

Foreword

As the Minister responsible for the Sarawak Museum, I am pleased to release this booklet as an Occasional Paper for the general public. This booklet is the compilation of useful materials put up in the "History of Kuching" exhibition held in conjunction with the Kuching Festival from 1st August to 21st August 1992. It is expected that readers of this booklet will know the interesting history of the fast developing city of Kuching, the Capital of Sarawak.

I greatly encourage the intention of the Museum to publish such occasional papers based on the themes of temporary exhibitions for general reading, apart from the annual publication of the Sarawak Museum Journal which mainly caters for academic interests.



**Datuk Adenan Haji Saem PNBS, JBS, PPB,
Minister for Social Development**

Table of Contents

Foreword	1
Kuching and its name	3
Kuching, capital of the Brooke Administration	4
Transport in Old Kuching	8
Kuching Today	10
Kuching Municipal Council	18
Kuching City	20
Kuching City Administration	21
Landmarks of Kuching	22
Milestones	24

NI
95-7.500
BKI

APB 708280

KUCHING and its name

Kuching was known as Sarawak, a hundred and fifty years ago. Then the word, Proper, was added to Sarawak, thus Sarawak Proper, so as to distinguish it from the larger Sarawak which, in 1841, consisted of only the area between Tanjung Datu and the Samarahan River.

In 1872, it was given its present name, Kuching, meaning cat in the Malay language.

History has it that Kuching was so named after a tidal stream called Sungai Kuching or Cat River that ran between the Chinese Chamber of Commerce and the Tua Pek Kong Temple.

Believed to be a wild cats' haunt, Sungai Kuching also happened to be in the Bukit Mata Kuching area where there was an abundance of a local fruit, *Mata Kuching* or cat's eyes.

Whatever it is, evidence shows that Kuching was so called even before the arrival of the English adventurer, James Brooke, in 1839.



Main Bazaar in 1925

KUCHING, CAPITAL OF THE BROOKE ADMINISTRATION



A Portrait of James Brooke

James Brooke first arrived on the banks of the Sarawak River in the midst of a local uprising. For his role in quashing the revolt, James Brooke was made ruler of the territory of Sarawak. He became the first Rajah of Sarawak in 1841.

Kuching became the seat of the Brooke government and saw remarkable changes.

One of the first things James Brooke did was to introduce a code of laws.

Piracy and head-hunting were suppressed and law and order enforced.

Yet, Kuching remained cramped and lacked facilities.

It was not until the reign of the second Rajah, Charles Brooke that more changes were seen in Kuching. Drainage was improved; new buildings and streets sprang up and old shophouses replaced with semi-concrete ones.

Most of Kuching - from Main Bazaar to Carpenter Street - was rebuilt following a great fire in 1884.

By the end of Charles Brooke's rule, Kuching had developed into a town with attractive government buildings and telecommunication services. The railway and rickshaws became important means of transport. There was even a race course and a clubhouse with a bar, billiard table and bowling alley.

Kuching continued to grow under Charles Vyner Brooke who succeeded his father as the third Rajah in 1917.

In 1941, Kuching was chosen as the venue for the Brooke government's centenary celebrations which included official ceremonies and an agricultural show at the museum grounds.

A few months later, the Japanese occupied Sarawak.

After the war, Kuching was revitalised as the capital of Sarawak under the British government. It remained as the capital when Sarawak formed Malaysia with Malaya, Sabah and Singapore in 1963.

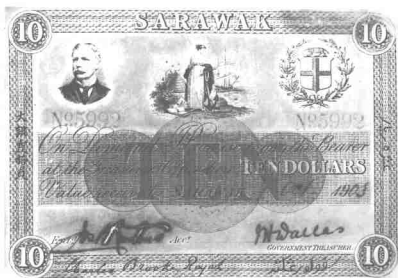
The rapid pace of development had gained momentum ever since.



Rajah's Residence



Charles Brooke



Brooke Currency



Tea party hosted for Charles Vyner Brooke



Charles Vyner Brooke



Brooke Postage

TRANSPORT IN OLD KUCHING

During the time of the first Rajah, Kuching was nothing more than a few houses along Main Bazaar and the opposite bank of the river. The thoroughfare along Main Bazaar was a mere dirt road, ideal for bullock carts which made their appearance in the mid 1880's. These bullock carts were used to transport goods. Heavy loads were also carried in two big baskets supported by a pole slung across the shoulders.

