A Study of European Women in Colonial Malaya

1786 - 1942

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Abstract

This study examines European women in Colonial Malaya from the 1786 acquisition of Penang to Singapore's fall in 1942. It establishes the role they played within their own community and in relation to the indigenous people. The Introduction discusses their role in imperial ideology and places them within the context of colonial Malaya and other colonies of the empire. The remaining thesis divides into two basic sections. The first deals with European women in the Straits Settlements, 1786 to 1880, with lives mostly domestic and urban and marriages dictated by husbands' finances and peer-group expectations rather than bureaucratic rules. Their circumstances are gauged through housing, amenities and social life and the problems and health-hazards they faced in unfamiliar territory. Their expectations, formed by background and upbringing, are expressed through first impressions, attitude towards the colonised populations and perception of their domestic and public role. Expansion of British-controlled territory, in the later period with annexation of the Malay States, a larger post-war, British middle class and change of official policy towards women in the colonies encouraged an increase in their numbers, which also included a small percentage of working women. These increased numbers and tighter bureaucratic control over public and private life produced rigidly-defined internal hierarchies and obsessive preoccupation with status, particularly for the subordinate wife. Improved communications, periods back home for reasons of health and children's education and a social life based round exclusively European clubs and hill-stations made them more self-contained and further removed from the local scene. Emily Innes and Katharine Sim specifically illustrate, through their writings, the circumstances and aspirations of their peer group living in rural areas while the general chapters concentrate on urban women. The conclusion surveys the changes in the lives of European women across the period.
Chapter 1
Introduction and Colonial Malaya 1786-1942

Outline of Thesis

The British Empire was closely associated with the powerful ideology of domesticated women and familial men. British women were perceived as custodians of ‘civilized standards’ concerning moral respectability, physical health, hygiene and family life, all embodying “racial strength and fitness for the responsibilities of Empire.” They were significant subscribers to the concept of superiority which fostered social exclusiveness and kept Europeans separate from local populations with their perceived threat of racial degeneration. Although attention has been given to colonial women elsewhere in this region, little has been written about those in Malaya. This thesis seeks to recover the histories of these European women who have been neglected in previous accounts by examining their role and living conditions in Malaya between the ceding of Penang in 1786 and the Japanese conquest in 1942.

Chapter 1 sets out the aims of the thesis, puts these women in context and within colonial Malaya's political and economic history. The background section focuses on the various Straits Settlements (SS) and Federated Malay States (FMS) sources as the most substantial British records were maintained there. These include contemporary accounts of both colonial history and Malay history and culture, often by British administrators and reflecting their particular interests, as well as biographies, individual reminiscences, official correspondence and records, journals and newspapers. This was compared with pre and post-Independence writers who

introduced the new perspective of Asian scholars plus historians, like Gullick reworking and extending old material\(^4\) and, finally, recent research evaluating the entire body of material.\(^5\)

The remainder of the thesis divides the period into two halves, 'The Early Years,' 1786 to 1880, mainly concerning the SS, and 'The Later Years,' 1880 to 1942 after the annexation of the Malay States. Each section is qualified by an in-depth study of the writings of one colonial woman from that period, Emily Innes\(^6\) and Katharine Sim.\(^7\) The thesis approaches colonial women from three angles: first a survey of who they were, where they came from, how they lived in Malaya and what problems they faced; second, their expectations, their relationships within their own group and their attitudes towards the local people; finally, comparisons between the two periods discuss changes in physical circumstances and attitudes. The group under discussion was very small and mainly British. However, to avoid sub-divisions the term 'European' is used collectively for all women of European origin, including Australians, New Zealanders and Canadians as well as Americans. Particular nationalities will be named where specific reference makes it necessary.


\(^6\) Innes E. The Chersonese with the Gilding Off Richard Bentley & Son, London, 1885; Appendix 5.

\(^7\) Sim K. Malayan Landscape Michael Joseph Ltd., London, 1945; Appendix 9.
‘The Early Years’ deals with 1786 to 1880, predating annexation of the Malay States and, therefore, concentrating on the SS with women in a predominantly urban environment. Since the British developed Singapore and Penang in preference to Malacca, the chapter concentrates on the former two as more representative. Approaching the women on two levels, circumstances and expectations, Chapter 2 looks at their journey to the SS and their first impressions, making use of personal accounts and travellers’ records. Through censuses and local town records, it defines the group as a percentage of its peers and as part of the general local population including specific references to named individuals. These include official figures like Sophia Raffles and those briefly mentioned in local records and newspapers either individually or in connection with their husbands.

To place them in context, the chapter uses anecdotal, local and architectural histories and town records to look at their housing, both a statement of prestige and a reminder of home, their servants and the available services and amenities, while newspaper advertisements for imported goods have provided another useful indication of life-style and contact with home. Discussion of daily occupation of time in a leisured and mainly domestic existence examines the women’s interdependence, contact with home and philanthropic engagement with local society. It includes their public life, mainly as embellishments, “The Ladies,” of infrequent but relished social events. As Janice Brownfoot points out, many authentic records by European women were destroyed in the Japanese occupation, but references to those of high profile, newspapers, memoirs, local histories, published letters, journals, magazines and artists’ impressions have provided useful general material and some specific references. Gravestones and obituaries suggest low life-expectancy so attention is paid to the effect of climate and new diseases on the Europeans’ health, worsened by refusal to compromise over diet and clothing, failure to understand their surroundings and the resulting fear, while the benefits of Penang’s early hill-station draws parallels with those in India.

The second approach focuses on expectations and attitudes, deriving from their background and upbringing, includes expectations of life-style in the SS, their domestic role, their place within their own social group as respected bastions of European standards and, also, with regard to the local population. Where these reflect the views of the Europeans as a whole, the women are referred to simply as part of that group. For a wider context, comparisons are drawn with colonial women in other parts of this region, through general and local histories or their own accounts.

'The Later Years' runs parallel for 1880 to 1942 but with the added dimension of the newly-annexed FMS and its more rigidly-controlled, Government-orientated society. As most Europeans lived in the SS and FMS, this chapter makes only brief references to the Unfederated Malay States (UMS). A wider range of material is available for this later period and the chapter again makes use of a similar variety of sources as ‘The Early Years.’ The fund of travellers’ impressions was increased by the new vogue for women visiting Malaya to record and publish their experiences although, as Strobel indicates, most of them did not overstep convention and made little attempt to actually understand the indigenous people. Newspapers, local records and personal accounts of European women in Malaya have been useful in assessing the development of amenities, services and social life, while Gaw’s Superior Servants, for example describes the place of amahs in the European household but considers both sides of the servant-employer relationship.

During this period, the development and proliferation of clubs had a significant impact, dictating social etiquette and dominating relationships between the Europeans. The female role became increasingly significant as changing patterns made it easier for European women to live in Malaya. Their small number placed them in an iconic position with a strong veto over behaviour but, also, brought them under close scrutiny and pressure to conform to rigidly-defined standards. The hill station, another transference from India, also, eventually, made a strong impact on

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9 Brownfoot J. Incorporated Wife 187
10 Strobel M. European Women and the Second British Empire Indiana University Press, 1991
colonial life in general and on women in particular. The cooler hill-station climate provided opportunities for recuperation without the family separation of furlough in England as well as an ‘English’ atmosphere distanced from the ‘alien’ world of their daily lives.

In this period, the increased female presence includes women in a public capacity for the arrival of working women meant that female missionaries were no longer the only employed women. This chapter looks at their attitudes and expectations against the background of an expanding but more rigidly-defined, colonial group. In defining their role within this group and their relationship with the local population, and comparing these with the previous period, it uses a variety of personally-based material as well as records, biographies and journals. The former includes recorded BBC interviews, autobiographical writings by colonial and Asian women and novels, some semi-autobiographical. While many of these may be biased towards personal agenda or specific audiences, they still capture aspects of colonial society or the writer’s perceptions and aspirations. Thus, Somerset Maugham’s stories may portray the essence of colonial life without being strictly accurate in detail, while the memoirs of Margaret and Sylvia Brooke, at their most basic, reflect contemporary attitudes but also show a more sympathetic response to the indigenous population. Likewise, Madalon Lulofs may have harboured resentment against her Sumatran peer group, but she did experience life as a planter’s wife. The final question asked in this section is whether, like progress in material aspects, any changes took place in women’s expectations and attitudes over the period examined.

Emily Innes and Katharine Sim, each illustrate and extend one period, Emily the end of ‘The Early Years’ and Katharine the inter-war years prior to the Japanese invasion. Both were Government officials’ wives and neither lived in the urban centres mainly discussed in Chapters 2 and 3. They, therefore, indicate how European women lived outside the larger towns, what facilities were available and what progress was made in the period between the two. Written for entirely different purposes, their accounts of their time in Malaya are the most complete of their kind.

12 Brownfoot J. Incorporated Wife 201
including both factual descriptions and their own attitudes and responses. Very little is known about Emily Innes, apart from what she reveals in her single book. Nothing else written by her survives and research is confined to articles by J.M. Gullick in the Journal of the Malayan/ Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society (JMBRAS) and subsequent elaborations.\(^{13}\) Katherine Sim wrote articles for the ‘Malay Mail’ and a novel\(^{14}\) based in post-war Malaya, but her main presence is through her autobiographical ‘Malayan Landscape.’ To put both women within some wider context, comparisons are drawn between their experiences and those of other women visiting or living in Malaya or the general region. Discussion of Emily Innes, therefore, also draws on accounts by or about Isabella Bird, Margaret Brooke, wife of Charles Brooke, the second Rajah of Sarawak and Harriette McDougal, wife of the Bishop of Sarawak,\(^{15}\) while Sylvia Brooke, wife of the third Rajah, Vyner Brooke, provides similar comparisons for Katharine Sim.\(^{16}\) Although outside the British Empire, Sarawak had close links with Malaya, its colonial women had similar lifestyles and problems and Emily Innes began her colonial life there. Singapore was a holiday destination and also a place of refuge for Sarawak colonials, as for Harriette McDougal after the Chinese insurrection of 1857, while Penang Hill was still the nearest convalescent station.

Although the main aim of this work is to recover some account of the lives of these European women in Malaya, an important factor in understanding their attitudes and expectations must lie in relating them to their backgrounds and to their relationship to the Empire and imperial ideology. Historians such as Catherine Hall,


\(^{14}\) Sim K. The Jungle Ends Here Hodder & Stoughton, London, 1961

Leonora Davidoff, Clare Midgley and Anne McClintock have researched the emergence of the middle class in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, its close connection with the Evangelical movement and the consequent establishment of separate spheres for its men and women. As they point out, by the early 19th century, woman's sphere was no longer in the public work-place, which was reserved for men, but firmly centred in the privacy of home, working wives being disapproved of as not fitting into the new ideology of women's economic dependence on men. Employment only became acceptable when necessitated by a husband's temporary absence or by widowhood. Philanthropy and missionary work, especially in nursing and education, came within their sphere but in a supportive role as helpmeet, with no formal status. This ideology placed great emphasis on the home, the centre of social order and a haven from the world and on the soothing and uplifting influence of well-ordered domestic life. Marriage and the family represented stability and a bastion against the potentially undermining force of immorality, both at home and, in the wake of events in India in 1857 and diminishment of British prestige, the stabilising power of their presence in the colonies was revaluated. Women were idealised as wives, mothers, guardians of the household and moral supporters and regenerators but, at the same time, were helpless dependents, subordinate to their menfolk needing their protection and guidance and with their sexuality firmly contained by their responsibilities and duties.  

These boundaries defining their behaviour and domestic expectations, transferred with them to Malaya as part of the imperial ideology and continued to develop there through their accepted lifestyle and preoccupation with social hierarchy in which their position was determined by their husbands' status. Although this becomes more obvious during the later period discussed in this thesis, perhaps partly due to the increased number of European women, there are distinct indications of it in

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16 Brooke S. Queen of the Head-hunters Sidgewide & Jackson, London, 1970
18 Brownfoot J. Incorporated Wife 179, 199
the earlier years. In descriptive accounts and newspaper articles, principally written by men, expectations are clearly of domestic, compliant women, some of whom might discreetly help their husbands in the hotel trade, but who all knew their real place, referred to collectively, as "the ladies," ornaments of society. Female suffrage and depletion of the male work-force during the Great War impacted on the status and role of women in early-20\textsuperscript{th} century Britain and affected the Malaya of 'The Later Years' through the increase in the number of working women. These, however, were a small percentage of a group whose role remained primarily domestic, helpmeets creating 'home' in the colonies with their 'incorporated' status dependent entirely on their husbands' position.\textsuperscript{19}

Although Empire was seen as a masculine preserve, dependent women, as bastions of domestic virtue and symbols of the reforming power and stability of the home, underpinned Britain's 'civilising mission' in the colonies, both within their own community and as an example to the indigenous people of European superiority. The language of Empire reinforced this image, with Britain as the 'mother country' and the colonies seen as her 'children. The women's 'uplifting' and 'civilising' presence was perceived and intended to be, counteractive to the undesirable degenerative effects of alcohol and liaisons with local women, on men "left too long in a racial wilderness" and thereby regarded as undermining to British prestige.\textsuperscript{20} This official desire to bring the control of sexual behaviour within the settled social order, followed a previously less antagonistic attitude towards inter-racial contact, intermarriage and Eurasians in India until 1813 and, likewise, in early Penang. Consequently it seems unfair to suggest that European women, while contributary to the resulting increased distancing from the local people as their greater presence and stipulated role implied, should bear all the blame they are often apportioned, for the disruption of good relations between European administrators and the indigenous peoples and the eventual loss of the empire. This suggestion, as Jane Haggis and Janice Brownfoot point out, is expressed principally by contemporary critics or writers.

\textsuperscript{19} Strobel M. European Women Introduction; Midgley C. Gender and Imperialism 19
\textsuperscript{20} Midgley C. Gender and Imperialism 176; Strobel M. European Women Introduction; Incorporated Wife Brownfoot J. 189-90, Gartrell B. 172 (Colonial Wives: Villains or Victims?)
like Somerset Maugham, who found it convenient to ignore the complexities of the situation and the influence of government policy.\(^{21}\)

However, this role in the ‘mission,’ supported by contemporary prooccupation with anthropology and origins, must have been instrumental in defining their attitudes towards the colonised ‘other,’ as simply part of redefining social boundaries with the indigenous races equated with the British lower/working classes.\(^{22}\) McClintock has examined the imperial view of the evolutionary hierarchy where white English middle-class women came only second to their male counterparts at its pinnacle while the ‘degenerate’ indigenous ‘colonised’ were at the bottom, parallel with the less desirable sectors of English society. Within this new colonial hierarchy, the ‘primitive’ and ‘childlike’ local was required to accept as superior the new imperial ‘white’ elite which had assumed the traditional patriarchal duties, where women played a supporting but ‘invisible’ role. These women would be aware of and might, like Emily Innes, even employ the language of Victorian feminists claiming a bond with female slaves or their ‘Eastern sisters’ to highlight their common exploitation by men. This, however, did not extend to any suggestion of equality or the cause of “rescuing” their “unfortunate sisters” from oppression inhibit European women from, in turn, exploiting locals as servants and inferiors. Their attitude towards local women was simply a gauge of their superior position in an oppressive, male-orientated, colonial system and an extension of that employed towards the servant class at home. The only difference was a greater access to servants in the colonies as they cost less to employ and the supply was more plentiful, even if they were perceived to need instruction in ‘civilised’ habits.\(^{23}\)

\(^{21}\) Midgley C. Gender and Imperialism. Introduction, 12, 45 (Haggis J. White Women and Colonialism: towards a non-recuperative history), 162, 166; Hall C. White, Male 67; Strobel M. European Women 7; Incorporated Wife Brownfoot J. 186, 191, 207, Gartrell B. 180-2

\(^{22}\) Midgley C. Gender and Imperialism 1-5,73; McClintock A. Imperial Leather. Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest Routledge, New York, 1995. 17,24-7, 31, 44-51,63-6, 236-50, 259-65

\(^{23}\) Hall C. White, Male 64; Midgley C. Gender and Imperialism 163-6, 170-1, 173-4; McClintock A. Imperial Leather 6, 24, 97-8; Chaudhuri & Strobel Western Women 108-112, 137-8, 146, 148, 150, 152; Davidoff & Hall Family Fortunes 18-35; Strobel M. European Women 10,13; Gartrell B. Incorporated Wife 182,183.
Other attitudes and expectations that the European woman took as part of her ‘baggage’ to the colonies, Malaya included, were also influenced by the Victorian preoccupation with boundaries. In the colonies, they crossed these understood boundaries into the unknown and needed familiar daily routines, rituals and reminders of home to help them cope with unfamiliar and ‘alien’ situations and conditions. In Imperial Leather McClintock explores the role of soap and the crusade for cleanliness, so central to the lives of women like Emily Innes, which went deeper than simply the desire for sparkling tableware or sugar free of ants. Its purifying potential, as McClintock points out, was an indication of the transforming power of the ‘civilised’ world to which Emily belonged and an indication of Britain’s evolutionary superiority. Likewise, her tin of Huntley and Palmer biscuits, with its telling picture on the lid, symbolised the triumph of imperial ‘civilisation’ in bringing teatime to the ‘primitive’ jungle.\(^{24}\)

This thesis also seeks to place European women in Malaya in reference to other parts of the colonial system, making use of accounts and personal histories of women in various colonial communities. The closeness of Sarawak as part of the Malay world, yet also with its British ruling class and its connections with the SS and, later, British Malaya, makes it an obvious point of comparison. However, the most important reference for the British in Malaya was the established colonial presence in India from which they derived many of their attitudes and ideas over housing, servants and social organisation, From India they inherited the colonial ‘bungalow,’ the hill station and the calling card. Although colonial society in India had its particular problems connected with the greater size of the country and a larger European group with a wider internal social representation, a uniform imperial policy meant women experienced the same problems as their contemporaries in Malaya, namely boredom, an unfamiliar, often hostile climate, childbirth and illness without adequate medical facilities or the support of relatives and the same interdependence which this engendered. Life for them, in both countries, was primarily within their own domestic

world, running households, coping with servants, rearing and educating young children, creating an 'English' environment and distancing themselves from an 'alien' culture and local population which heavily outnumbered them. As in India, where the government was also the chief employer, European women in Malaya were preoccupied with elaborate social rituals and their place in hierarchies based on their husbands’ status. However, although a much greater military presence was always maintained in India, European women in Malaya never experienced such atrocities as the Indian Mutiny but post-Mutiny government policy was a determining factor in the way their presence was subsequently officially regarded in Malaya.25

Parallel expectations are also found in early Hong Kong where colonial women “lived a private not a public life,” creating their own “thought world” with “different needs and different values from men” and “their own ways of fulfilling them” depending on mutual support. As in Malaya, the twentieth century saw some changes with a small percentage leading a more public life but most continued in this domestic role.26 Finally, Beverley Gartrell’s discussion of colonial women in post-war Uganda reveals a society with similar attitudes and structures, similarities which, as Margaret Strobel points out, emanated principally from centralised colonial policy at home.27

Australia and New Zealand provide a sharp contrast since women were part of the drive to populate a new settler dominion rather than temporary residents of a colony and protectorate, following their husbands’ careers.28 Official encouragement and subsidised emigration, especially for excess single women (Fig. 1.1) with little prospect of marriage in post-World War1 Britain, contrasts with the strict bureaucratic rules surrounding marriage in colonial Malaya. Many of these women came from less privileged backgrounds than their Malayan contemporaries, emigrating initially as domestic labour and eventually marrying there.29 They occupied a less prestigious position in colonial society, taking their place in the workforce as well as creating a

26 Hoe S. The Private Life of Old Hong Kong Oxford University Press, Hong Kong, 1991. pp. viii-ix
27 Gartrell B. Incorporated Wife 165-83; Strobel M. European Women Introduction
28 Brownfoot J. Incorporated Wife 188
home and raising a family without the benefits of comfortable houses and servants, and sometimes totally isolated from other female support. Another major difference was structural, the colonies of settlement being self-sufficient with a complete age-range. In contrast, Malayan European society, especially in the later years, was unbalanced, comprising mainly adults between the ages of 20 and 50 and children under 7 years, those 7 to 20 being at school in Europe and the over-50s having retired home.\(^\text{30}\)

The uniform middle-class image of British Malaya and its invincible Christian morality also contrasts with Stoler’s representation of the older, apparently less socially and racially discriminatory, Dutch East Indies.\(^\text{31}\) On the Sumatran plantations, from early 20\(^{th}\) century through to the inter-war years, recruitment, according to Szekely and Lulofs, also appears to have been from a wider social range than in Malaya with less rigidly-defined moral standards or concern about their local image.\(^\text{32}\)

The way in which they regarded their respective colonies also appears different, Katharine Sim describing the Dutch as “settlers in the deepest and more permanent sense of the word” to be “compared only with our India, not with little Malaya.”\(^\text{33}\) Another area of contrasting attitudes was the manner in which they addressed the question of Eurasians. The Dutch, like the Portuguese, were less concerned about inter-racial sexual relationships and accepted Eurasians as Europeans.\(^\text{34}\) The British, preoccupied with defining their own identity as the norm against which all others were judged, condemned ‘mixed’ marriages and liaisons with their suggestion of ‘going native’ and ‘engulfment’ and ostracised Eurasians as ‘flawed copies’ of Europeans with no true identity of their own. A crucial part of European women’s role in Malaya was to prevent such disruptions of the accepted social order.\(^\text{35}\)

\(^{29}\) Midgley C. Gender and Imperialism 25-6


\(^{31}\) Stoler A. Race and Education of Desire 46-9, 104-23.


\(^{33}\) Sim K. Malayan Landscape 152-60

\(^{34}\) Midgley C. Gender and Imperialism Introduction

\(^{35}\) McClintock A. Imperial Leather 27, 63; Hall C. White, Male 206-7
Colonial Malaya

The Colonial Malaya to which these women came divided into three parts, the SS, Penang, Singapore and Malacca, colonised between 1786 and 1824 and ruled directly by Britain, the FMS, Selangor, Perak, Pahang and Negri Sembilan ruled indirectly through British Residents and the UMS, Kedah, Kelantan, Trengganu, Perlis and Johore which stayed outside the Federation but accepted British Advisors with less power than the Residents. Each had distinctive historical, geographical and administrative characteristics. British interest resulted from rising nationalism at home with a desire for overseas expansion, the European competition for Asian countries, the need to protect Indian interests and trade with China and, indirectly from activity in Burma. The following survey gives a brief background of colonial Malaya, its formation, economy, population and colonial structure, concentrating on the SS and the FMS where most European women settled.

Early Years and the Straits Settlements

The SS, where most European women lived during the earlier period discussed in this thesis, became British territory under the East India Company (EIC), between 1786 and 1824 following the British Government’s preference at that time for trade with informal control through the agency of complaisant mercantile elites or privileged individuals. Starting as the Incorporated Settlements of Prince of Wales Island (Penang), Singapore and Malacca, administered from Bengal, in 1867, they became the Crown Colony of Straits Settlements, responsible to the Colonial Office in London, administered by a Governor resident in Singapore, who, after the formation of the F.M.S., was also High Commissioner of the Federation.

36 Oxford History of the British Empire Stockwell A.J. Vol.3 pp. 37,375; Louis W.M.R. Vol.4. 1-5; Tarling N. Vol.5 403; Andaya & Andaya History of Malaysia 205
Penang was acquired from the Sultan of Kedah, in 1786, by Francis Light, a 'country-trader' with EIC backing, as a potential safe harbour for refitting naval and trading ships and an alternative to Bombay. As a free-trading port until 1801, it also provided a base to counteract increasing Dutch power, to regain a share in the spice trade and to secure trade both regionally and with China, while the acquisition of mainland Province Wellesley in 1800, gave full control of the strait and made the island independent. Although the harbour proved unsuitable for refitting ships, trade flourished until Penang was overshadowed by Singapore and most European shipping transferred there. 

Singapore, initially a trading post, established by Stamford Raffles in 1819, was ceded to the EIC by the Sultan of Johore in 1824 in return for Raffles' help in a succession dispute. Raffles foresaw its potential as "the most important station in the East," with its objective "not territory but trade" but with the possibility of becoming a "fulcrum" from which to "extend our influence politically" as "circumstances may hereafter require." Its establishment and fast growth resulted from its strategic location on the main sea route from Europe and India to the Far East, access to Siam, Indochina, China, Sumatra and the Malay Peninsula and free-port status which attracted both shipping and investment. Its excellent, easily defended harbour facilitated the supression of piracy and its command of the southern entrance to the Straits of Malacca counteracted Dutch control. 

The cession of Malacca, by Holland to Britain, in the Anglo-Dutch Treaty, 1824, finally removed Dutch competition in the Straits and Malacca lost its significance, its trade in 1824 alone falling by 80%. It became a British military base and missionary centre, its decline earning it the nickname, 'Sleepy Hollow.'

Economic prosperity in the SS derived from its spice plantations and Far East trade, mainly private enterprise and Chinese-dominated. Britain and India provided most of the import-export trade in opium and manufactured goods bound for Singapore or further destinations. In return, came commodities like sugar, sago, rice,

39 Stockwell A.J. Oxford History of the British Empire Vol.3 372, 377; Clodd H.P. Malaya's First 1, 8; Mills L.A. British Malaya 27,29, 37, 39, 194; Georgetown City Council Penang Past and Present
40 Tyres R. Singapore Thenand Now 10, 11; Mills L.A. British Malaya. 59, 193; Turnbull C.M. History of Singapore xii, 6-9, 12, 20,28; Andaya & Andaya History of Malaysia 130-2
42 Stockwell A.J. Oxford History of the British Empire Vol.3. 384; Turnbull C.M. History
spices, coffee, tin, gold, ivory, gambir, gums, dye-stuffs, tobacco and rattan from China and the Straits, mainly bound for Great Britain and India. All Straits Settlements were chosen for their strategic positions but by 1824, Singapore had become an international market-place with free-trade entrepot traffic and by the mid-nineteenth-century, it was the largest and most successful commercial centre in the region and the epitome of Victorian and imperial progress and success. Its rise to global importance owed much to industrialisation and its position as an interchange point between raw materials for Western factories and manufactured Western goods for Eastern colonies, enhanced by the opening of the Suez Canal. A substantial portion of government revenue also came from taxes on opium, arrack and gambling farms. Singapore initially reduced Penang's trade but this had recovered by 1857 as Penang plantations were more successful than those in Singapore, where only pepper and gambier flourished.

In 1879, Isabella Bird saw SS prosperity as “a great triumph for free traders” while “Round the Empire,” published for British schools in 1899, described Singapore as “one of the most important points in the Empire” and “one of the great centres of the world’s commerce,” which could also afford its own defences. By 1903, it was the world’s seventh largest port. Tin and rubber contributed substantially to its prosperity, through production and investment and from 1923 to the late 1930s, its spectacular growth was ensured by world-record prices for tin and rubber, stimulated by the car and canning industries and by palm-oil, which first appeared in 1907.

This, then, summarises the historical and economic background of the SS, to which the early European women in Malaya came, mainly as wives of the small but
important group of merchants whose trading position made them significant in the
development of the settlement. Some would have married men from the Straits Civil
Service, established by the EIC in 1831 as a separate entity from that in India, and
staffed principally by men trained at its college, Haileybury. However, government
had not yet established the grip it was to hold over both public and private lives in the
FMS. Trade brought the prosperity which enabled men to marry, to provide the
necessary amenities and comfortable, even luxurious housing for their wives and to
establish an acceptable social life for them.

The Later Years and the Federated Malay States

During the early period, only a few European women lived outside the SS, in
the Native Malay States. The second period covered by this thesis, the later years, saw
annexation of the FMS and the arrival of European women there, as well as a smaller
number in the UMS. In 1873, an appeal had been made to the British Government to
abandon its hitherto laissez-faire, non-expansionist attitude in the Malay States for a
variety of reasons: the advice of local administrators like Swettenham; disputes
between Chinese tin-industry factions and a Malay-succession dispute in Perak which
endangered trade, affecting the SS; fear of intervention by other European powers
such as France and Germany; Siamese expansionism and French conquests in Indo-
China and British economic interests in Malaya including pressure from SS planters
and merchants wishing to expand their investments in the Malay States and protect
existing interests. At the same time, Britain’s new imperial ideology, in which
women also had a role, now sought to bring “civilization” and “light” to “dark places”
along with “the highest aims of human society,” “peace and commerce,” “justice, law
and order” while “encouraging and making profit.” This mission required the adoption
of British law and government and recognition of the superiority of western culture.
The SS Governor was instructed to act as peacemaker in the Perak succession dispute
and the tin-mine problems and, in 1874, the Treaty of Pangkor was signed, obliging

48 Mills L.A. British Malaya 91-2, 94-5, 97; Turnbull C.M. History of Singapore 84; Andaya & Andaya
History of Malaysia 136, 139, 141-6.
49 Oxford History of the British Empire Stockwell A.J Vol.3. 378; Porter A. Vol.3. 26; Turnbull C.M.
History of Singapore 81-2, 92; Andaya & Andaya History of Malaysia 151-5, 165
50 Swettenham F. British Malaya 174-5; Andaya & Andaya History of Malaysia 156; Midgley C.
the new Sultan to receive a British Resident "whose advice must be asked and acted upon in all questions other than those touching Malay Religion and Custom," including local law. By 1888, Selangor, Negri Sembilan and Pahang had also become British protectorates, forming the single administrative unit of the FMS, formally inaugurated in 1896, with Residents controlling policy and revenue and British District Officers taking over the power of the district chiefs and keeping the government touch with local opinion. Although, unlike the SS, the FMS were technically not British possessions and the Sultans were still nominally heads of state with confirmed sovereignty and an assured, suitable income, British control was effectively established with Residents responsible only to the SS Governor and, through him, to the London Colonial Office. In 1886, the Resident of Selangor moved to Kuala Lumpur (KL) which eventually became the FMS capital, with amenities to match the SS and, consequently, a place fit for European women, compared with the 'frontier' conditions of its earlier years.

