

From the collections of  
Major David Ng (Rtd) and Steven Tan

Text by  
Muzaffar D.J. Tate



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# Preface

THE invention of the picture postcard was a happy one, both for those who were its immediate beneficiaries and also for posterity. The picture postcards of Kuala Lumpur and its surroundings which were produced in the opening decades of this century were an undoubted boon in the days before television had developed to bring the world into our living-room. These pictures, taken by local or Japanese photographers, catered almost exclusively for a Western clientele who were thus enabled to send to the folks back home vivid images of the land in which they carried the white man's burden under the remorseless tropical sun. Their concern to reveal the exotic world in which they lived their lives accounts for the at times somewhat bizarre subject matter of the images which they sent; municipal slaughter-houses, the local fire-brigade station, workers' quarters – even the local gaol, together with portraits of street vendors, emaciated jinricksha pullers and professional beggars. However, we in the 1980s should be grateful for these off-beat predilections for we are presented with a unique visual record of Malayan society, at least from some aspects, as it appeared in the formative years of colonial rule, as well as being provided with an invaluable historical record of the evolution of our capital city. This record seems all the more important as vestiges of the Malaysian past are fast disappearing before the drive to progress and modernity.

Fortunately there are amongst us individuals and organizations who care about our heritage and who are concerned to preserve what they can of its more notable legacies. If this simple volume serves to increase interest in that heritage and in this way stimulate greater public support for the efforts of those engaged in its preservation, then it will have richly succeeded in its purpose.

*January 1987*

MAJOR DAVID NG (RTD)  
STEVEN TAN







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## 7 THE PEOPLE OF KUALA LUMPUR

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*Malay royalty – Malay ladies – Malay occupations – Chinese towkays – Chinese ladies – a Chinese funeral procession – Chinese occupations – a Chinese 'bomoh' – Chinese opium-smokers – Indian plantation workers – Indian policemen – a Hindu priest, an Indian beggar, Indian professional entertainers – aborigines*

## 8 ROUND AND ABOUT KUALA LUMPUR

93

*Countryside – tin mines – rubber estates – European bungalow and club – Batu Caves – Klang – Port Swettenham – the railway line – Kuala Kubu – Kuala Selangor*

*Books on Kuala Lumpur*

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## Acknowledgement

The authors and publishers wish to thank Mr J A Nicholson for his kind permission to reproduce the following postcards from his collection: No. 2 (p. 3), No. 13 (p. 8), No. 16 (p. 10), No. 25 (p. 16), No. 48 (p. 30), No. 114 (p. 64) and No. 126 (p. 70)

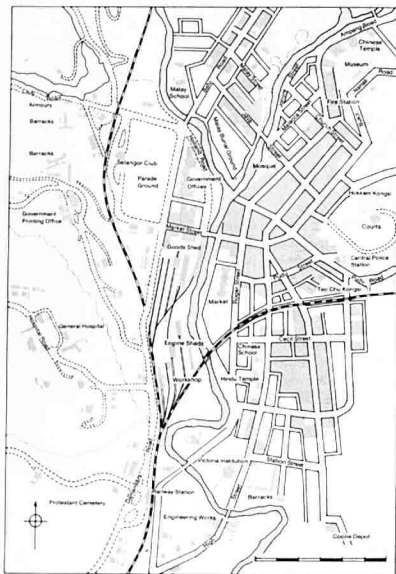
# The Growth of Kuala Lumpur

BETWEEN the 1890s when these picture postcards begin up till the 1930s where they end, Kuala Lumpur grew considerably, stimulated in the first place by its selection as capital of the newly-formed Federated Malay States (1896) and yet more so by the sudden rise of rubber planting in the first decade of the new century. Within a generation it was transformed from a small mining town into a compact, well-ordered administrative centre and focus of commerce and trade. The Chinese nucleus of small two-storey shophouses remained, their monotony

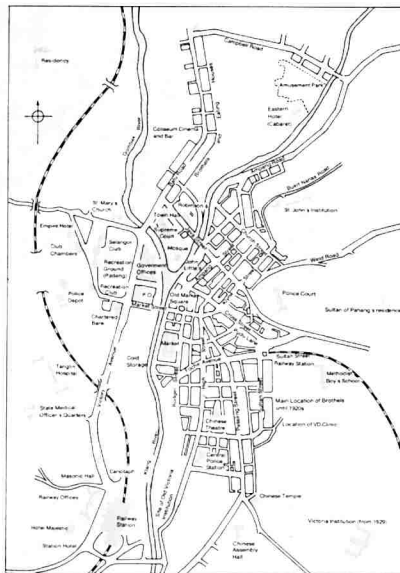
broken by taller blocks with elegant neo-classical or neo-baroque facades. Substantial government buildings, designed in a distinctive Moorish style, now graced the heart of the city. Banks, the buildings of large commercial houses, hospitals, schools, department stores, hotels, a central market and the most imaginative railway station in all South-East Asia gave Kuala Lumpur an identity of its own. The Malay *kampung* that had sat on the edge of the Chinese kernel had disappeared before the advancing lines of brick and plaster shophouses with their roofs of tile, but a new Malay

settlement had also sprung up in Kampung Bahru. The Indian presence had increased, promoted by the spread of rubber plantations around the city, the coming of the railway and the proliferation of the administration, with Brickfields, Bangsar and Sentul their centres of settlement. The European community created a garden city of their own, fashioned amongst the hills of Damansara on the west bank of the Klang River which separated them from the 'Asiatic' quarters.

Kuala Lumpur, 1880-95



Kuala Lumpur in the 1930s



①

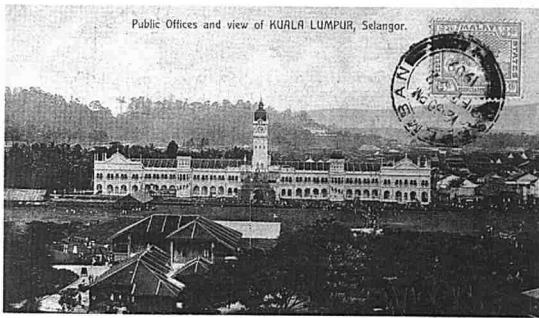
Kuala Lumpur in 1897. Public Offices under construction.



Two views of Kuala Lumpur, the first (1) taken around 1897 from the footbridge across the railway line to Rawang which used to run at the base of the hill on which the present police headquarters (Bukit Aman) stands. The new Government Offices (the Sultan Abdul Samad Building) can be seen under construction on the far side of the Parade Ground (Padang). The corner lot of the shophouses to the left of the Government Offices was occupied by the department store established by Loke Chow Kit in 1892. These shophouses were later pulled down to make way for the new General Post Office. In view (2) is presented a panoramic view of the Padang and the Government Offices facing it which once completed (1898) became Kuala Lumpur's principal landmark. This picture was taken in the early 1900s. In the left foreground can be seen the original Selangor Club (founded 1884); to the right the oblong shape of the railway halt constructed for the convenience of the British Resident whose offices were on the hill from which this picture was taken. To the right of the halt is the Selangor Recreation Club, established in 1896 'for the poorer members of the English-speaking community', while the five-arched building visible on the right-hand side of the Padang is the original Chartered Bank Building (built in 1891).

②

Public Offices and view of KUALA LUMPUR, Selangor.



③



View of Kuala Lumpur from Market Street Bridge.

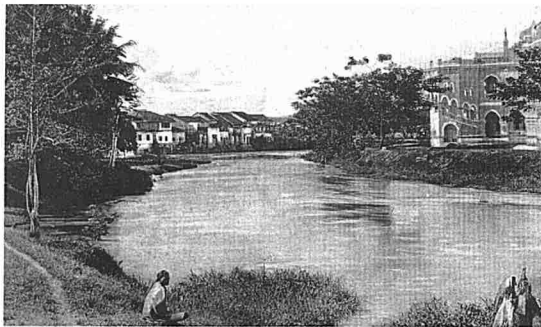
Any book about Kuala Lumpur should start, of course, with the river which, until the coming of the railway, was the main means of communication with the outside world. The view in (3) shows the muddy confluence of the Gombak and the Klang rivers which probably gave the town its name. The line of these two rivers separated the main part of the town, with its Asian inhabitants – seen on the right-hand side in (3) – from the official and European section on the opposite bank. The Jame Mosque (at the confluence) was not yet built. The picture was taken from the old Market Street Bridge and probably dates to the early 1900s. The views shown in (4) and (5) belong to the same period and were taken in the other direction, i.e., downstream from above the confluence on the Gombak River near where the old Supreme Court Building now stands. These views have hardly changed at all as far

④



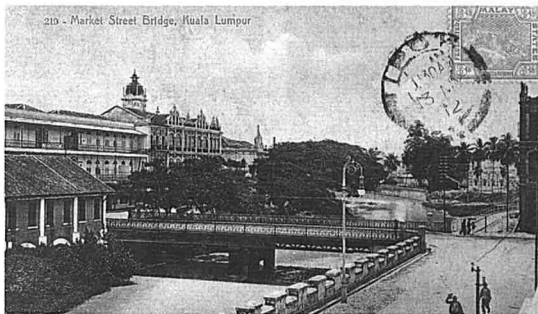
View of Kuala Lumpur Government Offices.

⑤

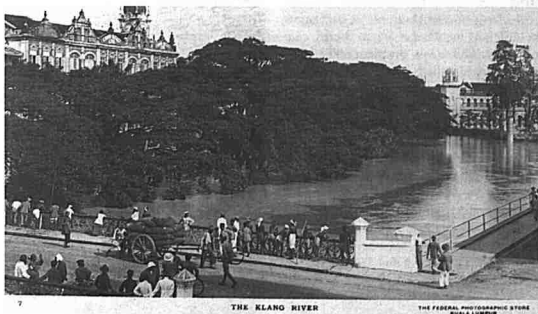


River View in Kuala Lumpur.

as the right-hand bank in the pictures are concerned. The scenes of the river shown in (6) and (7) looking upstream from just below the Market Street Bridge belong to a later date, i.e. (6) to the 1920s and (7) to the early 1930s. In both pictures the high facade of Chow Kit's store on Holland Road (Jalan Belanda) can be clearly seen on the left-hand side, with John Little's to its left in (6) and with the clock tower of the Government Secretariat peering above. In (6) the Jame Mosque is visible in the right-hand background, while in (7) can be seen the Supreme Court Building in the background.



⑥



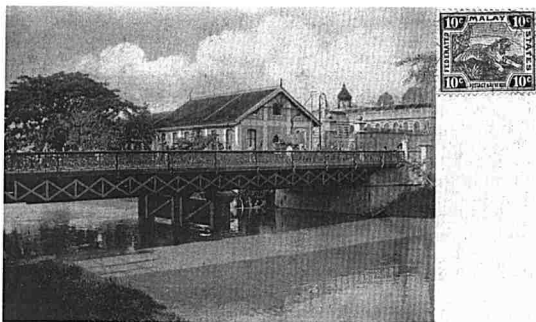
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(8)



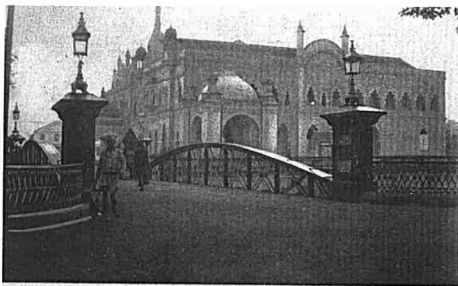
Kuala Lumpur—Market Street Bridge.

(9)



The first permanent bridge to be built across the river was the Market Street Bridge, constructed in 1883 to take the place of the felled tree trunk which had served the purpose to that date. This timber structure was replaced in 1890 by the 30 m lattice girder bridge seen in (8) and (9). These two pictures were taken in the 1900s when two-storey Chinese shop-houses still held sway in Market Street (Leboh Pasar Besar) itself. The next two bridges to be built were the Java Street (Jalan Tun Perak) Bridge over the Klang River and the Gombak Bridge over the Gombak River in 1884, whose timber structures were likewise replaced by iron in 1890. The view of the Gombak Bridge shown here (10) was taken soon after the

(10)



Gombak Bridge and Town Hall, Kuala Lumpur.



(11)



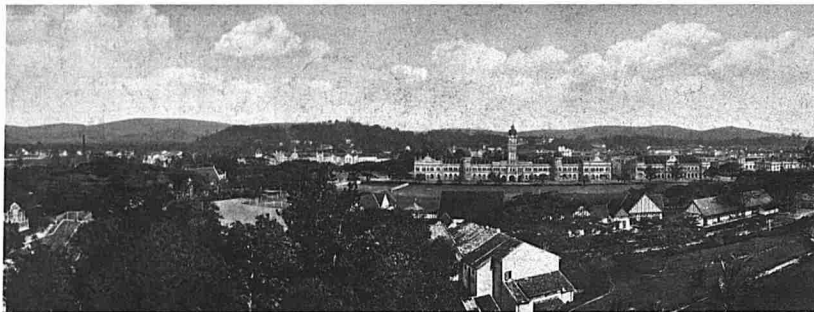
completion of the municipal offices seen in the background. The second view (11) was taken about a decade later (note the improved street lamps).

The Great Flood of 1926, during which the waters reached a record height of 1 m in the centre of town, causing great damage to property, was the worst of the periodical overflows which had afflicted Kuala Lumpur from its beginnings. The solution lay in straightening the tortuous course of the river as it passed through the centre of the town. The stretch between the confluence and today's Central Market was straightened in the 1880s. The experience of 1926 prompted much more extensive straightening works to be carried out starting from below the High Street Police Station, which were completed by 1930. Kuala Lumpur is still flood-prone but not to the same degree as before. The view from the Market Street Bridge (12) shows the flood-prone area.

(12)



(13)



274 - View from Police Depot, Kuala Lumpur, Selangor, F. M. S.

Two panoramic views of Kuala Lumpur, both taken in the 1800s, by which time the town had acquired the salient characteristics which were to remain with little change until the rash of development which followed Independence. The first view (13) shows the centre-piece formed by the Government Offices (later Federal Secretariat) which dominated the scene as they do in this picture. By this time the Offices were flanked by other stylish offi-

cial edifices – the General Post Office on the immediate right (in the picture), and the municipal offices (mostly obscured by trees) on the left. The Selangor Club (in the right-hand foreground) had also grown and was wearing its mock Tudor facade, as it still does to this day. The Padang (or Parade Ground as it was still called) was already the focal point for parades and other official occasions as well as the scene of all major sporting events.



General View of Kuala Lumpur.

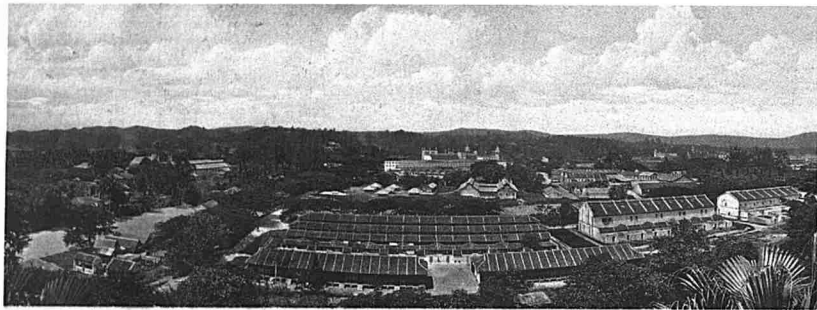


STATUE OF SIR FRANK SWETTENHAM, G.C.M.G., K.C.M.G.,  
AT KUALA LUMPUR, FEDERATED MALAY STATES.

The second view (14) looking at the Government Offices in the background over long rows of two-storey shophouses reveals another typical feature of Kuala Lumpur, and indeed of all Malayan towns, with the clock tower of the Offices rising above to give Kuala Lumpur its special identity. 1800s

Picture (15) shows the scene when the monument to Sir Frank Swettenham was unveiled at an impressive ceremony attended by the British High Commissioner (Sir Lawrence Guillemard) and the Rulers of the four Federated Malay States (FMS) in 1921. Swettenham had retired from the Malayan world but was still very much alive. He was honoured in this way because it was under his direction as the British Resident of Selangor in the 1880s that the first steps were taken to modernize the town. The statue was erected at the Gombak Bridge end of the Federal Secretariat where it remained (except for during the years of the Japanese Occupation) until its removal to its present site outside the walls of the National Museum after Independence.

The Police Depot mentioned in the caption to picture (13) was not the police depot of today, but was sited on the Bluff (Bukit Aman) near where the modern national police headquarters now stands.



220 • View from Petaling Hill, Kuala Lumpur, Selangor, F. M. S.

Another general view of Kuala Lumpur (16) in the 1920s taken from the Petaling Hills (Changkat) where the town's first golf links were located, overlooking the heart of Chinatown with the inevitable clock tower of the Government Offices protruding in the background. Pictures (17) and (18) take us into

the streets of Chinatown itself, showing typical rows of shophouses. These brick and plaster structures with their tile roofs had replaced the wood and attap houses which characterized Kuala Lumpur in the days of Yap Ah Loy. After a series of disastrous fires and also in order to improve the sanitation, Swettenham

17



ordered the reconstruction of the Chinese section of the town, street by street. By the mid-1890s the old attap houses had almost disappeared. The row of shophouses seen in (17) start with the simplest type on the extreme left, followed by a taller, two-storeyed building with a semi-classical facade next door. In Petaling Street (18) where business for a variety of reasons was brisker the shophouses had graduated to three-storeys and possessed still more sophisticated facades.

18



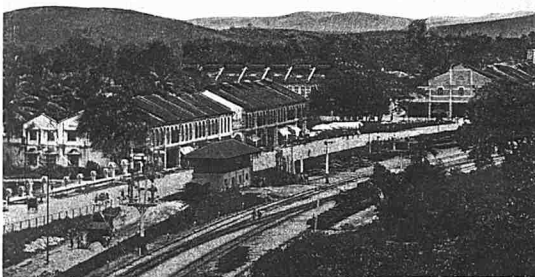
(M.35) Petaling Street, K. Lumpur, F. M. S.

Photo by M. S. N. K. J. M. S. K. L.