In 1895, a few rickshaws were brought in from Singapore. They remained a popular form of public transport for several years. Rickshaw stands were conveniently found at various locations in town - India Street, China Street and Gambier Road. The bicycle provided another popular means of getting about in town when it was introduced in 1900's. It was not until 1907 that the first motorcar - a 10-12 HP Coventry Humber - was brought to Kuching by the Manager of the Borneo Company, Mr. J.M. Bryan. By 1926, there were already several cars, buses and lorries plying the streets of Kuching. The first public bus service launched in 1912, made use of a 2-ton lorry which plied along Rock Road at a speed of about 14 miles an hour.

In 1912, Rajah Charles Brooke built a railway which connected the main town area to the 10th Mile - presently the Jalan Keretapi route. The railway facilitated the movements of farm produce and people to and from the outskirts of town. The service was regrettably discontinued in 1933.

Kuching's aviation history recorded the first landing of a seaplane on October 16, 1924. The plane flew over the town and eventually landed on the Sarawak River in front of the Main Bazaar.

A Bullock Cart, Market Street





First seaplane



Kuching first and only railway



Mosquito Buses

KUCHING TODAY

Kuching can certainly be considered as one of the most pleasant cities in this part of the world either for a visit or to reside in. It offers adequate facilities for both business and entertainment without the congestion and rat-race lifestyle of most cities.

Kuching is a colourful blend of history and city development. Concrete testimony of its rich heritage, like Fort Margherita, the Square Tower and the Astana, strikes a beautiful balance to the city architecture. It is this mixture of new and old that has become a lure for tourists.

In Kuching, the visitor can take a leisure stroll around. There is the Sarawak Museum, a storehouse of local history and culture; local arts and crafts of the ethnic communities which make lovely souvenirs and local delicacies to savour at the numerous stalls and restaurants.

The people comprising various races like the Iban, Bidayuh, Chinese, Malays, Melanaus, Indians and others, live in harmony and are warm and friendly. There are about 300,000 of them living in the city and they are increasing each day as more people migrate from the rural areas, in search of greener pastures.





Fort Margherita



Square Tower



Istana



General Post Office

These people have contributed tremendously towards the progress of Kuching. There are skilful craftsmen whose products can be found at the Karyaneka retail outlet at Satok Road, Sarakraf at the Sarawak Information Tourist Centre at Main Bazaar and the various arts and crafts shops. Others are employed in industries involved in the manufacture of cement, fertilizers and animal feed, plywood processing, timber moulding and metal works.

The hinterland is rich with the cultivation of vegetables, fruits and cash crops such as cocoa, pepper, oil palm and coconuts.

The city provides a ready market for all these locally grown and manufactured products. Exports go through the Tanah Puteh and Sim Kheng Hong ports.

Kuching's commercial and industrial activities are well supported by sound financial institutions - commercial banks and finance houses, of which six have international affiliations. The Bank Negara or Central Bank Branch in the city, provides banking and advisory services to the State Government and its statutory bodies.

As the capital of Sarawak, Kuching is the seat of the State Government. Most of the administrative institutions are based here. The State Secretariat at Wisma Bapa Malaysia in Petra Jaya, houses the state ministries and government departments. Beside the building is the Dewan Undangan Negeri or Sarawak Legislative Assembly Building, the venue for State Assembly sessions.

In August 1988, the Civic Centre or Dewan Suarah and the Sarawak State Indoor Stadium were officially opened to coincide with Kuching City Day and the State silver jubilee celebrations. These landmarks complement the city skyline and enhance its image as a modern city.

The rapid pace of development, however, has not transformed Kuching into a concrete jungle. There is still plenty of open spaces and greenery around.

Kuching is well landscaped by the two city councils; Kuching City South and Kuching City North who have been successful in turning it into a garden city. Trees, shrubs and flowers line all the major roads and are abundant at the numerous roundabouts.

Both councils also carry out cleanliness campaigns constantly to ensure that eating places and public premises are kept clean.

Food is a-plenty at posh restaurants and hawker stalls. It is a choice between local and international cuisines.

For those looking for a cosy place to unwind in the evenings, Kuching has numerous nightspots, from pubs with piped-in music to lounges with live entertainment and sing-along karaoke.



Pavilion



Royal Tower

The warm climate is perfect for outdoor activities. Clubs offer their members a wide range of recreational facilities. One of the oldest, the Sarawak Club, has a swimming pool, tennis and squash courts and indoor games facilities. The Sarawak Golf Club at Petra Jaya has a restaurant, an 18-hole golf course, a snookerium, tennis and badminton courts and an Olympic-sized swimming pool.