In 1909, Siam surrendered its rights in Kedah, Perlis, Kelantan and Trengganu. Their rulers accepted limited British control through British Advisers but did not join the FMS and, in 1914, Johore was forced to accept a General Advisor. Limited decentralization for the FMS was considered and the return of some real power to the States, to encourage ties between the FMS and the UMS, but resistance in Britain and in local European and Chinese business ensured it came to nothing.

The principal aim of the new government was to install a political, administrative and legal framework which would maintain peace and facilitate the export economy and, at the same time, provide a stable and reassuring environment in which Europeans could live. The huge Malay States tin and coal reserves offered potentially rich opportunities for both the British Government and entrepreneurs while cash crops like sugar, coffee, coconuts, spices, dye-stuffs, rubber, tobacco, the

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Gender and Imperialism 1, 59

Andaya & Andaya History of Malaysia 154-5, 157-60, 166-8, 172-4, 182-4; Chai Hon-Chan Development of British Malaya 36 Stockwell A.J. Oxford History of the British Empire Vol. 3. 383

Butcher J.G British in Malaya. 6, 10. O'Hanlon R. Oxford History of the British Empire Vol.4 383-4; Tate D.J.M. Malay World 107

contraversial and contentious tapioca and, later, rice, were “of great importance to English commerce.” However, for the newly-established FMS, tin, rubber and, after 1917, palm oil plus taxes on related commodities like opium and alcohol, were the principal sources of government revenue for its large civil service as well as railways, roads, ports, public buildings and social services which served both public and private sectors.

After the Treaty of Pangkor, British policy encouraged tin-mining with its related activities and, by 1898, the FMS was the world’s largest tin producer. Early European tin-mining was unable to compete with Chinese cheap manual labour and low profit margins which led to large-scale Chinese immigration to work the tin fields. Between 1900 and 1912, Europeans took over more of the industry, benefitting from investment through limited-liability companies, abolition of revenue farms and concessions to the Chinese, introduction of more advanced and more expensive hydraulic equipment which the Chinese could not afford, increased Government control and intervention and the development of the railway system which stimulated both tin and rubber production. The long-term aim was to connect Australia and India and, by 1909, the railway stretched from Wellesley Province to Johore Bahru, providing general transport, encouraging the growth of new ‘British’ towns with, eventually, facilities in line with the established urban areas and improving the living standards of all European women living in them. By 1937, Britain owned 2/3rds of the Malayan tin-mines, under international cartels and controlled nearly all smelting of tin from Malaya, Australia and other Eastern countries.

Rubber was introduced experimentally, replacing KL and Klang coffee plantations after the 1890s Brazilian take-over of the coffee industry. The imposition of an Australian-style, uniform land-tenure system in Malaya and the expanding automobile industry, fuelling the rising demand for rubber, made it extremely...
profitable and, by 1911, it rivalled tin in economic importance and, by the 1920s, was the country’s main export, with Malaya the world’s largest producer.  

In 1905, Singapore merchant houses with close links with London and run by European managers, floated estates as companies, acted as agents for these new companies and controlled estate management, managerial recruitment and supply of materials. This assurance of good management attracted investors and agency houses, like Guthrie, Boustead and Sime Darby opened in KL, followed by large, British banks, like the Chartered Bank of India, Australia and China, the Hongkong and Shanghai Bank and the Mercantile Bank. Government intervention over land availability, uniformity of land law and a Western land-tenure system, stabilisation of currency by linking the SS dollar to sterling, control of the peripatetic Orang Asli tribes, transport and irrigation infrastructure and subsidies for labour recruitment and transport from India enabled Europeans to own 60% of the rubber acreage, mainly on large estates with the greatest profits, although the inter-war period saw fluctuations in rubber and tin prices especially after the 1930s Depression and ensuing slump. By 1937, a woman married to a European planter might, typically, find herself living on a plantation of about two thousand acres, usually government-financed and controlled.

Population

In both the SS and the FMS, European women would have found a large, racially diverse society, especially in Singapore which, by the end of the 19th Century, was the most cosmopolitan city in Asia. In early Penang and Singapore, Indians were employed as domestic servants, Indian convicts were used to construct public buildings and there was a small but important group of Chettiar moneylenders from

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58 C.M. History of Singapore 89, 92, 94; Andaya & Andaya History of Malaysia 181, 209-11.
59 Chai Hon-Chan Development of British Malaya 25-6, 159; Tate D.J.M. Malay World 108; Stockwell A.J. Oxford History of the British Empire Vol.3. 385; Andaya & Andaya History of Malaysia 213-5
60 Turnbull C.M. History of Singapore 89; Andaya & Andaya History of Malaysia 208-9
61 Turnbull C.M. History of Singapore 127; Andaya & Andaya History of Malaysia 208; Butcher J.G. British in Malaya 13-15
60 Turnbull C.M. History of Singapore 94-7
South India. Initially, in the FMS, most clerks were Jaffna (Ceylon) Tamils, Punjabi Sikhs formed the police force and estate workers were South-Indian Tamil indentured labourers. Chinese merchants and traders responded to SS free-trade policy and were instrumental in the expansion of the SS and, later, the FMS. Most Chinese, however, came from Kwangtung and Fukien to work in the tin industry or in related service trades supplying the mining townships. The Hainanese mostly worked for Europeans as domestic servants while, another distinct group, the Straits Chinese, mainly Hokkien from Fujian, became British subjects and often educated in English. Mainly SS-based and most influential there through prosperous trade and investment, many became extremely anglophile, adopting some western habits and sending their children to England for higher education. Apart from the indigenous Malays there were small groups of of immigrant ‘Malaysians’ including Javanese, Sumatrans and the Boyanese who were often employed by Europeans as grooms and chauffeurs. Thus, while British control of government and commerce in the SS and, later, the FMS worked through liaison with the top local men, Malay Rajahs and Sultans, Capitan China and Capitan Kling (Indian), able to represent their respective communities as well as manage relations with European powers, for European women, contact with the local people would mainly be at the domestic level, through employment of them as servants.

Although most of the ‘white’ community was British, it embraced all of pure European extraction, including Australians, New Zealanders, Canadians and Americans. However, the British often did not mix socially with other ‘white’ nationalities, Australians and Americans in particular, who were seen as “too casual” or “egalitarian” as Emily Innes observed about the upbringing of the Douglas children. Eurasian numbers were obscured by Dutch and Portuguese less-discriminatory policy, principally in pre-1824 Malacca. Many Dutch and Portugese Eurasians regarded themselves as European, a view not accepted by the British who

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62 Ibid. 46, 55; Tyers R. Singapore Then and Now 162
64 Census Tables: 1901 FMS: Perak, Selangor, Negri Sembilan, Pahang; British Malaya Census 1921, 1931
65 Butcher J.G. British in Malaya 6; Bayly S. Oxford History of the British Empire Vol.3. 459;
Turnbull C.M. History of Singapore 54 ; Andaya & Andaya History of Malaysia 142,174, 178-81
blamed this attitude as contributory to what they perceived as the failure of those two colonial societies.\textsuperscript{67}

The entire ‘pure’ European population, of which the women formed a tiny fraction, was always comparatively small, 92 in the 1829 Singapore census against a total population of 16634, rising by 1841 to 200 against 30,000. In 1835, Penang recorded 40,207 inhabitants with only 790 Europeans.\textsuperscript{68} In 1881, there were about a hundred in the FMS rising to 719 in 1891, mainly government officials. By 1901, there were about 1438 due to bureaucratic expansion and between 1901 and 1911 the European population more than doubled, reaching nearly half that of the SS. The percentage of European women was also increasing due to government policy of now encouraging more settled European communities in the colonies. Europeans were concentrated mainly along the west coast, in the SS, and the chief FMS centres, with 39\% living in rural areas. The four FMS towns, KL, Ipoh, Taiping and Seremban, housed 38\% of its European population.\textsuperscript{69} This continued to rise until 1914 when 700 men left to enlist, taking their families with them.

Surrounded by such a large local population and, compared with India, with such a small military presence, British control in Malaya depended heavily on prestige and local acceptance.\textsuperscript{70} Potential embarrassments, like the unemployed or debtors, were simply removed\textsuperscript{71} while social misfits, like engine-drivers, were replaced, in the 1920s by specially-trained locals or, as in the case of governesses, alternative solutions were found.

\textsuperscript{66} Brownfoot J. \textit{Incorporated Wife} 203
\textsuperscript{67} Shennan M. \textit{Midday Sun} 69-70
\textsuperscript{69} British Malaya Census 1921
\textsuperscript{70} Aiken S.R. \textit{Imperial Belvederes, The Hill Stations of Malaya}, Oxford University Press,1994. 31
\textsuperscript{71} Stockwell A.J. \textit{Oxford History of the British Empire} Vol.4 371
\textsuperscript{67} Mills L.A. \textit{British Malaya} 67
Colonial Settlement

Within the FMS European hierarchy to which wives were expected to conform and which defined their status according to their husbands’ rank, the basic occupational division was between the Officials or Government service and the Unofficials. The Government Service was further divided between the cadets, the administrators of the Malayan Civil Service (MCS), from Assistant District Officer to Resident, and the non-cadets who staffed Education at an administrative level, Police and Technical Services, each department having its own internal hierarchy. The Government sector maintained a superior distance from the Unofficial sector which included mining, planting, commerce and education at the teaching level and was also hierarchically ranked. All mixed professionally and socially within their own group and at their own level but all were socially distanced from the locals, the British, unlike the French, Dutch and Portuguese, discouraging the mixing of races. Moreover, the Government, followed by all sections of the business community, set rules over behaviour in general and marriage in particular, which exerted control over the private as well as public lives of its employees. This system was also implemented within the SS for those in the government service or company employment.

The cadets were mainly middle class, public-school educated, conformist. After 1882, recruitment was through open competitive Colonial-Office examinations modelled on those of the Indian Civil Service, to select for the Eastern Cadetship, the joint service of the SS, Ceylon and Hong Kong. Initially, stamina and sociability had been seen as key qualities, preferable to academic ability, but open competition favoured middle-class, public-school men with university degrees. At first, Malaya’s unglamorous image, understaffing and low salaries made it the least popular Eastern Cadetship, until political upheaval in India during the inter-war years made the Indian Civil Service less attractive.

72 Brownfoot J. Incorporated Wife 201; Hyam R. Oxford History of the British Empire Vol.4. 60; Andaya & Andaya History of Malaysia 201
73 Butcher J.G. British in Malaya 23-4, 34-9
74 Annual salary for a 1898 junior cadet was £200 (Chai Hon-Chan Development of British Malaya 58)
Planters were also predominantly middle-class but not always university-trained and, unlike the predominantly English civil servants, about one third were Scottish. This resulted from the more socially-wider-based, Scottish secondary education which tended to obscure class divisions more clearly defined in the English system.\(^5\) Although the rubber boom, at its height, attracted some men from a wider social range, overall, the planting community appears to have remained middle-class, again preferring “public school education” and “good sportsmen.”\(^6\)

Professional and technical appointments were made by Crown Agents in London. Candidates, apart from some subordinate local appointments and socially-inferior ‘unofficials,’ assistants in engineering, mining and rubber companies, were also from the middle-class but like planters, were more likely to be Scots and less likely to be university educated.\(^7\) For all, however, confidence, skill in interviews, examinations and personal contact were essential and this recruitment system gave the European community an homogeneous, one-class appearance, with the uniform outlook and education essential to a minority ruling class. These were the men who brought wives to Malaya, mainly from the same middle-class background as themselves, although Janet Brownfoot suggests that the class spectrum for the women may not have been so completely uniform as for men. Some exceptions are not surprising as women entered the system through marriage and not recruitment from an established source. Whatever their origin, they appear to have been absorbed into the uniformity of the middle-class majority.\(^8\)

One difference between colonials in the early SS and in the FMS was their attitude towards residence. The early colonials underwent a dangerous, six-month journey, albeit substantially improved by the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869, and many invested their own money in plantations and commercial ventures. Many, therefore, like the Brown and Scott families in Penang, saw the SS as a long-term residence whereas,\(^9\) in the FMS, men saw work as a career terminating in retirement

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\(^5\) Selangor Journal 24\textsuperscript{th} February, 1893. 179 \quad Butcher J.G. British in Malaya 46

\(^6\) Planter 37 1961. 341

\(^7\) Butcher J.G. British in Malaya 46-8, 93-6; note 64.

\(^8\) Brownfoot J. Incorporated Wife 203

\(^9\) Georgetown City Council Penang Past and Present
home. Prestige, perceived as essential to the maintenance of power, continued to be expressed through housing and servants but, as their numbers increased and communications improved, Europeans, especially the British, sought a home-style social life with clubs exclusive to Europeans, European-style amenities to make life more comfortable and hill-stations with a climate reminiscent of home.

Education and Health

Health and the education of her children would have been subjects important to any European woman in Malaya. In the early days of the SS, both were areas for concern with insufficient medical knowledge or facilities and education dependent on fluctuating and variable missionary enterprises, often supported by European women but controlled by men, or private provision for European children, usually within the home by parents, tutors or governesses. Improvements came after the Government assumed responsibility for education and health in Britain and the empire, as part of the new imperial ideology. Of the three categories of schools, Malay vernacular schools, English-medium Government schools and Christian Mission Schools, introduced into Malaya ostensibly to educate local children, only the two latter affected the education of European children. Most Malay vernacular schools appear to have been designed to keep their pupils as the manual labour force, amenable to authority, apart from the Malay Residential School, in English Public School style, established in 1905 at Kuala Kangsar, for the sons of Malay aristocracy.

The fee-paying Government schools, mainly in the larger towns and with predominantly Chinese and Indian students, implemented an English system and syllabus which could also accommodate those English children transferring home to public schools at the age of 13, although most left at age 6 or 7. The better schools hired expensive European teachers, reflected in higher fees. The two largest

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80 Turnbull C.M. History of Singapore 115-7
81 Resident General’s Report 1899; Turnbull C.M. History of Singapore 141-2; Andaya & Andaya History of Malaysia 227-31
82 Andaya & Andaya History of Malaysia 229; Bayly S.Oxford History of the British Empire Vol.3. 469
Catholic missions, the La Salle Brothers and the Sisters of the Holy Infant Jesus, founded schools initially in Singapore and Penang and education was extended to girls in both Convent and Mission schools by the mid-nineteenth century. Anglican and Methodist mission schools had a chequered career until the late-nineteenth century when they were brought under Government supervision. By 1919, they were integrated into the system, catering for European children and those of a local English-speaking urban elite and with teaching standards generally acknowledged to be high.

Contrasting with the inadequate medical knowledge, facilities and treatment of the earlier years, European women of the later period benefitted indirectly from a government impetus whereby eradication of disease was perceived as a colonial triumph as well as a means of reducing the cost of Empire through the improved health of its work-force. Measures were taken to improve hygiene, new hospitals were built, an FMS- Government Health Department was instituted in 1911 and the newly-founded Institute of Medical Research in KL and the London School of Tropical Medicine helped to train doctors for the Tropics. Moreover, malaria was understood by the end of the nineteenth century, and this breakthrough first successfully applied in Malaya by medical officer Michael Watson. European belief that the tropical climate was detrimental to physical and mental health, especially to women and children, and that infrequent home-leave was insufficient to maintain health, led to the establishment of hill resorts like Maxwell Hill and Bukit Kutu in Selangor, Fraser’s Hill near KL and the larger-scale Cameron Highlands. This last development was strongly supported by planters’ families contemplating retiring there rather than Britain and thus making Malaya their permanent home.

Conclusion

The SS and FMS were where most European women lived. Early residents saw the SS as a long-term proposition while, in the later FMS, European attitudes

84 Andaya & Andaya History of Malaysia 226-278; Oxford History of the British Empire Louis W.M.R. Vol.4. 18; Etherington Vol.5 305
85 Wylie D. Oxford History of the British Empire Vol.5 277-80
86 Georgetown City Council Penang Past and Present; Turnbull C.M. History of Singapore 110, 113, 128-9.
were more ambivalent, mainly due to the developments of the intervening period. Improved communications ensured women closer contact with Europe, they educated their children and retired there and, between leave-periods, hill-stations were an alternative ‘home.’ Their clubs created a British social life and they kept in touch with home events through British newspapers. Prestige required them to enjoy a higher living-standard than in Britain and held positions of greater authority than their contemporaries at home but against this must be measured the adverse effects of an ‘alien’ climate, constraints on their lives by social rules, the prospective separation from either husband or children and constant awareness of their vulnerability in relation to the much larger local population.

While they maintained cordial relations with Asians, they kept separate without questioning their belief in their own superiority. Their attitude towards the different sectors of that local population, manifested in their stereotyping, varied and, likewise, their impact on them. All local races were treated differently. In spite of superficial official encouragement towards the Malays, British policy of no direct intervention and vernacular education, meant most of them were not educated or encouraged to participate in the new Malaya or to compete with the Chinese. Western ‘progress’ undermined their traditional crafts and lifestyles while the new policies and facilities mainly benefitted Europeans and Chinese but without allowing the Chinese any equality with the Europeans. British policy created a society of separate communities with no unifying Malayan identity, tenuously held together by a British external force which treated each nationality, and even sectors within that nationality, differently and distanced itself socially from all of them. It was a policy of ethnic divisions which contrasted sharply with the effect of colonial rule in the Dutch East Indies where all local races were treated identically, enabling them, eventually, to establish an ‘Indonesian’ identity. Although these were official policies determined by a male government, they were part of an imperial ideology to which many,

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88 Andaya & Andaya History of Malaysia 175-6
89 Stockwell A.J. Oxford History of the British Empire Vol.3. 386; Turnbull C.M. History of Singapore 98; Andaya & Andaya History of Malaysia 174-5, 218
90 Bayly C. Imperial Meridian 31; Andaya & Andaya History of Malaysia 153-4
91 Chai Hon-Chan Development of British Malaya 99-101, 240-287; Oxford History of the British Empire Bayly S. Vol.3 454; Stockwell A.J. Vol.4. 469; Bayly C. Imperial Meridian 14; Andaya &
although not all, European women appear to have subscribed. Perhaps they perceived this divisive treatment as reducing the feared threat of hostility and potential danger from a united local population which could have swamped them. Even so, allowing for some activity by the Malayan Communist Party and the Pan Islamic movement, the inter-war period in Malaya was relatively stable, leaving colonial government to function as a peacetime administration, concentrating on trade and production. The British in Malaya presented an image complacently out of touch with the world outside them, staid and stuck in routine. Combined with their inadequate military forces and poor information, this made them an easy target for the Japanese in 1941.92

Andaya History of Malaysia 175-6, 178-81, 200-3, 219, 223; Midgley C. Gender and Imperialism 51
92. Oxford History of the British Empire Bayly S. Vol.3 449; Stockwell A.J. Vol.4. 466, 469, 475-6; Turnbull C.M. History of Singapore 154
Fig. 1.1 Advertisements for emigration to Australia
Chapter 2
The Early Years. 1780 - 1880

Introduction

The study of European women in Malaya in this period concentrates on the SS predating annexation of the FMS and Singapore and Penang in particular. Reference is made to Malacca, but, after 1824, it became principally a military and missionary outpost and, therefore, presents a less representative picture of colonial life. Evidence suggests the SS European women were mainly the wives and other female relatives of traders, plantation owners, government officials, military and missionaries. Apart from the nuns, few made the journey alone but they all needed endurance and stamina to face the hazardous, uncomfortable, six-month sea-journey and the problems of a ‘pioneer’ society, disease, an alien climate, lawlessness and the difficulties facing a minority group only tenuously connected with home. The purpose for most was to help their husbands establish an ordered and prosperous society in which European — and especially British — values dominated and to make a home in difficult circumstances. These included well-established figures like Sophia Raffles, those less important but individually named and many who remain anonymous, referred to simply as “ladies of the Settlement.”

This chapter defines this minority group both as a percentage of the European population and, wherever possible, as individuals. It puts them in their context, examining the conditions in which they lived, beginning with their journey to the SS and their first impressions of their new homes. Local and architectural histories, town records, journals and newspapers have been useful sources of material for assessing their lifestyle through housing, servants, amenities, social life and contact with Europe, while the gravestones in Penang Colonial Cemetery and obituaries are poignant witnesses to limited medical facilities, hitherto-unencountered diseases and the effects of an ‘alien’ climate. Travellers’ records, personal accounts and letters of this period, although limited in availability where specifically by or about women, provide some insight into the attitudes and expectations with which they approached
their new life and how they conformed to their role both in colonial society and in the wider local scene.

Arrival and First Impressions

The first ordeal was the journey there. Before the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869, this took six months or longer, depending on weather conditions, making early-nineteenth-century Penang residents “six to nine months out of touch with their homelands.” The journey, besides long, must often have been extremely uncomfortable and inconvenient. Sophia Raffles’ voyage, in 1817-1818, began with sea-sickness. Later, Raffles recorded that “her appetite has return’d” and even “ship fare” had “its delicacies,” so she could begin to “think a ship a very beautiful thing” but not, it seems, to the extent of joining in the Christmas-day dancing. Moreover, the 647-ton sailing ship, was delayed by the weather causing Sophia’s first child to be born on board just south of the Cape of Good Hope. The first Mission of the Order of the Holy Infant Jesus, to Singapore in 1851, four Sisters under Mother St. Paulin, was nearly shipwrecked in the English Channel. They also encountered rough seas off the Cape of Good Hope, making all five Sisters ill for a month. Mother St. Paulin never recovered, dying almost within sight of Singapore. The journey had a profound effect on at least one of the remaining Sisters who decided to leave the Order on arrival at Singapore, whether or not one believes the story that she eloped with the ship’s Captain. Death on board was probably not uncommon and a tombstone in Penang’s colonial cemetery records that Elizabeth McMillan “Died at sea on the 7th of March 1850 off the north end of the island of Sumatra (Fig. 2.17). The vessel arrived eight days afterwards at Prince of Wales Island [Penang] and here her remains were interred.” Perhaps more poignant is the memorial to Mary Alexandrina “The infant and only child of Richard Saunders & Charlotte his wife who died on board the Dido off Penang July 16th 1843 aged 10 months & 22 days,” erected by the bereaved mother (Fig. 2.17).

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2 Bastin J, Sophia Raffles, Adventurous Women, 10-11
4 Gravestones, Georgetown Colonial Cemetary, Penang
The second Mission of the Order of the Holy Infant Jesus, Mother St. Mathilde, Sister St. Appollinaire, Sister St. Damien and Irish Sister St. Gregory Connolly, sailed from Southampton in 1852, following the customary route to Penang. After Gibraltar, weather and sailing conditions improved and the Sisters passed the time studying English, learning about Malaya, getting to know each other and praying. The journey between Alexandria and Cairo was by small, crowded boat down the Nile, followed after two hours rest, by caravan to Suez, where they embarked on the Indostan, arriving in Penang on October 28th, 1852. It was a journey which required courage and resolution from women who, hitherto, were unlikely to have encountered such privations.

The opening of the Suez Canal, with train between Alexandria and Suez, made the passage between Europe and the Indian Ocean shorter and cheaper and the number of European women travelling to South-East Asia increased, although most only went as far as the SS or Batavia. However, apart from distance, many of the other problems remained. Margaret, wife of Rajah Charles Brooke (Fig. A5.2), remembered her first journey to Kuching in 1870, with the cockroaches “jumping on to my face, arms and hands, as I lay in my bunk,” and the “hateful experience” of the “tiny prick of their spiky, spindly legs.” Harriette McDougall was similarly plagued by a swarm of these “disgusting creatures” on her journey to recuperate at Penang Hill, when they appeared “several times before daylight” and would “bite all round the nails of your fingers and toes” unless appropriate safeguards were taken. Margaret also found the ship’s rats “disconcertingly friendly” as they “glided up and down” the floor of her cabin, sometimes “scratching” at her pillow, which “did not add to my comfort.” For her, the journey was “one long nightmare of discomfort [and] monotony,” being “sea-sick almost the whole way from Marseilles to Singapore”, and “much too ill to take any interest” in anything en route. This included the evening concerts in which passengers participated and all bearing “a striking similarity to each other.” Unsurprisingly, she arrived in “a distempered state of mind” hating “the heat” and “damp clammy” feeling and thinking that she would

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5 Kong, Low, Yip. Convent Chronicles: Turnbull C.M. History of Singapore 64
6 The nuns were recruited from French aristocratic families.
8 Brooke M. My Life in Sarawak 3; McDougall H. Sketches 69
“never find happiness in such countries.” These feelings must have been common to many European women as they disembarked for the first time (Fig. 2.1).

To sickness, were added the dangers of fire and piracy. Sophia Raffles’ journey to England on the *Fame* was disrupted by the ship’s destruction by fire fifty miles off-shore in which Sophia lost all her personal possessions. Eventually, she returned in the *Mariner*, experiencing fierce gales at the Cape of Good Hope where she had to be boarded up and roped to her couch to prevent her knocking from side to side. The defeat of the second hazard, piracy, helped to establish British control of the Malacca Straits. One incident recounted by Thomson and involving English women, concerned the English ship, *E. Walker*, carrying Chinese convicts. These escaped and took over the ship, murdering the captain and officers while the passengers, including one “distracted lady,” spent several days, “trembling” with fear, waiting to be rescued. Mrs. Northwood, wife of the *Lizzie Webber*’s captain, showed more fibre when pirates attacked her husband’s ship. Ignoring instructions to remain in her cabin and shoot herself and her son if circumstances made it necessary, she tended the wounded, oversaw the removal of the gunpowder from the magazine and supervised her four-year-old son who wanted to see what “Papa was doing.”

There were casualties of such attacks. In his second account, Thomson wished to depict an incident of barbaric ‘native’ treachery, and the language he used was correspondingly prejudiced. Thus, the “hellish fiends” of the “morose copper-coloured” Malay crew are contrasted with the “young delicate ladies, the daughters of a happy, innocent and secure English home,” victims of brutal and sadistic murder.

A less emotive account of the same incident was given in the *Illustrated London News*, December 1851, describing the mutiny on the *Fawn*, following the captain’s punishment of the Malay mate for smoking down the forehatch. This account claimed the crew had no intention of killing Mrs. Rogers, the captain’s wife or her widowed sister, Mrs. Bechem, and her child. They had lowered them to the sea in a boat which

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9 Dewindt M. *Good Morning* 35-6
10 Brooke M. *My Life in Sarawak* 2
11 Bastin J. *Sophia Raffles*
12 Tarling W. *Oxford History of the British Empire* Vol. 5 410
was swamped and the three accidentally drowned when the *Fawn* was scuttled.\(^{16}\) Whatever the truth of this incident, articles about piracy were often printed in Penang and Singapore newspapers and women-passengers must have risked danger from this hazard.\(^{17}\)

Bounded by the sea on one side and the jungle on the other, Penang and Singapore presented a restricted area in which to build what Europeans might define as a ‘civilised’ society. New experiences began at the wharf, “a beehive, crowded with Chinese coolies and Tamils with their bullock carts” and were perhaps tinged with panic over the ‘alien’ smell, colour and noise. Probably they would be overwhelmed by their first journey through the town, like Rosamund Lawrence, descended from generations of British in India, who never forgot her first drive through Bombay.\(^{18}\) In Penang, the “sweet nutty smell of drying coconut,” the “stink of the monsoon drains” and “scent of cloves and pepper,” all the “spicy odours of the Far East” assailed their noses, while streets “echoed with the clip clog of wooden clogs” of “Chinese women and hawkers selling local delicacies.”\(^{19}\) The heat and humidity would immediately strike the new arrival, Penang temperatures ranging between 26 C and 32 C. First visual impressions of 1811 Penang were of pepper, coconut and sugar cane plantations surrounding Georgetown’s elegant garden-houses and bungalows and, in the background, the mountain, “clothed” with thick and “almost impenetrable” forest of “gigantic” trees, its valley “thickly studded” with “handsome” villas and “picturesque” bungalows.\(^{20}\)

By 1824, new-arrivals could admire Penang’s European sector with its public buildings and well-maintained roads whose “variety” and number exceeded “all expectations” of at least one visitor and, in his opinion, all “English possessions in India.”\(^{21}\) However, like Singapore with its constant threat of rampaging tigers, there are reminders of Penang’s untamed side, such as the 14-foot, 856 pound alligator reported captured not far from Georgetown on Christmas Day.\(^{22}\) In 1829, Augusta

\(^{16}\) *Illustrated London News* 20th, December, 1851
\(^{17}\) Turnbull C.M. *History of Singapore*  41-2; Andaya & Andaya *History of Malaysia*  130-2
\(^{18}\) MacMillan M. *Women of Raj*  33-4
\(^{19}\) Hoyt S.H. *Old Penang*  4.
\(^{21}\) Nabuijs Col. *Letters to the Lt. Gov. of the Netherlands, Indies*  1824 JMBRAS,19(2)1941.119-209.
\(^{22}\) *Penang Gazette* 25th December, 1824; Turnbull C.M. *History of Singapore*  44-5
Princep, arriving from Calcutta, considered Penang “one of the prettiest places” where the red roofs of its houses “glittered in the sun” through the surrounding foliage.” She also observed the contrast, as in India, between the “large houses and gardens” of the Europeans and the “warehouses, shops and huts,” all “thickly crowded together,” inhabited by the “swarming” local population. As in India, new-arrivals were probably both appalled and fascinated by the ‘native’ quarter, astonished by the diversity of people there and frightened by the “overwhelming crowds” against which they quickly recognised their own vulnerability. Like Thomson, in 1838, their spirits may have been raised at the sight of the “pillared jetty and a fort shaded by umbrageous trees,” the “white glittering houses of the town” and the clean, regular plantations.