The coming of the railway to Kuala Lumpur (1886) was a major step towards the town's development. It ended the tortuous three-day journey by sampan being poled upstream from Klang, and opened up the town to easy access from the outside world. Kuala Lumpur's first railway station, on the site of the present building, was a temporary affair of wood and corrugated iron roof. This was replaced by a more substantial building in 1892, the view of which in picture (19) is taken from the point where High Street (Jalan Bandar) used to end before the course of the Klang River below today's Central Market was straightened out. The presence of the railway led to a fresh influx of Indian settlers, many of whom found employment in the newly-opened railway workshop and goods yard (on the site of the new GPO and Dayabumi). Many of the Indians made their homes in the Brickfields area shown in picture (20). The name Brickfields itself came from the many brick kilns established in this area to meet the ever-mounting demand for bricks for the construction of new shop-houses and other buildings in the town from the 1880s onwards.



Kuala Lumpur Railway Station and environment, Selangor.



BRICKFIELDS ROAD, KUALA LUMPUR

(21)



Old Market Square, Kuala Lumpur

(22)



Two views of Old Market Square (Medan Pasar), the first (21) taken around about 1915, and the second (22) some ten years later. Old Market Square is set in the oldest part of Kuala Lumpur, a stone's throw from the spot where the first settlers landed, and it retained its position as the hub of trade and commerce. The Mercantile Bank Building seen at the end of the Square in (21) (now replaced by a more modern building) stood on the spot where Yap Ah Loy used to live and once offered – at the height of the Selangor Civil War – silver dollars for the heads of his enemies. But Old Market Square no longer wholly belonged to Chinatown for a number of the premises around it were occupied by successful Indian traders and European commercial houses.

Ten years later (22) the motor car had gone a long way to replacing the gharry. In this view Old Market Square is seen from the Mercantile Bank end, looking towards the Hong Kong and Shanghai Bank (also now replaced by a massive modern structure) which faced it at the other end, and to where Benteng now is beyond. The size and sophistication of these buildings suggest the strides Kuala Lumpur had made since the beginning of the century.

## 2

## Chinatown

THE oldest part of Kuala Lumpur is Chinatown, the heart of which grew around the spot where the 87 pioneer miners had unloaded their stores and supplies in 1857. This was where Benteng now stands, and the area behind which is now taken up by the commercial houses and banks around Medan Pasar. This was where Yap Ah Loy who was the Chinese master of Kuala Lumpur from 1868 till his death in 1885 held sway. His own town house stood on the site of the present Mercantile Bank in Medan Pasar, and a great gambling shed which was thronged by fortune seekers occupied the area between the market (i.e. Medan Pasar) and the river. Yap Ah Loy's shanty mining town of mud-walled, attap-roofed houses separated by narrow alley-ways barely 4 metres broad was virtually destroyed in 1872 at the height of the Selangor Civil War, and very seriously damaged again by a fire (a not infrequent occurrence) in 1881. This was followed at the end of the same year by a devastating flood which destroyed Yap's own residence.

The disaster of 1881 and the new presence

of a British administration in the town provided the opportunity for the rebuilding of Kuala Lumpur in a more permanent and better laid-out form. From 1882 onwards the streets of Chinatown today took shape, laid out in conformity with official regulations regarding their width, drainage, and access back alleys. These streets acquired new names – mostly colonial in flavour – although the Chinese who lived there had their own terms for them. The houses along them were also rebuilt, in line with the new requirement that they must be of brick and tile. A start was made with Market Street, then Ampang Street, High Street and Pudooh Street. In 1884 there were 45 brick houses in Kuala Lumpur, the following year 218, by 1887 518, and by 1889 it was possible for the authorities to issue an order for the pulling down of all the mud and attap structures still in existence.

The new shophouses adhered to the same basic pattern already familiar in Singapore and Penang and to become the stereotype for all the towns of the Peninsula – originally single-storey structures of which in Kuala

Lumpur itself only one or two examples survive. In 1892 the new Sanitary Board (town council) decreed the five-foot way, another typical feature of shophouse architecture, so as to keep the pedestrians off the roadway.

As Kuala Lumpur grew in importance and prosperity the single-storey block gave way to two and three storey buildings. Between 1900 and 1930 traditional shophouse architecture reached its zenith, with elaborate neo-classical or neo-baroque columns, friezes and cornices presenting elegant exteriors to the simple interiors which lay behind them. Within this complex of streets the Chinese of Kuala Lumpur lived and laboured, carrying on with their business and commerce, providing their own amusements and looking after their kith and kin through their traditional clan organization and *kongsis* halls. They built their own hospitals, founded and maintained their own schools, and spent a generous share of their surplus wealth on the erection of ornate temples in support of their traditional cults.



(23)



11 Street Scene, Kuala Lumpur.

A typical street scene (23) – possibly in Rodger Street (Jalan Hang Kasturi) – in Chinatown at the turn of the century with the ubiquitous clocktower of the Government Offices in the background. Note the rickshaws, the hairstyles, and the simple dress of short black trousers and a shirt of coarse nankeen worn by the man in the foreground, and the



Kuala Lumpur. - Chinese Street (The Supreme Court in the back)

bullock cart and the conical bamboo hats of the rickshaw pullers in the second view (24), which belongs to the same period. This view is probably of Market Street (Leboh Pasar Besar), looking up towards its junction with Cross Street (Jalan Silang), with the Police or Law Courts on Weld Hill (Bukit Mahkamah) in the background.

(24)

(25)



Petaling Street and High Street, Kuala Lumpur, Selangor, F. M. S.

Of all the streets of Chinatown the best known today and yester-year to which these pictures belong (25–27) is (and was) Petaling Street, although the reasons for its attraction then and now differ. Today Petaling Street is thronged with shoppers bargain-hunting by day, and by connoisseurs of good stall food by night. For the generation which lived in Kuala Lumpur in the 1900s, 1910s and 1920s Petaling Street was the street of sin and sensation. Its premises housed the gambling dens of the town – so much so that it was described as the Monte Carlo of Malaya – while a little further down the road were the ladies of easy virtue plying their trade. Brothels were legal and registered, and in the eyes of all concerned a necessary institution in a

(26)



"Monte Carlo", Kuala Lumpur.

rough and tough community where there were ten males to every one woman in town.

Most of the prostitutes were Chinese, often illegal immigrants, but the trade also became a Japanese speciality, and one end of Petaling Street was virtually a Japanese quarter. Their clientele was not only Chinese, or other Asians, but European as well. 'The Japanese dolls had laughed and clapped their hands, while the fat mistress of the house raked in our dollars, gauging her charges by the state of our hilarity', one old-time expatriate reminisced.\*

However puritan England finally caught up with its more accommodating local proconsuls of empire, and in 1930 prostitution became illegal, and the brothels officially had to close. Fortunately the consequence of the Great

Depression at about the same time was to change the pattern of immigration and to lead to a more normal sex ratio. In picture (25) which was taken around 1915, the imposing premises of the Commercial Press can be seen in the High Street on the right. This building was the forerunner of others of similar dimensions which rose as its neighbours in the 1920s.

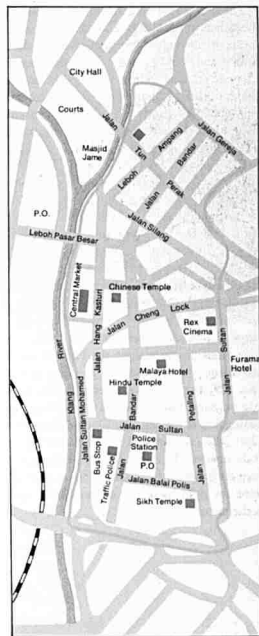
\* quoted by J. M. Gullick, *The Story of Kuala Lumpur* (1857-1939), Eastern Universities Press, 1983, p. 133.

#### Old names of the streets of Kuala Lumpur

Ampang Road	Jalan Ampang
Ampang Street	Leboh Ampang
Cecil Street	Leboh Hang Lekir
Church Street	Jalan Gereja
Clarke Street	Jalan Mahkamah Tinggi
Cross Street	Jalan Silang
Foche Avenue	Jalan Cheng Lock
High Street	Jalan Bandar
Java Street	Jalan Tun Perak
Klyne Street	Jalan Hang Lekiu
Malacca Street	Jalan Melaka
Market Street	Leboh Pasar Besar
Old Market Square	Medan Pasar
Petaling Street	Jalan Petaling
Pudoh Street	Jalan Pudu
Rodger Street	Jalan Hang Kasturi
Station Street	Jalan Balai Polis
Sultan Street	Jalan Sultan
Theatre Street	Jalan Panggong



Petaling Street, Japanese Quarter, Kuala Lumpur.



Chinatown

The view (28) of Church Street (Jalan Gereja) was taken in the 1900s. Church Street was a much more sedate precinct than Petaling Street, and took its name from the Roman Catholic church in the vicinity set on the slopes of Bukit Nanas where the Cathedral of St John's now stands. Despite their western-style frontages the rows of Chinese shophouses which sprang up along the streets of Kuala Lumpur and in every other town and village in the Peninsula where the Chinese dwelt were in essence a derivation of the rows of village houses in China itself, with shared party walls and stereotyped, traditional indoor layouts. These rows of shophouses with their identical exteriors led their inhabitants to identify their particular street by the number of shophouses in it; Sultan Street, for instance, was known (at one period) as 'twelve-houses street'. Chinatown also extended westwards away from the river along the Pudu Road to the village of Pudu itself. In the view shown here (29) the centre of interest is the large lake or 'pond' which covered what is now the playing field of the Selangor Chinese Recreation Club. The lake was fed by the waters of the Pudu stream. The railway line to Ampang ran from the Sultan Street Station (30 on page 19) along the right-hand side of the lake as seen in the picture.



Church Street, Kuala Lumpur.



189. Pudu Pond, Kuala Lumpur.



Railway Station, Sultan Street, Kuala Lumpur

The Sultan Street Station (30) was opened in 1893 when the line was extended from Kuala Lumpur to Pudu (and eventually to the mines at Ampang). This branch line started from the main railway station and ran across the river along what is now Jalan Cheng Lock, bisecting Chinatown. Jalan Cheng Lock itself owes its uncharacteristic width to the fact that it originally served as the permanent way. The traces of Sultan Street Station end of the track to Pudu still survive at the foot of the hill on which the Methodist Boys' School stands,

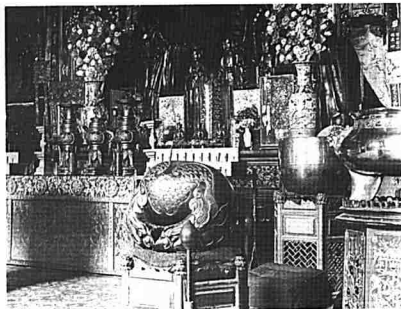
opposite the Pudu Bus Terminal. Picture (31) is a view of Station Street – now Jalan Balai Polis – as it appeared around the 1910s, when this picture was taken. The view looks over Petaling Street in the foreground towards High Street (Jalan Bandar) which it joined at a point opposite the present Traffic Police Headquarters. (It no longer does so.) Station Street was crossed halfway down by Theatre Street (Jalan Panggong), so-named after the one of the three or so Chinese theatres in town which was situated in it.



Kuala Lumpur—Station Street



"CHANS" TEMPLE, KUALA LUMPUR



A CHINESE SANCTUARY

THE FEDERAL PHOTOGRAPHIC STORE  
KUALA LUMPUR

(32)

(33)

No views of Chinatown would be complete without scenes of a temple or clan association house or *kongsi* where the genius of Chinese craftsmen – designers, sculptors, painters, wood engravers, interior decorators – and the magnificence of traditional Chinese architecture are seen in their fullest expression. Kuala Lumpur has its full quota of Chinese temples founded by grateful and generous *towkays* who had made good, and maintained by the local Chinese community.

One of the most remarkable of these temples is the Chan See Shu Yuen (32) at the Jalan Kinabalu end of Petaling Street. Built in 1906, this temple possesses the richest exam-

ple of the Kwangtung pottery style of roof and exterior wall decoration, known as Shek Wan, with rooftop figures and wall friezes in terra cotta, depicting scenes from Chinese history and mythology. The appearance of the temple has barely changed in any way since these pictures were taken in the 1910s, although there have been changes in the immediate surroundings and it no longer sits on fringes of the town.

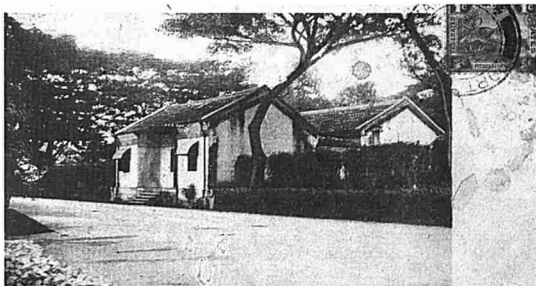
The temple interior shown in (33) with its wealth of carving and altar decoration remains as typical today as it was when this picture was taken. We have no indication to which temple this particular interior belongs.

(34)



"Ka Yin Hooi-Kuan" (Hakka Kongsi), Sultan Street, Kuala Lumpur.

(35)



"Tung Shin Yi Yuen" (Chinese Hospital), Kuala Lumpur.

The various clan associations and other social organizations which characterize Chinese society have been an essential part of the overseas Chinese's survival kit, particularly during the turbulent nineteenth century and the early part of the twentieth. Ancestral halls, *kongsi* and dialect associations and the like have served as important focal points in the community, and because of their close association with traditional culture their architecture is indistinguishable from that of the Chinese temple. Kuala Lumpur cannot boast the magnificent architecture of the *kongsi* houses of Penang or Singapore but what it once possessed can be seen in (34), a picture of the Ka Yin Hooi Kuan or Hakka Kongsi which once stood in Sultan Street – taken in the 1920s. The Chinese community were also pioneers in establishing hospitals in Kuala Lumpur. Yap Ah Loy probably established the first hospital in the town, but his successor, Yap Kwan Seng, made a more substantial contribution when out of his own pocket he founded the Tung Shin hospital (35) in Pudu Road (near the site of the present Chinese Maternity Hospital) in 1892. The new hospital was subsequently maintained and expanded through the efforts of the Chinese community.

# 3

## Official Kuala Lumpur

WHEN the British took the step of establishing their administration in Kuala Lumpur in 1881, they thought it prudent to post themselves on the other side of the river to where Yap Ah Loy's town lay, so that the river became a dividing line between Chinatown and official Kuala Lumpur. The first official colonial buildings were raised on the hill (Bukit Aman) where the modern police headquarters now towers. On another hill overlooking what is now Taman Tasik Perdana was placed the Residency, the home of the most senior British official, lifted lock, stock and barrel from its original site in Klang.

During the 1880s the buildings of colonial Kuala Lumpur, including the original Selangor Club, differed only in degree from the wooden shacks of Chinatown opposite. But it was also in this decade that the first permanent govern-

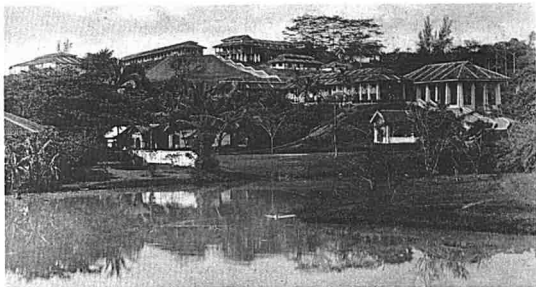
ment buildings were established – a hospital for Western medicine, a central market, slaughter houses, a fire brigade station, a town gaol – all essential to the needs of a fast-growing community. However, between 1890 and 1920 a spate of new and more substantial edifices were erected, designed to reflect the new dignity of Kuala Lumpur as the administrative and commercial centre of the recently-created Federated Malay States (FMS).

With an originality and inspiration rarely associated with government architecture it was decided to give these new government buildings a 'Moorish' look, as indeed befitted Kuala Lumpur's role as the federal capital of four Malay Muslim states. The trend was initiated by the construction of the main Government Offices (Bangunan Sultan Abdul Samad) which was completed in 1897 and at once became the hallmark of the town. Other

government buildings followed suit – the GPO, the Town Hall, the FMS Railway Offices – all clustered by the Padang. The trend reached its height in the magnificent new railway station (opened 1911). The new Railway Offices facing it which followed retained the Moorish trimmings but lacked its grace, and in general by this time (the 1920s) the trend was beginning to be lost in heavy and portentous facades – see the Survey Offices – and with the completion of the Sulaiman Building ca. 1929, the Moorish style had almost completely disappeared. Public architecture at the lower level remained functional and utilitarian, such as the railway workshops at Brickfields and Sentul, while nothing could have been more basic than the humble quarters designed for those who toiled and sweated to maintain the railway.



(36)



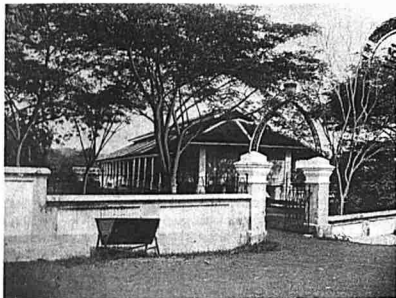
The Barracks, Kuala Lumpur.

(37)



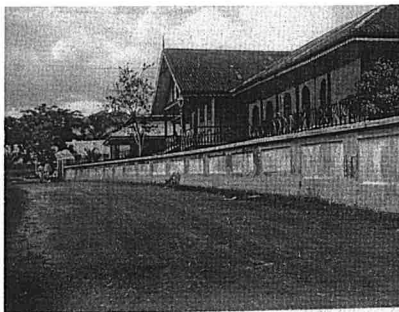
Kuala Lumpur - The Residency

When Bloomfield Douglas, Selangor's second British Resident, moved the state capital from Klang to Kuala Lumpur in 1880, he selected as the site for the new government quarters, including administrative offices and quarters for the police (36), the low hill which commanded the swamp and the river lying between it and Yap Ah Loy's town on the opposite bank. The swamp was drained and levelled to become the Parade Ground (the Selangor Club Padang of today) and at once to become the focal point of all official occasions and social activity. Meanwhile the Resident's own quarters were erected on a hill further back. The original building, brought over from Klang, was replaced in 1888 by a more stately bungalow, built in the style of the European wooden house which was to become standard throughout the Peninsula, with its lofty ceilings, spacious verandahs and balconies, and airy windows, as seen in picture (37), set amidst broad, carefully shrubbed lawns.



General Hospital, Kuala Lumpur.

(38)



Dispensary, General Hospital, Kuala Lumpur.

(39)

A crucial need of early Kuala Lumpur was for adequate medical facilities. Diseases such as malaria, beri-beri, syphilis, cholera and small-pox – the causes of which (at least in the case of the two greatest killers, malaria and beri-beri) remained undivined until the twentieth century – stalked the streets and alley-ways. The work of building a port (Port Swettenham) at Kuala Klang was almost abandoned at one stage because of malaria, while beri-beri wrought havoc amongst tin miners.