Kuching, as the gateway to beautiful Sarawak, has so much to offer to the tourists. As a result, tourism has become a major contributor to the economic development of Sarawak. Foreign tourist arrivals in 1991 totalled to 218,135.

The completion of the Kuching International Airport in 1983, is an impetus to the growth of tourism. The national airline, Malaysia Airlines, operates no less than 39 direct and indirect services weekly between Kuching and Kuala Lumpur. In addition to that, Singapore Airlines and Royal Brunei operate direct flights to their respective countries.



Old Building of the Sarawak Museum



Sarawak Islamic Museum



*Dewan Tun Abdul Razak
- a Sarawak Museum Extension*





*Dewan Undangan Negeri or
Sarawak Legislative Assembly Building*



Dewan Suarrah or Civic Centre



Amphitheatre



Sarawak State Indoor Stadium



Aerial view of Kuching

KUCHING MUNICIPAL COUNCIL

The Kuching Municipal Council (KMC) came into its own as a local government entity in 1953, although its history dates back to 1934 when it functioned as a Department for the Central Government. After the war, the work of the Municipal Board grew. There was a need for a more efficient system to undertake the Board's functions. On January 1, 1953 the Kuching Municipal Council became an independent body in terms of finance and management, subject to certain safeguards.

The newly established Council was headed by a Chairman, a British Government officer who was appointed by the Governor. The Chairman was assisted by twenty-four representatives of various races, six of whom were appointed by the Governor and the other eighteen, by local interest groups.

The Council held its first free election in 1956. Fifty-eight candidates contested for the nine wards and twenty-seven seats on the Council, which resulted in a newly elected Council that was to hold office for three years.

In 1963, for the first time, the third Municipal election was contested on party lines. A total of fifty-eight candidates from three political parties and 11 independent candidates participated in the election. The newly-elected Councillors had their office extended from three to eighteen years until October 15, 1981 by the State Government. Then on October 15, 1981 a new Council was appointed by the Yang Di-Pertua Negeri, substituting for an elected Council. This was made possible by the Constitution of the Council which was amended on December 15, 1977. The newly-appointed 26-member Council was headed by a Chairman, Datuk Amar Stephen Yong, and a Deputy Chairman, Haji Abdul Karim Abol. The Council was appointed for a 2-year period. However, a year later, Datuk Amar Stephen Yong resigned his post to become a Federal Minister.

On September 1, 1982 Encik Song Swee Guan succeeded Datuk Amar Stephen Yong as Chairman. Both Chairman Song Swee Guan and Deputy Chairman, Haji Abdul Karim Abol were reappointed to office on October 15, 1985 and again for the fourth term on January 1, 1988.

Functions and Administration

The Kuching Municipal Council was incorporated under the Kuching Municipal Ordinance to manage the municipal affairs of the town. It was entrusted with the:

- valuation and collection of rates on properties;
- erection and maintenance of traffic signs, traffic and parking areas;
- construction and maintenance of roads, drains, street lights, public parks, playground;
- collection and disposal of refuse, and sanitation in public places;
- licensing for business;
- provision and maintenance of the public swimming pool and lending library;
- control of advertisement and public entertainment;
- naming and renaming of roads and streets, and
- burial of paupers and other unclaimed corpses from the hospital mortuary.

The Council operates on the committee system to cater to its wide range of functions. Each area of operation comes under a Standing Committee, which meets each month to deal with matters under their respective jurisdiction. At the end of each month, they make recommendations to the full Council which sits in public. The Municipal Secretary is the Chief Executive of the Council.

Achievements

Since its inception in 1953, the Kuching Municipal Council has provided basic municipal services and contributed towards the growth of Kuching in many aspects as follows:

1. Public housing

In the mid '50s, the Kuching Municipal Council built a public housing scheme of 532 units of flat at Jalan Ban Hock. The purpose was to provide housing at the lowest possible cost to relieve the congestion in the town area at that time.

2. Infrastructure

As the highway authority for Kuching, the Council is responsible for the road system and traffic regulation. Over the years the Council together with the Departments of Lands and Surveys and Public Works have improved the road system in Kuching. Modern dual carriageways have replaced the former narrow streets and roads such as those at Jalan Tun Abang Haji Openg, Kuching By-Pass, Jalan Simpang Tiga, Jalan Keretapi, Rock Road, Tabuan Road and Jambatan Tun Datuk Patinggi Abdul Rahman Yakub. The KMC also improved drainage at Jalan Datuk Ajibah Abol, Padungan, Central Road and Jalan Mendu. It also constructed footpaths and overhead bridges for pedestrians.