Later, in 1879, Isabella Bird was impressed by the “great many ships and junks at anchor” in the harbour, the huge P&O steamer, Peiking and then, the “blaze of colour” of the multi-racial crowds thronging the jetty. She also praised the “excellent” roads and the “fine” European plantations with their “large massive bungalows, under the shade of great bread-fruit and tamarind-trees,” exuding wealth and solidity.” At the same time, she was conscious of Chinese predominance, “forty-five thousand souls,” substantially outnumbering the “six hundred and twelve” Europeans and perhaps evoking fears, basically unsubstantiated, of repetitions of the 1857 Indian Mutiny or the violence towards Europeans in 1843 Hongkong perpetrated by the influx of mainland Chinese during the Opium Wars.

One new arrival to 1829 Singapore found its “cheerful row of detached houses along the beach,” each with a “neat little enclosure” and the small hills “topped with bungalows” initially “pleased me even more than Penang” but, on closer inspection, decided that its “insignificant extent” made it feel like “a prison.” By 1838, its meteoric rise in prosperity was immediately obvious in the harbour full of local vessels and “numbers of English merchantmen,” the “warehouses and mansions of the

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25 Bird I Golden Chersonese 251, 254-8; Hoe S. Private Life 46-56; Turnbull C.M. History of Singapore 69-70
26 Prinsep T. The Journal of a Voyage from Calcutta to Van Diemen's Land: Comprising a Description of that Colony during a Six Months' Residence from Original Letters of Thomas
merchant princes,” the “conglomeration of all eastern and western nations” and the “bustling scenes on the Boat Quay and Circular Road.” Other new sights to attract attention might be “the little Malay boys” playing in the “cree,” the “mighty forest trees” or “picturesque” local costume. A recurrent theme again was the striking contrast between the European sector, “studded with handsome mansions and villas of the merchants and officials” or Government Hill, “with its verdant lawns and snug bungalow;” and the “compactly built” multi-racial, local quarter which “resounded with busy traffic.” By the 1860s, Singapore was beginning to look “impressive” and in 1864, could be described as “rivalling Bombay” in public buildings, its equal in the “commodiousness of its merchants’ offices” and its superior in the “palatial style of its hotels” and “extent of roads.”

Marianne North, visiting in 1876, was exuberant about Singapore’s “still warm air” and “exquisite blue sky.” She described the locals as having “a grace about them” which she had “never seen before,” their “rich dark complexions” were “the real thing” and their “turbans, sashes, and draperies of pure colour” were “in such perfect harmony with their skins.” Like many new-comers, she was excited by fresh botanical encounters like the “great bread-fruit” tree with “fruit as big as melons” and “leaves two feet in length.” Annie, Lady Brassey experienced more mixed feelings on her arrival in 1877. Her drive from the wharf was “full of beauty, novelty, and interest” with “tropical plants, trees, flowers, and ferns” growing “on every bank and dust-heap” but she found the town itself “not imposing” and the streets “terribly hot” despite the “fresh and strong” north-east monsoon. She appreciated the contrasting “cool, shady rooms” at Government House and the “delights of the punkah.” Oriental food and fruits produced equally mixed reactions. Marianne North was enthusiastic about the “lovely Mangosteen” and “soon learnt to like” the “great Durian.” Annie Brassey also enjoyed the “delicious mangosteens, lacas, and other fruits whose names” she “could not ascertain” and, after the “first horror of the onion-
like odour” of the durian, pronounced it “by no means bad.” Margaret Brooke was even less enthusiastic over her first encounters with tropical fruit. She found them all, especially the sour-sop, “tasting like cotton wool dipped in vinegar and sugar,” “positively repulsive.”

Enthusiasm for the exotic tropical flora and fauna was also expressed by Isabella Bird, impressed with the “rich, profuse, endless, rapid, smothering” vegetation “in all shades of vivid green,” the “monkeys of various kinds” and “bright-winged birds,” the “dim, green twilight” beneath the enormous forest trees and the “heavy fragrance” of “innumerable night-blossoming flowers.” On the two mile journey to the city, she observed “perpetual battle” between “man and the jungle,” the latter curbed only within a short distance of the city. It was a reminder that Singapore was still basically a frontier town, recording three hundred deaths annually from tigers alone. She too found the city “ablaze” with the glitter of “barbaric gold” and colourful “silk, satin, brocade, and white muslin” of “every Oriental costume from the Levant to China,” contrasting with the “pale-skinned” Europeans in their “ugly, graceless clothes.”

**Defining the Group.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>European females</th>
<th>European males</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
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<td>18</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>13,726</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>33</td>
<td>85</td>
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<td>1828</td>
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<td>97</td>
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<td>19</td>
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<tr>
<td>1837</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>30,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above census figures, 1826-1829, published by the *Singapore Chronicle* and *Commercial Register*, excluded the military, estimated in 1828 at 602, including wives and dependants. The numbers may not be completely accurate but they do indicate how small the early European female population was, although, after the

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32 Brasseys, Voyage 116  
33 Brooke M. *My Life in Sarawak* 2  
34 Bird I. *Golden Chersonese* 107-9, 113-4, 119
1829 census, the editor noted that “there has been a considerable addition to our European population, with the expectation of a further increase.” However, the records of Howard Malcolm, visiting the South-East Asia Baptist missions in 1837, indicate that increase was comparatively small.

It was a mobile society, where women might arrive for a lengthy stay or simply pause en route to other destinations. Between January 1827 and September 1830, the Singapore Chronicle records the arrival of 112 named European women, either on their own or with their families and the departure of 81. In 1840, Royal Naval surgeon, Edward H. Cree, recorded that “a band played every evening and “all the beauty” and “fashion” of Singapore assembled every evening on the parade to listen to the band but that this included “very few English ladies.” By 1841, there were 200 Europeans out of a total 30,000 although the occasional presence of one of Her Majesty’s frigates might double that number. In 1860, there were 500 Europeans, 271 being recorded as adult males and the rest, presumably women and children. Cameron commented that the 1865 community was “a very small one” with no more than forty families “who can aim to form a part of society,” or, more explicitly, were European. Isabella Bird, in 1879, noted that the SS Government officials were “numerous enough to form a large society of their own” while the merchant class was divided mainly between the English, Germans, French and Americans. The English, although “powerful as the ruling race,” were numerically “nowhere,” making virtually “no impression on the eye” while the Chinese dominated the scene, giving Singapore the “air of a Chinese town with a foreign settlement.”

In Penang, the 1835 census recorded the European population as 790 against a total of 40207 inhabitants and by 1879, Isabella Bird indicates the number had fallen to

33 Singapore Chronicle & Commercial Register March 1st, 1827; January 3rd, 1828; February 12th, 1829; January 1st, 1830.
35 Singapore Chronicle January 1827 – September 1830
37 Thomson J.T. Some Glimpses 202
38 Turnbull C.M. History of Singapore 38
39 Cameron J. Our Tropical Possessions 286
40 Bird I. Golden Chersonese 110, 115
41 Hoyt S.H. Old Penang.
By 1881 the entire SS European population was estimated at only 3,483, including transient sectors like the military.

Few of this small group of European women have been accorded individual recognition, apart from wives of officials with some social position. Many of these, like Sophia Raffles (Fig.2.2), came from professional, military or ecclesiastical families. Sophia’s father, a Writer in the Bombay EIC, returned to Britain to serve as a JP in Antrim, Down and Meath, High Sheriff of County Down and, later, Deputy Lieutenant of Essex. His daughter’s status as Raffles’ wife, her ‘Memoir of the Life and Public Services of Sir Thomas Stamford Raffles’ and Raffles’ many references to her in his letters single her out for notice. In 1822 he described her as “a host to me” without whose “love and affection” he would “have been cast away long ago.” In 1876, Lady Jervois, the wife of a later Governor, is recorded as a prominent figure at the investiture of Chinese millionaire, Mr. Whampoa as Companion of the Order of St. Michael and St. George. She, her daughters and other European ladies sat on a raised dais and, afterwards, “approached and shook hands with him.”

Such women were conspicuous for their public lifestyle and the status of their husbands or fathers, their activities being considered newsworthy items. Thus, in April 1829, the Singapore Chronicle recorded the departure of the Resident Councillor and his Lady for Batavia, noting that the object was “the recovery of the health of Mrs. Murchison, which has been, for some time, in a declining state” and offering its hopes for her complete recovery. Women other than Governors’ wives officiated at public events. In 1833, the Balestier Bell was presented to the Settlement by Maria Balestier, wife of Singapore’s first American Consul and daughter of American patriot, Paul Revere while the first steamer built in Singapore, was launched in 1848 by Miss Church, daughter of Thomas Church, Resident Councillor, in the presence of the Naval Commander and leading citizens. Another prominent European woman was Maria Frances Vernon, who arrived in Singapore in 1843 as the

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44 Bird I. Golden Chersonese, 255
45 Marriott H. Population, p. 32.
46 Bastin J. Sophia Raffles.
47 Ibid. 33. Raffles to the Duchess of Somerset, 30th November 1822.
49 Singapore Chronicle April 23rd, 1829.
bride of George Drumgold Coleman, the colony’s first architect. Unable to settle to retirement in England, he had married and returned to Singapore. He was then 46 and his bride 21. In December 1843, a son was born but Coleman died in March 1844 and, shortly afterwards, his widow married a wealthy lawyer, William Napier, the founder of Freemasonry in Singapore and the Singapore Free Press. Their rarity value, clearly made remarriage one option open to European widows in the SS.50 Another was that taken by Anna Leonowens who, after her husband’s death in Penang, moved on to Siam to teach the King’s children. She was probably typical of European women arriving in the SS from India, usually with husbands with military connections and already accustomed to colonial life.

Assisting their husbands in the hotel and boarding-house trade, as in Britain and other colonies, was a respectable and socially acceptable occupation for the rising middle class and one with which women were traditionally associated.51 In 1831, the Hallpikes opened a boarding-house in High Street, run by Mrs. Hallpike, while her husband owned Hallpike’s Boatyard and Blacksmith shop from 1836 until his death in 1848. In 1845, Monsieur and Madame Dutronquoy moved from their establishment in Coleman Street to the London Hotel. When M. Dutronquoy mysteriously disappeared prospecting for gold, his widow and son continued to manage the hotel for several years. Eventually, renamed the Hotel de l’Esperance, it was run by ‘a French lady’. In 1852, Singapore’s only existing boarding-house was kept by a “lady of the name of Roberts, whose husband is secretary to the government.” Her establishment was “spacious and well situated,” “comfortable” and “elegantly furnished.” The proprietors of the Adelphi Hotel, in the 1870s were Mr. and Mrs. Puhlmann, the wife, again, continuing the business after his death. Later, the hotel, renamed the Hotel de la Paix, was managed by Mrs. Kahleke and her husband (Fig.2.6).52 It would seem, therefore, that these women began by assisting their husbands in business and were able to remain after they were widowed, in full control over their deceased husband’s property. Newspapers recorded probate and transfer of property to such women as Mary Anne Flint, widow of Captain William Flint R.N. and sister of Raffles who, in 1829, inherited the house and spice plantation on the slopes of Mount Sophia. Later

50 Tyres R. Singapore Then and Now, 73, 106-8; Turnbull C.M. History of Singapore 46
51 Hall C. White, Male 173; Davidoff & Hall Family Fortunes 172-92
52 Kinloch C.W.Rambles in Java and the Straits in 1852. By a Bengal Civilian. Simpkin, Marshall
that year, Elizabeth Temperton was the “sole Executrix” for the will of “Wm. Temperton, late of Singapore, Shipwright, deceased” and in April 1830, probate was granted to “Anne Presgrave for the estate of Edward Presgrave Esqr. Late Deputy Resident of Singapore.” Although Mrs. Flint, did subsequently sell her property and return to Europe, there is no clear evidence of how many others chose to do so.

The Singapore European merchants lived on Beach Road, the “Mayfair of Singapore,” among them “the D’Almeidas, the Velges, the Georges, Bain, McEwen, Fraser, Purvis, Read, McMicking, Captain Congalton and Captain & Mrs. G. Dare, all well known for their hospitality.” Sometimes, this hospitality appears to have developed into a business enterprise. In 1870, Captain & Mrs. Dare established their “popular” ‘Tiffin rooms’ “within their private residence,” most of these “early fine houses” having billiard-rooms and other facilities annexed to them and, eventually, this became a “kind of hostel.” This may have been the same Captain Dare, ship-chandler of Dare & Co. whose daughter, Amelia, married Thomas Jackson, the financier, founder of Singapore’s Branch of the Hongkong and Shanghai Banking Corporation. There was clearly intermarriage between European families and there are many references to those with the family of Portuguese naval surgeon, Jose d’Almeida, one of Singapore’s foremost merchants. The eldest daughter, Marianne, married Mr. Thomas Owen Crane in 1826 and subsequently produced fourteen children, while three of her sisters, afterwards Mrs. Thomas Dunnman, Mrs. H. W. Wood and Mrs. W. W. Shaw, were “all very well-known and among the most highly respected residents in Singapore.” The d’Almeida residence was the European “rendezvous of all social amusement” in Singapore, renowned for its very large parties. The d’Almeidas’ close friends, the Velges, had one of the largest houses on Beach Road, a venue for “great hospitality,” being “admirably adapted for dances” which were “quite a feature” of Singapore’s social life.

53 Singapore Chronicle January 15th, 1829; October 22nd, 1829; April 22nd, 1830.
54 Tyres R. Singapore Then and Now. 184, 234; Turnbull C.M. History of Singapore 45
55 Turnbull C.M. History of Singapore 47
56 Buckley C.B. Anecdotal History 184-5
A visitor to Penang in 1791 records staying with a Mrs. Gray who appears to have been the only, and possibly the first, European woman living there at the time. While Singapore rapidly developed into a bustling urban centre, Penang became a relative backwater, with emphasis on plantation life and Georgetown as the social and administrative centre. One prominent plantation dynasty was the Browns of Glugor, founded by David Brown (Fig. 2.4), one of the Europeans who survived the losses ensuing from drought, disease and fluctuations in the market. He was the first Penang planter to be successful on a large scale and built Glugor House in 1812. During the time of his son, Forbes Scott Brown's, the family extended their holdings to sugar estates in Province Wellesley and other profitable enterprises. Forbes married Elizabeth Waller, daughter of George Waller, Penang Harbour Master. Members of the Brown family also intermarried with the George Scott family to whom they were related and who owned Ayer Rajah Estate. Thus, inter-marriage consolidated businesses and alliances. Mr. W.E. Phillips, who, due to "governors coming and going", effectively ruled Penang, consolidated his position, in 1817, by lending his home, Suffolk House, to the new Governor and also by marrying his daughter. It was, a double wedding, as, when Phillips married Janet Bannerman, Henry Burney, Military Secretary in Penang, one of the EIC's most talented employees in South-East Asia and brother of authoress Fanny Burney, married another Janet Bannerman, the Governor's niece.

Newspaper reports of births, deaths and marriages provide another identification source of these women, although editors do not claim a complete record. Motherhood was part of a woman's imperial role and many birth announcements simply refer to the mother by her husband's status, like "the Lady of Capt. Gottlieb, Commanding the Ship Arjuna" or "the Lady of John Anderson, Esq. Secretary to Government." These tend to indicate the women's professional or military connections. Some appear more frequently like "On the 21st Oct. (1827)
Mrs. Farquhar, Lady of Andrew Farquhar, Esq. Of a Daughter” and again “On the 21st Ultimo (November 1828), the Lady of Andrew Farquhar Esq., a son.” 62

Death announcements gave more detail of the deceased, like Emily Vandefut, wife of Captain Hodge, Executive Engineer at Penang, who died on Christmas Day 1827, at “the Convalescent Bungalow on the Great Hill, after a long and most painful illness” which she bore with “extraordinary fortitude and resignation.” Her death, “deeply and sincerely regretted by her affectionate Husband and Friends,” they claimed deprived them of “a Lady of uncommon talent and ability” and “professed accomplishments of the highest order.” 63 Others, like the “Lady of John Patullo Esq., of the Civil Service of this Presidency” and “eldest Daughter of Doctor Hare, of the Bengal Establishment” 64 get a briefer mention but, again, suggest their middle-class status. In such a small community, funerals would have been significant occasions and “nearly the whole of the society of Penang” attended that of Harriet Fullerton, the Governor’s wife, when “the remains of this much respected lady” were interred in St. George’s Church, in July 1830. 65

Marriages with military connections appear to be those most frequently reported, perhaps because a greater number of these occurred within the Settlements. Some were between military families like that of “Lieut. S. R. Hicks Adjt. 35th Regt. M. N. I. to Sarah Kennedy only Daughter of Lieut. Colonel Comdt. C. Farran of the Madras Army,” while others involved civilians like “Lieut. R. N. Campbell 4th Regt. M. N. I. Cantonment Adjutant and Commissariat Officer at Singapore to Margaret, only daughter of the Late Thomas Warrand Esquire, of Lentran in InvernessShire.” 66

During this period, as across the rest of the empire, female missionaries came mainly as wives, supporting their husbands and their work by running the household, providing hospitality, attending to the sick and helping to supervise education enterprises. 67 Their presence appears to have also been an effective factor in the

62 Singapore Chronicle October 25th, 1827; December 18th, 1828
63 Penang Register January 2nd, 1828
64 Penang Register June 11th, 1828.
65 Singapore Chronicle July 15th, 1830
66 Singapore Chronicle October 25th, 1827; February 14th, 1828.
67 McClintock A. Imperial Leather 230-1; Midgley C. Gender and Imperialism 52, 57, 68
conversion of the local women and, partly for this reason, it was seen as desirable that missionaries should be married. This attitude surfaces in the literature of the period, notably in St.John Rivers’ reasons for proposing to Jane Eyre. Harriette McDougal, wife of missionary, Frank McDougall, later Bishop of Sarawak (Fig.2.3), recorded that although “several women” in Sarawak “came to the house for instruction” and “seemed to take great interest” in the teaching of missionary, Mr.Chambers, it was “not until Mr.Chambers was married” that any would be baptised.68

In 1839 Singapore, Fitch Taylor found “a number of the American missionaries,” “gentlemen and ladies regularly stationed here.” Among the temporary residents were two brothers attached to the London Missionary Society, “very worthy men, and their wives greatly esteemed,” the ladies having “just enough of the Scotch in their accent to render their conversation of deeper interest to me than it would have been without it.” He describes their houses as being “on a scale of spaciousness and considerable elegance” and “generally surrounded by spacious grounds.”69 Anglican appointees would have been better placed than missionaries and the Rev.Mr.White, Singapore’s English chaplain, father to “the prettiest girl in Singapore,” was, according to Cree, reputed to have “a fortune” in nutmeg plantations and a “commanding” house.70 Harriette McDougall, found that her duties in 1848 Kuching, apart from assisting her husband, included acting as ‘first lady’ for the unmarried Rajah James Brooke, there being few other European women in the settlement. In return, she was allowed access to Brooke’s well-stocked library, of which she made much use, received fresh roses from his garden each day after the loss of her baby and, in 1849, with her husband accompanied Brooke to a Penang Hill bungalow for a period of recuperation.71 Brooke described her as “much loved and respected” and “so amiable and clever” that he would “deplore her loss” and “despair of readily making it good.”72 Although she appears to have had extensive duties, including caring for local orphans, taking responsibility for the school and acting as hostess to incoming

68 McDougal H. Sketches 79; McClintock A. Imperial Leather 222-3, 232; Midgley C. Gender and Imperialism 52
70 Cree E.H. Voyages 129-32
71 McDougall H. Sketches 17, 68-9
72 Saunders G. Harriette McDougall 53-4
missionaries, her standard of living seems to have been comfortable (Fig.2.9), even if Sarawak servants were expensive and therefore fewer than in the SS.

Penang Gravestones commemorate missionary wives, some with tragic stories, like Joanna Ince ‘Wife of the Revd. J. Ince Missionary, who after a short but painful illness entered into the Joy of her Lord. June 1st 1823 Aged 27 Years taking with her to the Grave her Infant Son Whose remains were enclosed in the same Coffin with her own” (Fig.2.17). Judith Bausum appears to have been very active in missionary work, devoting her “distinguished Talents during the last Years of her life to the extension of Christ’s kingdom among the Chinese females in the Straits,” while Elizabeth MacDonald, probably like many others, had already left the Straits before she died and was simply commemorated for the work she had accomplished. The memorial also mentions her three children who died in infancy, presumably during her time there. Although, perhaps more purposefully active than their colonial ‘sisters,’ missionary wives do not appear to have suffered greater physical hardship than other European women in the SS, apart from the religious orders.

In general, few missionaries appear to have shown much interest in early Singapore, except as a stage en route for China and appear to have been more interested in establishing printing presses and printing houses than in education. The first Singapore school, catering for six boys and six girls, was started in 1819 by the London Missionary Society and run by the Rev. Thompson and his wife. By 1829, this extended, to five more schools and, in 1839, a girls’ boarding school but enrolment was always low. In 1847, all London Missionary Society in Singapore were closed down, apart from St. Margaret’s, run by Reverend and Mrs. Dyer, which became Singapore’s oldest surviving girls’ school. This was founded in 1842 by two European women visiting Singapore en route for China, as a home for poor Chinese girls who would otherwise have been sold into slavery. Mrs. Dyer was succeeded, in 1843, by Miss Grant, a representative of the Society for the Promoting of Female Education in the East, formed in England in 1834. By the time Sophia Cooke took charge in 1853, the school had about twenty pupils. Miss Cooke remained as Principal

73 McDougal H. Sketches 118
74 Gravestones, Penang Colonial Cemetery
75 Kong, Low, Yip. Convent Chronicles 3; Turnbull C.M. History of Singapore 60
until her death in 1895 and in 1900, the school came under the control of the Church of England Zenana Missionary Society, adopting its name and with Miss Gage-Brown as its Principal. For many years, this was the only school in Singapore providing elementary English education for Chinese girls and an orphanage. For resident European children, there was the upper school of the Singapore Institution but its primary section for both boys and girls provided only indifferent education. Concern for elementary education led to the foundation of privately-funded institutions, the first European Master of one such institution, in 1834, being Mr. Moor, on a monthly salary of $75. At his death in 1843, a subscription was made for his family, his widow receiving a monthly allowance until her death, in Singapore, in 1884.

Education in Penang was for European children only until 1816, when Reverend R.S. Hutchings, Chaplain of the Presidency, petitioned for a ‘free’ boarding and day school for poor local children, including further provision for a girls’ school. Most teachers would be local but a European woman was needed to take charge. The school finally opened on 1st July 1817, when Mrs. Cox, wife of the boys’ school principal, was called from Madras and appointed on a monthly salary of $50. The school experienced difficulties but eventually reopened in 1828, with “Mrs. Smith, the wife of the Master of the Free School for Boys” as “Mistress of the said School.”

The nuns came in response to a request by the Apostolic Vicar of Malaya. In 1852, the Holy Infant Jesus Sisters’ Mission began in Church Street, Penang, with the school and orphanage run by five French Sisters, all lodged in a communal attap house. Almost immediately they received sixteen orphans, nine boarders and thirty day pupils. They had to learn the local language, adapt to the tropical climate – without discarding their sombre black robes and headdresses – and cope with cockroaches, rats, mosquitoes and malaria. One of the early arrivals in Singapore did fall ill almost immediately with brain fever and remained an invalid until her death a few years later, at the age of 33. However, they were prepared for privation and disproved the local belief that “no European woman could possibly wear the same

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76 Lim J. Sold for Silver London, 1958. 60-1
77 Turnbull C.M. History of Singapore 60-1
78 Buckley C.B. Anecdotal History 128, 133
79 Georgetown City Council, Penang Past and Present 12.
80 Penang Register August 13th, 1828.
heavy clothes and work as intensely and devote as many hours to prayer in such an enervating climate as she could in Europe....unless she wanted to commit suicide.” Money was scarce, so they worked by day and sewed at night to support themselves and their households, while charitable, pastoral and teaching duties were allocated according to ability. In 1859, they acquired the Government House at Light Street.⁸²

Mother St. Mathilde (Fig.2.5), the first Penang Mother Superior, arrived later in 1852, with three more nuns and was asked to establish a foundation and a school for girls, regardless of race or religion. In 1854, Sister St.Damien was appointed the new Penang Superior, Mother St. Mathilde and Sisters St.Appollinaire, St.Gregory and St.Gaeton Gervais, all from France, proceeding to Singapore. They were welcomed with enthusiasm and ceremony but no-one had thought of providing them with food so that “they had to remain fasting the whole day until evening when a parishioner brought them supper.” At their lodgings, “the doors had no hinges, there was rubble and plaster all over the kitchen floor and broken tiles in the bathroom, and the water jar was in no state to serve its purpose.” There were only one bed, two chairs, two mats and two stools to be shared between four women who came from the most aristocratic order in France and until the doors were mended, they had to resort to umbrellas for privacy. Even so, within ten days of arrival, they opened their girls’ school with 14 fee-paying pupils, nine boarders and 16 orphans.⁸³

The Sisters experienced great poverty but the Convent gained a reputation for “charity and graciousness.” Mother St. Mathilde was awarded the following contemporary accolade; “Wretchedness of all kinds found help in her. Everyone who knocked at the door of her heart found access to it: foreigners, travellers, the sick and dying, no matter what their religion was, she welcomed them all. She made herself all things to all men in order to gain them for Jesus Christ. On account of all that the government and the whole city of Singapore held her in high esteem, even veneration. She was the angel of the city.”⁸⁴ She remained in Singapore until 1872, when she transferred to Japan to found convents in Tokyo and Yokohama.

⁸¹ Kong, Low, Yip. Convent Chronicles 32.
⁸² Pulau Pinang Vol.1 No.6. 28
⁸³ Kong, Low, Yip Convent Chronicles 44-6
The nuns' objectives were to provide education for girls, give refuge to orphans, destitute children and prostitutes and spread the Catholic faith. During the first thirty years, the emphasis was on educating good Catholic girls to become good housewives for westernised local men. Sewing, knitting and cookery were important while only simple reading, writing and arithmetic were taught. English was the instruction medium but often the lessons were conducted in a mixture of English and Malay so that the pupils could understand them. Many of the nuns came from France and knew neither language, but these problems eased with the arrival of Irish nuns after the Order transferred to Ireland. In 1880, Mother St. Gaetan brought back 17 young lady teachers from France, most of whom became nuns. Language barriers, ill health, overwork and the tropical climate made staffing a constant problem but, for a long time, the nuns were Singapore's only trained teachers.85

European women of this period formed a tiny percentage of a numerically small but politically powerful group. Apart from the nuns, most appear to have been wives or dependents of men able to offer them a comfortable life-style. Peer-pressure dictated the ability to support a wife in a manner which would not damage European prestige in the eyes of the locals and those not conforming were encouraged to leave. Most appear to have belonged to the middle-class, some with connections to the landed gentry or influential ecclesiastical or established military families. Of those supporting their husbands in business, there is little evidence as to how many maintained those businesses long after they were widowed. Towards the end of the period, there were European women like Emily Innes, wives of Government officials living in rural districts outside the SS, and attempting to maintain standards in less congenial surroundings. That was 'frontier country' compared with the established, urban SS where, generally, the European female population, a respected minority group, appears to have enjoyed a more prestigious life-style than they would at home.

Expectations

Officially, empire was a male preserve with women in private, supporting roles and the expectations of most European women arrived in the SS were mainly

84 Jenkins P. Where There is Darkness Publisher and publishing house unknown. 118-119
85 Kong, Low, Yip Convent Chronicles 44-6; Midgley C. Gender and Imperialism 56
domestic – to create a family life and to support their husbands. As in Britain, their absence from the workplace was an indication of the material success of their husbands or fathers and so their function was familial and domestic, organising the household and the servants, having children and providing a soothing home environment. They could expect long hours of separation from husbands during the day and would be discreet but unseen helpmates when required, prepared to take responsibility should husbands be absent for any length of time. The colonial life these women created, while more leisured, was simply an extension of their upbringing.

Since many appear to have come from the middle class or the lower echelons of the landed gentry, they were likely to have received an education at home, enough to help their husbands or work in some voluntary capacity. Margaret Brooke described her own “limited” education as typical of that “given to girls.” While her brothers went to school, she was taught social skills like music, dancing and riding plus “two or three European languages,” depending on the qualifications of the current governess. She might also read the Bible and current literature. Others, like, Isabella Bird and Emily Innes, were clearly encouraged to be interested in botany and writing skills. Many, like Isabella and Emily, might also have been influenced by the evangelical, missionary and philanthropic sectors of the Anglican or nonconformist churches as well as lectures about the colonies by visiting missionaries on home leave.

Their small number placed them in a position to expect chivalry, respect and care from the European men, as dependants to be “cherished, supported, protected” and, as Thomson puts it, to “receive that ‘expected’ attention” associated with civilised behaviour. They might expect their presence to have a ‘civilising’ effect on a predominantly male European society and to discourage ‘undesirable’ behaviour,

88 Oxford History of the British Empire Hyam Vol.4. 49; Wylie Vol.5. 284-5; Strobel M. European Women 7; Midgley C. Gender and Imperialism 17
87 Hall C. White, Male 43-68; McClintock A. Imperial Leather 36; Davidoff & Hall Family Fortunes 359,392
86 Dewindt M. Good Morning 14, 15
85 McClintock A. Imperial Leather 260
90 Brooke M. My Life in Sarawak 1
90 Hall C. White, Male 32; Thomson J.T. Some Glimpses 35; Davidoff & Hall Family Fortunes 151
like liaisons with local women, perceived as detrimental to European prestige. An absence of European women had led to these liaisons which were usually seen as temporary and supposedly terminated when the man married, financial support for the mistress and children being entirely dependent on the man’s generosity. Both Francis Light and James Scott were ‘married’ to local women but even in such situations where the nonya was asked to “legalize” her “connection with the white man” and simultaneously become “a good Christian,” there does not appear to have been any official ceremony or accompanying legal rights. She basically became a common-law wife but only children of Europeans on both sides were eligible to inherit land within ten miles Georgetown. One solution to such problems, here as in India, was “the more abundant presence of European ladies” with an “an influence for the better” and a move away from concubinage.