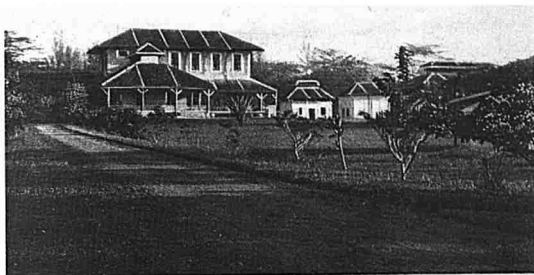
The first hospitals in Kuala Lumpur were pioneered by the Chinese, but they also catered only for Chinese-style medicines and treat-

ments. The first hospitals practising Western methods were built in 1883 (a general hospital and a 'pauper' hospital), probably on the site of the Tanglin Dispensary (the former Tanglin Hospital) in Jalan Chenderasari (Young Road), but were replaced in 1890 by the new General Hospital, seen in (38 & 39), on the same Tanglin site, and a new pauper hospital, probably on the site of the present General Hospital in Jalan Pahang. The Pauper Hospital catered for the destitute, in particular tin mining coolies, while the General Hospital was for all classes (and its wards divided into classes). By 1910 there were eight hospitals in

and around Kuala Lumpur, including the Bangsar Hospital off Bangsar Road (41) which was reserved exclusively for Europeans. (It is now a nurses' hostel.)

The road leading to the Bangsar Hospital, namely Jalan Travers, is named, incidentally, after Dr. E. A. O. Travers, once state surgeon, Selangor, who resigned and went into private practice. He was very prominent in the life of the town at the turn of the century, and being particularly interested in leprosy, he helped found the Sungai Buloh leper settlement.

(40)



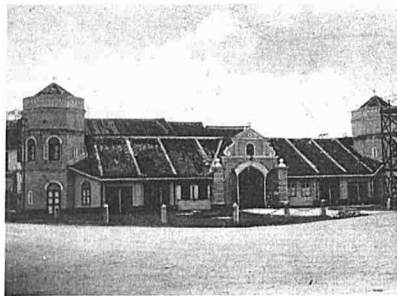
Institute for Medical Research, Kuala Lumpur. \*

An important contribution to the cause of medical science was made with the foundation of the Institute of Medical Research (40) which was brought about largely on the initiative of Sir Frank Swettenham. The Institute opened its doors in 1901, and although narrow-minded officials prevented its development into a leading centre for the study of tropical diseases, it achieved a notable early success in 1910 by identifying the source of beri-beri, a vitamin deficiency disease, from which 3000 mining coolies had died in the previous decade. The Institute also played a major role in developing the techniques of malarial control pioneered by Dr. John Watson at Klang.

(41)

191. European Hospital, Kuala Lumpur.





Selangor Fire Brigade Station, Kuala Lumpur.

(42)

Fire and crime were among the most serious problems that were to be faced in early Kuala Lumpur. Fires were endemic to the town (as they were in all Malayan towns of the period): the accidental upsetting of an open light could lead to flames spreading with lightning speed across the dry attap roofs of the tightly-packed wooden shacks of the old town. This happened with tragic results, for instance, in 1881 when three lives (including that of a nephew of Yap Ah Loy) were lost and damage to the tune of Strs \$100,000 – a lot of money for those days – was caused, with 500 people left homeless.



Pudoh Gaol, Kuala Lumpur.

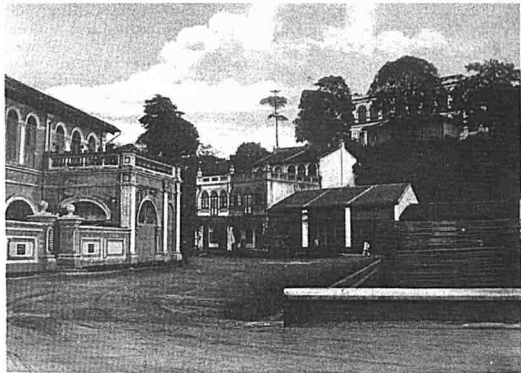
(43)

The institution of a fire service was therefore a matter of supreme importance. Kuala Lumpur's first fire brigade was actually formed on a voluntary basis in 1885 by a PWD official called Bellamy. Nine years later a permanent fire brigade station was constructed (42), situated at the end of Ampang Road at its junction with Malacca Street, and was opened by the British Resident of the day, W.H. Treacher. It was probably the most imposing public building in town at that time, because the complex of official buildings around the Padang were still on the drawing board.

Crime was also rampant in early Kuala

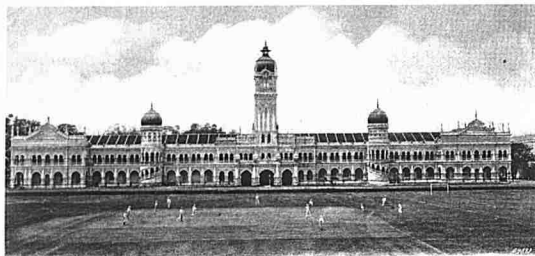
Lumpur and from time to time well-organized gangs perpetrated robberies and assaults which did not spare any section of the community. Slowly, through the efforts of H. C. Syers, a local police force was built up and the situation brought under better control. Up till the 1900s the main prison was the gaol at Taiping. The completion of the Pudu Gaol in 1896 was a welcome addition for those concerned with housing criminals. The purpose of the building did not give much scope for flights of fancy, but Spooner, the state engineer, nevertheless contrived to give an Islamic touch to the main entrance (43).

44



Entrance, Weld Road, Kuala Lumpur.

The process of justice itself was conducted in the Police Courts on what was then known as Weld Hill (Bukit Mahkamah) which had once been a coffee plantation. The view shown here (44) is taken from the Weld Street (Jalan Raja Chulan) end of Church Street (Jalan Gereja) in the 1900s. The buildings in the centre foreground have disappeared, although the old Telegraph Office seen on the left still stands. The other buildings have been replaced by the modern Telecommunications Building.



Kuala Lumpur - The Esplanade in front of Government Offices

*1. Picked up some Native States' cards  
Here - this is where I went on a walk  
recently.*

(45)

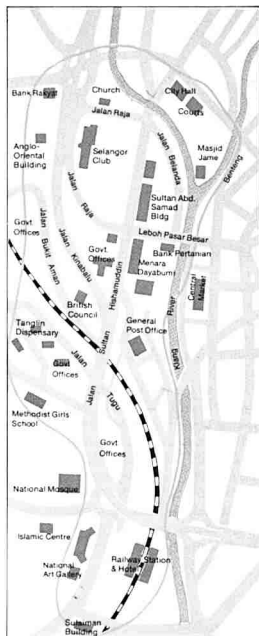
(46)



Kuala Lumpur—Part View of Government Offices.

The Government Offices (Bangunan Sultan Abdul Samad), the foundation stone of which was laid by Sir Charles Mitchell, the Governor of the Straits Settlements, in 1894 and was completed three years later, must be the most photographed building in Kuala Lumpur. It is certainly photogenic, as these three views (45–47) show and its exterior has hardly changed in its near century of existence, although in 1984 its interior was totally renovated and refurbished in preparation for its latest role as the nation's supreme law courts. In 1897 it marked the first of a complex of official buildings planned to house the administration of the newly-formed Federated Malay States (FMS) as well as of the state government of Selangor, so as to give, in the words of William Maxwell, the hand behind them, 'an air of prosperity to Selangor, which was then lacking'.

Sir Charles, however, obviously did not entirely agree, for, as he laid the foundation stone, he observed that 'Your tin will not last forever . . . . Not that these offices are not to a certain extent useful, but I think that you might have waited a little while.' The building's distinctive Moorish style, with its long arcades, domes and 41 m clock tower, was the happy inspiration of C. E. Spooner, the state engineer, who reputedly persuaded the architect, A. C. Norman, to abandon his original scheme for a classical facade in the Renaissance tradition of the West, as not being in keeping with the official buildings of a Muslim country.



Official Kuala Lumpur



Kuala Lumpur - The Government Offices

*E. O. Staff despatch to Perak.  
P.E. Office Kuala Lumpur  
Shahdethi*

(47)

At first the Government Offices housed all the main departments of the FMS administration, as well as the district and municipal offices of Kuala Lumpur itself, and the (Selangor) State Council chamber. Gradually the state and some federal departments were transferred to other new buildings, and the building became known simply as the Federal Secretariat. After the Second World War the building contained the offices of the Selangor state

administration (the federal government had acquired more modern premises), and served as municipal offices when Kuala Lumpur became federal territory and was detached from Selangor in 1974.

Incidentally note the game of cricket being carried on in picture (45); this peculiarly English game eventually caught on in Malaya and is still played by a diminished but stalwart band of Malaysian enthusiasts.



277 - Government Offices, Kuala Lumpur, Selangor, F. M. S.

(48)

By 1910 the group of Moorish-style buildings which formed the administrative heart of the FMS centred on the Padang were completed, giving to Kuala Lumpur with their unique design a distinction from the monotonous uniformity of most Malayan towns – Chinese shophouses with an occasional splash of colonial Palladian. The impressive ensemble presented in view (48) is taken from the corner of the Padang facing down Market Street (Leboh Pasar Besar) in front and down the length of Gombak Road, – renamed Victory Avenue (i.e. Jalan Raja today) to mark the triumphal end of the First World War. The General Post Office (opened in 1906), now

disused since its recent removal to the Dayabumi Building, is seen at the corner of the junction, while part of the FMS Railway Building appears on the extreme right of the picture.

Note the rather lonely traffic policeman on duty at the junction, and also the fountain at the edge of the Padang on the left-hand side of the picture. This rather beautiful fountain was erected by the Kuala Lumpur Sanitary Board in 1897, presumably to add grace to the area once the Government Offices had been completed in the same year. It was built by the well-known firm of Riley, Hargreaves & Co., and cost the Board all of Strs \$4,000.



(49)



Federal Post Office, Kuala Lumpur.

It still functions to this very day. Another view of the GPO is seen in picture (49), taken from its other end and looking up Victory Avenue towards the Railway Station. A full view of the FMS Railways Building is seen in picture (50): when the new railway offices were completed in the 1920s this building was taken over by the Public Works Department. Its most recent apotheosis is as the new information centre for Malaysian handicrafts, opened in 1986.

(50)

Kuala Lumpur. F. M. S. R. Offices.



Collection: J. Bruford



(51)

14 Kuala Lumpur - Town Hall.



Municipality, Kuala Lumpur.

(52)

The Municipality of Town Hall which was separated from the main Government Offices by the Gombak River formed another in the line of official buildings built at the turn of the century. Its design conformed to the established Moorish style and, as these pictures show, was as impressive as its counterparts. Picture (51) is a view taken from across the Gombak River, a rare view because it was taken before the High Court Building was erected, so masking the Municipality from this angle. Pictures (52 & 53) are both taken looking down Victory Avenue (or Jalan Raja) towards the start of Batu Road (Jalan Tuanku Abdul Rahman), the second view having been taken from across the Gombak Bridge. Picture (54) gives a frontal view of the Municipality. All of them were taken in the 1900s except for (53) which was taken about a decade later.

The Municipality was the home of the Kuala Lumpur Sanitary Board – the forerunner of today's City Hall – which, as its name only too readily suggests, was concerned with maintaining the health and cleanliness of Kuala Lumpur. This entailed, as laid down when the Board was first established in 1890, the 'compulsory cleansing and whitewashing of houses, the upkeep of roads and streets, and the destruction of the jungle ...'.

\* J. M. Gullick, 'Kuala Lumpur, 1880-1895', *Journal of the Malayan Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, vol 28, pt 4, no 172, 1955.



53

The Board's first chairman was A.R. Venning, the state treasurer, who deserves to be remembered by today's citizens of Kuala Lumpur as being the driving force behind the creation of the Lake Gardens (Taman Tasik Perdana). Amongst the Board's pioneer members who made their mark on the town in various ways was Bellamy, representing the PWD, who founded the fire brigade; Syers of the police; Raja Bot, the colourful and independent-minded son of Raja Jumaat of Lukut who among many other activities espoused the cause of Malay education; Yap Kwan Seng, the last *Capitan China* of Kuala Lumpur; and Tambusamy Pillai, a government clerk born in Singapore who turned to business and who is remembered today by the boys of the Victoria Institution as one of their first patrons, and by members of the Hindu community as the founder of the Mariamman Temple in High Street. He was also known amongst his contemporaries for the magnificent 'curry tiffins' which he regularly gave in his house in Batu Road.

The Sanitary Board's first premises were in Gombak Lane, somewhere near the present Dewan Bandaraya. It moved into its new quarters soon after 1900. Today the building houses the municipal offices.

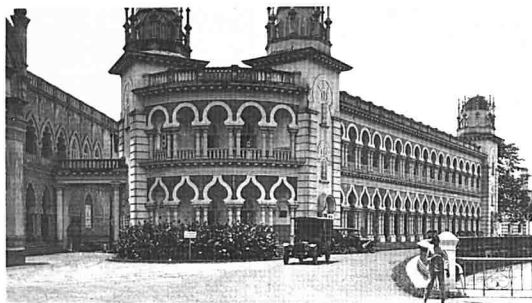


54

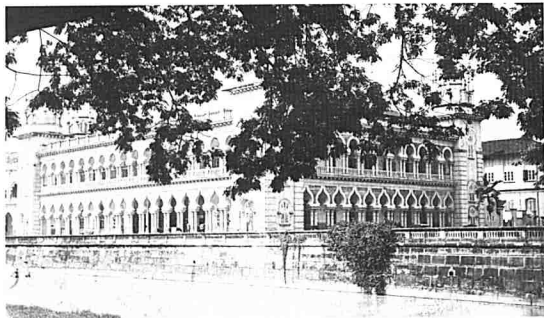
The Supreme Court of the FMS took its place in the congregation of official buildings around the Padang in 1904, a couple of years after the completion of the Municipality which stands beside it. It maintained the Moorish tradition, and continued as the seat of the highest court in the Peninsula up till as recently as 1984, when its removal to the renovated Bangunan Sultan Abdul Samad took place. The Supreme Court building still serves as offices for the government's legal department. The two views shown here reveal how little change has taken place in the appearance of the building between the 1900s and the 1980s. The view in picture (55) is taken from Jalan Raja at the point where it crosses the Gombak River, and that in (56) is taken from across the river, on the opposite bank, i.e., from Holland Road (Jalan Belanda, recently renamed Jalan Mahkamah Tinggi) – both probably in the late 1910s.

By this time the original girder bridge across the Gombak (cf. pictures 10 & 11) had been replaced by a wider structure (which is the one in use today). The last government building to be constructed as part of the Padang complex was the Survey Office (57) on the corner of Java Street (renamed Mountbatten Road immediately after the return of the British in 1945, and since Independence called Jalan Tun Perak) and Jalan Raja, next to the Municipality.

The Moorish style is still followed, but it has become more monolithic and lacks the more intricate design of the earlier government edifices. Note the solitary traffic policeman



SUPREME COURT, KUALA LUMPUR.



57



SURVEY OFFICE, KUALA LUMPUR.

58



who might be the envy of today's traffic cops not only for the marked absence of traffic congestion but also for the conical shade provided to protect him from the burning rays of the sun.

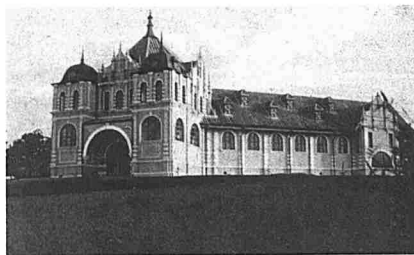
The odd man out amongst the government buildings which graced the Padang was the Government Printing Office (58) erected at the Market Street end in 1909, for instead of the Moorish look it presented a neo-Renaissance facade, probably of the style originally envisaged for the Federal Secretariat. Until 1904 it served the needs of the Selangor state government. After 1904 it became the central office for all government printing and publications in the FMS, the Perak government printing office at Taiping being closed down and its equipment and staff transferred to Kuala Lumpur. The original quarters of the state printing office had been in River Road (Jalan Bukit Aman).

The three views shown in (59–61) are of the original block or west wing of the Selangor State Museum which stood on the site now occupied by the Muzium Negara. This west wing was completed and opened to the public in 1906, and it was extended in 1914. With this extension the former main entrance was relocated in the middle of the new east wing (62). The museum had its origins in the private collections of Kuala Lumpur residents who were amateur naturalists and ethnologists, in particular those of John Klyne, a superintendent of public works, and of Captain Syers, the much-mentioned superintendent of the state police. With the help of a small grant from the state government these collections were initially housed (in the 1880s) in the old government offices on the hill overlooking the Padang, and then were transferred to the wooden building on the slopes of Bukit Nanas (not far from the present St John's Institution) which had been erected as an *istana hinggap* for Sultan Abdul Samad whenever he visited Kuala Lumpur.

The exhibits in the old museum had a strong natural history bias, a reflection of colonial predilections, while historical and social aspects were somewhat neglected. The museum was also inferior to the older Perak state museum established at Taiping. Nevertheless it had very comprehensive collections of Malaysian birds, reptiles, fishes and butterflies, a good display of Malay silverware, weaponry and handicrafts and samples of aborigine and Stone Age artefacts.



59



60

Selangor Museum, Kuala Lumpur.

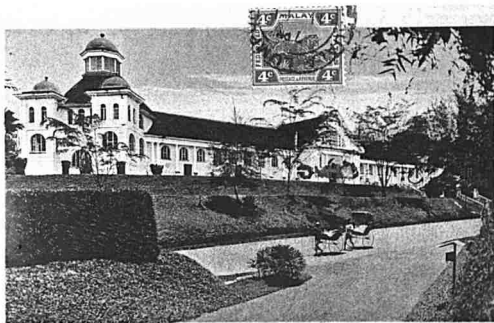
The bad aim of high level Allied bombers in the last months of the Pacific War (i.e. March 1945) which resulted in a stick of bombs demolishing the east wing of the museum instead of hitting the Brickfields railway marshalling yards opposite was a major disaster, and destroyed the best part of the natural history collection. In consequence soon after the War it was decided that the building should be demolished. The present Muzium Negara was completed and opened in August 1963 and was designed, in striking contrast to the old building whose 'Flemish' style hardly reflected the cause it served, in a manner symbolic of the architectural traditions of the country.



Museum K. Lumpur F. M. S.