3. Municipal Library

The Council established a lending library at Jalan P. Ramlee in 1970 to serve the needs of students and general public. The library was extended in 1984.

4. Public Market

The Petanak Central market, located on an area of 1.74 hectare at Jalan Petanak, was completed in 1988. It is a 2-storey building with 385 stalls under its roof. The project was a joint venture with the State Government. The existing markets at Jalan Gambier and Jalan Batu Lintang, and the hawker centres at Khoo Hun Yeang Street, Ban Hock Wharf and Pending have been improved by the Council.

5. Landscaping and beautification

The Council has been active in landscaping and beautification of public parks and roads by planting trees, shrubs and flowers. It has also set up its own nurseries for this.

6. Street lighting

Street lighting is a priority of the Council, which sees to it that improved lighting is carried out and new lighting points installed by the Sarawak Electricity Corporation (SESCO). For 1988, the Council expects to pay some \$820,000 to SESCO for street lighting charges.

7. Recreational facilities

On May 1, 1985 the Kuching Swimming Pool at Jalan Padungan was declared open to the public. A children's pool was added to it in 1987. The KMC also maintains the Jubilee and Song Kheng Hai recreation grounds for sports and games. The former reservoir area of some 21 acres was also developed into a beautifully landscaped park which was later complemented by a band-stand.

8. Kuching aquarium

The aquarium in the Museum Garden was initially jointly managed by the state's Agriculture Department and the Council. The aquarium was recently refurbished by the Council with grants from the State Government at a cost of \$150,000.

9. Kenyalang Park Hawkers Centre

The building has been completed and will be used to accommodate the licensed hawkers from the old Kenyalang Park market. The cost of the building was \$3.2 million.

KUCHING CITY

Kuching was officially inaugurated as a city on August 1, 1988.

The decision for Kuching to be elevated to city status was mooted by the people. The petition was made by the Chairman of the Council to the Minister for Local Government, who then motioned for a resolution pertaining to the matter. Thus, on July 18, 1984 the Resolution was passed in the Dewan Undangan Negeri. Both the petition and resolution obtained the assent of the Yang Di-Pertua Negeri in October, 1985. Thereafter, they were submitted by the Prime Minister to the Conference of Rulers for consideration. On July 3, 1986, the Resolution was approved after the Conference of Rulers was satisfied that certain prerequisites were met.

For a town to become a city, it must have these qualities.

- * financial independence in management and development;
- * centre of trade and commerce for its immediate area and for nearby towns;
- * source of inspiration for development for the surrounding areas as evidenced by rapid economic growth, number of financial institutions, population and built-up areas;
- * big in area and population compared to the whole state;
- * administrative centre of the State and well-known for its efficiency;
- * historical importance;
- * important tourist destination;
- * centre of arts, culture, literature, official celebrations, sports and athletic activities of national standard;
- * beautiful gardens;
- * institutions of higher learning, of international standard;
- * well-known research centres; and
- * a well-established library.

KUCHING CITY ADMINISTRATION

The City of Kuching is divided into two administrative jurisdictions - The City of Kuching North Commission and The Council of Kuching City South. Each is administered by a Datuk Bandar - a Commissioner for Kuching North and a Mayor for Kuching South.

Kuching City South largely covers the area previously under the Kuching Municipal Council (KMC). As it is still a local government authority, its powers and functions as conferred by the KMC Ordinance, are maintained with minor changes.

Kuching City North refers to a significant part of the territory formerly administered by the Kuching Rural District Council (KRDC). It also includes a part of the former KMC area. As it is not a local authority, Kuching City North is placed under the jurisdiction of a Commissioner who is assisted by a Board of Advisors. The Commissioner is a corporate body directly responsible to the State's Chief Minister. The power and function of the Commissioner are contained in Kuching City North Ordinance, which is closely modelled after the Kuching City South.

The city's twin administrations was born out of the need for an efficient system which would allow for a balanced development and population distribution for the two territories. It will also ensure that Kuching City South will not be hampered by the added responsibilities of developing Kuching North which previously was under the KRDC jurisdiction.

THE FIRST TWO DATUK BANDAR

On August 1, 1988 two local prominent personalities, Dr. Yusoff bin Haji Hanifah and YB Encik Song Swee Guan were appointed by the Yang Di-Pertua Negeri as the first Commissioner of Kuching City North and the first Mayor of Kuching City South respectively.