No communication was expected between European wives and these local women whose behaviour was seen as “lewd, immoral and wicked” but in such a small community, the European wife must have been aware of their existence and of their children. Anna Maria Davis, visiting Penang in 1791 en route from England to Macau, gives some indication of the European woman’s attitude towards the local ‘wife.’ Since no hotels were available, she and her companion stayed with the resident Englishwoman, their visit traditionally being seen as an occasion for socialising and entertainment. Light, the Governor, participated in the hospitality but this did not make Martinha, his local wife, a suitable hostess for European ladies. Anna described their relationship as Light keeping “a Malay woman” who “has lived with him for 20 years and has several fine children.” She was disappointed that on their first visit to his house they “did not see the lady” as “Mr. Light did not know we wished to see her,” her use of language reducing Martinha to the level of a peep-show. The fact that Martinha was not Malay and possibly had aristocratic Siamese connections would have been totally irrelevant to Anna who clearly saw nothing amiss in her disdainful attitude. Curiosity was satisfied on her second visit when “we went to breakfast at Mr. Light’s family house and saw the lady after breakfast,” as Martinha obviously did not eat with them. Anna’s ensuing description of Martinha

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92 Hall C. White, Male 67
93 Thomson J.T. Some Glimpses 195-7
94 Ibid 200
has a patronising ring, “well-made and has been pretty,” minutiae of her dress and hairstyle, her lack of English and the belief that she “seemed much pleased with us.” Her final remarks leave no doubt about her views, for, although “Mr. Light behaves very well to her and is very fond of his children,” she felt it was “a great pity he did not marry when he was a young man” as “he would have made a good husband.”

Clearly, the union, to her, was not a proper marriage. Even Light, in his will, did not refer to Martinha as his wife but as the woman with whom he had ‘cohabited’ for the previous twenty-two years but this may simply have been to establish her rights as his common-law wife. Anna makes no mention of Mrs. Gray’s social life outside her visit so there is no means of knowing if she socialised with women like Martinha when there were no European visitors or if her company was exclusively the European men. If the latter was the case, then she, as, apparently, the only European woman on Penang, must often have been extremely lonely.

As they were so few in number, the behaviour of European women must have been subject to constant scrutiny. Pressure to maintain prestige, perceived as essential if the Europeans were to continue as undisputed rulers, permitted no scandal or gossip. As her husband’s possession and a symbol of purity, the European wife was required to keep her reputation in tact and present a public image which denied her sexuality and all personal feelings. This did not necessarily prevent liaisons within the European community, providing they were conducted discreetly, but there is little evidence of such relationships between European women and local men. However, the case of Sydney Swettenham suggests such liaisons sometimes existed. Sydney, at 19, married Frank Swettenham on his home leave. Many years her husband’s junior, she was highly strung and married largely to escape an overbearing father but exchanged him for a charismatic but overbearing and insensitive husband. Swettenham, not noted for fidelity, put work before his wife and made no allowance for her immaturity or her inexperience of the East. Her failure to accommodate to her new life and subsequent strain on her marriage resulted in steadily worsening bouts of neurotic behaviour and eventual commitment to an English mental asylum. Before the final collapse of her marriage, Sydney gave birth to a “stillborn and premature” son in

92 Morson I. Connection Phuket 101-5
96 McClintock A. Imperial Leather 286-7, 362; Hal C.l White. Male 61; Brownfoot J. Incorporated Wife 207
May 1895, while she was in England, the event being announced in the Penang Gazette. The Swettenhams were on the point of separation and rumours of Sydney's infidelity with a non-European may have raised the question of the child's paternity which, in turn, led to speculation over its death. It seems that it was not unknown for children of such unions to be killed at birth and recorded as "stillborn," in order to avoid embarrassment. If so, this appears to indicate an established system for covering all traces of liaisons between European women and local men and underlines the lengths to which European society would go to preserve the outward impression of moral invulnerability.

Imperial ideology required the imposing of western standards and English suburban values over polite behaviour, cleanliness, family duty and style of eating, dressing and social life, regardless of climate. Such familiar rituals helped colonials ward off any confusion caused by their new situation outside the rigid middle-class Victorian boundaries they understood. Margaret Brooke was astonished to discover what little interest the Kuching English community took in its surroundings. Seeing themselves as "inordinately superior to those whom they chose to class together as 'blacks,'" they "simply wallowed in reminiscences of England," even cultivating English flowers and fruit in preference to those that grew locally. Uniformity and conformity were essential and any previous concepts of the Romantic East were usually dismissed as misplaced when confronted with the problems of actually living there, except for the privileged few, like Margaret Brooke. The ruling nation had to remain aloof, superior to all others, demanding respect and requiring a rigid maintenance of order, conformity, standards and a fair amount of "puritanical self-righteousness."

Duty towards and superiority over 'childlike' locals needing to be "considerately handled by Europeans," was an unquestioned conviction as was the belief that "permanence of good government" was to be found "in the white man and

97 Barlow H.S. Swettenham, Southdene Sdn. Bhd., Kuala Lumpur, 1995. 185, 400-1; Hall C. White, Male 61; McClintock A. Imperial Leather 286-7, 362
98 McClintock A. Imperial Leather 207-12
99 Dewindt M. Good Morning 52, 80, 101-2, 154
not in the native” and was “his burden.” Sophia Raffles spoke of Raffles’ delight in “possessing the power of diffusing civilization and blessings around him” while Swettenham’s view of Imperial duty was shared by Margaret Brooke who claimed that her husband “had been called to rule” Sarawak and “the gradual acceptance of a good government” by “hitherto uncivilized races” was “largely due to him.” Sarawak was “his” where he was “protector and friend” to his “children,” turning the “most hardened miscreants” into “decent law-abiding men” and keeping his “large and scattered nursery” in “order.” As his wife, she automatically assumed that “his people were my people.” England, to her, was “the greatest country in the world” ruled by the “greatest of all Ladies” and English men and women were “above all others.” Anyone not conforming to these views was made to see “the error of his ways” in extended exile or imprisonment. To Isabella Bird the indigenous Malayan people, like any nation within the Empire, enjoyed “absolute security of life and property” and “even-handed justice” under British rule and the “roll of the British drum” and presence of a “British ironclad” simply represented reassurance and safety. While British supremacy in Malaya depended more heavily on the cooperation of the locals than its thinly-stretched military forces, such sentiments must have fortified many European women during their sojourn in the East. Isabella, like her contemporaries, was proud of belonging a great nation, seeing England as “a name to conjure with,” while other European countries were “almost nowhere,” represented “chiefly by a few second-rate warships or shabby consulates in back streets.”

Such ideas related to national pride, protocol and attitudes towards the local peoples, modelled on British colonisation in India, gave shape to the early development of the SS as these, like India were colonies to be governed but, in the main, not settled. However, closer contact with Britain, greater turnover especially in Singapore, with settlers returning every two or three years on leave and bringing back “new brides fresh from England,” ensured that lifestyle there was more in touch than in self-administered India which had become “increasingly disengaged from

101 Swettenham F. Preface to Brooke M. My Life in Sarawak viii-x, xii; Hall C. White, Male 212-3
102 Turnbull C.M. History of Singapore 18
103 Dewindt M. Good Morning ix, 8, 49, 51, 74, 87, 90, 143
104 Washbrook D.H. Oxford History of the British Empire Vol.5. 604
105 Bird I Golden Chersonese 255-6
However, the European wife and mother, immersed in her own world of domestic affairs, would have considered her concepts of order, privacy and the nuclear family as superior to the more gregarious, extended oriental version and any clash with, or fear of absorption into, the strong local culture would be met with conservatism, conformity and a barrier of distance.

**Housing and Servants**

Central to a colonial woman’s life and her most obvious status-symbol was her home. It was her visible expression of belonging to a class of ‘substance, culture and respectability.’ In the SS, the Europeans adopted the Indian colonial house or ‘bungalow’ with its English overtones. Anna Maria Davis, in 1791, described Francis Light’s official home, a large brick building owned by the EIC, as “the same style as the Madras houses.” Light also possessed another family house “built in the Malay manner on a stage 4 or 5 feet from the ground” and reached by “steps or ladders without on each side,” the interior containing “good rooms with a veranda all round.”

Early-19th century English architectural fashion fused the Indian colonial house with the “grand Regency town residence in the Palladian manner,” the verandas, wide overhangs, and high ceilings suiting it “to tropical conditions.” This style is what the early Penang Europeans adopted for their plantation and town residences, the term ‘bungalow’ only being applied to a hill-dwelling for temporary use.

From contemporary accounts, these early Europeans appear to have lived in style with homes like Suffolk House (Fig. 2.7) epitomizing “all the grace and ‘nabob’ splendour of the Honourable East India Company.” James Wathen, dining there in 1811, described the house as “a very splendid mansion built in a mixed style of English and Indian architecture,” the dinner as “sumptuous and elegant,” the wines “excellent” and the rooms cooled by watered mats and filled with “odoriferous flowers.” Other European guests included Company Surgeon, Dr. Charles

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106 Cannadine D. *Ornamentalism* 58-9, 64-5; Edwards N. *Singapore House* 9-10.
107 Midgley C. *Gender and Imperialism* 48 (Haggis White Women); Gartrell B. *Incorporated Wife* 182.
109 Morson I. *Connection Phuket* 102-4.
110 Edwards N. *Singapore House* 19.
MacKinnon, Collector of Customs and Land Revenue, John Hall, and their wives, the evening ending with the ladies examining portfolios and Mrs. MacKinnon’s drawings of local plants, fruits and flowers. The MacKinnons and the Halls also lived in gracious mansions (Fig.2.10) about three miles from the town centre.\textsuperscript{112} To John Crawfurd, in 1828, Suffolk House was an “English gentleman’s mansion and park” with clove and nutmeg trees “substituted for oaks, elms and ashes” and around “three hundred spotted deer” in the grounds.\textsuperscript{113} Such homes created a sentimentalised but reassuring connection with England and allowed their owners to replicate for themselves the life-style of the English aristocracy.\textsuperscript{114} Glugor House (Fig. 2.8) of the 1830s, the plantation home of the Brown family was another “palatial” mansion with “tall white pillars, spacious flights of steps, broad airy verandahs” the liveried servants “grouped about, clothed in white robes, gold-laced turbans, and bright sashes” and “numerous lamps” casting their light on “the various elegant objects,” essential to the “pompous grandeur” of the “Indian household.” Another house where Thomson was a dinner-guest, although not so imposing, had a “capacious” drawing-room, high whitewashed walls and ceilings, Bengal mats on the floor and the family silver displayed in “full extent and variety.”\textsuperscript{115} New-arrivals without pre-arranged accommodation might find lodgings, possibly with compatriots, and check the newspaper advertisements, where “Elegant and Commodious” houses with spacious verandahs, billiards rooms and, sometimes, “Compounds” “well stocked” with “productive Fruit and Spice Trees,” were on offer to rent or buy.\textsuperscript{116} It thus appears that the European female settler could expect a comfortable, possibly luxurious, standard of living, a pattern repeated in Singapore.

From the beginning, Singapore’s Europeans preferred spacious houses, facing the sea across the Esplanade. From the start, Singapore was a planned town and Colonel Nahuijs, in 1824, mentions “thirty tastefully built” houses “a short distance from one another.”\textsuperscript{117} Another contemporary remarks on the “small number of
Europeans” each “demanding attention,” with “detached” houses “insulated in great space.” Their prominent position, facing the waterfront, was a statement of concentrated British wealth and power. In 1865, Cameron referred to the European residences (Appendix 3), “about two miles” out of town, all “built very similar to one another,” with “lofty” rooms, “white pillars and colonnades” and grounds “most tastefully kept.” As in India and English eighteenth-century country-estates, high walls, large grounds and distance from the road provided security and privacy, communicated social status and set boundaries round the colonial community, distancing and demonstrating ‘difference’ from the indigenous population. Perhaps this seclusion also gave the European woman some respite from her immediate neighbours as well as from the “contamination” of the local ‘alien’ culture.

Internally, the Colemans’ house, could be seen as typical of the early-19th Century European quarter and the grand Anglo-Indian bungalow. Fronted, as in Indian colonial houses by a veranda with columned portico, it was a square, symmetrical building of generous size, surmounted by a hipped, tiled roof and set in a large compound. Kitchen, stables, servants’ quarters were, as in England, at the rear, but, following the pattern of colonial India, separate with the outhouses and linked to the back veranda by a covered walkway. This clearly identified their position at the lower end of the household social system. Arched windows opened onto deep verandas while louvres and Venetian shutters in the windows minimized glare and provided through-ventilation. An entrance-porch led to an inner hall surrounded by office, study, cloakrooms, harness and coachman’s room, wine and store rooms, and service veranda. Twin staircases led from the porch to the first-floor entrance-hall, large lounge and central dining-room, flanked symmetrically by bedrooms and bathrooms with deep verandas, in the manner of Indian colonial houses. Punkahs and rattan blinds provided extra ventilation and shade. The interior reflected late-Georgian and Regency influences, with Greek-mythological sculptures and friezes, Venetian-style glass and ceramics echoing the Grand Tour and the English passion for collecting antiques plus wall-friezes of “Shamrocks, harps and the English rose” to

119 Cameron J. *Our Tropical Possessions*. 51-72
120 Metcalf T.R. *Oxford History of the British Empire* Vol.5 590-1; Davidoff & Hall *Family Fortunes* 361
reflect Coleman’s ancestry. Bathing facilities must have surprised most European women. The only bathroom lighting was that infiltrating through narrow chinks near the ceiling. A large, Shanghai bathing-jar stood in one corner, holding about sixty gallons of water and replenished regularly by servants. Bathing involved standing on a “small wooden grating close to the jar” and dashing water over the body with a “hand bucket” while soaping at regular intervals. Although Margaret Brooke claims this system was “very refreshing,” she also describes it as “strenuous,” “original,” “surprising” and “primitive” which does not suggest total conviction.

As Singapore expanded, the European quarter with its elegant atmosphere and leisurely tempo became more congested. Europeans moved inland, building large residences on choice hilltop locations. These included owners and managers of newly-established spice plantations who, by the 1840s numbered at least twenty. Marianne North stayed with Mrs.Stringer, wife of a banker and daughter of Major MacNair and described her home as a “comfortable house outside the town,” surrounded by “every sort of fruit-tree.” Its hill was, “just high enough to catch the sea-breezes at night” so “one could sleep with perfect comfort.” However, a neighbouring woman’s battle with insect life is reminiscent of Emily Innes’ experiences. The central room had collapsed without warning and crushed her house, the supporting beams having been eroded by white ants but the woman and her children were dug out unhurt.

European women in 1860s Singapore might be housed in the suburban villas of the fashionable area, near the Tanglin Club and the new Government House. These, in their picturesque gardens, were a change from the Regency formality of the original European town. They signalled renewed identity with England and the new English suburban ideology, European exclusiveness and difference and the value of such English social recreations as the garden-party. A visitor, in the 1880s, saw

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121 Edwards N. Singapore House 39, 44; Tyres R. Singapore Then and Now 108
122 Cameron J. Our Tropical Possessions 294
123 Dewindt M. Good Morning 48
124 Edwards N. Singapore House 41; Turnbull C.M. History of Singapore 47
125 North M. Recollections 112-3.
Singapore's new architectural style as reflecting "new tastes in the owners" and a "new and more varied assortment of occupants."¹²⁶  

Management of large households in a tropical climate made servants a necessity besides signifying social status although their constant presence ensured little privacy for their employer. Social gatherings required "the obliging care" of "maid servants or ayahs" for female guests while "the native servants, in their gaudy liveries" stood "with folded arms behind their masters and mistresses" waiting to serve them at table.¹²⁷ This recalls the proliferance of servants, "in white muslin with red and gold turbans and sashes," in the wealthy Indian European establishment, described by Emily Eden, sister to the Governor-General.¹²⁸ Maintaining and running a large household required a sizeable labour force. Contrasting with mid-19ᵗʰ-century Britain, where most of the middle class employed no more than three live-in servants, Ida Pfeiffer recorded that families in 1846 Singapore were "obliged" to keep a "large staff of servants" but "the lady of the house meddles very little in domestic matters" which were generally "entrusted to the major-domo."¹²⁹ Often, servants employed by the master before his marriage had enjoyed considerable autonomy which they were reluctant to yield to their new mistress who, in any case, was likely to be a novice in Eastern household management. Emily Innes, with a comparatively small establishment and some experience, was advised by her husband that the less she inquired about running the home, "the more smoothly things were likely to go." Women like Emily found this hard to accept, especially when servants failed to measure up to their standards. Emily always anticipated confrontations with her servants and she was never disappointed although she was by no means always the winner. However, her difficulties were invariably perceived to be the fault of the servants and compromise a matter of practicality not ethics. Other problems may have arisen when servants were asked to handle such forbidden commodities as pork or alcohol, especially where Christian employers misunderstood other cultures or made no allowances for other religions. Some European employers apparently resorted to violence against offending servants and Emily sometimes wondered if she would be

¹²⁶ Edwards N. Singapore House 8, 11, 13, 50  
¹²⁷ Thomson J.T. Some Glimpses. 33  
¹²⁸ Kenyon O. 800 Years of Women's Letters. Sutton Publishing Ltd., Gloucestershire, 1994. 144  
better served by employing such methods but decided her way meant she was “less robbed” and the servants did not abscond. As she found, recruitment of servants was a problem for Europeans living outside the towns who often relied on the efforts of urban friends.\textsuperscript{130}

Although she was expected to distance herself from the servants’ quarters, including the kitchen and all the manual labour of running the household, the European woman had the time-consuming and possibly frustrating role of coordinator. As in Europe, she had to oversee the household’s efficient order, regulation and management as well as assume responsibility for the household accounts.\textsuperscript{131} However, this position was preferable to that of Mary Norman of Upper Clutha, New Zealand, who, without any servants, “milked cows, made butter, cured all the bacon and hams by hand, made her household soap, and all the jams and preserves of fruit from her own orchard” as well as baking, sewing for the family and rearing twelve children. Her cooking was done on a coal range needing regular black-leading while washing, a prodigious and unending task, was done in a draughty wash-house built over a water-race for easy access to water or in a copper, outside under a tree.\textsuperscript{132}

Servants in a large SS household included the cook, responsible also for marketing, head-boy who assisted with the cooking, served the food and waited at table, amah, water-carrier who brought the daily supply of household water and cleaned the toilets, dhoby, gardener, guard, syce and, perhaps, assistants for some of them. The dhoby usually serviced several households and Isabella Bird described “hundreds of Bengalis” gathered “at all hours of daylight,” round a “sheet of water, by no means clean” and “unmercifully beating on great stones the delicate laces, gauzy silks, and elaborate flouncings of the European ladies.”\textsuperscript{133} Thomson believed the European houses often escaped the gang robberies which terrorised 1840s Singapore because of the security provided by the number of servants retained on the

\textsuperscript{130} Innes E. Chersonese Vol.I. 193, 223  
\textsuperscript{131} Davidoff & Hall Family Fortunes 175, 283, 285, 392; Hall C. White, Male 88; Brownfoot J. Incorporated Wife 195  
\textsuperscript{132} Aspinall P. Skirt Tales 15, 30-3, 42, 53, 73-77, 87  
\textsuperscript{133} Bird I Golden Chersonese 119-20
premises.”¹³⁴ These were mainly male, living in separate quarters at the rear, it not being the custom for servants to sleep in the house.

Annie Brassey commented on the “very few” European servants in 1877 Singapore, all with “their own peons” to wait on them.¹³⁵ In the Singapore houses Pfeiffer visited, “with the exception of the seis who are Bengalese,” the servants were Chinese, every spring seeing the arrival of “whole shiploads of Chinese boys, from ten to fifteen years old.”¹³⁶ Emily Innes, in the Malay States, preferred Malay servants, in spite of their “Oriental contempt for women,” believing them to be “faithful and devoted,” “better able to turn their hands to anything than the Klings or Chinese” and less prone to vulgarity.¹³⁷ Her trust, however, did not extend to the female servants who had freer access to the house and she refused to have ayahs, describing them as “the most degraded” women “in the land.” She conceded that Singapore ayahs were “a shade more respectable,” but believed they often collaborated in “the jewel-robberies and burglaries” which occurred “so frequently in Singapore.” Another of their perceived faults was the time they spent “making love to the men-servants” which detracted from the “respectability of the ménage.” She concluded that her Singapore friends only employed such creatures out of necessity to look after the children, appearing to suggest they posed more threat to household security than to the morals of their charges.¹³⁸ Other problems may well have arisen between amahs and employers over differing attitudes regarding the upbringing of children and, perhaps, the mother’s fear of the amah stealing their affection by over-indulgence. Margaret Brooke encountered prejudice over the amah she employed as her son’s wet-nurse, even though the girl had been brought up in the Mission by the Bishop’s wife. The Kuching English ladies expressed concern that “an English baby being fed by a Chinese” might also imbibe “Chinese oddities.”¹³⁹

¹³⁴ Thomson J.T Some Glimpses 203; Turnbull C.M. History of Singapore 57
¹³⁵ Brassey A. A Voyage 56
¹³⁶ Bastin J. Travellers’ Singapore 60
¹³⁸ Ibid. Vol.1 24-5
Services and Amenities

Adequate road maintenance and transport would have given a woman and her family mobility around the Settlements. By 1824, Georgetown’s road system, laid out and maintained by a “large number of deportees from the West of India” was sufficiently advanced to impress visitors\(^{140}\) and from 1827, a Committee of Assessors, chosen annually from Penang’s land-owners and householders, was responsible for clearing, watching and keeping in repair the streets of Georgetown.\(^{141}\) An 1839 Act made provision for “the efficient watching, lighting and repairing of the streets and thoroughfares in the Towns of Georgetown, Singapore and Malacca, and for the making of roads, bridges, and the effecting of other purposes necessary for the comfort and protection of the inhabitants.”\(^{142}\)

Transport and social recreation for European women was mainly by horse and carriage. The distance of their houses from the town centre and other destinations, the enervating climate and the condition of the roads and pavements would have made walking difficult. There was also the question of perceptions about a woman’s dignity, protection of her modesty and her safety, all requiring separation from the locals.\(^{143}\) Apart from the initially lawless behaviour common to ‘frontier’ towns, Penang and Singapore were ports and, whenever a ship anchored, likely to host drunken sailors. At such times, in Georgetown, the police-station bell was rung “to warn respectable women off the streets.”\(^{144}\) Carriages were usually accompanied by a Malay or Indian syce whose night-time task was to run by the pony’s head with a flaming torch. Dr. Oxley’s advice to people intending to make 1840s Singapore their “place of residence for some months” was to “bring with them a Light Pony Phaeton if they wish to be comfortable” as “good Ponies” could be bought “from $50 to $100 each.”\(^{145}\) If this was not practicable, newspapers carried advertisements for vehicles like, “an Europe-built Pony-Phaeton, exceedingly neat and light, together with a pair of fast-going Battak Ponies, with Europe Harness complete and perfectly new” all for

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139 Dewindt M. Good Morning. 199
140 Nabujs Col. Letters 119-209
141 Tyres R. Singapore Then and Now 84
142 Georgetown City Council, Penang Past and Present 15. Act XII, 1839.
143 Davidoff & Hall Family Fortunes 403-4
144 Hoyt S.H. Old Penang 44; Turnbull C.M. History of Singapore 16
According to Cameron, everyone maintained a stable, though the less affluent might have "but one steed, and the rich man a dozen."147

Travelling outside the SS was principally by sea, there being very little alternative. As the Malay States developed, wives of rural, Government officials saw visits to Penang and Singapore as desirable alleviations of their isolation. However, difficult connections made such visits infrequent. Even more infrequent, it seems, were reverse visits, from urban to rural areas. Not many women appear to have had Isabella Bird's appetite for adventure and none of Emily Innes' Singapore acquaintance made the journey to her home in Jugra. The Misses Shaw, daughters of the Malacca Lieutenant-Governor, foisted on Isabella for the jungle-river journey to Sungei Ujong, clearly had no idea how to cope. "Limp and helpless," they reclined in the small boat or lay prostrate with heatstroke and bilious headaches, were terrified of their surroundings and were "encumbered" by an 'indispensable' trunk.148

Availability of European commodities made life more comfortable and provided an important link with home. Newspaper advertisements indicate that there was plentiful choice of delicacies from Europe and the Empire as well as a wide range of household and fashionable clothing (Appendix 3). These advertisements suggest a newspaper-reading public living in a comfortable, perhaps opulent style enjoying "Plump Yorkshire Hams," "Fine Moist Pine and Double Gloucester Cheese," "English Claret, Burgundy, Fine Sparkling Champagne" and "Medoc Claret in wood." For ladies, there were also perfumery of various descriptions, materials, stationary for their correspondence home, jewellery and even "a variety of elegant Artificial Wreathes, Sprigs, Bouquets." Those with literary or musical tastes could purchase "Galignani's English Popular Authors,"149 "the works of Scott, Byron, Moore, Dryden, and other eminent authors, handsomely bound in Calf and Morocco"150 or "a Variety of Music for the Piano Forte and Harp, Ebony and Cocoa Wood Flutes." Even the children were remembered with "an Invoice of Europe made Children's Toys" just in time for Christmas. Basic commodities were provided

146 Singapore Chronicle March 25th, 1830
147 Cameron J. Our Tropical Possessions 289
148 Bird I. Golden Chersonese 162-72
149 Penang Register August 21st, September 19th, 1827; July 28th, 1828
150 Singapore Chronicle August 13th, 1829
locally. In August, 1827, Lowe Ammee acquainted “the Ladies and Gentlemen” of Penang that he was relinquishing his bakery “in favour of Chunhong,” and added “his most grateful thanks” for their “liberal support and patronage,” while, in December that year, Daniel Caldwell informed them of his intention to open “a Butcher’s Shop in Love Lane, where he will supply Good Beef at a reasonable price” and hoped “to merit the Patronage of the Settlement.” Food, according to Cameron, was cheap enough to make economy unnecessary and provide “luxurious” living that “could not well be indulged at home on similar means.” The “tables of the wealthiest” differed only from those of the poorest in their “lavish supply of European preserves and condiments” rather than “any greater abundance or variety of dishes.” The quality and safety of food must have improved after the 1860s, when ice and cold storage became available.

In Singapore, amenities steadily improved throughout the century. In 1824, it was already a town of “pretty, shady quays, avenues” and “fine public buildings” and the Botanical Gardens “tastefully laid out with many tropical trees and flowers.” In 1832, the Public Exchange Room, Reading and News-Room and Circulating Library opened, early residents having been dependent on the Raffles Institution’s small collection of books. In 1854, the Victoria Theatre replaced the old Assembly Rooms and performances of dramas and operas could be watched in greater comfort. The storage of food was improved by the establishment of an ice-house stocked with ice imported from Boston U.S.A. which could then be transferred to the wooden ice-chests in domestic households. Shopping became more pleasurable with the opening of the John Little & Co store in 1842 and then, in 1858, of Robinson’s – ‘the meeting place for the world and his wife in Singapore.’ In 1843, a woman, like her counterpart in Europe, could enjoy the novelty of having her photograph taken when Monsieur Gaston Dutronquoy “respectfully” informed “the ladies and gentlemen at Singapore that he is a complete master of the newly invented and lately imported Daguerreotype.”

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151 Penang Register, August 27th, December 5th & 19th, 1827.
152 Cameron J. Our Tropical Possessions, 298
153 Hoyt S.H. Old Penang, 44.
154 Jayapal M. Old Singapore, 21
155 Singapore Chronicle, January 6th, 1831.
157 Tyres R. Singapore Then and Now, 45, 108, 250
Attitudes towards religion appear to have differed between the two Settlements. Constructed at the time of evangelical revival, when religion in Victorian England was seen as central to family and social values, St. Andrew’s Church in Singapore was consecrated by the Bishop of Calcutta in 1862. It replaced the original 1834 church and the Mission Chapel, both too small for the entire, obviously zealous, congregation. The new church, partly founded by the EIC, accommodated 520 people but, even so, demand necessitated a ballot for seats. Isabella Bird, attending morning service in 1879, described it as a “fine colonial cathedral,” replicating as closely as possible an English church of 12th Century Gothic or early English style. The “bigoted Mussulmen” punkah-pullers simply reminded Isabella of “the small progress which Christianity has made upon the earth in nineteen centuries,” Christian conviction preventing any further reflection on the incongruity of the situation. The Sinhalese clergyman, she recorded, preached “an able sermon.”

Other sects and religions were also amply catered for, freedom of religion being a SS principle. Within the Christian sector, the Presbyterian Mission Chapel mentioned above was founded in 1823 with EIC money, the Armenian Church of St Gregory the Illuminator in 1835, the Catholic Cathedral of the Good Shepherd in 1846, designed to accommodate one thousand persons, and the Convent of the Holy Infant Jesus in 1852. Malacca was the missionary centre prior to 1819 but, afterwards English Christian missionaries came to Singapore to receive their training.