Photo by M. S. Niamjimb. F. L.

61



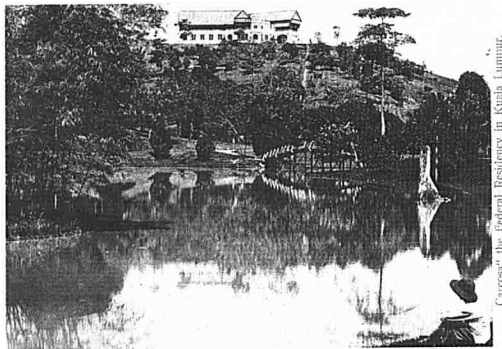
THE MUSEUM, KUALA LUMPUR

62

'Carcosa', the seat of the most senior British official in colonial Malaya, has been in its time both a source of mystery and controversy. It was built to accommodate the holder of the newly-created office of Resident-General of the FMS, Sir Frank Swettenham, who took a keen interest in its construction. It was probably designed by C. E. Norman, the government architect who was also responsible for the Government Offices (Bangunan Sultan Abdul Samad). Work started in 1896 and Swettenham moved in as its first occupant in 1901. The mystery centred on the name 'Carcosa', and was only dispelled by Swettenham himself when broached on the subject many years later. 'I did not call it Government House or King's House because neither seemed an appropriate name in Protected States. I did not give it a Malay name because it was to be the residence of a British Officer, so I took a book name as has often been done before.'

Carcosa was occupied by a succession of British officials whose titles changed with the changes which took place in the British administrative set-up in the Peninsula: Resident-General gave way to Chief Secretary, to British Resident (Selangor), and finally after Independence – as a result of the house and its grounds being granted in perpetuity as a gift to the British on the initiative of the country's first prime minister, Tunku Abdul Rahman –

\* In fact the name was taken from what is today, at any rate, an obscure novel by an American author (Robert W. Chambers) called *The King in Yellow*, published in 1895.



"Carcosa" the Federal Residency in Kuala Lumpur.

193. "Carcosa", Kuala Lumpur.







(65)

to British High Commissioner. But this gift created controversy, and finally as a result of renewed agitation in the early 1980s Carcosa and its four acres of land were officially returned to the nation in 1986.

Other occupants of the house included senior Japanese Army officers during the Occupation and senior British Army officers immediately after it. Lady Newbould, the wife of one of the Chief Secretaries who lived there,

claims that there is a resident ghost as well. The two views shown in (63 & 64) show Carcosa as it appeared soon after completion at the turn of the century, and as indeed it still appears as seen from Tasik Perdana today.

The final addition to the main government buildings erected in Kuala Lumpur before the Second World War was the Sulaiman Building, at the start of the Damansara Road just beyond the main Railway Station (65). Named after

the then ruler of Selangor, Sultan Alauddin Sulaiman Shah, it did not retain the Moorish motif, but represented a more stolid, conventional block closer to one's preconceptions of official architecture. Completed in the prosaic thirties, it also housed prosaic government departments, at first the Income Tax Office and later the Registration Department.



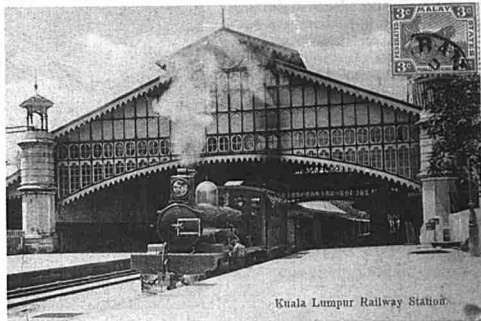
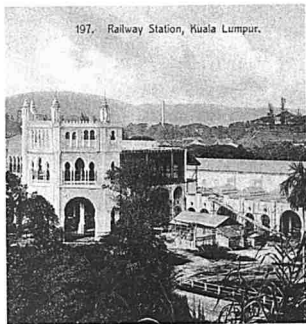
66

Kuala Lumpur's first railway line – the one to Klang – started on the Chinatown side of the river, so that the town's first station, built in 1885, was located at the end of what is today Jalan Cheng Lock, near the car park for the

Central Market, opposite the Dayabumi Complex. This line was soon linked by the construction of a bridge across the river to the northern line which started where Dayabumi now stands. This development led to the build-

ing of Kuala Lumpur's second railway station (66) shown above, on the site of the present railway station, in 1892. The rapid extension of the railway system north and south, together with Kuala Lumpur's elevation to the status

197. Railway Station, Kuala Lumpur.

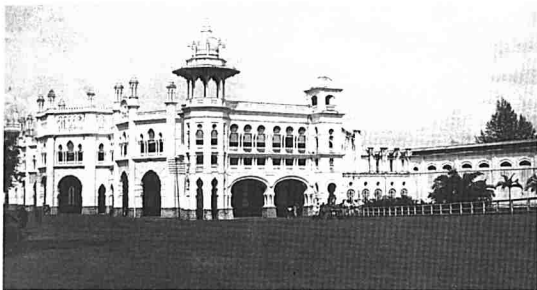


Kuala Lumpur Railway Station

of the capital of the FMS, made the construction of a larger station imperative. The result is the building that we all know today, seen in (67) under construction in the 1900s. The station was finally opened to traffic in 1911. By that time Kuala Lumpur was the pivot of a railway system which not only linked Singapore in the south to Penang, and ultimately Bangkok (34 hours from Penang) in the north, but was also the centre from which branch lines radiated to Ampang, Batu Caves and Batu Arang. The views of the main platforms (68 & 69) have hardly changed today from when these pictures were taken, although there has been a change in the type of locomotive!



The new station, designed by the PWD architect of the day, A. R. Hubback, has delighted generations of the inhabitants of Kuala Lumpur and visitors for the splendour and elegance of its Moorish style which rivals the older Government Offices on the Padang, and it was quickly established as the town's second landmark. However, not all visitors were as impressed by the building's interior, in particular the interior of the hotel which was incorporated within it (see page 43). In the 1920s the price of a room (equipped with electric light and fan) was a princely Strs \$9.00 per head, while breakfast, tiffin and dinner could be had for Strs \$1.00 to Strs \$1.75 a meal.

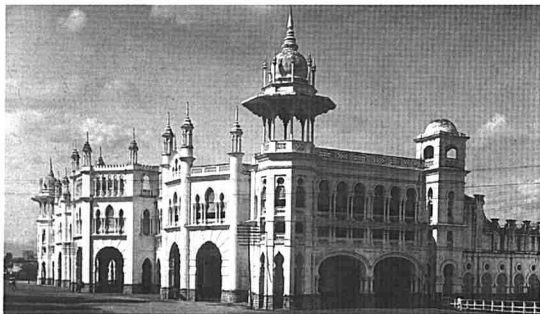


4

RAILWAY STATION, KUALA LUMPUR

THE FEDERAL PHOTOGRAPHIC STORE  
KUALA LUMPUR

(70)



(71)

72



Hotel  
Railway Station K. Lumpur

"The Station Hotel at Kuala Lumpur is a palatial structure, and little fault can be found with the restaurant, which serves also as a buffet for travellers; but the arrangement of the building is abominable. A wide corridor, which runs along the whole length of the second storey and is used as a lounge and smoking-room, forms a veranda in front of the bedrooms, and these in consequence have no windows open to the fresh air. Not only are they dark and ill-ventilated, but sleep is impossible when late revellers take up their pitch in the passage outside. If not too late, the Federated States railway department ought to deal severely with the architect!"

\* Horace Bleackley, *A Tour in Southern Asia*, London, 1928.

73



STATION HOTEL LOUNGE  
KUALUMPUR

The last official building in Kuala Lumpur to be designed in the full glory of the Moorish style was the substantial Railway Offices built opposite the Railway station and completed in 1917. The two views shown here (74 & 75) are taken from the Damansara Road and Padang side ends of the building respectively. In the background of picture (74) can be seen the oblong shape of the memorial erected to commemorate those who were killed from Malaya (i.e. mostly European planters, miners and government officials who had worked in the country and volunteered to join the fighting) during the course of the First World War. The Memorial has since been removed and now stands as part of the National Memorial ensemble in the Taman Tasik Perdana.



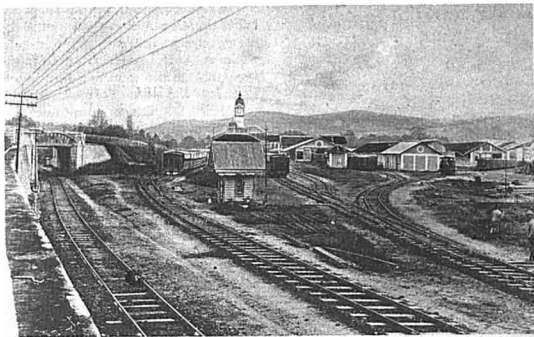
RAILWAY STATION & OFFICES, KUALA LUMPUR

74

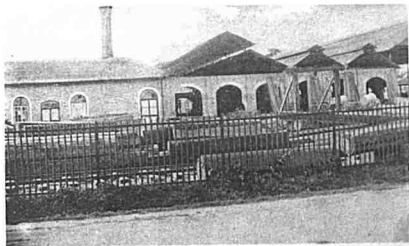


RAILWAY OFFICES, KUALA LUMPUR

75

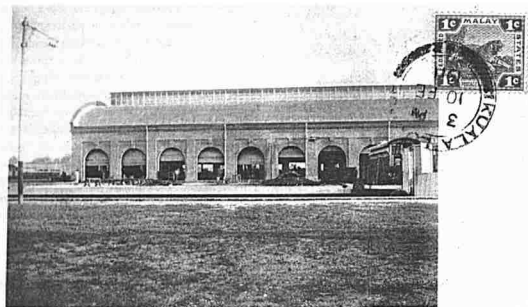


The Railway Station in Kuala Lumpur.



P. W. D. Factory, Kuala Lumpur.

The more functional side of the railways also had to be catered for by the public architect. View (76) shows the marshalling yard and engine sheds at Brickfields at the approaches to the main railway station with the ubiquitous clock tower of the Government Offices rising in the background. Those Government Offices and the other government buildings erected at this period were built with PWD bricks, that is with bricks manufactured at the Department's own factory (77). The factory was opened in 1894 because of the great amount of government construction in hand or planned, coupled with the shortage and high cost of materials. The factory which was located probably somewhere near the modern YMCA in Brickfields included brick and tile kilns, a timber depot and metal and wood-working departments. The Director of the PWD confidently declared in his annual report for 1900 that the 'bricks still continue to be the best made in the State and the Government could not erect the class of buildings, erected and under erection, without the Government Brickfields Establishment'. Nevertheless soon enough private enterprise caught up and by 1910 the Works were forced to close down as a result of outside competition.



(78)

Carpenters' and Masons' Shops, Central Railway Workshops, Kuala Lumpur.



(79)

Railway Station, Central Railway Workshops, Kuala Lumpur.

The development of Kuala Lumpur as the hub of the Malayan railway system necessitated the construction of the railway workshops at Sentul – which largely explains Sentul's heavy concentration of Indians, since Indian supervisors and workmen predominated on the railways. Despite their severely functional purpose, these buildings display a certain dignity – in particular the Locomotive Superintendent's Office. The Sentul Railway Workshops were built between 1904 and 1906.



Locomotive Superintendent's Office, Central Railway Workshops, Kuala Lumpur.

(80)



## 4

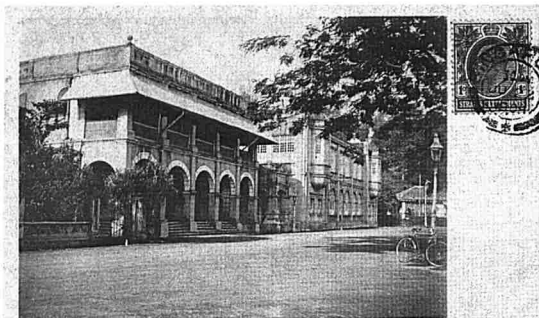
Colonial  
Kuala Lumpur

THE mock-Tudor Selangor Club staring across the Padang at the mock-Mootish Government Offices opposite symbolized the colonial Kuala Lumpur which had grown up on the other side of the river to the rows of symmetrical streets of shophouses crammed on the confined flat land by the river bank. Colonial Kuala Lumpur was the Kuala Lumpur of spacious distances, tree-lined avenues and grandiose buildings vying for prominence with government premises, and catering to the needs and fancies of the small, expatriate community which lived there. This community was made up of colonial administrators and their *mems*, planters, miners, business and professional men, all doing their time before they were promoted or demoted and transferred elsewhere.

Closest to Chinatown – in fact invading it – were the Western trading houses such as Straits Trading which had made a killing in tin-smelting or Riley, Hargreaves which had cornered the market in machinery, the western banks which greased the wheels of commerce and industry, and the shops and department stores (not all Western) which served exclusively the Western tastes of the *mems* who entered them to buy, to gossip and pass the time of day. Situated at greater lengths were the clubs which formed the centre of expatriate social activity where their members could insulate themselves from the alien world in which they worked. There were also the hotels, catering virtually exclusively for Western needs and palates, havens for the European traveller exhausted by the heat and the humidity of the tropics.

Another typical expatriate institution was the race-course, a place where East did meet West, and there was also the small Anglican church at the corner of the Padang, a minor reminder of duty and proper standards in a tropical environment so full of temptation. The two Kuala Lumpurs did meet and mix to a degree in day to day affairs, in matters of trade and business and also on the sports field. But the invisible barriers of status, position and wealth effectively isolated the inhabitants of colonial Kuala Lumpur from the rest of the world, an isolation which only the wealthiest and most prominent members of the Asian communities were able to penetrate, if they so chose.

The Chartered Bank of India, Australia and China was the first bank to open a branch in Kuala Lumpur (i.e. in 1888), first occupying some shophouses in Clarke Street (Jalan Mahkamah Tinggi) and/or Market Street (Leboh Pasar Besar). Its permanent premises on Jalan Raja were built on land provided without premium by the state government as one of the inducements to persuade the bank to open a branch in the town. The site itself was selected on account of its closeness to the old police headquarters on Bukit Aman. The view in (81) shows the original building erected on the site in 1891, and the other view (82) is of the reconstructed premises which replaced it in 1909 and still functions as a branch of the bank today.



Chartered Bank and Government Printing Office, Kuala Lumpur.

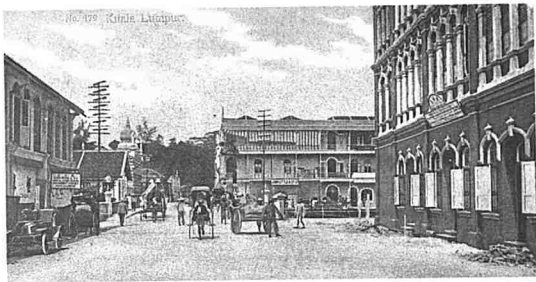
(81)



No. 2 Chartered Bank, Kuala Lumpur

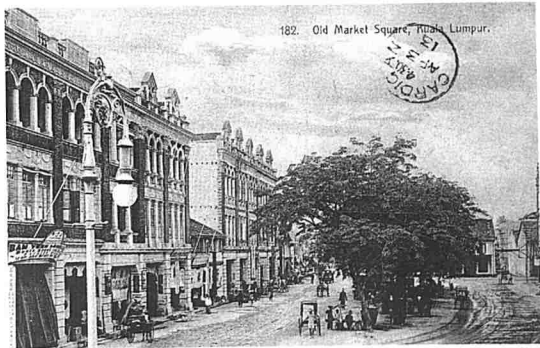
(82)

No. 179 Kuala Lumpur.



Views of Market Street (Leboh Pasar Besar) (83) taken in the 1900s from the vicinity of Old Market Square looking towards the Padang, and of Old Market Square itself (84 & 85).

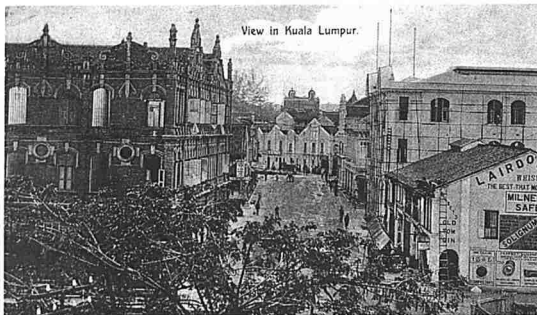
182. Old Market Square, Kuala Lumpur.



THE OLD MARKET SQUARE, KUALA LUMPUR, F. M. S.

Two more views (86 & 87) of Market Street, taken about a decade later than (83). In the 1920s new three-storey buildings with fully-westernized facades in a mixture of neo-classical styles rose up and confirmed the area's pre-eminence as the commercial, banking and shopping centre of the town. The view in (86) is taken from the opposite direction to that shown in (83), i.e. from the Market Street Bridge (partly visible in the foreground) looking towards the heart of Chinatown with its junction with High Street and Klyne Street (Jalan Hang Lekiu) visible in the background. The old Mercantile Bank Building in Old Market Square can be seen on the right (the third block along). In the other view (87) the picture is taken from the Padang end of Market Street. Part of the former GPO building can be seen in the left foreground, with the Straits Trading Building next door to it.

The Straits Trading Company owed its rise and fortune to its success in cornering the market in tin-smelting in the last decades of the nineteenth century. Founded by two enterprising Europeans (a German and an Englishman) who opened their first branch in Ipoh in 1887, by the end of the century they had broken the Chinese monopoly over the tin-smelting industry and came near to establishing a monopoly of their own.



86



Market Street, Kuala Lumpur.

87

Another view of Market Street (88) looking across a site in the process of being rebuilt to the ornate gables of the row of Indian shophouses which are still standing there today. Beyond the gables can be seen the new row of buildings which formed the flank of Old Market Square adjacent to the river, a site once occupied by Yap Ah Loy's huge timber and rattan gambling shed which had been an effective way of keeping the town's mining population amused during its earlier days. Old Market Square itself was so called as it had been the place where the central market stood in Yap Ah Loy's time. It was moved to the present site of the Central Market just below the Market Street Bridge and opposite the Dayabumi Complex in 1886, and the open space left behind became today's Market Square (Medan Pasar).

