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WHEN COCKFIGHTING WAS THE RAGE

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WHEN COCKFIGHTING WAS THE RAGE

J. C. P.

By

REVIVED BY YOUNG CIVIL SERVANTS MALAYAN REMINISCENCES

TO revert to the early days of Kuala Lumpur. The interior of Selangor was sparsely inhabited by Sakais in scattered groups, while the descendants of the original Bugis invaders were conspicuous by their absence, having settled along the banks of the Langat, Klang and Selangor rivers and the coastal district of Morib, where they lived by piracy eked by the produce of the sago palm and "ladang" (upland clearing) rice and bananas.

Piracy persisted up to the eighties and the last of the pirate chiefs to be rounded up was the most renowned, Syed Mashahor (as his name implies), who was made one of the first members of the State Council. A veritable "die-hard" and implacable, he swore that he would drive the British back into the sea before he died, and we often pulled his leg and asked when that happy event was going to take place. Of small stature, old, and wearing a beard, his general appearance belied his reputation. But he and Raja Mahmud, the Panglima Besar—the one invulnerable on the high sea and the other on land—kept things going and terrorised the Native States bordering on the Straits of Malacca for many years.

OBSCURE HISTORY.

The history of Selangor is shrouded in obscurity and it would seem that up to a comparatively recent time Selangor was no man's land. The

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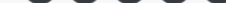


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WHEN COCKFIGHTING WAS THE RAGE

WHEN COCKFIGHTING WAS THE RAGE j. a p. By REVIVED BY YOUNG CIVIL SERVANTS MALAYAN

COULD NOT KNIT FOR NEURITIS

COULD NOT KNIT FOR NEURITIS If neuritis bothers you, deal with it as this woman dealt with hers "For

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early navigating merchants of the East India Company's period—Captains Glass, Scott and Forest—put the population down at 1,500, but these were mostly Bugis pirates, and the Sultanate (the present dynasty) was not created till some years after.

The following account of the present Bugis dynasty, given by the late Raja Allang ibni Raja Brayun, who was a Forest ranger of the Ulu Langat district in the late 'eighties should be interesting. We were very much thrown together when I was prospecting for tin in his district and he seemed to know all about the Sultans of Selangor and claimed that it was his father who placed the late Sultan Abdulsamad on the throne :—

"Salleh Udin was the first Sultan of Selangor. He came from the country of the Bugis to found a settlement and establish a stronghold for piracy in the Straits of Malacca. This was

less than 100 years ago (say 1815). He arrived in a large fleet of prahus accompanied by 40 'daiangs,' or men of noble birth, besides a large number of followers, and met with no opposition as the whole of Selangor was inhabited by Sakais.

"But Salleh Udin had no 'nobat,' or regalia, to uphold his 'Dolat' (dignity or divine right of Kings) and so he demanded that the Sultan of Perak deliver up his own regalia to him, failing which he would declare war and take the regalia by force of arms. Now, the Bugis pirates were the terror of the eastern seas, and going to war with them was out of the question. So the Sultan of Perak compromised by lending the regalia to Salleh Udin for the occasion of the 'tabal' or coronation.


"Salleh Udin settled in Jugra. In the reign of Sultan Mahomad he was afraid of Raja Abdulsamad (afterwards Sultan), his cousin, who he suspected would betray him and usurp the throne, and for this reason he ordered the arrest of Abdulsamad who fled to Kajang, a village higher up the Langat river, and settled there.

BLOOD MONEY.

"At this time Raja Brayun, a Mendeleng from Sumatra, invaded Sungai Ujong and attacked Datoh Klana Sendeng, because a friend of Raja Brayun was murdered and Datoh Klana Sendeng refused to pay the blood money of \$400 according to the 'adat' Malayu. On the side of Raja

Brayun there was Panglima Garang and Panglima Si Gara, both 'invulnerable' and fierce warriors, besides 500 fighting men. But he was defeated although he had bribed one of Datoh Klana Sendeng's men with \$3,000 to burn the granaries and blow up a powder magazine. Raja Brayun then retired to Recko, a village on the Langat river a short distance upstream from Kajang, and invited Raja Abdulsamad to live with him. He built a stockade at Recko and had a large force of fighting men who lived

by robbery and raiding Sakais to sell them into slavery.




"When Sultan Mahomad heard that Abdulsamad was living with Raja Brayun he sent a warning to Raja Brayun not to shelter Abdulsamad or have anything to do with him. As Raja Brayun paid no heed to his warning, the Sultan fitted up an expedition of 500 prahus from Kajang to attack Recko, and everybody warned Raja Brayun to be on his guard. On his part, Raja Brayun got together 300 men with axes and bilongs with orders to fell the forest across the river on hearing the report of a gun, and to run amuck and massacre Sultan Mahomad's men if they attempted to cut through the blockade. Nothing happened as the expedition returned to Kajang.


"When Sultan Mahomad was dying, Abdulsamad, Raja Brayun and Tunku Panglima Raja, also known as Raja Berkat Rhio, went to his bedside and Raja Brayun and Raja Berkat Rhio

drank the 'ayer sumpah' (water of fealty) and appointed Abdulsamad Sultan of Selangor."


FORTUNE DURING BOOMS.