While the first St. Andrew’s Church in Singapore was flourishing enough to need enlargement, Penang presented a very different picture. St. George’s Church, completed in 1800, represented an earlier age of attitudes preceding that of evangelical revival, where an Anglican living might be seen largely as a sinecure. Funded by the EIC but not, in Thomson’s opinion “for religion’s sake,” its chaplain’s job appeared to be “not to teach much, but to preach little.” As in India during that early period, according to Thomson, Europeans in the SS “seldom attended church,” so while St. George’s was “fitted for the climate” with “every comfort,” and could seat

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158 Tate D.J.M. Malay World
159 Bird I Golden Chersonese 121
160 Tyres R. Singapore Then and Now 122, 151, 165, 175.
400, Thomson, in 1838, counted only twenty worshippers. These included “five young ladies” and “one handsome brunette, with a prematurely withered mother,” none of them joining “in any way whatsoever” in the service. Even in people’s homes, grace was only requested “if a clergyman be present” and usually “in deference to him.”

**Occupation of Time and Social Life**

The European woman’s domestic duties of organising and overseeing the running of the house would have been time-consuming and repetitive but not usually physically onerous and the climate must have enforced a slower pace of life than in Europe. Part of her imperial role was to produce children and newspaper announcements and gravestones suggest that, like her contemporaries in Europe, she was frequently pregnant or rearing and educating her younger offspring. However, most of her children’s physical, daily needs would have been dealt with by their amahs, leaving her many leisured hours to fill. To Isabella Bird, the lot of these women was “dreary, aimless,” “scarcely life” only “existence,” leaving them only “the hope of going ‘home.’” The atmosphere in such a small group must have oscillated between supportive and claustrophobic. Their small number must, however, have placed them in great demand amongst their own community, with the power to impose certain social standards. In turn, their highly-visible position would impose restrictions on their behaviour so they did not ‘let the side down.’

Apart from the usual domestic occupations, sewing, embroidery, sketching, painting and piano-playing, some took an interest in social work and philanthropy. An 1828 Penang meeting called for the cooperation of the European ladies “to afford their patronage and protection to an Establishment” for the “advantage and improvement of their own sex.” All that was required was “the patronising superintendancy of the Ladies of the Island” who had “long since evinced the laudable wish of promoting the female institution” to “save hundreds of their sex

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161 Thomson J.T. *Some Glimpses,* 33, 37-9  
162 Davidoff & Hall *Family Fortunes* 176, 187, 335-43.  
163 Midgley C. *Gender and Imperialism* 17, 19  
164 Bird I. *Golden Chersonese* 110.  
165 Dewindt M. *Good Morning* 138
from a vicious and degrading course of life." As at home, women were needed in the practical arrangements of philanthropic enterprises but wielded no formal power, all important decisions being made by the men. This appears to imply a class of women with the time and education to oversee the instruction of others. Other acts of philanthropy included the purchase of a piece of land in Georgetown in 1835 by an English Jewess for her own burial and to act as the Jewish cemetery in Penang.

This being the era when Europe focussed attention on botany and natural history, some women studied and recorded the local flora and fauna. Sophia Raffles was enthusiastic about Penang’s natural history, “devoting her time a great deal to botany” and “constantly complaining that the days are too short” and Wathen had particularly mentioned admiring Mrs. MacKinnon’s drawings at Suffolk House. Marianne North, the guest of Lady Jervois at Singapore’s Government House, was entranced with the exotic “great india-rubber tree with large shiny leaves and fantastic hanging roots” and the “gorgeous tree of Poinciana regia blazing with scarlet blooms” there, the rare plants on Mrs. Stringer’s verandah and the “orchids hanging to every tree” in Whampoa’s garden. All were studied and painted, “Mrs. S. working beside me all the hot day” in her “deliciously airy upper rooms.” However, she did note that “it was curious to see” how little many of the English people cared about “these glories around them.” Lawn-tennis and croquet were “reigning supreme” and “little else was thought of.”

Correspondence home, a tenuous but vital contact with Europe, would have occupied some of the women’s time and to Isabella Bird was their “one active occupation,” the “greatest sign of vitality in Singapore Europeans” being in the “furious hurry in writing for the mail” to the detriment of all other social activities. Even the “feeble Englishwomen” exerted themselves for “friends at home,” culminating in “driving down to the post-office at the last moment.” Newspapers advisements provided information as to when letters could be received at the Post

166 Tyres R. Singapore Then and Now 45,108,250; Hall C. White, Male 102; Davidoff & Hall Family Fortunes 422-36
168 Raffles to Peter Auber Feb. 1819. Adventurous Women 26
169 North M. Recollections 112-4
Office “for transmission to London” and details of the boats conveying them.\textsuperscript{170} Another “great event” was the arrival of the incoming mail, English newspapers and the monthly periodicals, the local papers republishing “such parts of the abstracts” as “appeared most interesting.” After the opening of the Suez Canal, mail only took five weeks instead of two months to arrive and by Isabella’s visit in 1879, the telegraph ensured all public and commercial news a four week advantage over the mail ship.\textsuperscript{171}

Cameron, in 1865, had already commented on the lack of stimulation in the daily lives of Singapore’s colonial women. While the men’s day began at five with exercise, the ladies first appeared at nine, for breakfast. After the men’s departure for work, the women were left with a long day to amuse themselves.\textsuperscript{172} A lot of time must have been spent at home, an 1840s visitor complaining that it was “only at church or on parade” that it was possible to “glimpse” the “good-looking girls,” perhaps because “prudery” was “the order of the day.”\textsuperscript{173} Apart from organising the servants, which would have occupied some time, the ladies might read “in the extremely reclining posture” for which the verandah chairs” were “so admirably adapted”\textsuperscript{174} or, like Marianne North and Mrs.Stringer, paint and then drive out “in the late afternoon and evening” or pay visits.\textsuperscript{175}

At 6pm, most men returned home, for “a glass of sherry and bitters” before dinner at 7pm. A “clock-work regularity and punctuality” was observed over meals which, Cameron felt, helped maintain “the good health of the European community.” After dinner, there might be billiards, a “chat on the verandah,” a “little meditation,” or “perhaps a book” to pass the time “pleasantly enough” until bedtime at 10pm or earlier.\textsuperscript{176} Marianne North recorded they went to bed “soon after dinner,” the men being “far too tired after their days in the hot bank” for “playing at company or sitting up at night.”\textsuperscript{177} Such a domestic scene does not suggest much excitement or social intercourse between husband and wife. The only break in routine seems to have been the two evenings, usually Tuesday and Friday, when the regimental band played on

\textsuperscript{170} Singapore Chronicle April 23\textsuperscript{rd}, June 18\textsuperscript{th}, 1829; June 3\textsuperscript{rd}, 1830
\textsuperscript{171} Bird I. Golden Chersonese 111; Turnbull C.M. History of Singapore 64
\textsuperscript{172} Cameron J. Our Tropical Possessions 295
\textsuperscript{173} Bastin J. Travellers’ Singapore. 54.
\textsuperscript{174} Cameron J. Our Tropical Possessions 295
\textsuperscript{175} North.M. Recollections 112-3
\textsuperscript{176} Cameron J. Our Tropical Possessions 30, 303.
the esplanade between 5.30 and 6.30 and “the whole European community” attended.178

Isabella Bird found Singapore’s European sector “dull and sleepy looking” with “no life or movement” and its social life artificial and unattractive. The residents “hid” in their “roomy, detached bungalows,” while their wives led “half-expiring” lives, and grew “paler every week.” The daily drive was the one diversion when “at a given hour” they all emerged and drove, mainly to the esplanade, where for two hours, “a double row of handsome and showy equipages moves continuously in opposite directions,” replicating the wealthy in European cities. Apart from this, diversions were few, except for occasional “dances, lawn tennis” and “various other devices for killing time.” She found Penang equally dull and gossipy, neither town offering a society which appealed for any lengthy period.179 However, contemporary accounts suggest these nouveau riche Europeans in Penang and Singapore were an hospitable crowd whose “entertainments, public and private, were frequent, brilliant and lavish.” Formal dinners “followed by musical performances by the ladies, began at 4.30 in the afternoon,” at 9.30, there was a supper and parties finished at about 10.30pm.180 The main complaint made about the Singapore Europeans was they “so determinedly set their faces against every sort of entertainment which does not include a dinner” both “magnificent and unrestrained.”181 The first recorded official dinner was given by John Crawfurd in February 1823 for all the Europeans, “about fifty persons including the ladies.”182

Apart from dinners, entertainments included picnics, theatre performances and concerts at the Town Hall, although, by the late-1820s, Penang already had a theatre. Many entertainments were public. Public balls for Europeans were scattered throughout the year and, although there seems to have been no definite annual cycle, many appear to have marked such occasions as “the races, the opening of a public building, the arrival or departure of some important personage”183 and anniversaries.

177 North M. Recollections 112.
178 Cameron J Our Tropical Possessions 299-300
179 Bird I. Golden Chersonese 118
180 Hoyt S.H. Old Penang 59
181 Cameron J. Our Tropical Possessions 303
182 Buckley C.B. Anecdotal History 155
183 Cameron J. Our Tropical Possessions 288-9
of events like the Battle of Waterloo or the King’s birthday, stressing the colony’s loyal links with Britain. These “consisted principally of dancing,” often restricted by “the very small number of Ladies of the Settlement,” which was “more limited than every one could wish.”^185

Grand events were held in Singapore’s Assembly Rooms, like that in 1848 marking James Brooke’s appointment as Governor of Labuan, when “a numerous party assembled” and “dancing was kept up with great animation until a late hour.” Singapore’s most splendid Ball on record celebrated the thirty-fifth anniversary of the Settlement’s foundation (Fig. 2.12). Dancing was followed by supper, speeches and toasts, including the inevitable “the Ladies of Singapore,” after which, “dancing was kept up until about two o’clock,” the ladies’ stamina apparently undiminished. The following day, in a charitable sequence, the Singapore Institution Free-Schools’ children were entertained on the lawn of Government House by Mrs. Butterworth, the patroness, and the Ladies’ Committee of the school.^186

Although 1828 Penang is recorded as having its share of “parties, public entertainments, theatricals and fancy dress balls,”^187 it appears to have had less public social life than Singapore. Anna Maria Davis, visiting briefly in 1791, indicates that there was only one European woman living there at that time. Her letters to her sister, contain her observations of the English world created by the Georgetown colonials. The advent of an East Indiaman and possible visitors was obviously an exciting occasion for the small English community and an excuse for various entertainments for the visitors, a tradition continuing into the twentieth century. Anna stayed in Georgetown with Mrs. Gray, thus being spared the inconvenience of a nightly return to the ship.^188 Even in 1879, Isabella Bird was removed from her “ant-infested hotel” to stay with a colonial resident, this being considered more fitting for a female European visitor.^189 Mrs. Gray was “about eight and twenty, in good height and well made,” her face being “rather handsome than otherwise.” A “very fashionable woman,” she was “very good natured and well bred” indicated by always leaving the

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184 Singapore Chronicle April 24th, 1828
185 Penang Register May 28th, 1828
186 Tate D.J.M. Malay World 48-9
187 Singapore Chronicle December 4th, 1828.
188 Morson I. Connection Phuket 101-2
table “as soon as the cloth is removed” and not returning “until she is sent for to join the card table.” Contact with the local people was, for Anna, limited to two “black girls” to “attend us” who “did not understand one word we spoke to them” and were clearly worthy of no further mention.

Entertainments included dances, card parties, breakfasts, lunches, suppers, dinners, including a reciprocal one on board ship, visits to various houses, excursions into the town to see the Chinese area and a picnic. Two occasions give an impression of the lavish hospitality Georgetown society could offer. An “entertainment” by Captain Williamson included both a dinner and dancing. Between the ladies, the ship’s officers and the gentlemen of the Island, they were thirty in number. Dinner, at 3pm, was “very elegant” with a “profusion of everything.” Afterwards, Anna was “able to dance all evening,” the three ladies being so much in demand that they were each squired by two gentlemen and changed partners every two dances. They “supped” at 11pm, were entertained by songs from various members of the company and finally retired between 12 and 1am. The picnic, on their last day, started at 6.30am, three gentlemen escorting the ladies to a Malay pavilion owned by Francis Light. This comprised a thatched roof surrounded by a fence interwoven with boughs of greenery. Inside, the “large room with windows on every side,” was divided into three parts “for us to sleep in separate places if we chose,” all concern obviously being shown for their comfort. Light had arrived earlier with “a great number of blacks,” transporting the food, furniture and cooking utensils. After a substantial breakfast “set out in the most elegant manner” they strolled in the gardens before retiring to sleep, the ladies in the pavilion and the gentlemen in the dining area. At 3pm, they reassembled refreshed, bathed, ready for dinner, again lavish and “served with great elegance.” Then they returned to Georgetown to change for the evening’s dancing.  

As the community grew, especially the number of women, formal celebrations appear to have become more common, marking events like Colonel Farquhar’s 1804 return from furlough, when “90 gentlemen and ladies partook of an elegant breakfast,” followed by dinner at 7pm or Lord Mayor’s Day, when, in 1807,

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189 Bird I. Golden Chersonese 108
190 Morson I. Connection Phuket 102-7
“Mr. Clubley had the honour of leading Mrs. Raffles (Olivia, not Sophia) down the first dance to the tune of ‘Off she goes,’” the supper tables were covered with “every delicacy that India can produce,” and several of the ladies and gentlemen entertained the company with songs until the early hours of the morning. Newspaper reports of “uncommonly animated” balls, “sumptuous” suppers, Quadrilles and Spanish dances followed, at midnight, by supper for more than a hundred people and “sprightly” dancing “until past three o’clock” suggest the climate did not affect the quantities of food consumed or the vigour of the exercise, while the lateness of the hours kept indicates a late-rising society in Penang. European visitors played an important role in “fitting the young ladies for society.” Cree, in 1845, describes a party “given by Mrs. Wallace at the ladies boarding-school” in Penang, where he met “some really nice girls.” “Plenty of waltzing” was followed by “a great hot supper” at 2am and then more dancing “till 5 o’clock.”

Newspaper reports suggest that private entertainment could also be lavish and Colonel Nahuijs’ described being received “with true Scottish open-handedness” by the “estimable Mrs. Macalister” who was “exceptionally hospitable.” Cree saw the Penang Europeans as “few in number” but “hospitable, social, kind and agreeable,” their entertainments, both “public and private,” being “brilliant and lavish.” Entertainment appears to have emulated its English counterpart and a 1838 Penang dinner-party described by Thomson could, apart from climate and some oriental touches, just as easily have taken place in an English dining-room. After the guests had been greeted by their host and the hostess “sitting in state” on the verandah and the ladies had enjoyed the “obliging care” of the maid servants, the company was “apportioned,” according to rank and proceeded downstairs to consume a substantial, seven-course meal. Although many ingredients were obtained ‘locally’ like the “Bengal mutton, Chinese capons, Keddah fowls and Sangora ducks,” there was only one course which could be described as truly oriental and the size and content of the meal was more suited to a cold climate than to the tropics. The women were also encouraged to keep pace with the men in the liberal drinking, causing the

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191 Clodd H.P. Malaya’s First 121
192 Penang Register March 19th, 1828.
193 Tate D.J.M. Malay World 39
194 Nahuijs Col. Letters JMBRAS 19 (2).
195 Tate D.J.M. Malay World 38
conversation to get louder and “the ladies unbend from their rigidity,” perhaps more reminiscent of Georgian than Victorian England. At 9pm, the ladies retired to the drawing-room for coffee and tea, followed, about a half-hour later, by the men. Here, glass-shaded lamps had been thoughtfully placed to ensure “the white dresses and jewellery of the ladies” were “set off to the best advantage” and the remainder of the evening followed the traditional European pattern of piano duets, “each young lady taking her turn,” cards and dancing. At 11, “the matrons show symptoms of moving,” the women seemingly having the deciding vote, and “the party is broken up.”

Singapore dinners, likewise, were not the “light airy meal” which might be expected by the “nature of the climate” and luxuries were more abundant than in Penang. Cameron comments that, were it not for the punkahs, the gentlemen’s “white” jackets, the ladies’ “gauzy” dresses, the “motley array” of “native” servants, an everyday dinner there might easily “be mistaken for some more special occasion at home” in England. There were the same lavish courses as in Penang, “very good cheese” obtained “in fortnightly supplies by the overland steamers” and “good fresh butter,” although sweets did not hold “the same temptation” apart from the “luxuriance” of tropical fruit for which Singapore dinners were renowned. Again alchol was consumed in liberal quantities, in the belief that it “conduces to good health and long life.” Dinner usually ended with a cigar and a glass or two of sherry “after the ladies are gone.”

Some indication of the size and frequency of 1870s dinner parties may be found in letters from Adolphine Sturzenegger-Morstadt, the wife of a Swiss merchant in Singapore. They occurred “practically every week,” the gentlemen afterwards going to the Club and leaving the women, “merry and cheerful,” to their “joyful musical evenings.” Adolphine’s home was “almost a small hotel” with house-guests and frequent visitors for meals, sometimes as many as 34 people, and frequently at only three hours notice. This also included business entertaining, “many times” there being “ships’ captains in for meals,” the evening sometimes ending with dancing. Occasionally, bigger events, like Christmas dinner “for the firm’s Assistants” with “fifty persons present,” gave Adolphine “much work” preparing presents from “the

197 Cameron J. Our Tropical Possessions 300-2
Christmas case arrived from home." She seems to have appreciated the skills of her Chinese servants and the "wonderful way" they made the table look on such occasions with "all the crockery, glasses, cutlery and flowers." She appeared to enjoy her social life, making "shawls and ribbons" with friends, having "forever to get dressed up" and participating in Club concerts and dances. Such events took place "every six weeks" and "I love it." Her letters underline the interdependence of the women and Adolphine clearly relished her rarity value, being "admired and revered" because "there are no young girls"198

Adolphine’s cheerful comments include no mention of her recovery from a difficult childbirth or the harder aspects of a colonial woman’s life, except by implication. Although she enjoyed her social life and was spared heavy physical work, she did have to manage the servants and ensure an evening’s success, often at short notice. She likewise does not stress the fact that her husband, like Mrs.Stringer’s, was mostly at work, returned home late and tired and seems to have often left for the Club immediately after supper. This appears to confirm that men and women spent most of their time separately, leaving women to depend on each other for support and company. However, dependence did not imply automatic harmony. EIC wife, Clara Elliot, complained to her sister that among her 1836 Macau contemporaries “nice people....are very scarce” but nevertheless was dependent on their support.199 Thomson mentioned decisions over precedence at dinner-parties as “not always giving entire satisfaction to the ladies” and causing some friction200 while Margaret Brooke, observed that feuds among the Kuching English ladies could last several years and that “almost any community of English men and women” in “out-of-way places” seemed to “take pleasure in having rows with one another,” especially when they “imagine that they are Somebody.”201 Such disputes could, at the very least, prove uncomfortable and be a continuing problem for colonial wives with too much time on their hands.

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198 Schweizer-Iten H. One Hundred Years of the Swiss Club and the Swiss Community of Singapore. Swiss Club, Singapore, 1980. 33
199 Hoe S. Private Life. 12
200 Thomson J.T. Some Glimpses. 33
201 Dewindt M. Good Morning. 63-4
As in Europe, music appears to have played an important part in home entertainment, with the ladies featuring prominently. Musical instruments were among the merchandise newspapers advertised, like the “Broadwood’s Square Pianoforte, especially made for India” and a “handsome piece of Furniture” the property of “a Lady about to leave the Settlement.”\footnote{Singapore Chronicle October 11th, 1827.} Emily Innes’ piano was a wedding present, specially constructed for tropical conditions and Margaret Brooke was given an Erard by her husband, and entertained the Kuching English community at the weekly Astana tea and dinner-parties.\footnote{Dewindt M. Good Morning. 52-3} Thomson’s 1838 dinner-party included piano performances by the young ladies and, as in England, the tradition of musical evenings with guests participating continued into the following century.\footnote{Davies D. Browns of Glugor} In Singapore, the large family of Portuguese merchant, Dr. Jose d’Almeida, was all “very musical” and gave “delightful concerts in their house,” twice a weekly, the ladies singing and playing various instruments “divinely.”\footnote{Tate D.J.M. Malay World. 35, 40} Talents could also be displayed in amateur dramatics and in August 1828, the Penang public were informed of “a fair prospect of the restoration of Private Theatricals in our Settlement.” The following September, \textit{H.M.S. Java} was converted temporarily into a theatre for a performance of Farquhar’s \textit{The Recruiting Officer} which was “well cast and sustained throughout with considerable spirits.” It would not have been a true Penang event without “an elegant supper” followed by dancing “until the morning was far advanced” and the ladies “reluctantly” departed.\footnote{Penang Register August 27th, September 3rd, 1828.}

Established planting families, like the Browns and Scotts in Penang, often held \textit{kenduris} or feasts on their estates for tenants and most of the neighbourhood, sometimes totalling two thousand guests. Each nationality was generously and appropriately catered for and the non-stop entertainments included sports, dancing, singing, boxing, \textit{wayang kulit}, South-Indian plays, Malay \textit{manora} and a fire-works display after dark. Such occasions were partly intended to show the plantation owner and his family as European gentry “liberal in qualities, superior in understanding,” just and “affable,” who could “easily win the affections of an unsophisticated race.”\footnote{Davies D. Browns of Glugor}
In the early days, European isolation from home and small numbers had engendered some social mixing with Asian counterparts in Singapore and Penang. Increased prosperity, especially in Singapore, in the mid-1840s and regular fortnightly steamship services, first to Calcutta and then Europe, changed the pattern of SS social life. Closer contacts with Britain meant Singapore in particular took on formal, middle-class, more narrow-minded Victorian values while added prosperity and greater preoccupation with work meant less time for entertaining visitors. Wealthy leaders of the local communities, like Whampoa, who spoke English and understood western customs, still entertained European friends lavishly and there were reciprocal, multiracial, social occasions but these became increasingly superficial. Further social distance was created by the Europeans forming clubs and gradually retreating into the exclusively western life which became more clearly defined in the next century.  

There were also social rules discouraging intermarriage or social mixing with Eurasians. Thomson underlines these demarcations on a visit to a European-educated Eurasian married to the daughter of a Protestant missionary, “of pure British blood” but “reared and educated in India.” Both had been married before and had children by all marriages, all living “in great amity.” Some children were “dark as Hindoos” while others were “fair as Swedes,” but while the fair ones were expected to rise in society, were attentively educated and went out to parties, the dark ones were “intended for more humble usage” and stayed at home. The wife was proud of her pure blood and maintained this dual standard within her household but, by her marriage, had put herself outside the ‘social pale,’ and was in Thomson’s eyes an illustration of the “fragile ground on which families of Europeans in the East maintain their purity of origin,” infringement of which weakened the “foundations of their great influence.”

National pride and confidence in their own racial superiority, demanded British communal solidarity and assertion of permanent ‘difference’ from the indigenous populations. At balls in 1865 Singapore, it was apparently not uncommon for one young lady to refuse to dance opposite another because her “vis-a-vis” was “slightly darker than herself in complexion.”

208 Turnbull C.M. History of Singapore 64-5
210 Oxford History of the British Empire Porter A. Vol.3 23-4; Hyam R. Vol.4 48
For most European women in Singapore, the Esplanade was the social hub (Fig.2.13), where “all the beauty and fashion of the place promenade daily” at 6pm and “enjoy the cool sea breeze.” In this confined atmosphere, married couples paraded in their conveyances, stopping to chat to acquaintances, old women gossiped and their daughters indulged in “a little innocent flirtation,” the place eventually becoming known as “Scandal Point.” Recreation and sport were important social vehicles, with women usually as spectators rather than participants. They went to cricket matches at the Esplanade or the Singapore and Penang Cricket Clubs, regattas and to the horse-races, Singapore having its first racecourse in 1840. Recreational clubs, like the Singapore and Penang Clubs, proliferated, principally male-orientated with women as guests. However some, like the Teutonia Club, 1856, and Tanglin Club, 1865, accepted women as members. During the following decades, such clubs increased in number and, in 1884, Singapore women finally acquired their own Ladies’ Lawn Tennis Club. Other social outlets for women, in the late-19th Century included luncheon or tea parties in the tiffin houses and card parties at various hotels.

Health and Penang Hill

European women’s health declined in the tropics. Thomson described them as “climate worn and pale,” an evening’s entertainment restoring them temporarily to a “brilliant moment of their former selves,” while the “young English rose just arrived” contrasted with her “pale sisters.” The heat must have been partly responsible for the “languid softness” which replaced the “ruddy glow of the colder latitudes” in most women’s cheeks and made the “pretty pale-faced European children” a “little less boisterous” although “quite as cheerful as is witnessed at home.” Perhaps Cameron realised their physically inactive life-style, spent mainly within their own or friends’ homes, conveyed everywhere in carriages and denied “almost all other outdoor amusement” apart from the evening outing, as contributory to the women’s pallor and listlessness. Boredom could have been another factor, as they appeared to have

211 Cameron J. Our Tropical Possessions 287-8
212 Bastin J. Travellers’ Singapore 72
213 Thomson J.T. Some Glimpses 202-3
214 Edwards N. Singapore House 107.
enough stamina to dance all night at social functions and Isabella Bird's acerbic assessment certainly was that they were “pale for want of exercise and engrossing occupation.”

Health was clearly a preoccupation for the European woman, seemingly more in Penang than Singapore which, with its “cool mornings and evenings.” Until the mid-19th century, Singapore had its share of refuse and pollution problems but was considered less prone to the “diseases which usually rage in tropical climates,” despite virtually no medical services prior to the 1840s. This was attributed to “our activity and love of outdoor sports.” During such cool mornings, European children might be encountered, sent out in their ayahs’ care “to ‘eat’ the morning air.” Isabella Bird found Singapore’s steady 80%-84% “hot – so hot – but not stifling” and observed that many coped with the night heat by sleeping on Malay mats spread over mattresses, often dispensing entirely with covering sheets or fanned all night by punkahs.

Penang was considered unhealthy for several decades, sickness often having a devastating effect on the European population. The main illnesses were malaria, tropical ulcers, diarrhoea and dysentery, with periodic outbreaks of smallpox, typhoid and cholera, all exacerbated by poor drains, dirt and overcrowding in parts of Georgetown, basic medical knowledge and “crude and unhygenic” hospitals. Only by 1857 were some of these problems addressed. The introduction of smallpox vaccine helped reduce adult mortality but infant mortality remained a problem. Another contributory factor was the general European refusal to adapt to the climate, continuing to wear heavy western clothing which could cause various skin diseases and over-indulgence in what they consumed, ignoring advice about “nourishing but not heating diet.”

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216 Cameron J. Our Tropical Possessions  299-300
217 Bird I. Golden Chersonese  117
218 Jayapol M. Old Singapore  21.
219 Tate D.J.M. Malay World  44; Turnbull C.M. History of Singapore  48, 62.
220 Straits Times  17th August, 1861
221 Cameron J. Our Tropical Possessions  96
222 Bird I. Golden Chersonese  107, 110
223 Hoyt S.H. Old Penang  44.
224 Morson I. Connection Phuket  49, 58; Turnbull C.M. History of Singapore 62
It was not until the end of the century that malaria was understood, although doses of quinine were known to be a useful preventative. The fate of one couple is recorded in 1828 as a “most melancholy” instance of the “fatality of the Penang or jungle fever,” the couple being “victims” of this “incurable,” “mysterious” and “unknown” disease. Ignorance about the mosquitoes in the jungle surrounding their house, meant the man’s illness and death were attributed to “imprudent” exposure to “sun and to the night air” but did not solve the mystery of “the identical disease,” as “equally” and “rapidly” fatal,” suffered by the lady, without any such “imprudent exposure.” Such swift and unexplained deaths must have been as frightening as AIDS today, especially as the couple had been home “upwards of a fortnight” and appeared “in perfect health” until the moment of their “fatal attack.”

Similarly, Lieut. Colonel Jackson and his wife, Matilda died as suddenly and unexpectedly on 1st April 1855,” and their son the previous afternoon, all from “jungle fever,” having just taken possession of their fine plantation house (Fig.2.17).

Evidence from gravestones and newspaper reports suggests that, as in India, European life expectancy was generally low, and it was not uncommon for women to die in their 20s, like “Margaret Heylin…aged 21,” “Elizabeth Berlie…in the 23rd year of her age,” “Harriet Scott.Age 25” and “Isobel Marion.aged 23 Years.” Newspapers announcements give similar indications of high infant mortality as in India, like “of fever and dysentry, Isabella….14 months and 18 days,” “Johanna….5 days,” “ Elizabeth…nearly 7 months” or “Kenneth, Infant Son of Kenneth Murchison…5 Months.” Harriette McDougall’s third child died of diphtheria, while they were in Singapore, on their way to Penang. The two others had already died in Sarawak and, during the next six years, “one infant after another” was “laid in God’s acre.” Sophia Raffles was seriously ill in the East and three of her children died of sickness, the fourth being sent to England for safety and thus causing a long separation between mother and child. Gravestones record deaths of entire families

225 Penang Register June 11th, 1828
226 Gravestone, Penang Colonial Cemetery; Thomson J.T. Some Glimpses
227 Penang Register October 17th, November 28th, 1827
228 Gravestones. Penang Colonial Cemetery
229 Midgley C. Gender and Imperialism
230 Singapore Chronicle June 7th, 1827; May 16th, December 30th, 1830
231 Penang Register October 31st, 1827.
232 McDougall H. Sketches
233 Turnbull C.M. History of Singapore
like the children of W. Williamson and his wife Louisa, William, 1849 aged 4 days, Providence, 1851 aged 6 days, William 1853 and Florence, 1855 aged 8 months, 16 days (Fig 2.17). Likewise, Joanna Ince buried Caroline, in 1820, aged 5 months and 26 days and Eliza in 1821, aged one month and 4 days (Fig. 2.17). Presumably, she subsequently died in childbirth, she and her infant son being buried in the same coffin. Likewise, many Europeans in Singapore’s colonial cemetery were young women and children. For these women, the pain of their children’s deaths must have been increased by separation from support of families at home.