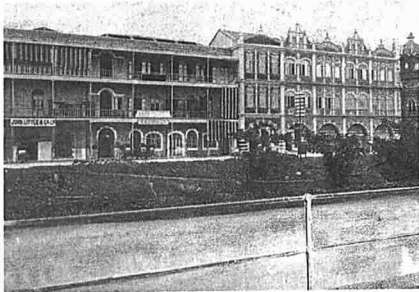
Picture (89) shows a view of Old Market Square itself taken in the early 1920s from the corner of Cross Street (Jalan Silang) looking towards the old Mercantile Bank. The block of buildings seen at the left-hand side of the picture has lost its symmetry and in one part has been gashed by a modern structure. But it is still there.



Old Market Square, Kuala Lumpur.



(90)



(91)



EMBANKMENT, KUALA LUMPUR.

(92)

Shops and department stores sprang up to meet the demands of Kuala Lumpur's *tuans* and *mems*. They were concentrated in the area on both sides of the river bounded by Market Street at one end and Java Street (Jalan Tun Perak) at the other. In (90) can be seen a row of the leading shops and stores to be found in Holland Road (Jalan Belanda). The premises occupied by John Little (a Singapore firm) and McAlister & Co have now been replaced by a modern office block but the stately building on the right which housed the store of Chow Kit & Co still survives. Loke Chow Kit had his original premises at the corner shop-house in Jalan Raja facing the Padang which was pulled down to make way for the new GPO in the 1900s. He had built up his fortune selling (according to the *Malay Mail* of 14 December 1896) 'Xmas toys, pipes, drapery,

perfumery, stationery, crockery, double-brim straw hats, felt hats, helmets, sun hats, toilet requisites, bedsteads and children's cots, harness, saddlery and requisites, ladies and gentlemen's tennis chairs, Thomet's Brentwood chairs of assorted shapes and kinds, Dutch provisions, etc., etc.' The view in (91) is taken from Holland Road across the river to Benteng. The only building of the lot shown here still existing is the one with the cupola (which has now disappeared) and was occupied by John Little who had shifted from their Holland Road address (90): Whiteway Laidlaw was another leading department store in the 1920s. This view (92) is taken from Benteng looking across the Klang River to the corner of Java Street (Jalan Tun Perak) and Malay Street (Jalan Melayu) where the building occupied by Whiteway Laidlaw still stands.

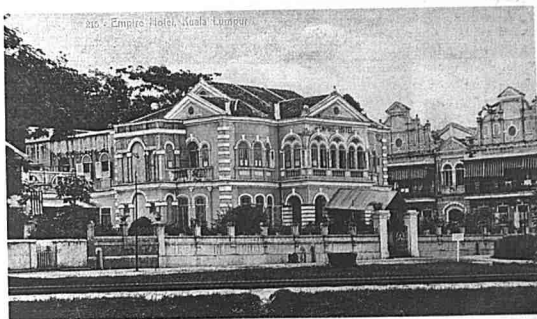


Besides the Station Hotel, by the 1920s Kuala Lumpur could boast of five or six hotels of 'international standard', meaning hotels adapted wholly to meet European tastes, and catering for an almost exclusively European clientele. The first of these to be established was the FMS Hotel (93), opened in 1895.

The Empire Hotel (94), located near the back of the Selangor Club near the Padang, had also passed from the scene but its handsome premises still remain, today safe in the hands of the Pertubuhan Arkitek Malaysia (PAM – Malaysian Institute of Architects) which has made it the Institute's headquarters and which also houses the voluntary body most directly involved in the struggle to preserve the legacy of the past – the Heritage Trust of Malaysia. The building was originally (i.e. in 1907) the town house of Loke Chow Kit of department store fame, its design inspired by what the *towkay* had seen on a previous trip to Europe. In the years immediately after the Second World War until just after Independence it was used as Kuala Lumpur's Rest House. The building adjacent, partly visible in the background of (94) was built in 1936 as the headquarters of the powerful Anglo-Oriental Mining Company, in later years being used for the same purpose by the Malaysian Mining Company.



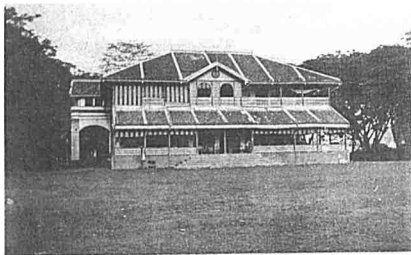
(93)



(94)



*I lived on a hill just overlooking this part. so you see quite cool at a morning.*  
 (H.R.) ... floor ... all over this area.



Selangor Club "The Spotted Dog", Kuala Lumpur.

Club life became synonymous with British colonial rule. In Kuala Lumpur, as indeed throughout British Malaya, the 'club' became the centre of almost all European social activity, and it was virtually inconceivable for a European living in the country, whether a government servant or in planting, mining or business, not to belong to it. In most cases these clubs were exclusively European in membership. One notable exception to this was the Selangor Club, particularly in its earlier years. Founded in 1884 largely on the initiative of the British Resident of the day, J. P. Rodger, who also became its first President, it was the first club of its kind to be founded in Kuala Lumpur. It started out as a social and cricket club and also provided a central reading room. It occupied a simple plank and attap structure on the site of the present Club on the Padang. Although from the outset the membership was preponderantly European there was an Asian element. In the early 1890s when the membership stood at around 140 there were 20 non-European members including the irrepressible Thambusamy Pillai. By this time, with the help of a Strs \$900 grant from the state government, the Club had acquired more substantial premises (95 & 96), in the form of the two-storeyed structure of brick and tiles which still serves as the Club's centrepiece.



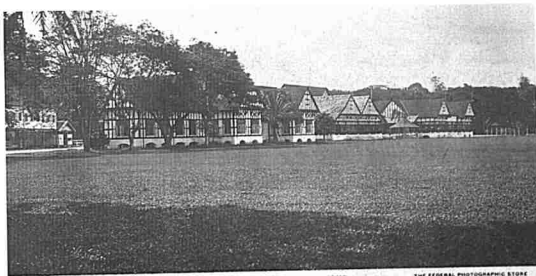
97 Selangor Club, Kuala Lumpur, Federated Malay States.



In 1910, with the membership swollen by planters swilling in the rubber boom, the Clubhouse was extended to take the form seen in (97), the architect being A. C. Norman. At this time the double-storey clubhouse which now stood in the centre of the Club's buildings lost its upper storey. In 1922, there was further renovation and extension and the Club acquired the characteristics, including its prominent mock-Tudor style which has survived to the present-day (98). However, in 1970 a disastrous fire destroyed the north wing, leading to it being rebuilt with a modern interior but in the same style as before.

There are several stories as to how the Club got its popular nickname, 'the Spotted Dog', including references to the poorly-drawn tiger which formed the Club's first emblem, the black-and-white Dalmatians kept by the wife of the police commissioner Syers, and the fact that membership of the Club was socially, if not ethnically, somewhat mixed.

98



SELANGOR CLUB, KUALA LUMPUR

THE FEDERAL PHOTOGRAPHIC STORE  
KUALA LUMPUR

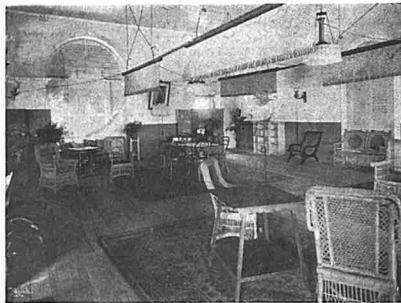
The second of Kuala Lumpur's clubs, the Lake Club, was founded by twenty-eight dissident 'senior' members of the Selangor Club in 1890, perturbed perhaps by the somewhat irregular administration of the old club under its first salaried secretary, a Count Bernstorff, who eventually disappeared leaving a large sum inexplicably missing from the accounts. From the beginning the Lake Club, set in superb surroundings and able to offer superior facilities, was the refuge of the highest members of the colonial administration, was rigidly elitist, and maintained its exclusive attitude even in the more relaxed days that followed the Second World War when an invitation to the Sultan of Selangor caused a storm in the committee. However, the Lake Club was the doyen of all the Kuala Lumpur clubs, and so has remained under its new name of Kelab Perdana today.

The view in (99) shows the original club building in its Lake Gardens setting in the 1900s, while (100) shows one of the clubrooms in a picture probably taken in the 1920s.

LAKE CLUB, KUALA LUMPUR.



99



Collection J. Bruford

100

Hope  
to  
hear  
from  
you  
soon  
Robert

Kuala Lumpur - Lake Club. Setting Room.

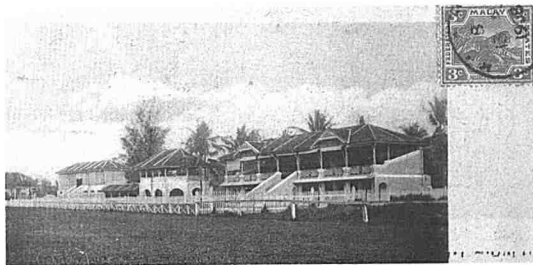
Sports was the one area in which the various communities of Kuala Lumpur in its early days did come together, and horse-racing was the sport which aroused the greatest public response. With race-courses already well-established in the Straits Settlements (i.e. at Singapore and Penang), Kuala Lumpur's first course, sited off the old Circular Road area, was opened by the newly-formed Gymkhana Club in 1890. But the five years of the Club's official lease were not a great success, largely because of the government prohibition against professional jockeys taking part. As a result when the lease expired in 1895, the Club was disbanded and the Selangor Turf Club formed to take its place. The Turf Club successfully negotiated a new lease with the government, without any restrictions on participants, and developed a new course off Ampang Road which was opened for racing in 1897 and remained the venue for the town's turf events.



The Race-course of Kuala Lumpur.

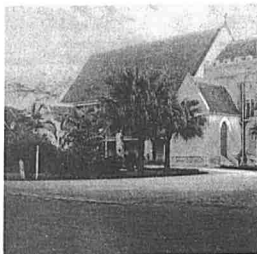
(102)

(101)



Amongst the sports' early patrons was Loke Yew who owned a number of 'griffins', the yearlings imported from Australia. The absence of bookies in the early days was overcome by the Chartered Bank which closed office on race days and supplied its cashiers to fulfil the purpose. While the wealthy and the privileged watched their bets from the grandstand, seen in this view of the 1900s (101), the ordinary folk of town flocked for a flutter to the 'native stand' next to the track as seen in (102). After the last race the course became a mini-Ascot (i.e. the fashionable London race-course patronized by royalty) as European *mems* walked ostentatiously around in the latest fashions to reach the country.

103



St. Mary's Church, Kuala Lumpur.

The small Anglican church of St. Mary the Virgin (103) was formally consecrated in 1895, the first brick building of the Church of England in Malaya. Although members of the Anglican Church were in a vast minority when compared to the great numbers of Buddhists, Hindus and Muslims resident in the town, the Church had the backing of the administration, as seen in the state government's contribution to almost half the cost of construction. In fact, for the Anglican community in Kuala Lumpur and in Selangor as a whole, St Mary's was their second social centre (and antidote) to the Club, attendance at the Sunday morning

service being virtually obligatory for (European) government officers, with the watchful eye of the Resident himself ready to record and later to pounce on absentees. The congregation also included Christian Tamils, and under the European churchwarden the church's helpers were mostly Indian, as suggested by the picture (104) below. Built on land originally occupied by the stables of the Selangor Club, the architect of its early English Gothic style was the universal A. C. Norman, who had responded to the advertisement inviting designs and whose other monuments in varied styles were going up around the Padang.

180. St Mary's Church, Kuala Lumpur.



104

## 5

# The Other Kuala Lumpur

GROWING up alongside the workaday Kuala Lumpur of Chinatown, the Kuala Lumpur of government administration, and the institutions of Kuala Lumpur's colonial society were those other aspects which are central to the life of an urban community – its markets, its schools, and its places of recreation. All these were developed by a typical mixture of private initiative and official enterprise. One of the first tasks the Sanitary Board established in 1890 had to carry out was the establishment of hygienic market facilities for a town whose fast growing population was in the process of expanding from some 3000 Chinese miners a decade before to a total of 30 000 by the end of the century and which was to almost triple itself again by 1920. The establishment of the first

schools, particularly during the 1890s, was a comment on this growth. Naturally enough the first school was Chinese, an establishment started in 1884 in High Street through the combined efforts of the Chinese community led by Yap Ah Loy and the colonial administration. This was followed by the opening of the first English-medium school (the Government English School) in 1890 and the Raja School, giving instruction in Malay and English for the sons of the Malay aristocracy in 1892. The pooling of the resources of these two schools led to the establishment of the Victoria Institution two years later, destined to become one of the leading English-medium schools in the Peninsula. In 1905 the Christian Methodists founded the Methodist Boys School, followed a year later by the Roman

Catholic St John's Institution. The Roman Catholics had already opened a school for girls (the Convent of the Holy Infant Jesus) in 1899 while the forerunner of the MBS was a small Anglo-Tamil school which had been operating from a shophouse in Batu Road (Jalan Tuanku Abdul Rahman) since 1897. The private initiative of a public official, Arthur Venning, the chairman of the Sanitary Board and Selangor state treasurer, resulted in Kuala Lumpur acquiring one of its most attractive features, the Lake Gardens (Taman Tasik Perdana), opened at the turn of the century. The needs of the Muslim community – Indian Muslims and Malays – were met by the erection of the incomparably graceful Jame Mosque in 1909.



A Chinese street stall, Singapore

(105)



(106)

Kuala Lumpur's first public market was the private concern of Yap Ah Loy, standing opposite his town house in what is now Medan Pasar. When Swettenham, in his effort to reorganize and improve the layout of the town in the 1880s wanted to replace Yap Ah Loy's 'very insecure shed', the Chinese leader, fearful of a loss of revenue, at first refused. However, a compromise was reached and Ah Loy himself paid for the rebuilding of the market with brick pillars and a galvanized iron roof (completed in 1883), with ownership remaining in

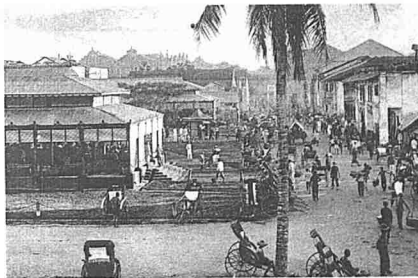
his hands during his lifetime. On his death in 1885 administration and ownership passed into the hands of the government (not without a long legal wrangle with his heirs and successors), and the decision was soon taken to remove the market to a more spacious site somewhere near the Central Market building of today. This structure (108) was ready by 1886. It was eventually replaced (in the 1920s) by the present building. The provision of public amenities for the slaughtering of animals so as to secure and maintain adequate hygiene



Market Place.

(107)

(108)



The Slaughter House, Kuala Lumpur.

(109)

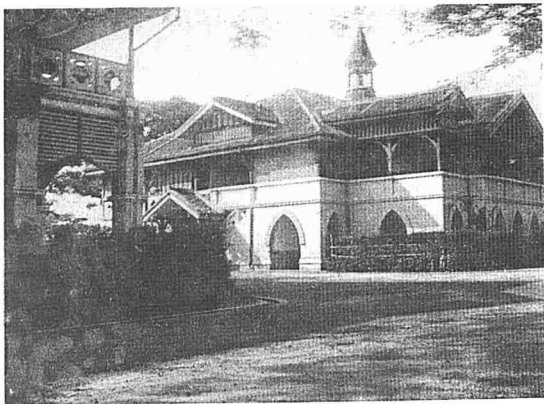
and cleanliness was another essential measure, concomitant with the reform of the market place itself. The government slaughter house (109) was situated off Brickfields Road.

In the meantime the typical open market, now made subject to hawkers' licences issued by the Sanitary Board, functioned very much as they do today, as can be seen in the scenes presented in (106 and 107). The wayside stall is another feature which is still with us. The view shown in (105) was actually taken in Singapore, but if we did not know this fact from the caption on the card it might as easily have been thought to have been taken in Kuala Lumpur or any other town in the Peninsula.

The three principal English-medium boys' schools of Kuala Lumpur were all established within a few years of one another (i.e. between 1894 and 1906). The earliest, the Victoria Institution, took its name from the fact that it was largely financed out of surplus funds raised to mark the Silver Jubilee of the English Queen Victoria. However, the school had truly Malayan antecedents, its list of sponsors being headed by Sultan Abdul Samad and including the town's last Capitan China, Yap Kwan Seng, the tin millionaire so generous with his money; Loke Yew, and by the ever-prominent Thambusamy Pillai. Its first headmaster was the Revd. Frederick Haines who was also the first state inspector of schools and the first vicar of the Anglican Church of St. Mary's. The original school building was situated in the High Street (Jalan Bandar) (110) where the school-house can still be seen next door to the Traffic Police headquarters.

The building partly visible on the left-hand side of the picture is presumably the headmaster's house (it is no longer there), the scene in 1911 of a celebrated murder involving the headmaster's wife (Mrs Proudlock) and her presumed lover which provided the material for one of the best of Somerset Maugham's short stories about British Malaya – *The Letter*. When the school moved to its present quarters in 1929, the old buildings were taken over by the Kuala Lumpur Technical College, and today are allocated for an experimental theatre group.

Neither the Methodist Boys School, founded in 1906, nor St. John's Institution, can boast



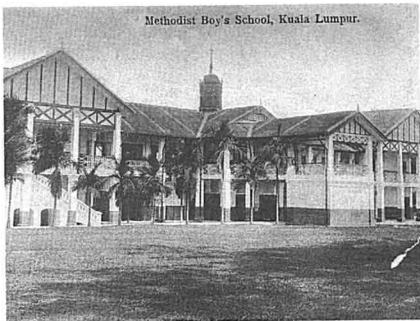
„Victoria Institution“, Kuala Lumpur.

such sensational associations as the V.I. However, the MBS in particular represented the fruition of the determined efforts of Methodist missionaries led by Dr. Kensett who opened the first Anglo-Tamil school in a shophouse in Batu Road (Jalan Tuanku Abdul Rahman) in 1897. The school moved twice – to the Old Fruit Market in Malacca Street in 1902, and again to the Methodist Mission in Sultan Street before finally entering its own premises



(111)

Methodist Boy's School, Kuala Lumpur.



