squander his money away in England where Charles felt he would want to spend most of his time. He therefore tried to work things out so that Sarawak would be under the control of both of his sons. Vyner was prohibited by his father's will from carrying out any major developments or changes either in the State or Government before first consulting his brother Bertram. He wanted them to work together as one and hoped that when one of them was out of the State the other would always be around. Bertram was also to be shown the same respect and given the same treatment as his brother the Rajah. The brothers did manage to work quite well together but any suggestions put forward by Bertram were quite often ignored by the Rajah.

Sarawak, under its two 'rulers' was not quite the same as it had been during the reign of Charles' rule. Vyner came and went a lot, in spite of the fact that his father had hoped he would spend eight months of the year in the State. When he was in Kuching with the Ranee, life consisited of some very lively parties held regularly at the Astana. Not everyone approved of the new Rajah's carefree lifestyle and some seemed to think he was not as devoted to his task as his father had been. The Ranee, although she did take an interest in Sarawak, left the impression that she was more interested in the pleasures and gaiety of life. Bertram was more like his father and the people seemed to be able to identify with him much easier. They felt that he had the same ideals as Charles and he liked to journey as much as possible into the interior.

As the European population increased the newly arrived wives had a tendency to stick together and with the help of the Ranee, soon formed their own exclusive club. The club later became known as *'The Ranee's Club'* and non-Europeans were not allowed to join. James and Charles Brooke would very likely have turned over in their graves if they knew

what was happening in Sarawak. Both of them had been very definite in their attitude that Sarawak belonged to the Sarawakians. But with the influx of more Europeans the time spent socialising with the local people was drastically reduced.

Once again the question of an heir to the Raj had to be considered. It was now obvious that the Rajah wasn't going to have any sons so,according to his father's will the next in line would be Bertram. Since Bertram wasn't in the best of health the Raj would fall to his son Anthony Brooke. If the Rajah died before his brother it seems likely that Bertram, instead of taking the task upon himself would pass the title onto his son and renounce his own rights. It shouldn't be hard to imagine how Vyner must have felt at not having a son to pass the title on to. All his young life he had lived with the knowledge that his parents preferred his brother over him, it now seemed likely that he had no choice but to make that brother's son his heir. The Ranee was more upset than her husband and tried to have the succession passed on to one of her daughter's, or perhaps her eldest daughter's son, but to no avail. The Rajah had no choice but to accept Anthony Brooke as his heir, but that still did not prevent him from looking upon the young man with distrust and criticism.

In 1936 Anthony Brooke entered the Sarawak Service and served as a District Officer in the Third Division. It was soon apparent that he had a definite interest in his inheritance, with some very strong views that he was not afraid to express. With such a strong attitude it was easy to see that he wasn't going to have a trouble free relationship with his uncle. In a ceremony on the 9th April 1939, Anthony Brooke was officially appointed the Rajah Muda. Although the title did not make him the legal heir apparent, it did imply that he was the successor to the Raj and would take care of affairs in the State when the Rajah was absent. When, a few days later, Vyner left for England Anthony took over the running of the government. Unfortunately, all did not go well. Anthony's outspoken views made him unpopular with some of the older officials, who viewed him with a certain amount of suspicion. Four senior officers retired during this time, among them the Chief Secretary and the Chief Justice. It was rumoured that they were dissatisfied with the new regime. The Sarawak Treasury also had a complaint. They felt that the Rajah Muda was a bit too generous with money at times. On one or two occasions he advanced money to a couple of his officials to pay off their debts. As his uncle's deputy, it appears that he felt he could use the goverment's money as he himself saw fit.

With the outbreak of war in Europe in 1939, the Rajah returned to Sarawak and shortly after Anthony left Kuching to meet his bride-to-be. It

Anthony Brooke

was while he was on honeymoon, and visiting his mother in Athens, that he received a notice from the Rajah saying that he had been deprived of the title and rank of Rajah Muda. The reason given was that he was "not yet fitted to exercise the responsibilities of this high position". Unfortunately, such a move caused a great deal of uncertainty among the people of Sarawak and it was rumoured once again, that the Ranee was trying to change things so that her daughter could succeed to the Raj. She was of course unsuccessful. Since the Rajah didn't have a son of his own it's only natural to assume that he didn't feel as strongly about the Raj as he used to, especially as it would pass into the hands of a nephew that he had already had disagreements with.