Commissioner's Mace



Commissioner's Chain of Office



21 *Mayor's Mace*



Mayor's Chain of Office

LANDMARKS OF KUCHING



Kuching International Airport



Satok Shopping Complex





Sarawak Plaza



Wisma Saberkas



MILESTONES

- 1839 *English adventurer James Brooke first sailed up the Sarawak River.*
- 1841 *James Brooke became the first Rajah of Sarawak.*
- 1848 *Sarawak's first flag hoisted in Kuching, just in front of James Brooke's house.*
- 1851 *The first Christian Church, St. Thomas', was built on the site of the present church.*
- 1856 *Borneo Company was established with its office at Bukit Mata Kuching.*
- 1870 *The present Astana, first built by the second Rajah, completed.*
- 1872 *Kuching was so called by the second Rajah.*
- 1874 *The Court House came into use as the administrative centre. The Council Negeri Meetings were held here until 1973.*
- 1879 *Square Tower built.*
- 1880 *Fort Margherita, now a Police Museum, was built to defend the town from possible attack and to complement its beauty.*
- 1881 *The first rubber tree in Sarawak was planted at Sekama Road.*
- 1883 *The Clock Tower was added to the front of the Court House.*
- 1886 *Round Tower built.*
- 1890 *Sarawak's first race course at Padangan opened.*
- 1891 *The renowned Sarawak Museum was opened to house and display the state heritage.*
- 1895 *Rickshaws first arrived from Singapore.*
- 1900 *The telephone service was introduced.*
- 1905 *Cinema shows were screened.*
- 1907 *The first motorcar, a 2-seater Coventry Humber 10-12 HP was brought to Kuching by the Manager of Borneo Company, J.M. Bryan.*
- 1909 *The Pavilion was opened for use as a medical headquarters.*
- 1912 *First bus service along Rock Road.*
- 1912 *Brooke Dockyard opened.*
- 1916 *The railway was opened to the public, linking the town centre to the 10th Mile, following what is now the Jalan Keretapi route.
Post and telegraphs were introduced with the erection of wireless masts at Rock Road.*
- 1923 *Electric lights came into use after the establishment of a power station at Power Street.*
- 1924 *Chartered Bank opened.
The Charles Brooke Memorial erected in front of the Court House.
First seaplane landed on the Sarawak River.*

- 1926 *The Satok Suspension Bridge opened.*
- 1931 *The Kuching General Post Office opened.*
- 1934 *Kuching Municipal Board came into operation as a Department for the Central Government.
The Sylvia Cinema, Kuching's first, screened the "King Kong" on its opening night. Initially, it was opened to the male population only.*
- 1938 *Kuching had its first fire station.*
- 1939 *Kuching had its first Police Station.
The Sarawak Broadcasting Service came into operation, disseminating mainly news and propaganda.*
- 1953 *The Kuching Municipal Council became an autonomous local government authority.*
- 1954 *The second Secretariat at Barrack Road.*
- 1956 *Radio Sarawak established.
The KMC held its first free election.*
- 1961 *The incorporation of Kuching Port Authority.*
- 1963 *Kuching became the state capital when Sarawak formed Malaysia with Malaya, Sabah and Singapore.*
- 1968 *The State Mosque at Market Street completed.*
- 1970 *Opening of the Sarawak General Hospital at Rock Road.*
- 1973 *Opening of Dewan Tun Abdul Razak.*
- 1975 *Datuk Patinggi Haji Abdul Rahman Yakub Bridge opened.*
- 1976 *Bangunan Wisma Bapa Malaysia, Dewan Undangan Negeri and Lapau in Petra Jaya opened.
Holiday Inn officially opened.*
- 1983 *Kuching International Airport opened.
Opening of the \$9 million Sarawak Sports Stadium at Petra Jaya, Kuching.
Allocation of Dewan Tun Abdul Razak as a Sarawak Museum Extension.*
- 1985 *Syariah Court at Jalan Satok opened.*
- 1986 *Kuching Festival, a yearly event, first celebrated.*
- 1988 *Last Council Meeting of the KMC on July 29.
Kuching became a City on 1st August.
Santubong Bridge opened.
Dewan Suarrah Kuching or Civic Centre opened.
Kuching Hilton officially opened.
Opening of the \$21.5 million Sarawak State Indoor Stadium at Petra Jaya, Kuching.*
- 1989 *Bangunan Sultan Iskandar opened.*
- 1990 *The new State Mosque at Petra Jaya (Masjid Jamek) opened.*
- 1992 *Opening of the Sarawak Islamic Museum.
Opening of the Amphitheatre.
Riverside Majestic Hotel officially opened.*

Reference: Kuching Towards A New Horizon.

Kuching: Ministry of Environment and Tourism, 1988.