190. St. John's Institution, Kuala Lumpur.



(112)

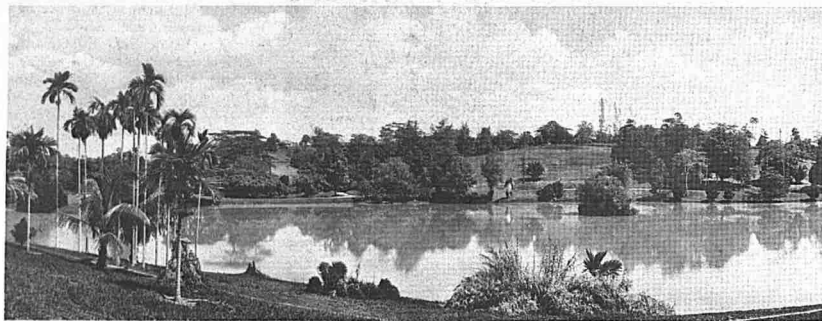
(111) off Jalan Davidson, where the present school buildings stand today. St John's Institution was built on Bukit Nanas, presumably not far from the old Malay fort which had dominated Kuala Lumpur at its very beginning, on land which the Roman Catholic mission had acquired in the 1880s. The building (112) still stands, hardly altered from the first day of its opening in 1907.

Another form of social service for youth was provided by the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA), whose first branch was opened in 1905 by Justice Hyndman Jones in the shophouses shown in (113). They were situated in Watkins Street not far from its present premises in Brickfields.



Y. M. C. A. Kuala Lumpur.

(113)



273 - Public Gardens, Kuala Lumpur, Selangor, F. M. S.

114

The Lake Gardens (Taman Tasik Perdana) (114-16) was the brainchild of Alfred Venning, the European planter who had started his career in Ceylon (Sri Lanka) and come to this country where he found employment with the Selangor government and became the first chairman of the Kuala Lumpur Sanitary Council. Sometime in 1888 he proposed to Frank Swettenham that an area close to the centre of town but still running wild with pig, deer and the occasional tiger, and occupied by a handful of Chinese squatters would make an excellent site for botanic gardens. Having made a thorough investigation of the area

proposed, Swettenham gave his approval, made available the necessary funds, and work went ahead. The central feature of the new gardens was the artificial, ornamental lake, formed by damming the waters of the small stream known as the Sungai Bras Bras. When this was achieved by May the following year (1889), the Gardens were formally declared open by the British governor of the Straits Settlements, Sir Cecil Clementi. It took another ten years before the Gardens were really in order, the briars, lallang, screw pines and tree ferns subdued and replaced by dutiful flowering trees and shrubs, and roads and paths built

115



Entrance to Botanical Gardens, Kuala Lumpur.

to make for easy access. The result was not only to provide Kuala Lumpur with 173 acres of extremely pleasant parkland but also to open the surrounding hills into sites for the bungalows and generous compounds of the expatriate bureaucracy – including Carcosa, built on one of the hills overlooking the Gardens. As for the Gardens themselves, they were an instant success with the general public, and have always remained so. To add to their attraction in the 1890s, a police band – made up largely of Filipino musicians – played there on every Thursday afternoon, with the Resident giving his approval for every programme that they played. The newly-created lake on the banks of which they played was called the Sydney Lake in honour of Swettenham's wife, whose maiden name was Sydney.

116

194. Sydney Lake, Kuala Lumpur.





(64)

Botanic Garden, Kuala Lumpur.

Other views of the Lake Gardens taken in the 1900s (117–20) which all go to show that little has changed since except for the disappearance of the jinricksha. On occasion the Gardens were put to official use, as was the case in 1903 when a temporary conference hall of bamboo and attap (121) was erected to house the second Durbar of the four Rulers of the FMS (and

their British advisers) – one at which, incidentally, the Ruler of Negeri Sembilan lamented the decline in the use of Malay for official purpose while the Sultan of Perak pondered on how four captains could run one ship, a reference to the constitutionally somewhat bizarre set-up of the Federated Malay States.



Kuala Lumpur. Lake Club Avenue.

(118)



Kuala Lumpur—Avenue of Lake.

(119)



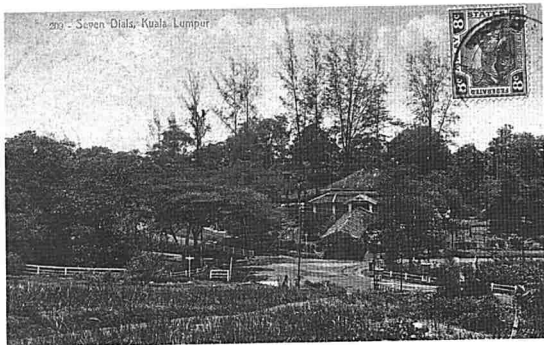
(120)



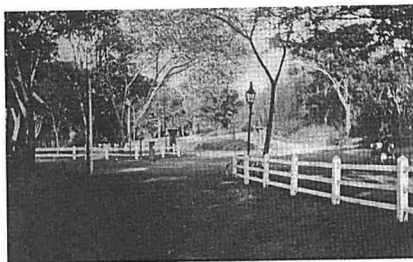
KUALA LUMPUR, FEDERATED MALAY STATES.

(121)

As Kuala Lumpur's population grew, so did the area taken up by the town. The creation of the Lake Gardens opened up the Damansara hills around it to the 'white bungalows, each in its own garden' which the town's European inhabitants had built for themselves, so that, in the words of C. W. Harrison, the editor of the *Illustrated Guide to the Federated Malay States* (1923 Edition) 'the whole of the English quarter ... is one garden with roads in every direction ... offering at every turn fresh scenes of that restrained but still tropical beauty which results from successful efforts to preserve some only of the jungle and keep the rest of the ground in green lawns and shady paths.' A spectacular conjunction of roads, named Seven Dials after a similar but more congested and grubbier junction in London, was formed where the Jalan Duta–Jalan Mahameru interchange races now (122–3).



122



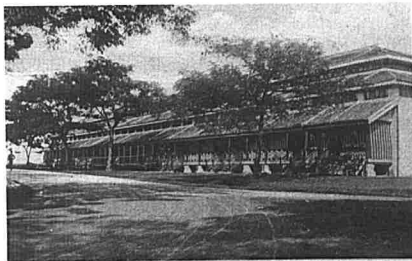
123

"Seven Dials", Kuala Lumpur.



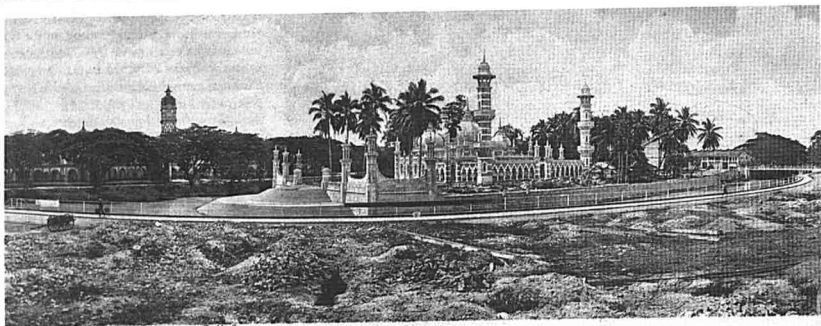
(124)

One of the earliest tracks out of Kuala Lumpur was the path to Ampang, to the tin mines of which the town in truth owed its very existence. By the 1900s the track to Ampang, following generally the course of the Klang River, was a very well-trodden one, and for the first couple of kilometres from its junction with Malacca and Johore Streets had developed into a stately avenue lined by palatial residences built by *towkays* who had made their fortunes. For although Harrison in his *Guide* (op. cit.) says that 'the Chinese prefer the rabbit warren to the garden city system of housing', those who were rich demonstrated the fallacy of his assertion by fleeing the warren and constructing their spacious mansions along Ampang Road (124). The less fortunate employees of the government had no such options and had to be content with simpler, shoddier quarters in the centre of town, such as those shown here (125) in Kampong Attap, a stone's throw from the main railway station. Yet even here there was shade.



(125)

Railway Clerks' Quarters, Kampong Attap, Kuala Lumpur.



- The Mosque, Kuala Lumpur, Selangor, F. M. S.

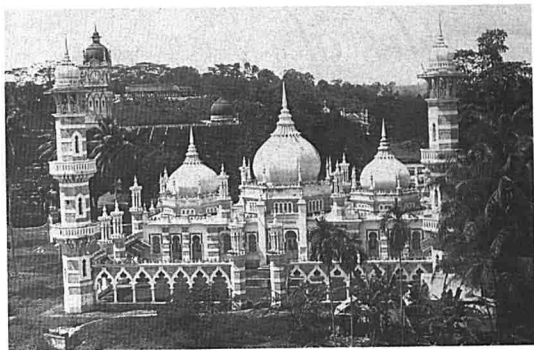
(126)

The incomparably graceful Jame Mosque (126-8), situated on the tongue of land at the point of which the Gombak and Klang rivers meet and which until 1892 was a Malay burial ground, was until the completion of the National Mosque in 1956 the principal centre of Muslim worship in town. Designed by Hubbuck (of Railway Station fame) on the model of a North Indian mosque, it was opened in 1909, the cost having been met by

funds granted by the state government and also raised through public subscription. It replaced the oldest mosque in Kuala Lumpur which had stood on the site of the present Gian Singh building at the corner of Benteng and Jalan Tun Perak since the 1870s. There was also an Indian Muslim mosque in Malay Street (Jalan Melayu) either near or at the site of the present mosque in Jalan Masjid India.



127



The three views shown here were all taken soon after the mosque's completion, and before, as can be seen in (126) the Embankment (Benteng) and Java Street had acquired their department stores.

128



## 6

*Modes of Transport*

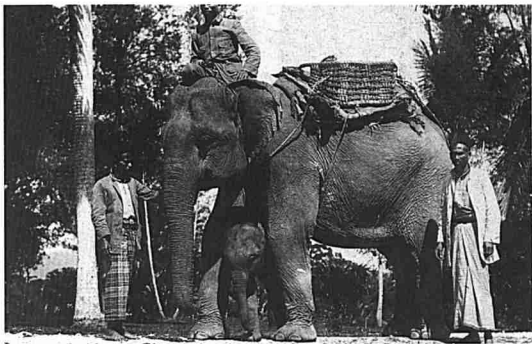
THE traditional form of transport, if not in town, at least in the countryside and for forays into the jungle, was the elephant (129). Elephants were admittedly not much in evidence in the congested streets of Kuala Lumpur, but they were available for trips to Batu Caves or to the hot springs at Dusun Tua in the early days. Before the coming of motor transport the bullock cart reigned supreme as the vehicle for moving goods, passengers (except for the wealthy who went by gharry) and rubbish from point to point.

They were usually managed by Indian or Sikh attendants. Pedestrians, traipsing the hot, dusty laterite streets of the town, would have to resort to the jinrickshas, which were a monopoly of the Chinese and survived until the eve of the Second World War when they were superseded by the bicycle-propelled carriage known as trishaws or *beka*.

By the 1900s the upper classes had been rescued from the indignities of these egalitarian modes of travel by the arrival of the motor-car. Picture postcards of motor-cars do not feature

in this collection, no doubt because the spectacle of the *tuan besar* or the *towkay* being driven to his office or home was not calculated to have such an exotic impact on its Western recipient as that of an Indian bullock, a Malay elephant, or an emaciated Chinese rickshaw puller. The railway, of course, which displaced the river as the main line of communication, had an aura of its own, and always provided in its empire of stations, bridges, tunnels and installations plenty of photogenic subjects.

129



Bullock carts in their heyday, which was in the decades which preceded the First World War (1914–18) were maids of all work and were put to all kinds of uses (130 & 131). They were also the undisputed queens of the highway, a fact demonstrated by twisting, winding old roads of Malaya. The failure of these roads to take the shortest route between two points could be ascribed to the dictates of the old bullock cart which would only negotiate gentle gradients fashioned along the contour lines.

130

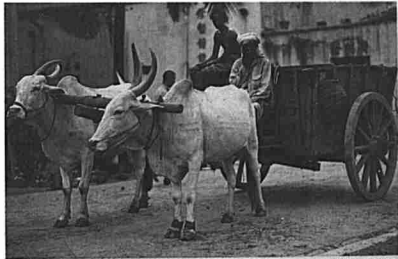


130

Bullock Carts, F. M. S.

F. M. S.

131



A REFUSE CART

THE FEDERAL PHOTOGRAPHY BUREAU LONDON

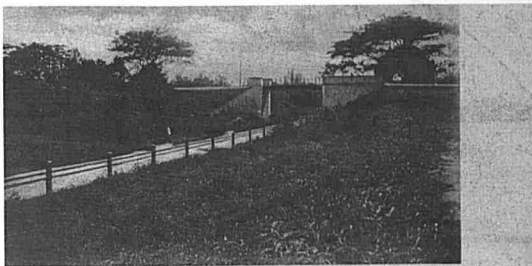


Rickshaw coolies – young, old, muscular, skinny, in baggy shorts, a tattered shirt or no shirt at all – a thin, gnarled body between two great shafts – pulling the weight of a *tuan* or his *mem*. For the newly-arrived Westerner with an ounce of sensitivity not yet blunted by the familiar, it could be an uncomfortable reminder of the colonial nexus: 'The master was on the throne. The slave was in harness', wrote one newcomer, evocatively. 'His shoulders moved in rhythmic action .... I half shut and then opened my eyes and saw the perspiration on the man's vest. It was I who caused the perspiration.'

\* George Bilainkin, *Hail, Penang!*, London, 1932



For those without imagination, a railway line is a railway line. But for the enthusiast the railway, wherever it might be, was a never-ending source of romance – a line disappearing into the elliptical mouth of a tunnel, or a simple bridge across the track, a place from which to watch the trains go by, could justify a place on a picture postcard. Apart from that, the prosaic embankments, culverts, cuttings and tunnels of the railway's domain represented an ocean of sweat, toil and achievement by a nameless horde of workers.



135

Railway Bridge, Brickfields Road (near European Hospital) Kuala Lumpur.



136

RAILWAY TUNNEL F. M. S.

## 7

# The People of Kuala Lumpur

PICTURE postcards at the turn of the century were not only concerned with the sights and the scenery but also with the inhabitants – the locals, because these also were of considerable interest to the people back home to whom such cards were sent by relatives carrying the white man's burden in the East. As a result we have at our disposal an impressively comprehensive array of portraits which cover the main groups into which Kuala Lumpur's and Malaya's population could be divided. The only absentees were the colonial masters themselves, presumably since there was no anthropological interest in the 'Mat Salleh' as a species amongst his own kind.

Today our interest in these portraits of

yesteryear is of a different kind – to identify the similarities and the changes. The unmistakable association of race with occupation, so typical of colonial times, emerges clearly here; so does the identification of race with costume. The Malays were not the most conspicuous element in Kuala Lumpur itself, but they were much in evidence in the area immediately around – Batu, Gombak, Cheras, Kepong, Kajang – in their traditional surrounding carrying out their traditional mode of life, while in Klang reigned the titular Malay head of state. Kuala Lumpur was, of course, essentially a Chinese town and its Chinese inhabitants proliferated in it, presenting a complete cross section of society from the very rich to the very poor. The Indians, much fewer

in number, had nevertheless carved out for themselves a prominent niche largely connected with the public services.

The faces shown here belonged to the former generation of 'natives' and 'immigrants'. No one questioned that the Malays – supplemented by their cousins from Sumatra and Java – were the sons of the soil. The immigrants came and went; only a small minority amongst them were regarded or regarded themselves as permanently resident. However, after 1930, when our postcards end, and when new laws had been passed severely restricting the tides of immigrants, the situation rapidly changed, so that many of the children of those portrayed in these pictures were destined to belong to the first generation of Malaysians.

Although the Malay presence in Kuala Lumpur was not great, Kuala Lumpur was the administrative capital of a Malay state whose ruler, living in Klang, formed the apex of Malay society. Picture (137) shows DYMM Sultan Alauddin Sulaiman Shah whose long reign (1898–1938) covered the whole period presented by the postcards in this book. His subjects were largely rural folk (138). Informal Malay dress (*sarung* and *baju*) was far more generally worn than now, and the finely decorated bullock cart shown in the picture has disappeared completely from the Selangor scene.



H. H. the Sultan of Selangor and suite.

(137)



Malay Festival

(138)

(138)



MALAY GIRLS



(140)



(141)

As these pictures of Malay women in the 1900s show, Malay costumes have not changed. In (139) the *baju kurung* is worn in the Johor style; the Javanese lady in (140) is wearing a *baju kebaya* with a batik gown; while the Indian Muslim lady (from Penang?) is also typically attired (but striking an Edwardian pose) with her *selendang* and *baju kebaya panjang* (141).





PADDY FIELD, KUALA LUMPUR.

(PUBLISHED BY M. R. RAMAJIMA.)

At the beginning of the present century rice fields abounded around Kuala Lumpur, much closer to the heart of town than they are to be found today. No one doubted that this was the domain of the Malays, and the seeming inevitability of the Malay preoccupation with agriculture and their apparent lack of interest in other fields helps to account for the official colonial view that the way to achieve Malay 'welfare and happiness' is 'by building up a sturdy and thrifty peasantry living on the lands they own and living by the food they grow than by causing them to forsake the life of their fathers for the glamour of new ways which put money in their pockets today but leave them empty tomorrow. ...'

\* from an official memorandum on the extension of rice cultivation (1933), quoted by W. R. Roff, *The Origins of Malay Nationalism*, Kuala Lumpur, University of Malaya Press, 1967.



CASTING NET



Although the rustic charm of the countryside tended to obscure the fact, life for most Malays was tough and barren. The subsistence economy of the *kampung* was eked out by the yields from copra (144) or from occasional village handicrafts, amongst which basket-weaving (145) was typical. The Malays were rarely willing to submit themselves to the sweated labour, mean wages and appalling conditions of work on the tin mines or the rubber estates, but a ready supply of labourers was always available for Western employers from the overcrowded island of Java (146), brought over on contract terms. The wayside market (147) was always a standby, while pineapples in season fetched as good a price then as they do now (148).

(144)



(145)

146



147



Malay Man & Woman.



Native Malay Cutting Pine Apples.

148

The everyday dress of the Chinese, whatever his social status, was simple – a pair of short trousers, a loose nankeen shirt, a conical hat and (in the case of those of higher status) a pair of thick-soled shoes – but those at the top, the wealthy *towns* who had made their fortunes, donned for important ceremonial occasions the robes of the mandarin (149). Their children, especially for the New Year, were similarly dressed (150). The mandarin clothes were not just a pose but a means of asserting one's social status, often enhanced

by purchasing an order or decoration from the Ch'ing (Manchu) dynasty to which the great majority of Chinese gave their allegiance until the Chinese Revolution of 1911. The dress for Chinese ladies of affluence was more elaborate and equally traditional (151–2). The funeral of a wealthy Chinese was a major occasion. Picture (153) shows the funeral procession of Eu Tong Swee, a prominent businessman, as it reached the corner of Yap Ah Loy Street and Cross Street (Jalan Silang).