Penang had the advantage over other parts of SS in possessing a hilly interior with a cooler climate, better suited to the European constitution. There, the air was cool enough for Charles Kinloch and his wife to sleep happily “under three blankets” on their 1851 visit and for Isabella Bird to comment on its “delicious temperature” and recuperative benefits for those not having access to a spa or a sea-voyage. So, when Penang Europeans wanted a refuge from the enervating lowlands, they emulated their peers in India and the Netherlands East Indies and went up to their Penang-Hill bungalows. The hill-top was reached in two stages; horseback or gharry to the ridge and then Sumatran pony or sedan chair to the crest. Men walked or rode while women, children and invalids were carried in a sedan chair, on the shoulders of five to eight “stout Malays,” “regulated by the weight of the person to be carried” (Figs. 2.14, 2.15). In 1805, the journey along a “steep and rugged” path “not more than eight or ten feet wide” took two or three hours, including frequent stops along the way for rest and refreshment.

On top, initially, only Europeans were allowed bungalows and social status went with elevation. The Governor’s Bel Retiro occupied the most commanding site surrounded by “the flowers of our native country”, the Browns owned Strawberry Hill House, a large atap-roofed bungalow with a magnificent view of Georgetown, while below were the bungalows of lesser officials and merchants, smaller, one-storey buildings, with pyramidal roofs and deep verandahs, an open central area for both

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234 Gravestones. Penang Colonial Cemetery.  
235 Turnbull C.M. History of Singapore 62  
236 Hoyt S.H. Old Penang 57-8  
237 Bird I. Golden Chersonese 258  
238 Aiken S.R. Imperial Belvederes p.16
sitting and dining and bedrooms on either side. Each had its own spacious compound with gardens of “contrived naturalness” which, in 1824, Colonel Nahuijs admired for their abundance of “roses and strawberries.” Here Europeans pursued activities like riding, walking, picnicking, shooting, painting, sketching and collecting specimens of the flora and fauna (Figs. 2.14, 2.16). One visitor, finding these attractions limited, suggested anyone contemplating a lengthy stay should go with “a supply of books,” there being “neither society or amusement on the mountain,” and thus leaving him “dependent solely upon his own resources.” Within a few days he would be “acquainted with the different rides and walks” and, without other resources, would be bored in less than a week.

Early-19th Century pictures of Penang Hill show women in soft, high-waisted, tubular muslin dresses, cool and airy compared with the men’s fashionable but hot, close-fitting breeches and cutaway jackets. Servants with parasols protected their mistresses’ complexions from the sun avoiding any darkening of the skin which might suggest racial transgression. Later, fashionable crinolines, petticoats and bonnets restricted women’s comfort, movement and participation in outdoor activities. The European woman might be “an ungraceful heap of poufs and frills, tottering painfully on high heels, in tight boots,” her figure “distorted into the shape of a Japanese sake bottle, every movement a struggle or a jerk” and her clothing “utterly unsuited to this climate,” “impeding motion, and affecting health, comfort, and beauty alike,” but clothing signalled European refusal to compromise, prejudice overruling commonsense whatever suffering was involved (Fig.A5.10). Moreover, light woollen underclothes were considered essential to absorb perspiration and avoid chills and fever and, as in India, “quantities of flannel” night-wear to counteract the danger of “sudden chills” caused by punkah-pullers either falling asleep during the night or applying too much vigour.

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239 Davies D. Browns of Glugor
240 Aiken S.R. Imperial Belvederes 50.
241 Fitzgerald D. Palladio Delineated
242 Nahuijs Col. Letters 22.
243 McClintock A. Imperial Leather 276
244 Bird I. Golden Chersonese 117.
245 Ibid 57-8.
Emily Innes and *The Chersonese with the Gilding Off*

This chapter, so far, has considered women living in or on the fringes of large urban areas. Towards the end of this period, there were also a few European women living in rural areas of the Malay States, prior to annexation. They would have enjoyed few of the advantages of their urban contemporaries but would have shared the same assumptions and attitudes. One of these was Emily Innes who was at Langat, Jugra and Durian Sabatang, Selangor, between 1876 and 1882. *The Chersonese with the Gilding Off*, the only surviving record of her, covers these years, and Emily describes, with “tactless” but “considerable accuracy,” the living conditions to which she had to adjust and the standards and attitudes she considered she was required to maintain. Like many of her peer group, such as Isabella Bird, she came from a prominent evangelical, middle-class family and, like Isabella, probably received a good education at home. She met her husband through relatives, while he was home between appointments in the Far East. At 32, she married James Innes, then 39, and accompanied him to Kuching and, subsequently, to Langat in Malaya, where he was employed as collector and magistrate. A fuller account of Emily’s time in Malaya is given in Appendix 5.

Emily was the first European woman to arrive in Klang and also at her final destination, Langat. She was, therefore, immediately the object of more intense local scrutiny and curiosity than she was likely to have been accorded in the SS. This unnerving attention and loss of privacy was followed by a long and uncomfortable journey by ‘native’ boat to her final destination. The “Malay wigwam,” home at Langat (A.5.4), and the rat-infested, Government “shed” at Durian Sabatang were hardly the prestige symbols of the SS Palladian residences although the “civilized” bungalow at Jugra was probably closer to her expectations. Unlike urban officials, the Inneses only employed the two servants who had accompanied them from Sarawak. The Government provided a water-carrier and gardener and their washing went fortnightly to the Klang *dhobie*. Despite James’ discouragement of her active

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246 Kenyon O. *800 Years* 143  
247 Khoo Kay Kim Introduction to *Chersonese with the Gilding Off* v, vii, xii, xiii; Caddy. F *To Siam and Malaya in the Duke of Sunderland’s Yacht Sans Peur* Hurst & Blackett, London, 1889. 278  
248 Gullick J.M. *Adventurous Women* 119, 201; Barr P. *A Curious Life* 163-73; Hall C. *White, Male* 188, Gullick J.M. *Emily Innes 1843-1929*; Appendix 5
intervention in the kitchen, Emily clearly felt the need to establish familiar domestic rituals and respect from her servants which often placed her in conflict with their resistance to female authority or change from “dirty” habits to those concurring with her crusade for ‘Christian’ cleanliness. She considered it no insult to issue a “Chinaman of the coolie class” with a bar of soap and tell him to wash or to inform the Malays that the “Prophet Mohamet’s regulations” had only resulted in making them “particularly dirty.” It was all simply part of “washing and clothing the savage” and impressing on them the superiority of western standards.

Although she fulfilled her obligations as a conscientious housekeeper, Emily faced much greater difficulties than she might have done in the SS over diet and food supplies. The flow of even essential imported goods, such as tinned meat and milk for her afternoon tea, was erratic and expensive at Langat and virtually non-existent at Durian Sabatang. Transference from Singapore suppliers to the Civil Service Supply Association in England substantially improved the situation at Jugra and Emily kept chickens and grew fresh produce in the Jugra garden to supplement their diet. Household duties also included a great deal of sewing and mending, Emily’s prejudice against employing amahs removing the possibility of any help.

Her isolation from other Europeans, although not as total as some of her New Zealand contemporaries, left her with long, monotonous periods to fill with fewer occupational and social possibilities than in the SS and greater need for self-reliance. Like Margaret Brooke, Emily learnt Malay, although without Margaret’s advantage of a professional teacher. Her knowledge was acquired through reading Malay books. Like many of her peer group, she was interested in local flora and fauna and established a garden containing European flowers to remind her of home. She also played the piano, seemingly without Margaret Brooke’s enthusiasm. Reading matter was more restricted than in the SS or Kuching with no available Circulating or Astana Libraries and orders from England often delayed or stolen. For exercise, there was tennis or walking. Unlike her urban sisters, Emily’s mobility was restricted to

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249 Innes E. Chersonese Vol.1. 7-19, 24, 31-2, 167-72, 189-94, 213-5, 221-32, 238-9; Vol.2. 7-23, 55-64, 70-3, 92-3, 147, 150, 158-9, 173, 187; McClintock A. Imperial Leather 207-12, 223.

250 Innes E. Chersonese Vol.1 21-7, 124-8; Vol.2. 25-36, 63-71, 210-11; Davidoff & Hall Family Fortunes 387

251 Kennedy & Murray Early Pioneers 32

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where she could walk and freer access to the official launch might have encouraged her, like Margaret Brooke, to travel more extensively.\textsuperscript{252}

Emily’s role as colonial wife dictated unswerving loyalty to her husband but even critics like Douglas implied an easy relationship between them. Like Margaret Brooke, she gives no impression of her marriage, performed with little prior knowledge of James, being a love-match but, unlike Margaret, she appears to have established compatibility and companionship with him. Her disapproval of the Malay women’s uninhibited conversation indicates not only a lack of awareness of local behaviour patterns but also a Victorian prudery over outraged natural modesty. The way she writes about children suggests she regretted her own childlessness, perhaps seeing it as a failure to fulfil a wifely duty. Her isolated situation would have precluded one great advantage of children, the companionship of other mothers and she was at least spared the anxieties of pregnancy away from familiar surroundings, the possible distress of infant mortality and the pain of eventual separation.\textsuperscript{253}

There are few occasions where Emily appears to question her subordinate, domestic role although she clearly had the stronger personality. Such questioning might be seen in her inclination to “demur” over James’ refusal of a gift on her behalf and her reference to the Married Women’s Property Act not having then been passed; in her comparison of herself to a slave in a conversation with Hugh Low, Resident of Perak; in her respect for Tunku Chi with a “stronger character” than either her husband or father and in her condemnation of the status of Malay wives, “low and insignificant” chattels, forced by their circumstances into “listening behind curtains and other underhand practices.” Raised in a prominent evangelical family, Emily must have been conversant with the anti-slavery movement and the feminist language which underlined middle-class British women’s inferior status in society through alignment with the female slaves. Possibly she saw a parallel between herself and the women behind the curtain and her acerbic condemnations or her admiration for Tunku Chi were outlets for her exasperation. If so, she never gives any indication of

\textsuperscript{252} Brooke M. My Life in Sarawak 2, 68-70, 151-3, 159-60; Gullick J.M. Adventurous Women 171-2; Dewindt M. Good Morning 101, 108-9, 113, 168-9; Innes E. Chersonese Vol.1. 34-6, 74-6, 131-2, 136-49, 235-7, 264, 269; Vol.2. 6-7, 71-6, 131, 176.

\textsuperscript{253} Gullick J.M. Adventurous Women 153; Dewindt M Good Morning 62, 132, 142-3, 206, 213-4, 263; Brooke S. Queen of Head-hunters 27, 58-9, 61, 172; Aspinal P. Skirt Tales 87; Innes E.
considering that a Malay sultan's daughter might be the equal of a British administrator's wife. These are also the limits of any possible feminist statements by her, rather more enigmatic than Margaret Brooke's nominal approval of the idea of female suffrage but outright condemnation of her perceptions of feminist behaviour. Instead, Emily chose to ignore James' failures described by Isabella Bird, Douglas and Low and to represent him loyally as well-meaning, decent but misunderstood, simultaneously serving the primary purpose of her book, namely presenting James and his 'cause' in the best light possible. She may also have seen her assumption of all domestic decisions and, like Margaret in the Rajah's absence, some of James' responsibilities in his absence as simply an extension of the role of her British contemporaries at home. Perhaps, however, as Khoo Kay Kim suggests, her unjustifiably acidic remarks about Hugh Low, the luxuries with which he entertained the Inneses at his residency and the contrast, in her eyes unjustified, between his position and theirs simply disguised her disappointment and frustration over James' inadequacies and her failed aspirations.254

While Emily gives the impression of sociability among her equals, she also had a clear view of what constituted an equal. At Langat, these boundaries were less clearly marked than in the SS with their larger European community. At Langat and Jugra, apart from six brief visits, all official and by men, Emily's European contacts were the family of the Resident, Bloomfield Douglas (Fig. A5.8) and Douglas's male entourage. James' career plus colonial protocol necessitated a good relationship with his superior officer. Emily disliked Douglas' overbearing insensitivity and his loud voice, a sentiment echoed by Isabella Bird, but, initially, she both visited him and played hostess to him on many occasions. Problems arose with the arrival of Mrs. Douglas and her children. As the Resident's wife, Mrs. Douglas was Emily's superior but Emily was unable to accept the daughter of a yeoman farmer as "a lady," even if, according to Isabella Bird, she was "dignified and gracious." Moreover, the manners of her Australian-reared children may not have been refined enough for Emily.

Realising the need to preserve the appearance of good relations, Emily, like the EIC wives in 1820s Macau, resorted to a cool, discreet distance but only succeeded in eventually provoking Douglas’ vindictive animosity.\footnote{Douglas Diaries May & December 1876 JMBRAS 48 (2); Bird I. Golden Chersonese 217-8, 224, 241; Brownfoot J. Incorporated Wife 203; Gullick J.M. Emily Innes 1843-1929 178; Hoe S. Private Life 9; Innes E. Chersonese Vol.1. 263-8; Vol.2. 188}

Emily’s self-isolating discrimination was also directed towards members of Douglas’ entourage whose visits she saw as an “unmitigated nuisance.” One of these was Harry Syers, later FMS Commissioner of Police, whose articulation of English placed him, in Emily’s eyes, as belonging to the “rough-and-ready order,” with no regard for the abilities which so impressed others, like Isabella Bird. Over Turney, James’ Eurasian subordinate Collector, Emily merely voiced British contempt for Eurasians, flawed copies of themselves with no true identity. To her, he was simply “the Eurasian,” “whitey-brown,” the unreliable, untrustworthy “little man.” It is the attitude of the ‘pure-blooded’ British towards the Eurasian Indians or the Creoles in Jamaica and that expressed by Isabella Bird about the “half-breed” children of the Malaccan Portuguese. It also surfaces in the literature of the period, Bertha Mason in Jane Eyre perhaps being the most notorious example. With only three other Europeans at Durian Sabatang, Emily, glad of what company there was, had little scope for social discrimination. However, her excitement over a visit to Singapore, with its familiar “civilised” atmosphere, western entertainment, varied western food and abundance of “white faces” made it clear where she felt comfortable.\footnote{Bird I. Golden Chersonese 130-2, 226-34, 248; McClintock A. Imperial Leather 62-3; Bronte J. Jane Eyre London, 1847. Ch.27; Innes E. Chersonese Vol.1. 119, 122-3, 129, 170-1, 263; Vol.2. 75-6, 177-80, 227.}

She would have understood her position in the “snake-pit” of Singapore’s “would-be fashionable women”\footnote{Gullick J.M. Adventurous Women 155} or accepted her place in Kuching’s small but rigidly-observed hierarchy, probably more readily than Margaret Brooke appears to have done. Margaret’s more privileged status and greater sympathy with local society enabled her make friends among the aristocratic Malay women and to avoid the English bickering over precedence which she found irksome. Emily’s denial of local customs and behaviour, as inferior to her own, led to her withdrawal from contact with the local women who she perceived as beyond saving, dismissing the
chiefs' wives, her local equivalent, rajahs' wives and Sultan’s "womenfolk" all as neither superior in "manner" or "intelligence," "common," "intrusive" and "tiresome."\(^{258}\)

Her isolation from other Europeans, however, made her more dependent than her urban peers on interaction with the indigenous population, in Emily's case the male members of the Sultan's family. These she obviously considered her inferiors. Although acknowledging some friendship, respect and sympathy for Sultan Abdul Samad (Fig. A5.9), she still regarded him as an "unclothed old savage." She was patronisingly amused by the Tunku Panglima Raja's failure to grasp the rules of tennis and clashed bitterly with Tunku Dia Udin over his misconceived attempts at western table manners, outraged at the "unhygienic slovenliness" the "savages" of his entourage imposed on her household while he was her guest. She shows no introspection over her expectations while failure to achieve her standards simply confirms her view of the unbridgeable gap between the two cultures and the superiority of her own. Her six years in Malaya appear to have confirmed her views on racial stereotypes, common to many of her contemporaries, the "unsophisticated," mendacious Malay, the "laziest being on the face of the earth" who refused to adapt to western ways, and the "villainous," "absolutely brutal" Chinese, "all of the coolie class" who "saw no disgrace in being dirty." In the language of empire, she reduced them, at best, to "intelligent children" unable to communicate anything "interesting" and, at worst, to "savages" or lower. Their servant, Apat, "honest and truthful for a Chinaman," demonstrated "canine" fidelity just as Isabella Bird referred to the "monkey-like" faces of Sultan Abdulla's sons.\(^{259}\)

Like her urban peers, Emily faced unfamiliar problems over health and safety, often made worse by her isolated situation. Poor food supplies and lack of appetite due to the climate resulted in malnutrition while loneliness and boredom must have caused depression. Between the two, she appears to have often suffered ill-health and, unlike Margaret Brooke, could not expect recuperative periods in England. Inability

\(^{258}\) Brooke M. My Life in Sarawak 22-9,61,176; Dewindt M. Good Morning 45-51,64,100-2; Innes E. Chersonese Vol.1.26-7,77-9,83-4

\(^{259}\) Bird I. Golden Chersonese128,140,231,247,281; Andaya & Andaya History of Malaysia 175-6; McClintock A. Imperial Leather 17,32,49-51,66; Innes E. Chersonese Vol.1.4,39-44,152-7,173-88,231-2; Vol.2.2,93,195,219; Gullick J.M. Glimpses of Selangor 19,97; Hall C. White Male 79
to adopt, as Margaret did, local costume more suited to the climate must have added to her problems and her layers of night-attire prevented her from ever sleeping properly (Figs. A.5.3, A5.10). For her, medical supplies and facilities were virtually non-existent, access to those in the SS was difficult and, indeed, Emily was often required to use her limited skills as doctor to the neighbourhood. She faced close encounters with cholera epidemics, like Margaret Brooke, describing them with some sang froid, admittedly in retrospect. She risked malaria, endured more constant battles than her urban sisters with mosquitoes, ants and a variety of other insects, poisonous snakes, centipedes and scorpions and had tigers frequently at the paling round her house. Although, as she recognised, her personal safety was never at risk from the Malays who surrounded her on a daily basis, her fear of the Chinese appears justified when she was attacked by a group of them and left for dead during her visit to Pangkor.260

In all she gives the impression of an intelligent, courageous woman, adhering closely, and with commitment, to the imperial expectations of a colonial wife. She faced more extreme conditions than her peers in Singapore and Penang or privileged, short-term visitors like Isabella Bird261 and her isolation from all that was familiar probably made her more dependent on establishing the domestic standards and rituals she understood, in order to survive. At times, this makes her appear acrimonious, snobbish, even petty but, for six years, she also coped with self-reliance and resourcefulness in circumstances which would have defeated many women.

Conclusion

This early period, centring mainly on the SS, saw substantial development in amenities, safety and social life for the European colonials. The women, a small but visible group, were faced with the problems of distance from the familiarity of home, a tropical climate, ‘alien’ peoples and unknown diseases. To compensate, were the colonisers’ large, comfortable houses, retinue of servants, imported carriages, regular

260 Innes E. Chersonese Vol.1. 3-6, 19, 33, 36-7,40-2, 64-9, 109-112,143-9,160-6, 215, 230, 254-61; Vol.2. 21-3, 36-46, 69, 77-8, 85-123, 144-6, 201, 206-7; Appendix 7; Brooke M. My Life in Sarawak 26-9, 73-5,93, 110, 177-83; Dewindt M. Good Morning 69-70, 132, 141, 203, 208; Khoo Kay Kim Chersonese Introduction: xi, xiv-v; McClintock A. Imperial Leather 27, 49, 67.
261 Innes E Chersonese Vol.2.243;Bird I. Golden Chersonese 234; Khoo Kay Kim Chersonese
supply of imported European goods and rapidly improving facilities. In contrast to the progressively changing framework in which they lived, were their attitudes towards their own position as representatives of a great empire and towards the local population. They presented a homogenous front, never questioned their status as the wives of the ruling race and distanced themselves from all local ethnicities, apart from patriarchal social and educational duties towards the locals, perceived as vehicles for imparting moral views and saving the indigenous population “from a vicious and degrading course of life.”

They considered no alternative to a European life-style wherever possible, making little concession to climate in diet and clothing and, while their expectations were principally domestic, their rarity-value must have also led them to assume some influence within their own community. Those few, like Emily Innes, in the Malay States prior to annexation, enjoyed few of the SS amenities but maintained the same attitudes and expectations. Apart from various social activities to partially alleviate boredom, most, as in India, must have had leisured but repetitive lives, at a higher living-standard and wielding greater influence than they could have expected in England and in stark contrast to those of their Australian contemporaries.

Introduction; Gullick J.M. Adventurous Women 193

Penang Register, August 13th, 1828.

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Singapore 1823 by Lieutenant Jackson. (National Museum of Singapore)

Singapore 1839 by G.D. Coleman. (Antiques of the Orient, Singapore)
Penang 1867 (Old Penang, S. Hayes Hoyt)

East India Company map of early Singapore (People of Early Singapore, H.F. Pearson)
Fig. 2.1 Arrival at Singapore
‘For the Shore’, The Graphic, 24th Feb 1883
(Antiques of the Orient, Singapore)
Fig. 2.2 Sophia Raffles (replica of a Miniature by A.E. Chalon; Adventurous Women in S.E. Asia, J.M. Gullick)

Fig. 2.3 Harriette McDougall (Adventurous Women in S.E. Asia, J.M. Gullick)

Fig. 2.4 David Brown (Penang Museum and Art Gallery)

Fig. 2.5 Mother St Mathilde (Convent Chronicles, L. Kong, S.A. Low and J. Yip)
Fig. 2.6 Mrs Kahleke’s establishment Singapore 1870s, originally Coleman’s house. (Singapore Then and Now, R. Tyers.)
Fig. 2.7 Upper picture. Suffolk House, Penang 1818 by William Daniell. (Penang Museum and Art Gallery)

Fig. 2.8 Lower picture. Glugor House and Plantation, Penang 1818 by William Daniell (Penang Museum and Art Gallery)
Fig. 2.9 Upper picture. The Mission House, Kuching 1851 by H. McDougall. (Sketches of our Life at Sarawak, H McDougall)

Fig. 2.10 Lower picture. Dr Mackinnon’s House, Penang 1811 by J. Wathen (Antiques of the Orient)
'Fitting the Young Ladies for Society', water-colour by Edward H. Cree, 1845, whose roving eyes took note of their figures which 'slight clothing and the absence of stays plainly displayed'. (Brigadier G. H. Cree)

Fig. 2.11 Upper picture. Ball at Penang 1845 by E.H. Cree (Old Penang, S.H. Hoyt)

Fig. 2.12 Lower picture. Ball at Singapore 1854
(Illustrated London News, 22nd April 1854)
Fig. 2.13 Upper picture. ‘The Padang or Esplanade’ by J.T. Thomson (Singapore 1851; The National Museum of Singapore)

Fig. 2.14 Lower picture. ‘Visiting Penang Hill 1863’ by Jackson. (Imperial Belvederes, S.R. Aiken)
Fig. 2.15 Upper picture. Transport up Penang Hill 1880

Fig. 2.16 Lower picture. Life on Penang Hill. Interior of ‘Woodlands’ 1858
(Both figures from Imperial Belvederes, S.R. Aiken)
This monument
Is erected
By his Brother Officers and Friends.
To the Memory of
Lieut. Colonel GREGORY JACKSON
15th Regiment M.N.I.
Aged 55 Years.
Also of
His Wife MATILDA JACKSON
Aged 59 Years.
And their Eldest Son GREGORY JACKSON
Aged 21 Years.
Both Parents expired on the Morning of
The 1st April 1855, and their Son
The previous afternoon from jungle fever.

SACRED IN THE MEMORY OF
RICHARD SAUNDERS S.B. OF CALCUTTA
WHO DIED ON THIS ISLAND ON 4TH JUNE 1845 AGED 40 YRS
THAT WE MIGHT SLEEP IN ABSENCE, AND BEING WITH HIM
WHEN FROM THE DUST OF DUST I RISE
To take my mansion in the skies
E'en then shall this be all my plea -
Jesus hath laid his life for me.

ALSO OF MARY ALEXANDRA
THE INFANT M. ONLY CHILD OF
RICHARD SAUNDERS & CHARLOTTE HIS WIFE
WHO DIED ON BOARD THE DOW DANG OFF PENANG
JULY 16th 1843 AGED 6 MONTHS & 22 DAYS.
JULY 1843 AGED 16 MONTHS & 22 DAYS.
JULY 1843 AGED 16 MONTHS & 22 DAYS.
JULY 1843 AGED 16 MONTHS & 22 DAYS.
JULY 1843 AGED 16 MONTHS & 22 DAYS.

This monument is erected by the bereaved widow another.

SACRED
To the Memory of
JO ANNA,
Wife of the Revd. J. INCE, Missionary.
Who after a short but painful illness entered
Into the Joy of her Lord, June 1st 1823,
Aged 21 Years.
Taking with her to the Grave her Infant Son
Whose remains were enclosed in the same
Coffin with her own.

We are more than Conquerors through Him that loved us.

Of such is the Kingdom of Heaven.
CAROLINE RACHEL INCE.
Born Oct. 11th 1819, Died April 5th 1820,
Aged 3 Months and 26 Days.

ELIZA INCE.
Born April 20th 1821, Died May 23rd 1821,
Aged One Month and 4 Days.

Fig. 2.17 Gravestones in Penang Colonial Cemetery (photographs by P. Tilley)
Chapter 3
The Later Years. 1880 – 1941

Introduction

Extension of British control in Malaya with annexation of the FMS, subsequent development of towns like KL and Ipoh, Government policy, expansion of the British middle-class due to post-war prosperity and depletion of the British male population in the Great War led to an increase in the number of European women in Malaya during this period. The new influx was seen as “the most fundamental change...over the last twenty-five years” and was part of a more widespread development within the colonial context. After the Indian Mutiny, government policy sought to address the problem of declining British prestige in the colonies by encouraging the presence of more white women and, consequently, more settled families. By 1931, men in the FMS only outnumbered women by two to one, compared to three to one in 1911. Improved communications with home led to a fluctuating population and change in attitude towards Malaya, seeing it as “a temporary rather than permanent habitation,” a place of work until it was “time to retire.” There was also a status change for some European women. While many still came in a domestic capacity, there were more single, working women and married women with independent careers who, with the exception of Catholic nuns, also mainly saw Malaya as a temporary home. In contrast, the Sumatran Dutch were, to Katharine Sim, “real settlers in the deepest and more permanent sense of the word,” who “live differently from us in their colonies,” accepting the country as “their own home.” Despite changes around them, in status and improved facilities, the attitudes and expectations of Malayan European women remained basically the same as their predecessors although greater numbers and self-sufficiency led to further distancing from the local population. The presence of more white women, not only in Malaya but throughout the empire, has been seen as an important factor in the decline of race...
relations during the later 19th and early 20th centuries. Using a similar range of source materials to ‘The Early Years,’ this chapter presents a survey of these women between 1880 and 1941, including attention to the new, official marriage-regulations and assesses what changes took place between the two periods.

**Arrival and First Impressions**

The journey to Malaya continued to be by sea but made safer, more available and more comfortable by improved sea-routes and better transportation. Newspaper passenger-lists indicate a steady flow of visitors to the SS, especially Singapore, on business, pleasure or en route elsewhere. By the late-19th Century, Malaya was a vacation destination for the affluent who sometimes sailed their own yachts there, their experiences often recorded by a female passenger. P&O’s fortnightly service between Penang and London in 1903 cost $340 single first class, with the option of disembarking at Marseilles and continuing by train, or Penang to Hong Kong, return “with one native servant” was $110. Other services included the Ocean Steamship Company, Lloyd Steam Navigation Company, the Negapatam Line, while “Extra Steamers” offered “excellent” but limited accommodation for “1st Saloon passengers.”

Life at sea was “full of high spirits,” catering for the active as well as “fancy work and fancy talk” for the ladies. Entertainment included sports, concerts and competitions organized by a self-appointed committee, plus after-dinner dancing and often a “grand ball” to which the captain invited both first and second-class passengers. Besides “fresh water to wash,” there was “fresh food all the way” from the “freezing chambers,” with “every luxury” from lobster to salad “fresh and crisp as if they had come from the morning’s market.” It was a striking contrast to one woman’s recollection of an 1870s four-month voyage to Australia when passengers provided all their own food and ran out of water before their destination.

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6 North M. *Recollections: Brassey A. A Voyage.*
7 *Straits Echo* 20th May, 1903
8 Georgetown City Council *Penang Past and Present* 29
9 *Straits Echo* 20th May, 1903
10 Hill A. *Around the British Empire* Herbert Jenkins Ltd, London, 1913. 13, 44-50
The main inter-war shipping-lines East were P&O, Blue Funnel, Glen Line, BI and Bibby Line, providing even greater levels of comfort and entertainment. Margaret Brooke used P&O to Kuching via Singapore or, sometimes, the shorter Messageries Maritimes or North German Lloyd lines from Genoa to reduce time at sea and discomfort of sea-sickness. Shipping-lines varied in quality. Blue Funnel with the "comparative luxury," of its one class was known for its relaxed atmosphere. In contrast, P&O had "considerable style" and the Kennaway sisters, a Tanjong Malim rubber-planter's daughters, recalled revelling in its "pre-war luxury and the romance of dancing with "young naval officers." In the 1930s, it was a "very military establishment," the two dinner sittings being announced by bugle call to "the very handsome dining-room." On board, most East-bound passengers appear to have started establishing the club-like atmosphere central to their colonial life. Women, "daughters going out to join their parents, fiancées coming out as brides-to-be and wives following their husbands after an extended leave," were outnumbered by men and were in great demand. The "lovely feeling of freedom" apparently encouraged "fierce flirtations" and shipboard romances and it was not unusual for a man to find his fiancée had decided to marry someone else she had met on board. If he had paid her passage, it was customary for his successor to refund the cost. For women not interested in dancing or flirting, there was the bar or bridge for the "very hard cases" who played "from morning till night."