Anthony Brooke returned to Sarawak, in spite of what had happened, and was made District Officer of Sarikei. The year was 1941 and the Rajah was preparing to celebrate the centenary of Brooke rule in Sarawak. He decided to establish a Constitution for the State and thereafter divest himself of absolute power. An agreement was signed providing for certain allowances for the Rajah and his family and also for the payment of a sum to compensate him for the loss of his rights. This in turn gave rise to rumours among the people that the Rajah was selling his birthright. He wanted to name Anthony Brooke as his heir but the ex-Rajah Muda refused on the grounds that his father was still alive. Bertram was, by law, still the legal heir and had not denounced his rights. Furthermore, Anthony sent detailed criticism on the Constitution proposals to the Rajah who was not pleased. The first flimsy excuse that arose gave the Rajah a reason for dismissing Anthony Brooke from the Sarawak Service. Vyner then announced that the heir to the Raj was to be his brother Bertram.

When Vyner became Rajah he had sworn to honour the Rajah Charles' will which had laid down the succession to the Raj. It also stipulated that he consult with his brother before making any changes in the government of Sarawak. Up to now the Tuan Muda had never been consulted by Vyner on any decisions that had been made and it was only his loyalty to his brother that made him keep that fact to himself. But now, where the present situation was concerned, he did not agree with altering their father's plan for succession. As far as his father's will was concerned he was already the heir-presumptive. Under the new conditions which Vyner had negotiated for, he would have the advantage of being able to reduce his chosen heir to a lower rank if he so desired, which would make the position of heir a very insecure one. All powers that had previously belonged to the Rajah would now pass on to the Rajah-in-Council under the new constitution. The Rajah would have very little say except for his power to nominate members of the Council. If a Bill presented to the Council was prohibited by the Rajah he

would have no choice but to endorse it if it were presented at three separate sessions of the Council. Some of the other conditions laid down were that if the Rajah died his heir who would succeed him could only do so under the provisions laid down in the 1888 Treaty with Great Britain. The new Rajah must be proclaimed within a month by the Supreme Council who in the meantime would act as Regent. If the Rajah was absent from the State then the Rajah-in-Council was empowered to appoint an officer to administer the State during his absence. The officer appointed would have all the Rajah's power and prerogatives during this time. If the Rajah was unable to look after the affairs of State then the Supreme Council could appoint someone in his place to do so.

But in spite of all the Tuan Muda's protests Vyner went ahead and announced him as his heir. He laid down a condition that if Bertram were to die before him, then the Committee of Administration for the new constitution must consult with the British Government on the question of a new heir for Sarawak. Under these conditions Bertram's inheritance was not really his to dispose of as he wished, and the terms of their father's will were being completely violated. In the nine Cardinal Principles on which the former Brooke Rajahs had based their claim it was stated: "That Sarawak is the heritage of Our Subjects and is held in trust by Ourselves for them".

It's not known if the new constitution would have worked because as fate would have it, Sarawak was swept up in the ravages of war when the Japanese invaded on Christmas Day 1941. The Rajah had managed to leave the State before then and was in Australia while Bertram was in London. None of the Brookes were in Sarawak at this crucial time. The State suffered greatly during the war years and it was obvious that the cost of rehabilitation would be expensive. By this time the Rajah had patched up his differences with his nephew and appointed him Rajah Muda once again, giving him the power to negotiate with the Colonial Office on the future of Sarawak. When Sarawak was liberated the Rajah again changed his mind, dismissed the Rajah Muda and assumed control of the government himself. He then offered to cede the state to the King of England and the cession was accepted. His distrust of his heir seems to have played a large part in this decision, but he could console himself with the fact that he was only doing what the first Rajah had also tried to do.

In 1843 and again in 1866, James Brooke had offered Sarawak to the British Crown. The only stipulation he made was that the customs and religion of the people be respected. His offer was not accepted. Charles, the second Rajah, was happy to let Sarawak prosper on its own, while

Vyner was of the opinion that the situation had changed so much that it was no longer possible to be self-governing. And so, not without its problems, Brooke rule in Sarawak had drawn to a close. It was the 'END OF A DYNASTY'.

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