149



Mandarin.

150



151

Chinese Lady (Cantonese).



152



Federal Dispensary, Kuala Lumpur



153

28 Funeral of Eu Tong Swee

Tin mining: removing surface soil (Cheras, Selangor).



h 7 0.



Vaughan, the ex-navy man turned magistrate, who was one of those rare Englishmen of either the nineteenth or twentieth centuries to acquire a knowledge of Mandarin or a Chinese dialect and to learn about the Chinese, wrote: 'The Chinese are everything', and proceeded to list over a hundred occupations which the Chinese of the Straits Settlements carried on. His list was equally applicable to the centres of Chinese settlement in the Malay states. As far as Kuala Lumpur was concerned, the most important occupation by far was tin mining, and the great majority of Chinese men living in and around Kuala Lumpur were connected either directly or indirectly with the industry which until the coming of the tin dredge remained a virtually Chinese monopoly, (154).

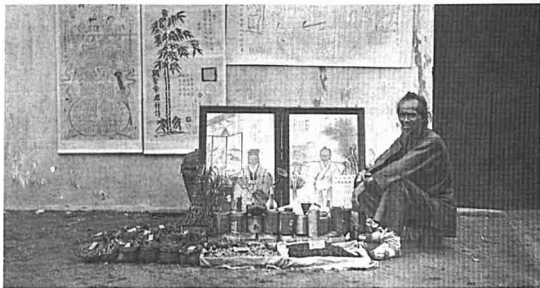
Amongst the host of other forms of employment both the barber (155) and the cobbler (156) were denizens of the five-foot-way. The barber, in particular, was indispensable in an age (i.e. up till the downfall of the Manchus in 1911) where every Chinese male had to shave the greater part of his head. According to Vaughan, the barber, armed with a battery of triangular razors, strong combs and a toothpick, 'goes quickly over the head and every part of the face, even the eyelids, and in half an hour turns his man out looking clean and fresh.' Another familiar figure in the street was the hawker, carrying his wares suspended from the two ends of the *kandar* (pole) and squatting down by the roadside to trade as seemed appropriate, his presence advertised by the click-clack of his wooden tongs and by the strident cry associated with his wares. (157)



'J. D. Vaughan, *The Manners and Customs of the Chinese of the Straits Settlements*, 1879; issued as a reprint by Oxford University Press, Singapore, 1985 (3rd Imp).

Chinese medicine has since time immemorial been known for the efficacy of its herbs and drugs for curing fevers and other bodily ailments, for its ointments and lotions and cures for sprains and dislocations. In general the practice of medicine was divorced from the temple and religious cults, but the prevalence of superstition and the common subscription to belief in supernatural powers enabled certain temple priests with proved powers to obtain great fame and exert great influence for their supposed healing abilities.

The great social evil in Chinese life was opium smoking, an evil which was, nevertheless, institutionalized by the colonial authorities and actively encouraged by mine-owning *towkays* seeking a docile working force. However, public pressure in the first decade of this century produced by a strange juncture of English puritanism and Chinese patriotism eventually forced the FMS Government to abandon its opium farm, lucrative as a source of income as it was. From 1910 onwards the provision of opium became a government monopoly under the control of a government department, and by imperceptible degrees the supply was curtailed. But it was not until the Pacific War had begun (1941) that opium-consumption was made illegal in Malaya.



14

A PRIEST DOCTOR

THE FEDERAL PHOTOGRAPHIC STORE  
KUALA LUMPUR

156



Chinese Pipe and Opium Smokers.

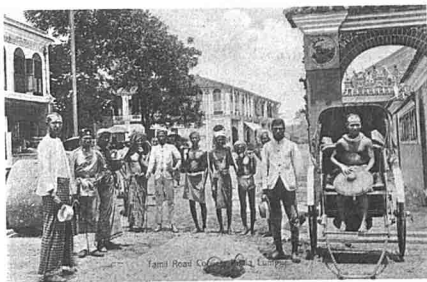
159



Tamil Labour on Estate (Rubber) Selangor.



Not all the labourers on the rubber estates in colonial Malaya were Indians – there were some Chinese, a number of Javanese, and the occasional Malay – but the great majority were recruited from India, and ferried across the Bay of Bengal on overcrowded ships at very cheap rates, paid for out of a special fund created for the purpose. Of all the labouring groups in the country, the Indian estate labourer was by all accounts the worst off. He was the most provided for in terms of legislation and the most efficiently exploited by his employers. One did not have to travel far out of town (Kuala Lumpur) to come across a rubber estate – Wardieburn, Seaport, Killinghall, Kinrara, to name a few.





214 Indian Rubber Estate Coolies, F.M.S.

J. S. SASTRI, 1937



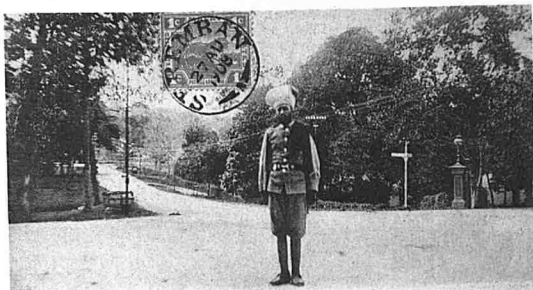
MALAYA RUBBER. LATEX BROUGHT TO FACTORY

The life of the estate labourer was highly regimented. To begin with he lived in long lines of barrack-like quarters – ‘normally ... a long barrack-like structure of wood, roofed either with “attap”, a local palm, or with tiles or corrugated iron ... divided down its length by a partition which does not reach the roof and single rooms are provided back to back so that each line is in effect a double line facing both ways ...!’ He attended a muster parade in the morning – very early in the morning – to be checked by the *kangany* or by the European manager himself before going out into the dark groves of rubber to work. His quarters were subject to regular inspections, a canteen catered for his requirements, and a toddy shop performed the role that opium did for the Chinese coolie. The law made it mandatory, however, for estates to provide hospitals (or clinics) and also schools for their employees.

\* quoted from V.S.S. Sastri, *Report on Conditions of Indian Labour of Malaya*, 1937.

'The first policeman you see is a Sikh,' observed Harrison in his *Illustrated Guide*.<sup>\*</sup> The Sikhs and the Pathans owed their presence in the country primarily to their reputation as soldiers and were famous for their martial qualities. The nucleus of today's police force lay with the Perak Sikhs, originally raised by the British adventurer, Tristram Speedy, in order to control Larut. The North Indians made a much later entry into the Selangor Police which had been founded by Syers, since Syers regarded the Malays as much more suitable for police work in a Malay state. However, in 1894 he was finally persuaded to accept a North Indian element in his force. From that time on Sikh or Pathan policemen were as typical a feature of the police in Selangor as they were in Perak and elsewhere, and in Selangor as in Perak a special detachment of North Indians was formed to provide a mounted guard for ceremonial occasions.

<sup>\*</sup> op. cit.



Kuala Lumpur. Road to Botanical Gardens.

165



Indian Body Guards, Kuala Lumpur.

166

Although Indian society in colonial Malaya was far less variegated than that of the Chinese, the Hindu priest formed an essential part of it (167). Wherever an Indian (Hindu) community was established, there would be found a temple supported by its members. The temples in the towns often attained great magnificence (such as the Sri Maha Mariamman Temple in Jalan Bandar, Kuala Lumpur), but even amongst the less affluent communi-

ties of Tamil estate workers, the most splendid structure was invariably the temple.

Mendicants (168) for whom begging was a calling were also familiar accompaniments of the influx of Tamil coolies recruited to work on the rubber plantations or of the clerks, teachers and hospital assistants employed to fill the lower rungs of government service.

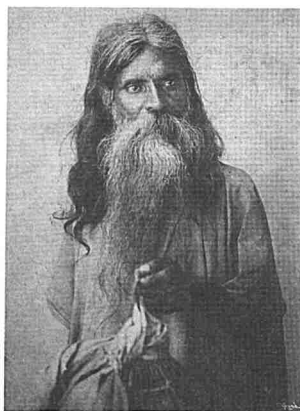
Grim as no doubt the life of an estate labourer was, it had its lighter moments brought

by groups of itinerant musicians and dancers (169–70) who enlivened the dark hours in the coolie lines with their performances and who provided entertainment for such social occasions as a wedding. Equally popular – and not only among Indians – was the snake charmer. Nowadays one never sees such a colourful ensemble as that presented in (171).

(167)



(168)



A Native Beggar.



169



170



171



(172)

(68)

Native Sakai People, F. M. S.

In colonial days the *Orang Asli* were known as the Sakai – a generic term used to cover all the aboriginal folk of the interior whose language was not Malay and whose religion was not Islam. They formed the oldest inhabitants of the Peninsula, but as far as the average citizen of Kuala Lumpur was concerned they were an elusive, mysterious people whom he had never seen and about whom whatever he knew had been gleaned from books. Yet one did not have to travel far out of town to come across them – at Gombak, Ulu Langat or Bukit Lanjan. Those who did know them

respected them as skilled hunters and trackers, masters of jungle-lore and indispensable companions for an expedition into the deep forest, folk 'who glided through the thickest undergrowth with the suppleness of a serpent, who walked crouching, almost pouncing, beneath low-swung branches and through roots and creepers, for hours at a time – in places which a Malay could only penetrate with his machete and *parang*,' wrote a French observer. 'A savage, as we understand the term in Europe only exists in the tenements of St Cloud (Paris), rolling their great eyes, eating anything thrown

their way, swaying from right to left and forever threatening to launch themselves on one of the spectators in order to eat him alive .... But take a look at this man of the forest, this "orang-utan" chief, busy negotiating an official loan, like the most cultivated monarch in Europe – these are aborigines but they are not savages, at least, as far as I am concerned.'

\* Brau de St. Pol Laas, *Perak and the Sakais*, Paris, 1883 (translation).

# 8

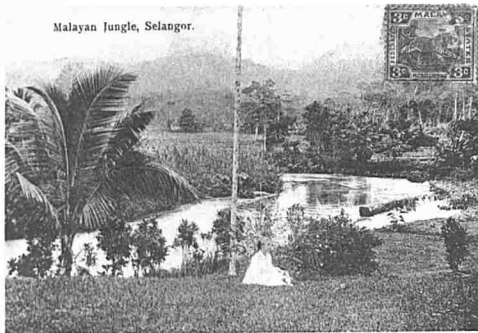
## Round and About Kuala Lumpur

THE postcards which follow present scenes which are still familiar enough to us today, although their subject matter reflects colonial European tastes and preoccupations: views of the idyllic countryside, the scarred and battered landscape of the tin mines and their tailings, well-known to mining engineers and government inspectors as well as to the large numbers of workers who depended for their livelihood on them; the endless groves of rubber undulating over the hills adjacent to the town, in the midst of which sat the simple attap-thatched, *nipah*-palm walled bungalows which pioneer Euro-

pean planters lived in to supervise the scene where their fortunes (hopefully) were being made, and to whom Kuala Lumpur was a welcome 'watering-hole' at the weekends. There was also Batu Caves, still far from the centre of town which demanded an exciting foray through the jungle to reach and explore (before it became a centre for Hindu worship); Klang, the royal capital of Selangor and the second largest town in the state; Port Swettenham (Pelabuhan Klang), a twentieth century creation built over the muddy mangrove swamps at the estuary of the Klang River, which formed for many Europeans their intro-

duction to the world of Malaya. The inevitable railway track carried government officials, prospectors, planters, miners and businessmen as well as the whole gamut of humbler folk from coast to city, from the city southwards through Kajang to Seremban and beyond – perhaps for a weekend excursion to Port Dickson or for a week's leave in Singapore – and northwards to the Perak border at Tanjung Malim (and Penang) – for a retreat to the cool of the hills (Treacher's, The Gap, and Fraser's) where the colonial migrant might for a while forget that he was in Malaya at all.

Malayan Jungle, Selangor.



(173)

"As you pass through the country you are grateful to these people without being quite conscious of it. Your eye lights upon the recurrent little cameo views of the rice field set about with the coconut palms, a few crescent-horned buffaloes lazing in the centre of the picture . . . the Malays have given the country the only beauties in it provided by the hand of man. Touching this responsive land they have adorned it, and still continue to adorn, and whether you live here, or merely flash through, yet the pictures which the Malays have provided are carried in your brain."

\* C. W. Harrison, *An Illustrated Guide to the Federated Malay States* 1923 edition, Kuala Lumpur.



No. 18 Malay Scenery

Empire Series

(174)





175



210 - Malay Houses on Klang River

176



177



A Malayan Tin Mine

(178)



Tin mining in SERENDAH, Selangor.

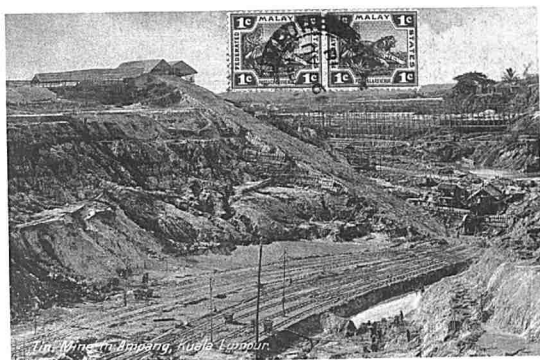
(180)



TIN MINING IN MALAYA

(179)

Sir Charles Mitchell's warning (see p. 28) that 'your tin will not last forever' was not empty because by 1895 Selangor had already passed the peak of its tin production. In the first decade of the new century when these pictures (178-82) were taken, the Chinese and their methods still dominated the industry. But as can be seen clearly in pictures (180 & 181), the use of the gravel pump and the adoption of water power to wash down the burden of the ore (hydraulic) – an Australian innovation – had already modified traditional Chinese mining practice and made possible the excavation of much deeper mines, including the largest open-cast mine in the world, the Hong Fatt mine at Sungai Besi (182). The introduc-



181

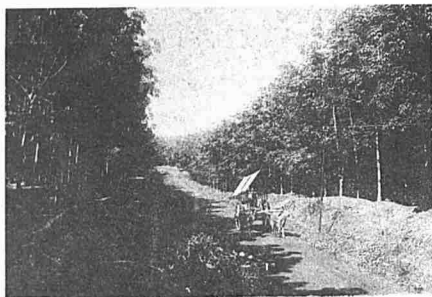
tion of the first bucket dredge into the Peninsula in 1912 marked the end of the Chinese domination of the industry and enabled the Europeans, with their greater capital resources and superior machinery, to gain the lion's share. However, as a retired Senior Warden of Mines, FMS, pointed out in the early 1920s, to the 'would-be immigrant', 'the Federated Malay States do not offer opportunities like Canada and Australia for the manual labour of the European. All manual labour is done by Asiatics, and the part the European takes is that of ordering labour and superintending operations, but unless the would-be immigrant has the knowledge to superintend and the capacity for controlling labour, the Federated Malay States are a closed door to him.'

\* 'Mining', an article by F. J. Ballantyne Dykes and W. Eyre Kenny in *An Illustrated Guide to the Federated Malay States* 1923.



182

183



ESTABLISHED ROAD IN RUBBER PLANTATION

MALAKKAJALA KUALA LUMPUR, MALAYA



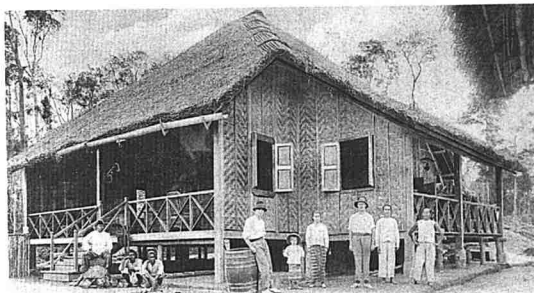
Rubber Estate F.M.S., Kuala Lumpur.

185

184

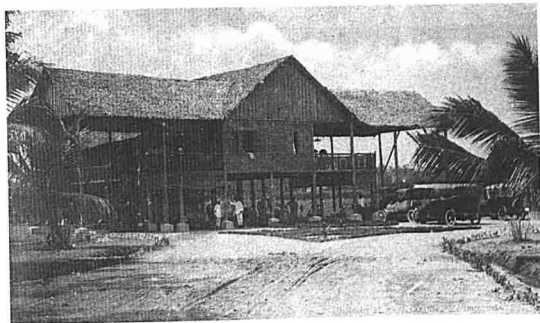


MALAYA RUBBER PLANTATION



186

Bungala for European in federated Malay States.



187

The spread of vast rolling acres of rubber estates transformed the aspect of the countryside around Kuala Lumpur (and of course elsewhere). The tribulations of the Tamil labourers who toiled on these plantations have already been mentioned. His European bosses also had tribulations of their own. 'The bungalow of which my manager was immensely proud', reminisces a 'creeper' (the term used of young planters recruited on probation), 'was built of rough *bakau* poles and attap. It comprised two bedrooms, an office, and a verandah-dining room. Whenever it rained at night I used to spend part of the night shoving my bed around trying to find a spot where the rain came through less frequently than where I was normally situated.' For the young planter fresh from England it was a lonely life, isolated on a distant plantation, with probably none of his kind or taste nearby to find companionship with. The antidote came at the weekends, when recourse was had to the local club, a white man's institution, such as the one at Kuala Selangor shown here (187) where he could joke and yarn, pick up the latest news from outside, play tennis or, may be, golf, and have a drink – usually more than one too many.

\* C. R. Harrison, 'The Last of the Creepers', *Malaya in History*, vol vii, 1 & 2, 1962.



Kuala Lumpur - Entrance to Batu Caves

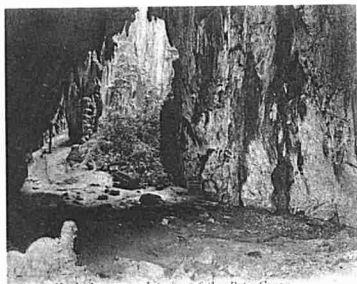
(188)

Today Batu Caves is a centre of Hindu worship and a major tourist attraction, and also virtually in a suburb of Kuala Lumpur. Yet in the days of the Japanese Occupation, forty years ago, the Caves were still sufficiently remote for the Communist Party of Malaya to hold a general conference there, a conference which ended in disaster when it was suddenly pounced upon by a detachment of Japanese soldiers and many of its participants killed (the First September Incident, 1942).