Penang and Singapore were still the first destinations for most new-arrivals and many first impressions were the same as those experienced by earlier women. Some "seldom forgot" their "first sight of Malaya's shores," Penang's "extraordinary beauty," "deep, blue water," "green verdure" and "steep hills rising from the water's edge" in a "land of perpetual summer" and Singapore's "shining and white" buildings facing the sea and distant green hills. They also noticed the multinational nature of the "closely packed houses," "men of every colour, in every conceivable garb," "ceaseless traffic," the "babel of languages" and the comparatively small number of Europeans. Alongside the familiar European sector, with its 'English village'

11 Dewindt M. Good Morning. 132, 203, 207, 261-2
12 Allen C. (edt) Tales From the South China Seas: Images of the British in South-East Asia in the Twentieth Century. Abacus, London, 1994. 31-6, 203, 237-8; Shennan M. Midday Sun 190-1; Lewis G.E.D. Out East 30-4
13 Swettenham F. British Malaya 2-11; Munro G. Malaya Through a Woman's Eyes Crown Colonist
padang, town hall and church, was the heat and dust and unfamiliar, perhaps threatening, smells, sights and constant clamour of a large, male-dominated local population. Some, like Helen Candee, in 1927, did not see beyond the “English hotel, with English people,” “English motor cars,” “English club” across the square and “English cathedral with English chimes that ring out the English hours.” Others, like Charlotte Cameron, acknowledged the town’s oriental side but were unenthusiastic about its alien nature, seeing “dried fish...preserved since the days of the Ark,” or “tentacles of octopus” simply as a “happy hunting-ground for insects.” Many first impressions are tinged with pride in perceptions of British development and supremacy. To Florence Caddy, 1889 Singapore was “flourishing and enlightened” and “advanced and well-governed,” in contrast to “quaint and crowded” Bangkok. St Andrew’s was “very nice and neat inside,” and designed for coolness, the Raffles Hotel was an ideal place to lunch and read the newspapers while the “interminable line of wharves” and “unbroken chain of ships” flying “every known flag, but mostly the red ensign of Britain,” were a constant reminder of British power.

Not all women were daunted by Singapore’s oriental side. Despite its flatness and “constant damp, muggy heat,” Ethel Colquhoun, in 1901, admired its “verdant mass of greenery” and found its “native streets” full of “fascination” and the “queerest medley” of “Oriental races.” Mary Macfarlane Park, in 1914, was equally fascinated by the Malay boys diving for coins around the boat. Although deploring the “Turkish bath” climate, she was amused by the monkeys in the trees and impressed by the variety of tropical fruit but decided that “a good strawberry would surpass them all.” What struck Una Ebden, daughter of Malacca’s Resident Councillor, was the “enormous growth” and greenery of the Malayan countryside making it look like “a large greenhouse.” Another new experience for European women, here as in India, was the “nakedness everywhere” of bare-chested and bare-legged locals. However, there appear to have been few “well-bred faintings,” even “the most fastidious” not

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14 Jayapal M. Old Singapore 33, 36; Turnbull C.M. History of Singapore 112
15 Cameron C. Wanderings in South-Eastern Seas Fisher Unwin Ltd., London, 1924. 50
16 Caddy F. To Siam 227-30
17 Colquhoun E. Two on Their Travels Heinemann, London, 1902 8-16
18 Bastin J. Travellers’ Singapore 166-8
19 Allen C. Tales 207
20 MacMillan M. Women of the Raj 35
being seen to "bat an eye." The increasing opulence of inter-war Singapore immediately struck new arrivals, with its "air of grandeur," "wealth and importance," and "singularly beautiful" European sector like "a vision of home." However not everyone found it impressive. Margaret Wilson, in 1935, considered it "decidedly unprepossessing" after the "beauty of Kuala Lumpur" but perhaps her view was coloured by its "more trying" climate, the expense of furnished accommodation and the lack of modern sanitation after "our lovely bathrooms in Kuala Lumpur."²¹

Katharine Sim, in 1939, described herself as gaping with "rusticated eyes" at Singapore's modern public buildings, "native" waterfront and quarter and "wonderful" European shops, especially Kelly and Walsh, the one up-to-date bookshop, all contrasting with the limited amenities of small-town Lumut. It was a "melting-pot," a "curious," "polyglot" place, "inhabited almost entirely by British and Chinese" but, "unlike Penang," had "no particular charm of its own," a reaction very close to that of Isabella Bird, sixty years previously, although Katharine did like Penang. Her first impression of KL was "a town full of big, creamy-white buildings" with "domes and minarets of Moorish style," and a station like a mosque, its roof designed to London regulations to withstand a three-foot snowfall.²²

Defining the Group

In 1890, the population of KL was predominantly Chinese, about 20,000, with an increasing number of Jaffna Tamils, Eurasians and Malays and an influential group of about 100 Europeans. The first of these, in 1879, was government official, Dominic Daly and his wife, daughter of Bloomfield Douglas, who died shortly afterwards, of cerebral malaria.²³ By 1891, the European number had risen to 151 and between 1901 and 1911, due to rubber-boom wealth, it doubled. Censuses for 1901 record the population as 32,381 persons, just over 1,000 being Europeans and, by 1911, the figure was 46,718 with 2,240 Europeans, equivalent to nearly half the European population of the Straits Settlements. The limited impact of the Great War 1914-1918 was among younger Britons and their families returning home for the men to join the

²¹ Bastin J. Travellers' Singapore 200-3, 224-5; Wilson Malaya 101-23
²² Sim K Malayan Landscape 117, 194-5
armed forces while older Europeans were encouraged to remain to keep the Malayan economy running. After the war, FMS Europeans, although still a small part of the overall population, increased disproportionately to 3,600 by 1921 and 7,300 by 1931. Outside KL, there was the same rapid European growth, although the numbers were smaller. In 1879, there were about forty Europeans in Perak and about fifty in Selangor in 1884. According to the 1891 census, there were 719 Europeans in the FMS, this figure nearly doubling by 1901, because of Government-sector expansion. The 1891 census recorded 224 Europeans in Perak, eight planters, nine in commerce, twelve contractors and builders, six miners and the rest government employees. In Selangor the Europeans were mainly on the coffee plantations and, in Pahang, at the Raub Gold Mine. By 1921, 38% of FMS Europeans were living in the four major towns, 427 in Ipoh, 285 in Taiping, 202 in Seremban, and 1,267 in KL. The 1931 census records over half the 6,350 Europeans as English, nearly one fifth Scots and the remainder including Irish and Australians, described as British, and Dutch, French and Americans, ranked as non-British. Between 1891 and 1931, the FMS European population rose from 719 to 6,350 compared with 4,422 to 10,003 in the SS. The inclusion of Eurasians may have distorted numbers in earlier censuses, but this was rectified by 1911. It also may have affected records of age-sex structure. As the Eurasian structure was close to normal, the sex imbalance in European society may have been greater than records suggest. By 1911, European women appear to have formed one quarter of the total European population in Malaya, rising to one third by 1931.²⁴

The expansion of the inter-war Malayan European community was partly due to the depression in Europe making the colonies more attractive, the previous prosperity enlarging the British middle class and Indian political unrest reducing attraction to the prestigious Indian Civil Service. The community became more self-sufficient and inward-looking and developed its own carefully-demarcated, Government-regulated hierarchy with the British Resident at its head in the FMS and, ultimately, the Governor in Singapore. In 1879, Isabella Bird describes “the whole white population” of Klang “seven men and two women” sitting under one punkah at

²⁴ British Malaya Censuses 1891, 1911, 1921, 1931
church, while the Resident sat alone under another, to emphasise his importance.25

The FMS to which the women of this period came was, from the start, more rigidly and officially stratified than the trade-based SS. Nearly all the men they married were from the British middle class, educated at public schools or selected grammar schools like Manchester and Bedford. Preference, in both the Government sector and the planting and business community, was for men who “excelled at sports,” favouring those who “failed conspicuously at all bookwork and examinations” to intellectual high-flyers unable to “suffer discomfort and hardship.”26 Stress was laid on being “a gentleman,” neither “a boor or underbred.” Most of the women, likewise, came mainly from the same middle-class background or were soon absorbed into the middle-class majority. 27 In Maugham’s “Before the Party,” the background of the central character, the daughter of a “respectable family solicitor,” centres round the Ladies' Golf Club, vicarage garden parties and keeping up appearances, a familiar picture for many colonial women. Thus in their small, highly-integrated colonial society, everyone understood the rules, those not conforming being encouraged to leave while bonds between government families and those of planters or other ‘unofficials,’ were often strengthened by intermarriage.

In such a status-conscious group, as opposed to class-conscious at home, difficulties arose over those who failed to conform, like governesses and train drivers whose low position excluded them from club-membership or any part in European society. Drivers’ wives could not afford shops like John Little’s or Cold Storage, frequented by other European women and had to bargain at ‘native’ emporia. This was perceived to weaken British prestige and the only solution was to eradicate the problem by replacing them with Indians or Eurasians. 28 The same applied to ‘unrespectable’ women. There were no British prostitutes in the FMS, Singapore’s European prostitutes came from other parts of Europe and brothels were located out of view of respectable European women. Any British prostitute could expect immediate deportation to avoid a threat to British prestige, as “the native” who can purchase “for his sensual gratification” a woman of the “same colour as his rulers”

25 Bird I. Golden Chersonese 222
26 Ticknell G.T Early Days in Selangor British Malaya Vol.2 Jan. 1928. 231
27 Letter from Birch E.W. to Colonial Secretary 6th Jan. 1896 (Butcher J.G. British in Malaya 42);
Strobel M. European Women 20, 124; Brownfoot J. Incorporated Wife 203
might possibly thereby lose some of the “respect for the authority” to which “he is accustomed to bow down.” However, with the same dual-standard of morality applied to Asian mistresses, non-British European prostitutes were condoned as a necessary evil but as an inferior group apart. Similar concern was later expressed about the image of western women presented by American films and seen as “responsible, at least to some extent, for the decline in the white man’s prestige.” Here Western women could be seen “cavorting across the silver screen,” contrary to the high moral image the establishment sought to project (Fig. 3.32). An indigenous audience was deemed unable to differentiate between fantasy and true Western life and its “rapture in beholding the bare flesh of a white woman,” expressed “audibly,” roused British fear of lessened respect for “the women of the ruling race.” All films were, therefore, rigorously censored to protect the image of the pure, passionless, unattainable British woman.

**Marriage and Married Women**

This tight control over behaviour also applied to marriage, the official system restricting much freedom of decision. Marriage was expensive to the employer and was perceived to impact strongly on a man’s career and social standing and, ultimately, on British prestige. In the earlier SS, marriage was a personal decision, constrained by financial circumstances and peer-group pressure. In the official-dominated FMS, rules were fixed by the employer, ensuring a man was established in his career before he married and unlikely to endanger his social position or become an embarrassment. Failure to comply could result in dismissal. Companies followed suit so marriage was tightly controlled, directly by official rules and indirectly by social conventions. This attitude contrasted with Australia, where European women, their passages paid, were encouraged to emigrate, ostensibly as domestics but also as potential wives. However, Australia was not a dependency like Malaya but a colony of white settlement needing populating, partly redistributing the overcrowded British working and lower-middle classes.
Problems for women in the FMS compared with the earlier SS in initial lack of essential amenities. Coping with the climate now implied frequent visits home plus a second establishment there and provision had to be made for educating children in Britain. All expenses, apart from the Malayan home, were borne by husbands as, initially, few colonial women worked. This, plus the importance laid on maintaining a living-standard considerably higher than the Asiatics, meant that Malayan colonial men married comparatively late in life. In 1928, a junior planter, earning $247 monthly, paid $100 for food and household necessities, $49 for servants, $44 for drinks, tobacco and club expenses and $20 for clothes, leaving no margin to adequately support a wife. A wife was also a potential distraction to a young man, concern for her health and safety impairing his efficiency. Women like Emily Innes were regarded as making great sacrifices to bring “the comforts and hospitality of home life into the fastnesses of the jungle,” but taking a wife to some remote area was now considered undesirable. This would imply more young married officials in towns with fewer available for rural areas. Employers, who provided accommodation in Malaya, had to subsidise larger houses and more sea-passages for families and forbade marriage until recruits had worked for several years. In the government sector this meant one four-year term of office, although many postponed marriage until after the second term (Fig. 3.1). They were then in their late twenties or early thirties, considered a prudent age, when a man could support a wife in an acceptable style. Planters, apart from those with private means, required their companies’ permission, this depending on their position and salary, again, usually about eight years. British banks had the strictest rules, requiring a formal agreement to marry only after eight years, any infringement resulting in dismissal. This policy was adopted by the large agency houses, with permission usually granted after five years. Thus, the 1931 census shows 22% of European men aged 22 to 29 were married compared to 52% in England and Wales; 54% between 30 and 34, compared to 77%; 70% aged 35 to 39 compared to 85% and 77% between 40 and 44 in the FMS compared to 86% at home. There is a considerable rise in the number of married men in Malaya between 1921 and 1931, 33% to 47% compared with the previous ten years, the largest increase.

Butcher J.G. British in Malaya 84
Planter September 1928
Strobel M. European Women 19-20; Lewis G.E.D. Out East 30; Brownfoot J. Incorporated Wife 191
being in the 30 to 34 year age group.\textsuperscript{35} By 1931, 28% of Malaya's European population were women, about 5,000, almost half living in Singapore and, by 1940, this overall number had increased to around 8,500.\textsuperscript{36} Modern developments and improved mobility during the inter-war years also impacted on marriage statistics, particularly for men in rural areas and the 1921 census recording a sharp increase here for European men between 30 and 34 to 50% from 26% in 1911, compared with a 46% to 59% rise in the towns.\textsuperscript{37}

Compared with the number of bachelors, there were few unmarried European women and competition for them was high. Ethel Colquhoun recorded the 1901 Singapore English community as "largely made up of males" and that the small proportion of unmarried girls was a "deplorable state of affairs" for society in general. In such a small community, it was impossible for women to apportion their attention "comfortably" or " impartially."\textsuperscript{38} In 1923, \textit{Straits Times} reporter George Peet found only six eligible European girls in Singapore and later married one, Laura Buel, an American missionary teacher.\textsuperscript{39} In 1925, European women there were described as good-looking, with "boundless energy" and well-dressed in "the latest fashions." Moreover, as the elderly "retire home" not one "appeared older than forty-five." Japanese propaganda in 1938 claimed that all European Singaporean women "sprang from the petty bourgeoisie of England and Scotland" which probably contained some truth, but, more implausibly, that "scrubwomen, farmers' daughters and manicurists" all became Singapore 'ladies,' the "Cockney in their speech" refuting "amazing stories of aristocratic backgrounds" which conflicts with the government's middle-class-recruitment policy.\textsuperscript{40}

By the late 1930s, Singapore had about eleven European men to every woman, a ratio worsened by the influx of soldiers and sailors, so any woman "who could walk without the aid of crutches" was in great demand. Schoolteacher, Tamsin Luckham, recalled that, as an "unmarried girl," she was "welcomed into all the clubs"

\textsuperscript{35} Censuses FMS 1911,Table 14; British Malaya Table 18 (1921), Table 112 (1931); Strobel M.European Women 20
\textsuperscript{36} Shennan M. Midday Sun 188-9
\textsuperscript{37} Census Tables 1911, 1921, 1931
\textsuperscript{38} Colquhoun E. Two on Travels 8-16
\textsuperscript{39} Peet G. Rickshaw Reporter Eastern Universities Press, Singapore, 1985. 223
\textsuperscript{40} Bastin J. Travellers' Singapore 207, 241
in KL by men “pleased to have some girls” and Una Ebden remembered her “lovely, carefree, irresponsible life” as one of a greatly sought-after minority with “no shortage of dates” and men “queuing up” to “book” dancing partners “three weeks ahead” (Fig. 3.31). Some of the single women were female relatives of senior government officials or businessmen while others went to Malaya specifically to work as teachers, like Dorothy Hawkings, in charge of the Cameron Highlands European nursery school, and Tamsin Luckham, at the KL Pudu English School, nurses like Mary Cullerton at Batu Gajah hospital or as doctors and met their husbands there. All single women being under pressure to marry and fit into the established hierarchy, the nursing service had so many engagements and resignations that it was often accused of being a marriage bureau rather than a medical service. Many in the first category were born in Malaya and returned after education in Britain, usually to find a husband as prospects were better there. A similar situation could be found in India. Others in this ‘fishing fleet’ came regularly from Australia to stay with relatives. Some, like Ethel Hume, sister of a government official, came on prolonged visits to relatives with no ulterior motive apart from seeing the world.

With so few available eligible women in Malaya, most men found wives on their six-month furlough. Most were eager to marry, having become “demoralized here for lack of a woman and a real home,” but six months gave them little time. Some were probably hampered by gaucherie, caused by isolation from European female company. The young planters in Tropic Fever display similar awkwardness when confronted by two Australian entertainers at the club or by the company director’s attractive wife. One advantage for them was the British sex-ratio, post-war unmarried women heavily outnumbering bachelors. Sometimes marriage took place during the furlough but often it was postponed, the woman travelling out to marry her fiancé, the “beach wedding” (Fig. 3.3) taking place within days of arrival in Malaya and usually organised by a married acquaintance of her husband or the wife of a senior colleague.

41 Allen C. Tales 74, 203-5, 207-9
42 Gullick. J.M. Adventures and Encounters. 174-5; Shennan M. Midday Sun 188; Brownfoot J. Incorporated Wife 189
43 Szekely L. Tropic Fever 89-91, 193-201, 241
44 Shennan M. Midday Sun 191; Allen C. Tales 233
Although some men may have followed the advice to “hang around” a London teaching hospital and “pick up a nurse,” their obvious starting-point for finding a wife was among family and friends and many women had known their prospective husbands from youth. Some were long-standing arrangements, like Thomas Barnes, a Dunlop employee, and his fiancée who waited fifteen years to marry, others were whirlwind romances where women arrived with husbands they barely knew in alien surroundings and ill-understood situations. While many clearly rose to the challenge, others must have been distressed by the conditions they found on arrival. Although there must have been many love-matches, some couples must have married for other reasons, like Sydney Swettenham, seeking to escape an overbearing parent or, Margaret Brooke, who, although she “respected and admired” her husband, was “never in love with him,” but thought she might be “some help to him” and, simultaneously, exchange her “boring home-life” for one with “interest.” Likewise, she was realistic enough to accept he had married her, not because he was “madly in love” but because she was “young and very healthy” and he wanted an heir. While she admits this made home-life “rather bleak,” she claims not to expect to “interest him greatly” or rouse “demonstrations of romantic attachment,” was grateful for “his toleration” of her “youthful inexperience,” and accepted that she “bored him.” Like most of her contemporaries, she also had to accept that “his wife had no separate entity” but was “his property,” owning nothing but her wedding-ring. Disparity of ages (Fig. 3.2) and ‘bleak’ situations far from everything familiar must have been problems in many such marriages. Margaret Brooke’s privileged position bestowed some advantages but duty involved bearing three more prospective heirs when her first three children all died of cholera. Sydney Swettenham, with more idealised expectations, found life in the East, the demands of her official position and an indifferent, overbearing, frequently absent husband too much for her fragile mental health. Even she did not suffer so dramatically as Ellen Saul of Upper Clutha, New Zealand who, in 1879, became depressed, ate strychnine and died in agony. Like Sydney, her predicament evoked a callous response, the coroner expressing his

45 Allen C. Tales 202
46 Shennan M. Midday Sun 189-90; Allen C. Tales 209, 219
47 Dewindt M. Good Morning ix, x, 24-27, 33-34, 263
sympathy with her husband over the considerable noise she made while dying, distracting him from his game of cards in the same room.48

Many new wives were probably courted by men often less than honest about themselves or life in Malaya, resulting in the women’s eventual disillusion and disorientation. Those cherishing fantasies of the ‘Romantic East,’ must have been unprepared for the ‘alien’ environment and the demands of their husbands’ jobs on their marriage. The planter’s wife, besides an exhausted, work-orientated husband, might face the hostility of the ‘old brigade’ who believed plantation life was no place for a ‘white’ woman with her “narrower ideas of decency,” a complaint with some foundation as civil-service wife, Madeline Daubeny, acknowledges. Her isolation and monotonous daily life meant that intellectual stimulus, female companionship or real friends were unlikely. Like the Dutch women of the Medan plantations in Tropic Fever, thinking how romantic it would be “alone with a young husband” in the “idyllic sombre virgin forest,” she would discover reality was a husband starting work at half-past five and returning twelve long hours later, “dead-tired after a long day” in the equatorial sun, “taciturn and irritable,” and simply “worn out, unwilling to eat, unwilling to talk.” Life meant waiting and isolation with no neighbours for miles around and “not a single European.” 50 Madeline Daubeny saw no other “white woman” for six months, reminiscent of Emily Innes’s isolation from “white faces.”51

This picture is echoed by Madelon Lulofs, a Sumatran Dutch planter’s wife 52 and by Katharine Sim who described the Malayan planter’s life as “a monotonous one,” his wife spending many hours daily with only the servants as company while her evenings might evolve round a “not very serious game of mah-jong” before an early bed.53

Part of the European woman’s imperial role was to counteract their menfolk’s drinking problems or liaisons with local women, the result of pre-marriage loneliness.54 However, even the more pragmatic must have been forced to face

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48 Aspinall P. Skirt Tales Foreword
49 Lulofs M. Rubber 103; Allen C. Tales 221
50 Szekely L. Tropic Fever 245-7, 263
51 Allen C. Tales 225
52 Lulofs M. Rubber 76-84
53 Sim K. Malayan Landscape 207-8, 220-1
54 Midgley C. Gender and Imperialism Introduction; Incorporated Wife Brownfoot J. 189, 190,
experiences similar to those of Millicent in Maugham’s “Before the Party” or Doris in “The Force of Circumstance.” Millicent, 27, married Harold, 44, despite the age disparity, not out of love but because he had a “very good position,” and she, like Margaret Brooke, “wasn’t likely to get a better chance.” Harold epitomised the many men coming to England “in order to marry” and “didn’t much mind who.” On returning to Malaya, Millicent discovers that he is an alcoholic hoping marriage would help break the habit. Doris, who married for love, is confronted with her husband’s Malay mistress and their three children. In both cases, the marriages suffer, Doris returning to England and Millicent, more dramatically, murdering Harold although disguising it as suicide. Others, like Leslie Crosbie in “The Letter” or her real-life counterpart, Ethel Proudlock, may have found consolation, attention or even love, in discreetly conducted infidelities with European men, although it was never conclusively proved that Ethel Proudlock and William Steward were lovers. Moreover, not all such situations remained discreet. The Proudlock case ended in murder and a scandalous public trial. Maugham points out that his stories were written to entertain and the incidents he selected were not “of common occurrence.” Most Malayan Europeans, he claimed, were “ordinary people ordinarily satisfied with their station in life,” “good, decent, normal” and “as happy with their wives as are most married couples.” Perhaps this disclaimer was his attempt to placate colonials who had entertained him during his visit and expressed outrage at the way he depicted them. Perhaps Maugham, while not accurate in detail, had come too close to capturing the essence of this tightly-self-regulated, somewhat repressed community.

Besides possible marital problems, women faced the continuing difficulties of homesickness, heat, childbirth and rearing children where child-mortality was common and there were fears, mainly unfounded, over danger from a large local population. Despite a more luxurious lifestyle than they could expect at home and reduced isolation through the advent of the motor car, their new world was narrow and conventional, carefully-regulated and buzzing with intrigues in the race for promotion. Government wives had to cope with frequent transfers, about every two years, as their husbands were promoted but their living conditions improved

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Gartrell B.169

55 Maugham W.S. Sixty-Five Short Stories 221-2
56 Maugham W.S. Malaysian Stories xix
correspondingly. For planters’ wives, there was also the prospect of moving at a moment’s notice. A static Manager’s wife could expect a minimum of twelve years on one estate but an Acting Estate Manager might move every six months. Wives might find themselves completely isolated with only limited access to a car often needed elsewhere and distances too great for walking or other forms of transport. Finally, there was the return to Europe, with readjustment to its values and, perhaps, lower, living-standards.57

**Working Women**

During this period, especially the inter-war years, more European women were employed in Malaya although not on the same scale as in contemporary Britain and still only a small percentage of their Malaya peer group.58 Although working women enjoyed greater social prominence there than in Britain, they had less economic importance in Malaya’s male-dominated workforce that had not been depleted by the war. Most worked in traditional areas of female employment as doctors, nurses or teachers, often connected with missionary enterprises and basically extending the missionary wife’s unpaid role.59 Others went under Government auspices as conditions for Government nurses were better in Malaya than in other colonies but there was no role for women in the British Colonial Service until after World War2.60 Married women were likely to work from choice rather than financial pressure, marriage regulations ensuring their husbands’ salaries could support them. Few did as working was discouraged as contrary to their image of dependency and lack of professional ambition. Their domestic duties, if conscientiously performed, would leave them with no time for an independent career. Widows, however, if they remained in Malaya, would probably have to work to support themselves and their children. Some, like the widow of John Cameron, owner of the Singapore Free Press, took over the business after their husbands’ death, while others, like Elizabeth Newton in Singapore, entered the boarding-house trade.61 Outside the more conventional professions were women like Mlle.Cuisinier, “a very determined and

57 Incorporated Wife Brownfoot J.194, Gartrell B. 174  
58 Brownfoot J. Incorporated Wife 189  
59 Midgley C. Gender and Imperialism 33, 51-7 (Haggis J. White Women)  
60 Strobel M. European Women 74; Brownfoot J. Incorporated Wife 204  
61 Turnbull C.M History of Singapore 118; Shennan M. Midday Sun 60; Incorporated Wife Gartrell B. 172, Brownfoot J.189, 191, 204, 205
intrepid French lady" involved in a 1933 reconnoitring journey from the Cameron Highlands to the East Coast Railway or Frances Russell, arriving in 1890 to help her husband set up Selangor’s first printing press.

Many teachers and nurses came temporarily, under the auspices of missionary societies or the Catholic Church, often on their way to China or Japan. Janet Lim, a mui tsai, sold into slavery in a wealthy Chinese Singaporean household, voices only admiration for the missionaries with whom she had contact in her early life. These women included Mrs. Birch a “very pretty Englishwoman” who took six orphans Christmas shopping and bought treasured presents for them, and Mrs. Winter, Singapore’s Lady Assistant Protector of Chinese who “spoke little Chinese” but was “someone more than human” and “the saviour of many hundreds of girls.” At Singapore’s Church of England Zenana Mission School, where Janet went in 1934, the missionaries and a few teachers were British amongst a racially-mixed staff. Miss Lane, the Principal, a former missionary in China and the Scottish Miss Kilgour were closely involved in their pupils’ welfare. Conversion to Christianity was an important part of the school’s agenda, Sunday was strictly observed and Miss Lane and Miss Kilgour were witnesses at girls’ baptisms, substituting Christian for Chinese names. Miss Lane came from a strict Victorian family which discouraged association with the opposite sex, and this was reflected in the school whose main objectives were to provide security and train girls in middle-class domesticity, ready for suitable marriages and subsequent motherhood. These marriages were often arranged by the school and by Miss Lane in particular. In 1935, Miss Thackrah, “large” and “very kind-hearted,” introduced professional training in business, nursing and teaching, besides modernising the kitchens. Janet was most impressed by Miss Kilgour, “one of the greatest woman missionaries in Singapore in my generation” who volunteered for service inspired by a C.E.Z.M.S. speaker home on leave. Unlike some missionaries with “no interest in the local population,” she combined “stern discipline” with “the gift of personal sympathy and understanding.” Another English missionary, Miss Inge, arrived in 1939, Janet’s last year, and introduced further modernisation with sport, updated uniform and encouragement to join outside clubs and establish contact with the local community including boys. Similarly, Josephine Foss, headmistress of
the Pudu girls' school was faced with the official view that marriage and motherhood was a girl's true vocation but insisted on introducing natural sciences and business studies into the school curriculum and turned it into a centre of excellence. She also was involved in training Malay teachers and helping with literacy courses for Malay women. By the 1920s onwards, there were a number of such established English schools in Malaya employing dedicated British teachers.

Janet is more critical of the Singapore Mission Hospital where she began work in 1940. Its over-emphasis on daily chapel-attendance seemed hypocritical compared with the European staff's unfriendly behaviour and distant, superior attitude and left her with "a deep distrust" of "church-going and devotional exercises" which contained no "Christian behaviour." One exception was Sister Muriel Clark who instructed and helped local staff in their work, encouraging them to treat her as a friend. Otherwise, Janet mentions with respect, Dr. Patricia Elliott, who exercised "great influence" at the Mission Hospital, eventually becoming Medical Officer-in-Charge of St. Andrew's Orthopaedic Hospital and "cheerful and friendly" Matron Jones at the Alexandra Military Hospital. Other figures in the medical world also appear to have been greatly respected by the community in which they worked, such as Mrs. Ferguson-Davie who started the medical mission in Singapore which became St. Andrew's Hospital, Elizabeth Darville who, in 1927, initiated maternity and child welfare work in Penang and Dr. Winifred Lowson who, with Dr. Margaret Smallwood, ran the children's ward in Johore Hospital and the women's and children's clinic.