The universally accepted version of the succession was that Abdulsamad was appointed Regent to Raja Mahmud, the younger of the two infant sons of the late Sultan—the elder brother, Raja Laut, being illegitimate—and usurped the throne for himself; but I prefer to believe Raja Allang's version that Sultan Abdulsamad succeeded to the throne immediately on the death of Sultan Mahomad. Otherwise his remains could not have been buried. Besides, he had the backing of Raja Brayun, probably the most powerful chief of the time, and none of the adherents of Sultan Mahomad's heir would have dared to oppose him.



Raja Allang went in for rubber planting on a large scale and successive booms brought him a fortune and he died a rich man. Panglima Garang, the veteran and invulnerable warrior attached to Raja Brayun, I had also met planting out coconut seedlings on his 100-acre freehold block on the Batu Road, given by the Sultan in gratitude for past services, perhaps. Though an old man he was tall and well-built, with a heavy, fierce looking moustache, and one could well believe his past prowess on the yields of battle. This coconut plantation is now the site of the Central F.M.S. Railway workshop. How things have changed from the old Selangor I knew!



The fact of the country being inhabited by Sakals, and the paucity of Malays accounted for Kuala Lumpur being about the dullest hole I ever struck. Unlike the northern native states of Kedah, Perlis, Setul, Singora and Patani where the pristine native plays like Mayong, Manora, Wang Kulit or Shadow play, Lakon, and a few others help you to while away the evening, there was nothing doing in the way of amusements unless you went to the Chinese theatre or the gambling dens, to have a flutter at poh and fantan.

PAINTED TOWN RED.

One night a few of us tried both

We left what little money we had with the banker, and were driven out of the theatre when the orchestra put on the loud pedal, by banging the big drum and the symbols to call the attention of the audience to a battle scene. We then painted the town red from sheer exuberance of youth and ennui combined. That night I had to bail out of the lock-up one of my companions, and he was the son of bishop.

too. The next morning we were faced with a bill for damages—a broken street lamp and other trifles—but dear Steve Harper saw to it that the affair did not go any further.

Yes, Kuala Lumpur in the early days could boast of the son of a belted earl, a creeper on a coffee estate; son of an admiral, a Sanitary Board inspector; and the son of a peppery Indian colonel who was a surveyor and latterly emigrated to Pahang and went "native."

In the day-time you could go to the cock-fighting farm, an attap hut on the Batu Road, which was farmed out by the Government to a Malay for \$60 a year, and watch the cocks fight every afternoon. It was a tame and unsportsmanlike affair as steel spurs were used and an inferior bird, as often as not, won by a fluke if it got the spur home first into its opponent's vital part.

The owner of the winning cock took the defeated bird, whether dead or alive, home to be curried and, of course, the stakes as well. The cock-fighting farm was abolished by Sir William Maxwell (then C.M.G.) when he succeeded Swettenham as Resident, but not so the gambling farm which held out for years after, and, grouped under the heading of Gambling, Spirits and Pawnbroking farm, was a recurring item in the annual estimates and brought no end of money into the Exchequer besides laying the foundation of the colossal wealth of the late Towkay Loke Yew.

* MUST DISPERSE.

It may seem incredible but it is nevertheless true that some years after a few young bloods in the Civil service called junior officers, headed by the late George Cumming (then in the Straits Trading Co.) revived cock fighting (without steel spurs), and on certain Sundays used to foregather round the pit at the bachelors' mess and had no end of time. This went on for quite a long time until in a weak moment, out of sheer bravado and to show no ill feeling, George Cumming must needs send a chit to Captain Talbot, the Commissioner of Police, inviting him to the cock-pit to watch his invincible white cock wipe the floor against all-comers.

That cock-fight did not take place, as Captain Talbot had to keep his official end up, though he might have known what was going on, and wrote

back that he would set the police on them if they did not disperse.

There was plenty of shooting to be had in the "blukar," where the Railway Station now stands, and I have often bagged green pigeons and once a small wild boar. Lower down the railway line, at the second mile post, lived Lebeh Hamid who had a pair of hunting dogs, a hybrid between the piriah dog and the srigala (wild dog), which he had trained to drive the deer to the gun. They were the most intelligent dogs I had ever seen, and the Bendahara of Pahang had offered as much as \$300 for them but Lebeh Hamid would not part with them at any price.

Deer were plentiful and we had venison almost daily as Bachee Captain the son and heir of the late Captain Yap Ah Loy, was a great shikara and a crack shot who made a hobby of going out, every day almost, with a pack of dogs and trained beaters to shoot down the deer in the surrounding district, giving the venison to the

beaters and the two Malay guns who followed him. It was just slaughter.

Sometimes Bachee Kim Lee, son of Baba Kim Lee of the defunct bar in Market Square, would invite me for a picnic to his brick kilns in Batu Limabias, which usually ended in a jamboore to the accompaniment of violin and drums, and the singing of Malay "pantuns" and Portuguese songs of which he had a large repertoire. The Malacca-born Chinese know how to enjoy themselves and Bachee had good reason for merry-making as he was simply coinin; money with bricks selling at \$180 a laksa (10,000) and half a dozen kilns burning all the time. The old adobe houses were giving place to brick buildings and like Topsy the new town it grew.

In the previous chapter of Malayan Reminiscences, it was stated that "Tunku Kudin outlived his brothers and his three sons, the eldest of whom was Tunku Bahadur." This passage should have read: "Tunku Kudin outlived his three brothers and his three sons except Tunku Bahadur, the eldest." Tunku Kudin died 20 years ago while Tunku Bahadur died two years ago.





A Sakai boy with blow-pipe.

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