Batu Caves, Kuala Lumpur

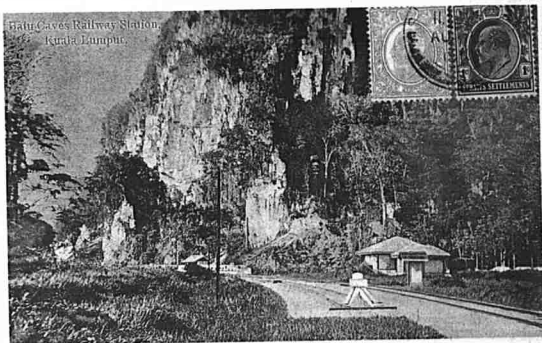
(189)



Kuala Lumpur - Interior of the Batu Caves

(190)

Batu Caves was 'discovered' in June 1878 by William T. Hornaday, the senior taxidermist at the US National Museum and H. C. Syers, Superintendent of the Selangor Police whilst hunting in the vicinity, alerted by the pungent smell of guano emanating from the caves. 'What is it that stinks so?' Syers enquired of the old Malay who served as their guide. On being told what it was and where it came from Syers asked, 'Why did you not tell us of it the other time we were here, old simpleton?' 'I didn't know you wanted to know about it, *tuau*,' came the old man's reply.



192

Once discovered, the Caves soon had a stream of European visitors taking the place of the local aborigines who used to frequent the caves in order to catch the bats who lived in them. One of the visitors was Sir Frederick Weld, the Governor of the Straits Settlements, who went there in 1880 and was so impressed by their natural beauty that he declared that, 'I really felt that it was worth while making the tour of the globe if only to see that sight.' By the mid-1880s it was a favourite spot for the *tuans* and *mems* of Kuala Lumpur to spend an adventurous Sunday exploring the caves by candlelight.

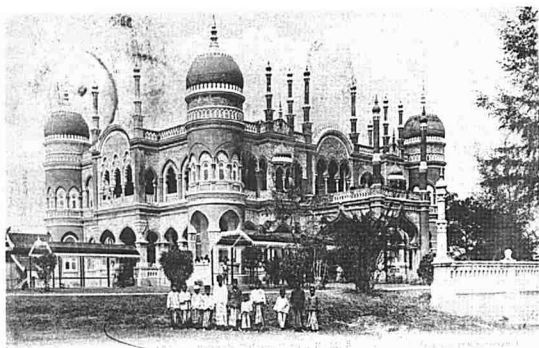
After 1890 the Caves became the preserve

of the Hindus. A Hindu temple was founded there by Thiruvengaden Pillai and Kanthappa Thaver and Thaipusam was celebrated there for the first time the following year. The 292 steps leading up to the Main Cave were completed just before the start of the Pacific War and in the 1980s Thaipusam attracts a crowd of 100 000 or more every year. The railway line which ends in the shadow of the Caves (192) was originally built to carry away the rock mined at the quarry opened by a European firm at the foot of the outcrop. Today it is used once a year to ferry devotees to the Thaipusam festival.

191



Klang whose importance lies in its position commanding the lower reaches of the river of the same name became the royal seat of Selangor when Sultan Alauddin Riayat Shah (1898–1938) made his home in the new palace (193–4) which the state government had built for him at the turn of the century. This meant that the ruler had to abandon a smaller but more attractive building which he had built at his own expense in the rice fields of Bandar, near Jugra where his grandfather and predecessor, Sultan Abdul Samad, had lived. (This palace still stands, forlorn and desolate.) Sultan Alam Shah made Klang his permanent residence after 1903 when he was crowned in the new palace, henceforth known as the *Istana Mahkota Puri*. The palace remained the official residence of Selangor's sultans until the building was pulled down in 1958 to make way for the modern Istana Alam Shah which stands on its site today.



193

Sultan's Palace, Klang, Selangor, F. M. S. Photo by M. S. Nakajima, E. I.



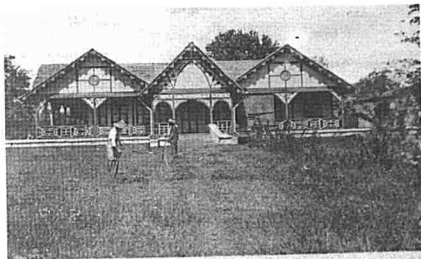
194





The Selangor Court House.

195



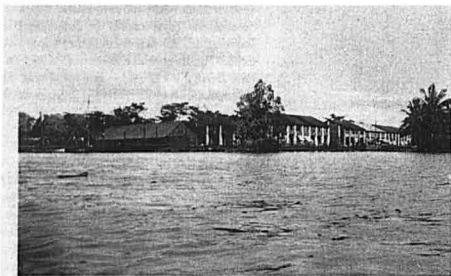
P. W. D. Klang.

196

As a result of the move to Klang, the town became the royal capital of Selangor, and acquired in consequence some impressive public buildings which otherwise might not have been the case. Amongst these was the Selangor Court House, erected in the colonial classic style (195). A new magistrate's court now stands on the site of this building.

Despite its strategic position and its assumption of the role of a royal town, Klang never – at least, until recent years – rose architecturally above the level of the average town in the Peninsula, as the offices of the Public Works Department (196) shown here suggest. That intrepid Victorian globe-trotter, Isabella Bird, who stayed there in 1879 dismissed Klang as 'not interesting' and 'like a place which has "seen better days"'. 'Klang does not improve on further acquaintance', she adds a little further on. 'It looks as if half the houses were empty, and certainly half the population is composed of Government employees, chiefly police constables. There is no air of business energy, and the queerly mixed population saunters with limp movements; even the few Chinese look depressed, as if life were too much for them.'\* However, Klang's fortunes

\* Isabella L. Bird, *The Golden Chersonese and the Way Thither*, London, 1883; reprinted by Oxford University Press, Singapore, 1985.

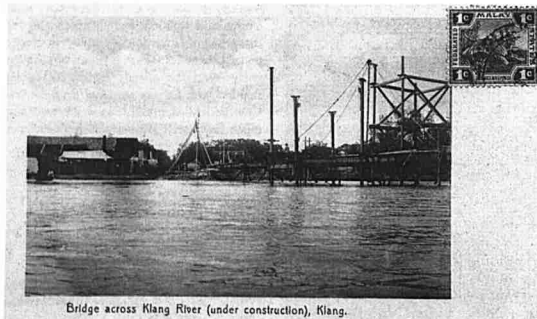


Bukit Raja and Klang River, Klang.

did improve, especially with the opening up of the interior, and until the railway was built it was the main staging point for the journey upstream to Kuala Lumpur and the tin mines beyond. The construction of the railway led to the first bridge being thrown across the river at this point (in 1889), and this was followed by the opening of a road bridge of steel (seen under construction in (198) in 1908. The town

(197)

(198)



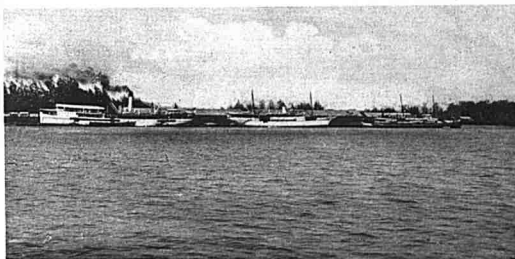
Bridge across Klang River (under construction), Klang.

279. Malay Kampong, Klang, F. M. S.



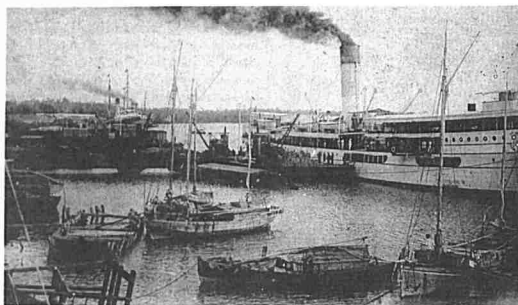
also benefited from becoming the centre of one of the most prosperous agricultural districts in the Malay states, a centre for the growth of cash crops such as rubber and coconuts, as well as *padi*. This, and the royal establishment along with other government offices, accounts for the considerable Malay presence in and around Klang (199).

199



The Landing Pier in Port Swettenham.

200



(M.69)

Port Swettenham, F. M. S.

Photo by M.S. NaraJima, Kuala Lumpur.

(201)

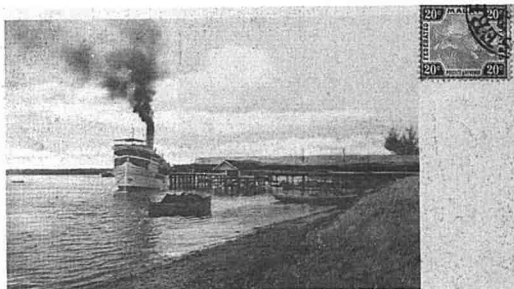


(202)

PORT SWETTENHAM

S.S. "KINTA"

These views of Port Swettenham (now Pelabuhan Klang) were taken soon after the port was opened in 1901 and before the wharves were constructed (completed in 1914) which enabled the handling of ocean-going vessels. The tall-funneled ships conspicuous in each of these views (200–4) formed part of the famous 'White Fleet' of the Straits Steamship Company which conducted a regular service between the port and Singapore and Penang four times a week. This service which left Port Swettenham for Singapore at five in the afternoon was much more popular than the stuffy, tedious and sooty journey down the Peninsula by train. The voyage from Port Swettenham to Singapore took about sixteen hours, carrying its passengers – government officials, businessmen, planters, miners and those humbler folk who travelled on deck – through the cool of the night, providing them with comfortable cabins and good food (the first class passengers, of course) and getting them to their destination in time to start a new day's work. *SS Kinta* identified in (202) was one of the four vessels plying this route. Built in the 1900s it was known to four decades of travellers until it ended its days, having been requisitioned by both the Japanese and returning British military authorities, after the Second World War.



The Jetty, Port Swettenham.

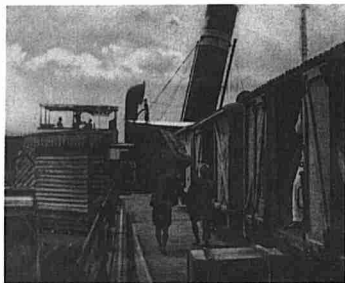
203



At Port Swettenham.

204

(205)



Coolies at work, Port Swettenham.



257 - Customs Office, Port Swettenham.

(206)



Shipping Offices and Overhead Railway Bridge, Port Swettenham.

(207)

The idea of establishing a port for coastal steamers at Kuala Klang to replace the limited facilities at Klang itself had been mooted as early as 1885. It took ten years of discussion and another five of construction in the difficult mangrove swamps of the area to bring the idea to fruition. In its first year of operation (i.e. 1901), the port was almost abandoned as a result of a devastating wave of malaria which laid low almost the entire labour force at the jetties. However, by 1904 the draining of the area under the direction of the local medical officer, Dr. Malcolm Watson, – the first man to apply practical measures against the *anopheles* mosquito, the newly-identified source of the disease – had completely restored the situation. After that the place grew rapidly, so much so that it soon exceeded its original function as a port of call for coastal steamers, and with the construction of additional wharves and new facilities became by 1914 a fully-fledged port for ocean-going vessels. It also became, along with Penang, one of the main ports for rice from Burma, and the annual shiploads of Tamil coolies recruited to serve on the rubber plantations of the hinterland. The port was named after Sir Frank Swettenham who as British Resident of Selangor had initially encouraged the scheme, as Resident-General of the FMS, had actively promoted its construction, and who, when it was opened in 1901, had reached the apex of his Malayan career as High Commissioner to the Malay states.



Harbour, Port Swettenham.



Kuala Klang (now Port Swettenham).



44

PORT SWETTENHAM, SELANGOR.

(PUBLISHED BY M. S. NAKAJIMA.)

(210)

While many voyaged north and south by the Straits of Malacca, in the first decade of the twentieth century – to which the views shown here (210–13) belong – the railway reigned supreme on land. For the newcomer, just disembarked at Port Swettenham, his first journey would doubtless be by rail to Kuala Lumpur, and thence to other destinations beyond. On the Port Swettenham–Kuala

Lumpur line – the first to be built in Selangor – the train stopped at Klang, Assam Jawa, Batu Tiga and Petaling before steaming into the federal capital's main station. In the early days (i.e. in 1893) there were five trains daily, covering the distance of 35 kilometres (before the extension of the line from Klang to Port Swettenham) in just over an hour for a fare (first class) of Strs \$1.10 (44 cts 3rd class). By

1921 it was possible to travel by train from Kuala Lumpur to all of the following places in Selangor: Port Swettenham and Klang; Batang Berjuntai and Batu Arang; Kuala Selangor (change at Assam Jawa); Ampang and Batu Caves, while Kajang, Batang Kali, Serendah, Kuala Kubu and Kalumpang could be reached by taking the main north-south trunk line joining Penang to Johor Bahru.



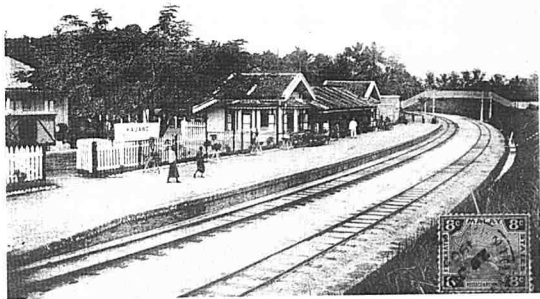


Railway Station, KAJANG, Selangor.



Railway Station, Klang.

The trains themselves were driven by British engine-drivers, a source of occasional embarrassment to the predominantly middle-class, public school British community by whom they were regarded as social inferiors.



Kuala Kubu (214-15) which today no longer exists was at the beginning of the century, when these views were taken, a flourishing settlement controlling the main pass into Pahang (the Gap) and the third largest town in Selangor. It was well-known to European travellers who were en route across the Main Range to Pahang or who were planning to

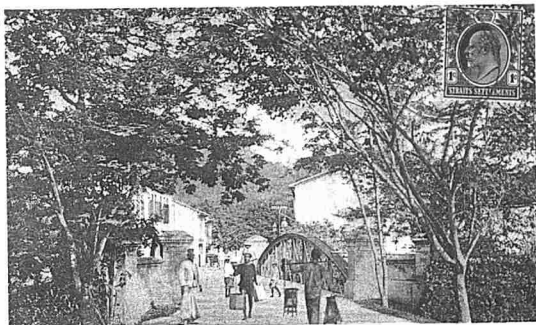
climb the eleven kilometres to one of the country's first hill stations, Treacher's Hill or Bukit Kutu (they were usually carried up to the top!).

Kuala Kubu was also the administrative centre for the district of Ulu Selangor. However, the Selangor River which flowed through the town was steadily silting up as a result of

214



General View of Kuala Kubu.

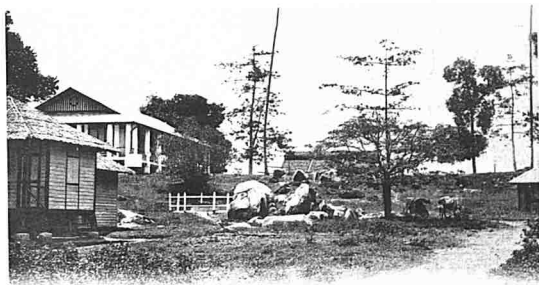


215

KUALA SELANGOR

mining operations being carried on further upstream. By 1922 the situation had become so bad that the district headquarters were temporarily removed to Rasa while plans were made to build a new town on an alternative site. Hence the origins of Kuala Kubu Bharu which was ready for occupation by 1930. Four years later Kuala Kubu had been completely abandoned and most of it laid buried beneath thick layers of silt.

Kuala Selangor (216) holds an important place in the annals of the Selangor sultanate, having been the royal capital under the state's Bugis founders and now their resting place on the slopes of Bukit Melawati, under the shadow of the Dutch fort above. During the British colonial period Kuala Selangor was an important outstation for the European planters living on the rubber estates in the district, and it also served as the district's headquarters.



216

THE HOSPITAL OF KUALA SELANGOR

(PUBLISHED BY M. S. NAKKIRAM.)

## Books on Kuala Lumpur

There is no official history of Kuala Lumpur yet written, and the best and most comprehensive account of the capital's background and history are to be found in the various writings of J. M. Gullick, a retired MCS officer who has written extensively on Malaysia. His works which have the greatest relevance to Kuala Lumpur's history are as follows:

1. "Yap Ah Loy (1837-1895)", JMBRAS, vol 21, pt 2, 1951.
2. 'Kuala Lumpur in 1884', JMBRAS, vol 32, pt 1, 1959.
3. *The Story of Early Kuala Lumpur*, Singapore, Donald Moore, 1956.
4. 'Kuala Lumpur in 1884?', JMBRAS, vol 32, pt 1, 1959.
5. 'Selangor, 1876-1882: the Bloomfield-Douglas Diary', JMBRAS, vol 48, pt 2, 1975.
6. 'Syers and the Selangor Police, 1875-1897', JMBRAS, vol 51, pt 2, 1978.
7. *The Story of Kuala Lumpur (1857-1939)*, Singapore, Eastern Universities Press, 1983.

\* This article was started by S. M. Middlebrook, and completed by Gullick on the death of the former.

## Abbreviations:

- JMBRAS: *Journal of the Malayan/Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*  
 JSEAH: *Journal of South-East Asian History*  
 MIH: *Malaya in History* (Journal of the Malaysian Historical Society)  
 MHJ: *Malayan Historical Journal* (as above; former title of MIH)

Other information and accounts of Kuala Lumpur can be found in scattered articles and newspapers, particularly in JMBRAS and the publications of the Malaysian Historical Society. Amongst the most useful may be included:

- (a) Hawley, Lady Ruth, 'Carcosa: An Outline of Its History', MIH, vol 24, 1981.
- (b) Jackson, J. C., 'Kuala Lumpur in the 1880s', JSEAH, vol 4, pt 2, 1963.
- (c) Ng Seo Buck, 'Some Recollections of Kuala Lumpur Fifty Years Ago', MHJ, vol 1, pt 1, 1954.
- (d) Wan Ming Sing, 'Yap Ah Loy and the Hsien Szu Shih Yeh Miao', MIH, vol 9, 1965.

The Malaysian Historical Society's journal, MIH vol 14, pt 2, 1972 issue was devoted entirely to Kuala Lumpur and contains a number of useful extracts, mainly taken from the *Selangor Journal*; an editorial note in MIH vol 8, pt 1, 1962, provides an explanation regarding three memorials once sited in Jalan Raja.