In 1926, a few women were first admitted to the membership of the Malayan Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society. Out of a total membership of 597 in 1934, 567 in 1935 and 597 in 1936, only 6 were women, their numbers increasing in 1937 to 7 against a total membership of 613. During the earlier inter-war years, female membership was slightly higher, 12 in 1926, 10 in 1929 and 8 in 1931. However, there were no women on the organising council which continued to be a male

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64 Shennan M. Midday Sun 192-3
65 Shennan M. Midday Sun 98-101, 112
66 Shennan M. Midday Sun 192
preserve until 1948 when 7 women joined a council of 100. Addresses indicate these members were mainly unmarried, professional women. Of the others, 3 were single and 6 married, one registered care of the Trengganu Survey Office and two living on Kedah and Kelantan estates, their husbands presumably being the managers. Length of their membership ranged between three and seven years, depending perhaps on their husband’s employment in Malaya, or, for single women, whether they married or left Malaya. The professional women included nine single and five married, and long-standing memberships, twelve or thirteen years, belong to the single women. Unless the married women simply resigned, this again may indicate the dependence of their careers on their husbands’ movements. Of the fourteen professional women 1926 to 1938, eight were teachers, three School Inspectors, all in Singapore, and one was in the Education Offices in KL, Ipoh and finally Malacca. Five of the eight teachers were from the SS, four Singapore and one Penang, one was Principal of the Ipoh FMS Anglo-Chinese Girls’ School and two were in the UMS, in Johore and Kedah. The other two were a doctor whose husband was with the FMS Railways in KL and a nursing sister at the Singapore General Hospital. Miss D.M.Buckle, one of the two longest standing members, was awarded the O.B.E. in 1931 before retiring to Chelsea in 1938. As headmistress of Raffles Girls’ School, she was a prominent figure in 1920s Singapore society. There were only three female contributions to the Journal during this period, all suitably feminine in context and predating membership, “Malacca Lace” and “Basket Making at T.Kling, Malacca” by Mrs.Bland, in 1906 and “Some Peculiar Papuan Customs” by Miss L.S.Gibbs in 1918.67 Naturally, these figures could not be considered a cross-section of professional women of this period, JMBRAS being a journal perhaps more likely to attract educationists than nurses. They do however give some indication of the small number of professional women in comparison to the men and reflect the tendency suggested by the 1921 FMS census where the largest group of employed professional and business women were teachers, 71 out of 163 in total. Compared with these numbers, there were two British nurses in the Perak Hospital in 1903 and, by 1921, still only 41 in the entire FMS.68

Catholic nuns, principally those of the Holy Infant Jesus, continued to be prominent in teaching, especially in Singapore and Penang and, after 1907, in Ipoh. In

68 Straits Echo 13th January 1903; British Malay Census 1921 Table 34 FMS
Singapore, pupil numbers, of all nationalities and religions, rose from 197 in 1894 to over 300 in 1904, when several took the Junior Cambridge examination for the first time. The first registered success in the 1905 Senior Cambridge exam was Martina Stolz, later Mother Emile. Financially, the nuns relied on their salaries, public and private donations and supplementary earnings from sewing for the rich Singapore ladies and, between 1885 and 1903, from nursing in the General Hospital. In 1892, they had 200 orphans to feed and clothe plus 30 poor women and 26 babies. Including the Sisters, they catered daily for 300 persons. In 1936 alone, about 400 babies and children were abandoned at the convent gates. During the inter-war years, the Penang and Singapore Convent Schools educated daughters of Europeans and wealthy Straits Chinese. In the selection of a wife for Khoo Sian Ewe, a leading Penang Straits Chinese, and later, for his daughters, emphasis is placed on a convent education. Khoo made several substantial donations to the school and his oldest daughter married “in the presence of a large gathering including many Sisters from the Penang Convent,” even though the bride was not Christian and the ceremony was traditional Chinese. Similarly, the Singapore nuns cultivated the wealthy and influential. Most lay teachers were English, all lessons being conducted in that medium, while the European nuns were now mainly Irish, after the order moved to Ireland in 1912. The schools had a reputation for strict discipline, good manners and high educational standards, receiving Grade I Government classification. During the inter-war years, responding to changing attitudes towards women, the curriculum was enlarged from its middle-class domestic orientation to include geography, literature, history, algebra, geometry, sciences, shorthand, typing and book-keeping (Fig. 3.5). Physical training and sports to promote good health and school orchestras and drama societies to develop performing talents were likewise encouraged although physical relaxation for the nuns continued to be “in two long facing rows” walking slowly “back and forth again along the length of the path” each “talking with the opposite partner.”

Even here segregation was defined by money. Day girls and boarders did not mix outside the classroom and boarders were further divided into first and second class. The first class (Fig. 3.4), daughters of European diplomats, civil servants,

69 Pillay T. & J. In the Old Old School, a Place to Say ‘Goodbye’. Straits Times Annual 1974  
70 Straits Echo and Times of Malaya 19th January, 1939  
71 Yeap JK The Patriarch Times Books International, Singapore, 1984 50, 74, 95  
72 Kong, Low, Yip Convent Chronicles 65, 69, 75, 81.
planters and miners and high-ranking Asians, paid higher fees, enjoyed better facilities and diet and were looked after by Irish nuns. The second class, from middle-class, often local, families were looked after by Asian nuns. The final group, usually local orphans, were, again, segregated outside the classroom. There was also a hierarchy among the nuns, teaching sisters out-ranking convent and orphanage sisters and entitled to include ‘saint’ in their names. Boarding fees, sale of uniforms, made from English Tootal Horrocks Cotton, school-bookshop monopoly over stationery and sewing for private orders raised the money to support the Convent and its substantial charitable work. When sponsorship was unavailable, the nuns even maintained and painted the buildings. Constant proximity to boarders must have supplied ample opportunity for their commitment to religious training and conversion to Christianity. Mass at 6.15am was compulsory for boarders, proselytising only being allowed outside school hours, after government grants commenced in 1881.\textsuperscript{73} Like Mission School pupils, converts received Western Christian names at baptism and marriages were arranged for orphans, the nuns continuing to monitor the girls’ welfare after marriage and, sometimes, recommending school-leavers for employment in European households.

Two sisters stand out from the rest. After moving to Japan in 1872 until her death in 1911, Mother St.Mathilde continued to direct work in Malaya. She travelled between the two countries, starting schools in Taiping, KL, Seremban and Ipoh. Mother St.Tarcisius, arriving in 1904, was Penang Mother Superior, 1924 to 1954 and Mother Provincial for Malaya and Singapore. In 1936, she received the OBE for her work, including the expansion of the Penang Convent, founding and reorganising of other convents and orphanages and organisation of hospital visiting by the Sisters. The following accolade by three former pupils, may echo the sentiments of many others that the nuns “moulded school life and school days for generations of girls.” They did not lead a “cloistered, fastidious existence innocent of worldly concerns” but “injected life and exuded exuberance,” “inspiring young girls to greater heights.” This was done “in love, simplicity and steadfastness,” while they also “found it possible to

\textsuperscript{73} Ibid. 72, 79
be selfless without being anonymous” and to communicate “the extraordinary love and concern which lay behind the stern exteriors.”

St. George’s Girls’ School, Penang, the Convent’s educational rival, was founded in 1885, by St. George’s Anglican Church. In contrast to the nuns, the British headmistress and teachers, housed in bungalows in the school grounds, were seen as “frighteningly tall,” stern, “tartars for discipline” and smelling of “a formidable combination of butter and sweat.” This local belief that the English smelled of butter, probably resulted from sweat caused by restrictive clothes and one source of wonder was the nuns’ calm, cool appearance despite their starched wimples and thick, black habits.

Expectations

In expectations and attitudes, little had changed for European women from the previous period. Although working women now began to make an appearance, the majority continued in the supporting role of wives, mothers and upholders of Victorian standards of duty, decorum and moral virtue. As members of a sought-after minority, they could still expect greater social prominence than in Britain and more deferential treatment. Even the “corpulent, chubby-faced” Mrs. Schwers, the plantation Manager’s wife in ‘Tropic Fever,’ although “of uncertain age” and unjustifiably “full of pride and regal dignity,” could believe in her irresistibility and importance, being “a mem, a white woman” and “entitled to a proper respect.”

Women, irrespective of looks, personality or intelligence, could rely on compliments and attention in a world where they were in constant demand, and men, of necessity, had to be “the most charming specimens of their sex.” The Proudlock murder trial (Appendix 8), which shook the British colonial community in Malaya to the core, initiated letters to papers there and England, endorsing reverence for Malayan European women and claiming that “nowhere at Home are English women more honoured and esteemed than here.” This esteem, “undoubtedly as good” and

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74 Ibid. 76, 84.
76 Szekely L. Tropic Fever 86
77 Wilson M. Malaya the Land of Enchantment Amersham, 1937. 97; Brownfoot J. Incorporated Wife 192
“probably much better” than “that of Walton-on-Thames,” was perceived as essential in order for women, perhaps “alone all day with Chinese men-servants and a Javanese gardener,” to command equal respect from the “natives.”  

As solidarity was essential, they could rely on the full support of their peer group. Ethel Proudlock, the “pleasant,” “unassuming” middle-class mother and wife of KL Victoria Institute’s Acting Headmaster, immediately received the sympathy of most KL Europeans demanding legal defence of her honour and convinced of her innocence. This conviction seems to have been founded on her being a ‘white’ woman and, therefore, having some provocation for her action. One interesting feature of the trial is Ethel’s apparent belief that refuting the accusation of an affair with Steward and any suggestion of being an adulteress was more important than the charge of killing him. Fear of diminished prestige in the eyes of the locals, increasing anti-colonial sentiment at home and accusations of a sybaritic colonial lifestyle, made a woman’s passionless purity paramount just as imperial manliness with its twin virtues of paternal responsibility and sexual restraint became essential in colonial men.

Ethel’s conviction triggered outraged letters to the press, objecting to the absence of a jury, to the prosecutor openly questioning an Englishwoman’s moral character and to her fate depending on an “Oriental potentate,” her pardon being in the jurisdiction of the Sultan of Selangor. Although he had a humane reputation, his power over a European offended British sensibilities. It was reminiscent of the outrage which had been expressed over the 1883 Ilbert Bill which allowed Indian magistrates to sit in judgement over Europeans. Its opponents had produced the similar potent image of the “helpless white woman” at the mercy of the ‘native’ devoid all ‘manly chivalry’ and removed from the ‘natural’ protection of the ‘white’ man who regarded it as his “sacred duty.”

Two hundred KL Europeans signed a petition on Ethel’s behalf, over sixty European women sent a telegram to Queen Mary requesting her intervention and a group of prominent Penang European women sent a telegram to King George and

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78 Malay Mail 28th May, 29th May, 28th July, 1911; Shennan M. Midday Sun 62; Midgley C. Gender and Imperialism 23
79 Oxford History of the British Empire Louis W.M.R. Vol.4. 20; O’Hanlon R. Vol.4. 392; Davidoff & Hall Family Fortunes 107-18, 402
80 Chaudhuri & Strobel Western Women 98-105 (Sinha.M. Chathams,Pitts, and Gladstones in Petticoats), 137; Brownfoot J. Incorporated Wife 207
Queen Mary, requesting a pardon. There was also support outside the European community, 2003 dollars being raised for an appeal and 560 Indians and fifty leading KL Chinese ladies also presenting petitions to the Sultan, amongst the thousands he claimed to receive. Such local support might comfort European women, so outnumbered and so far from home. However, the Proudlocks' ostracism by their fellow Europeans, following Ethel's pardon, was a warning about causing such public embarrassment to a conventional colonial community with traditional standards of correct behaviour.

Pride in their Empire continued to be expressed through confidence in their racial superiority and contempt for the local people, Sultan and servant alike. Thus, in Isabella Bird's view, "one may criticise as much as one likes when one criticises yellow or brown-skinned men." Mary Macfarlane Park considered it only natural that the 1901 Singapore Chinese were "both loyal and grateful to Great Britain" and realised their "debt of gratitude" for the "even-handed justice" and opportunities of "earning a comfortable livelihood" on "British soil." She saw absolutely no need to "make friends with them" because "they do not understand being treated as equals." Even in a prisoner-of-war camp, Janet Lim records a European woman's anger over an Indian girl preceding her in the bathroom queue, as "we English are always first, and will always be first."

If anything had changed, it was a tightening of these attitudes and further distancing from the local population, resulting from increase in European Malayan numbers leading to greater self-sufficiency and from improved communications with home. With Malaya becoming a career-destination for Europeans rather than a life-commitment, with few remaining after their working life, the British woman could now see it as a temporary residence where she could maintain and reinforce contact with home through regularly reading British newspapers, pursuing familiar activities, taking hill-station holidays in a home-like climate, eating British food based heavily on imported goods, educating her children in Britain, making visits home and, eventually, returning on retirement. Local English newspapers always referred to

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81 Butcher J.G. British in Malaya 237; Shennan M. Midday Sun 63-5
82 Bird to John Murray Adventurous Women 235
83 Bastin J. Travellers' Singapore 166-7
84 Lim J. Sold for Silver 138
Britain as ‘Home’ and Lord Northcliffe’s view of most 1921 Singapore Europeans was that “none would stay here but for the absolute need of earning their living.”

Another cause of this tightening of attitudes was the greater official control exerted in the FMS than in the earlier, freer SS period. This rigidly-defined demand for uniformity, conformity and doing one’s “social bit” to avoid diminishing European status “in the eyes of the native peoples,” applied in both public and private life and was more demanding than the behaviour expected in middle-class Britain. Thus, Europeans prepared “to travel third class in England” must “perforce travel first class” in Malaya. All, regardless of personal wishes, had to follow the same rules which forbade living in “cheap” houses or dispensing with the “usual number” of servants and advocated membership of the “usual clubs” and generally living “as other people do.” Married couples were expected to entertain extensively and provide children’s education comparable to their own, without detriment to their social status. All were expected to become “dumb treaders of the same social mill,” living in “the style set by the well-to-do” and following “the same pursuits” so that every new-arrival’s expectations of “what he cannot do without” soon became “very much enlarged.” Thus, despite less freedom of choice, the European woman in Malaya could expect a higher income and standard of living, servants to free her from chores and greater authority than her peer group at home.

**Housing and Servants**

The necessary status for the maintenance of power continued to be reflected in housing. In 1897, Swettenham, the Resident-General, commented that his new house, comprising dining, drawing, morning and billiard rooms, five bedrooms, five dressing rooms, office accommodation, servants’ quarters, stabling and quarters for the horse-keepers and gardeners was a suitable size “for a man with a family,” social occasions there enabling the Europeans to imagine “taking part in some big country-house ball at home.” The home, more than ever, was the symbol of prestige, order and civilised

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85 Bastin J. Travellers' Singapore 195; Brownfoot J. Incorporated Wife 188, 190
86 Butcher J.G. British in Malaya 88-92, 132-3
87 Malay Mail 3rd March, 1913; Times of Malaya 7th March, 1912
88 Allen C. Tales 238; Midgley C. Gender and Imperialism 73
89 Clifford.H Malayan Monochromes London, 1913. 275; Butcher J.G. British in Malaya 74
behaviour. However, although standards were uniformly still higher than at home, this period saw a more pronounced hierarchical system.

Greater urbanisation in Britain endowed a private house on its own land with the two desirable objectives, privacy and status, an ideology already echoed in SS suburban houses and, later, in peninsular Malaya. In 1889, SS residences were located two to three miles from the town centre, each “solitary in its own charming grounds” and impossible to visit “under half an hour’s drive” (Figs.3.7, 3.8, 3.11). Spacious gardens, establishing identity with England and the search for rural tranquility and, simultaneously, separation from the indigenous culture, provided opportunities for gardening and social activities. One colonial’s advice, besides having “your own things around you, and as much beauty as you can in your own home,” was to live “as nearly as possible as you would in Europe” and keep “up to date” with England.

During the inter-war years, the earlier uniformity in housing began to change, hierarchical position now dictating the size and location of the house. This is clearly demonstrated in Singapore in the Tanglin district and round the Botanical Gardens where banks and companies built residences for senior managers, near those of senior government officials. These houses were symbols of domination and less sympathetic to local style than their predecessors. Although some retained the earlier, imposing, pseudo-Renaissance style many were rustic mock-Tudor, with large gardens and maybe a tennis court, seemingly “transported directly from...House and Garden” and designed to make these areas look like suburban England. They were built at low density, occupying a quarter of an acre to around six acres, depending on their owner’s social position. The English trend for the seaside villa, meant these owners might have another, substantial, weekend home in the beachside Tanjong Katong, near the Singapore Swimming Club and the Grove Hotel.

During the 1920s, the rising numbers of senior civil servants, army officers and company executives initiated the construction of several large estates of the

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90 Bastin J. Travellers' Singapore 140; Turnbull C.M. History of Singapore 136,
93 Edwards N. Singapore House 76-84
'black-and-white' houses, based on English garden suburbs (Figs.3.9,3.10,3.12). They were in good locations, near upper-class British social centres and often bore evocative English or Scottish names. They signalled a continuing sense of dignity, tradition and uniformity, status being indicated by size of house and land and location. For those further down the scale, like the increased military in the 1930s, there was simpler accommodation on large estates. This was comfortable, modern in design but less suited to the climate than the spacious black-and-white houses (Fig.3.13). Although there were obviously variations in wealth, most Europeans living in the towns appear to have enjoyed a higher standard of housing than at home although Margaret Wilson found Singapore expensive and furnished bungalows “hard to obtain” due to rising influx of colonials. Prestige apart, it was felt that a family in the tropics needed space, even though families were generally small and children were often at boarding school in Europe and it was noticeable “not how few Europeans lived luxuriously” but “how few did not.” For many women, however, the absence of their children, the interruption of three to six months’ home leave between contracts plus the fact that many of the houses, all in the case of government civil servants, were provided and furnished by employers for a succession of occupants, must have made them feel that their domestic environment, although luxurious, was less permanent, established or personal than they might wish apart from the few familiar touches of their own possessions.94

Outside the larger FMS towns, many women lived in small towns or on plantations, some experiencing real isolation, unlike those in the SS where distances were comparatively small. Katharine Sim describes the houses and lifestyles of her planter friends’ wives, some in “old, rambling, wooden bungalows, dark and gloomy,” others occupying attractive, modern houses, built solidly of stone. Her first experience, at the end of an unmetalled, laterite road, was a plantation house “set up on terraced lawns in front of the rubber trees.” Its owner had Malay rather than the usual Indian servants, “very decorative in white with emerald green sarongs and black kapias.” Here Katharine discovered that “rubber trees in the early morning are reminiscent of a beech wood” in England. The Steeles’ home, at Sitiawan was “new and light, set in a big garden backed by the rubber” but not “overshadowed by it” like

94 Wilson M. Malaya 101; Allen C. Tales 163, 218; Shennan M. Midday Sun 114, 196
one at Sungkai which, "as are only too many estate bungalows" was "completely surrounded by rubber." Here, "in contrast to the smaller more modern houses of Singapore," Katharine’s room was "very spacious," with "dressing-room, bathroom and verandah attached." Another "old-style, rambling" bungalow had big verandahs and long flights of wooden steps and was built above a stone-floored garden-room. As most plantation work was done by Tamils, many planters’ wives lived in the midst of a large Hindu community. One way of coping, was to surround the house with an English-style garden, another was to introduce recognisably English features like pets which would also provide interests to counteract boredom. On one estate, the Indian school-children had a glass of Horlicks every morning. An Acting Estate Manager’s wife faced moving and coping with different surroundings every six months, wherever her husband replaced a static Manager on furlough. Under such circumstances, it is unlikely that any house would feel like home. Moreover, sanitation still implied the *jamban*, and the Shanghai jar.

Women in remote areas might find themselves in “very crude” houses, far removed from those of their urban contemporaries, with no electricity, proper sanitation or even running water.\(^5\) In terms reminiscent of Emily Innes at Durian Sabatang, one 1927 planter’s wife described their flimsy, rat-infested home as having “no running water, no sinks, no proper ice-box,” while the domestic water supply was sent by launch once a week and then needed to be boiled and filtered twice before it was fit for use. Like Emily, she derived satisfaction from maintaining her household routine “in spite of difficulties.”\(^6\)

Servants continued to be a statement of prestige as well as a necessity in the tropical climate. Household-staff reduction in early-20\(^{th}\) century Britain was only minimally reflected in Malaya where servants’ wages were low, although lavish employment of them decreased as wages rose. The minimum of seven became perceived as essential for efficient household-management, necessitated by climate and poor plumbing. On plantations servants were usually Indian. Elsewhere, the cook and ‘houseboy’ were usually Chinese and, in less affluent households, these positions

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\(^5\) Shennan M. *Midday Sun* 196, 207; Sim K. *Malayan Landscape* 114-9

\(^6\) Hart A. *Housekeeping and Life in the Malayan Rubber Blackwoods* Vol.221, 1927. 598-9, 600-1, 606
might be combined. A Malay or Indian ayah or Chinese amah looked after the children and performed other domestic duties. Eurasian amahs were virtually never employed through fear of the children assimilating the Eurasian accent and being unable to eradicate it later. A Malay or a low-caste Indian cleaned the toilets and brought the household water, a Boyanese or Malay syce cared for the horses and drove the carriage, later converting to chauffeur and motor mechanic while the Indian kebun (gardener) and the dhobie (washer man) often worked for several households. The wealthy might employ extra servants, like a doorman, but no jobs were expected to overlap. All servants and their families, except the dhobie, lived in quarters provided by their employer, attached to the house. In European households, they provided their own food but many local servants preferred the Chinese system of supplying food but around 50% lower wages.

During the inter-war years, when middle-class families in Europe might employ one servant, the essential number in Malaya only dropped to five, where the houseboy's responsibility for all indoor domestic work was taken over by the amah. Katherine Sim employed five in the late 1930s and mentions that number in her novel, set in 1950s KL, for a European family of four. The stream-lining of house-design with kitchens incorporated in the main house and the number of bathrooms reduced to one for the whole family, eliminated the need for many servants. Piped water replaced the Shanghai jar, public sewerage and modern sanitary fixtures eliminated the night-soil collector and electricity, labour-saving kitchen equipment and smaller families all made household management more efficient.

Although European women had fewer chores than contemporaries in Europe and ample spare time, they resented any implication of idleness, "the bane of so many women in Eastern countries". Organising and supervising the servants was still a major task, involving careful household records and accounts. More, unlike their predecessors, came from backgrounds unused to servants and might initially find this new experience unnerving and a temptation to abuse their power but, in general, even-

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97 Colquhoun E Two on Travels 8-16, 263
98 Selangor Journal Vol.1. 35; Allen C. Tales 236; Lewis G.E.D. Out East 35-6
99 Midgley C. Gender and Imperialism 21-2; Sim K. Malayan Landscape, The Jungle Ends Here.
100 Munro G. Malaya Through a Woman's Eyes 227
101 Butcher J.G. British in Malaya 143
tempered control was the approved method of dealing with servants. Wives might encounter servants discontented about the longer working hours expected in family households compared with bachelor establishments where employers were out all day, were unlikely to require attention after dinner and allowed servants greater latitude in running household matters. Married-household servants could expect more constant overseeing by the mistress and be expected to work late if there were guests, dinner being “a late function generally” with “Chinese servants” ready to serve it “at any time.” For large functions, it was customary to borrow other households’ servants or for guests to take their cooks to help.

As many European women knew virtually no local languages, they encountered communication problems (Fig.3.30) and Katharine Sim initially relied on her Chinese houseboy to translate her orders. Madeline Daubeny recalled the “frightful problem” caused by her “bad” Malay but, later, became “quite reasonable” in the language. Servants were expected to learn the names of their employers’ family but Europeans, as was customary in Europe, simply addressed them by their function, like ‘Cookie’ or ‘Boy.’ Some perceived local servants as lazy, dirty or incompetent where refusal to abandon traditional method contrasted with the British ideal and wives were advised to carry out “irregular but fairly frequent inspections” to ensure “cleanliness and sanitation.” According to one woman in 1922, “housekeeping at Home” was easy where “one orders goods and they are sent” and it was unnecessary to “choose and haggle.” In comparison, housekeeping in Malaya was “complicated” where everything had to be “kept locked up and given out in small quantities.” Moreover, “people (who do not know!)” claimed the amah “does everything” whereas most European mothers “make all their children’s food” and although amahs might do a substantial part of the work, they were unable to “fill the place of an English nurse whom one trusts.” Generally, the amah appears to have done the menial work of child-care, leaving the mother free to socialise with and

102 Midgley C. Gender and Imperialism 22; Gartrell B. Incorporated Wife 180
103 Planter 14 November 1933 The Planter’s Wife 180
104 Douglas Hume E. The Globular Jottings of Griselda Blackwood & Sons, Edinburgh, 1907. 54-8
105 Allen C. Tales 222
106 McClintock A. Imperial Leather 219, 268
107 Munro G. Malaya Through a Woman’s Eyes 226
108 Malay Weekly Mail 5th October, 1922.
educate her young children but such detrimental comparisons with European servants must have been a source of friction.\textsuperscript{109}

Husbands still sought to avert trouble by discouraging their wives from too active intervention in the servants’ domain, understanding this could have other advantages, apart from maintaining a wife’s dignity in front of the servants. A servant could shop more cheaply at the market, a venue considered improper and undignified for a European woman. One visiting mother commented that her daughter was “induced to go once, when she first lived in town — but once only” and “fled, before she publicly disgraced herself.”\textsuperscript{110} In civil service households, the cook usually came with the house while other Europeans often had to settle for one passed on by their predecessors or for more restricted choice than their local contemporaries.\textsuperscript{111} He was the highest paid servant and might make extra money from his marketing, as understood by his mistress although she should “inspect the food when it is bought” and “deduct the price from the cook’s allowance” if it was unsatisfactory.\textsuperscript{112} Otherwise, the kitchen was his domain.\textsuperscript{113} Usually, he went marketing “after a short morning colloquy with his mistress” about the day’s menus. His wet market bills were paid daily and those from Cold Storage for meat, dairy products, liquor and groceries monthly, one cook recalling that “sometimes they gave me fixed amounts to spend. At other times, I’d pay first and settle later. If food was ordered from a grocer, I’d place an order with him and he would send her a bill at the end of the month.” In this way the European woman retained authority over the kitchen even though she might rarely venture there.\textsuperscript{114}

Elizabeth Kennaway saw the house-boy, usually Chinese or Malay, as the “key figure” among their servants as he employed the amahs for her mother.\textsuperscript{115} In larger establishments, he looked after the husband’s clothes, able to “produce exactly the garment needed” and “in such perfect order” that neither his master or mistress “gives them a thought” while the head boy would “arrange the flowers, look after

\textsuperscript{109} Brownfoot J. \textit{Incorporated Wife} 198
\textsuperscript{110} Wilson M. \textit{Malaya} 64
\textsuperscript{111} Thor K H. \textit{The Changing Face of Kuala Lumpur} New Straits Times Annual 1981
\textsuperscript{112} Munro G. \textit{Malaya Through a Woman’s Eyes} 226
\textsuperscript{113} McClintock A. \textit{Imperial Leather} 268
\textsuperscript{114} Gaw K. \textit{Superior Servants} 121; Brownfoot J. \textit{Incorporated Wife} 196
\textsuperscript{115} Allen C. \textit{Tales} 236
guests, concoct cooling drinks, and do anything and everything." Although some European women might enjoy such freedom from domestic duties, others might resent their restricted influence. One recalled that even for a cup of coffee or tea, "I did not dare venture into the kitchen" unless it was the amah's day off. Such intrusions were considered impertinent, the mistress's requirements being "brought in on a tray complete with tray cloth."

The 'black and white' Cantonese amahs, arriving in Singapore, the FMS and Hong Kong in the 1930s were exceptions to general perceptions and rapidly became domestic status symbols. Their black-and-white uniforms presented an image of efficient, hygienic orderliness central to European middle-class thinking and was attributed to British employers wanting servants to look "immaculately turned out" and recognizable as 'servants.' Most amahs, whatever their personal feelings, appear to have accepted that "if you worked for foreigners" it was unavoidable. Their loyalty to the colonial families they served meant they often remained with them for a long time, sometimes till retirement. Their honesty and reliability were essential, employment being mainly through personal recommendation, sometimes from one European employer to another and sometimes through other amahs, the latter having the additional virtue of minimizing any potential friction between servants. Europeans, at face value, paid higher salaries, $8 to $15 per month compared to $5 to $10 from local employers during the 1930s, ($8.5 to £1), but did not include food. Servants could expect better living conditions with specific jobs and working-hours and many amahs appear to have preferred working for Europeans, with "specific working hours and specific jobs," considering the colonials as "much better" employers who "don't order you about" and allow "more freedom." However some amahs disliked households where they had to do their own cooking" and "didn't understand their language."

Children were another area of potential friction. Apart from the few households where mothers looked after their children unaided, young European children, like their contemporaries at home, spent a great deal of time cared for by

116 Colquhoun E. Two on Travels 8-16
117 Gaw K. Superior Servants 160
118 Allen C. Tales 215; Shennan M. Midday Sun 205
119 Gaw K. Superior Servants 103-5, 113-4, 166-7
their amahs (Fig. 3.15), many of whom appear to have been allowed a comparatively free hand. As in The Jungle Ends Here, many mothers and amahs may have shared “a deep bond of mutual sympathy” that had “grown and strengthened” through years when the amah had looked after the children “since they were small babies.”

However, many European mothers must have resented the amah’s constant presence, her influence over their children and, possibly, the children’s affection for her. Amahs often had their own views about child-care and disliked interference, the European mother sometimes having to relinquish her share of these duties and feeling alienated from her own offspring. One area where parents usually did intervene was over the amah’s administration of small opium doses to alleviate teething or pain. For older children, parents’ fears included the danger of them learning more than was considered desirable about sexual relationships from servants perceived as morally lax. They were also concerned, seemingly justifiably so, that children also might learn, at an early age, to take advantage, treating servants with contemptuous superiority.

With few European playmates to counterbalance, this could lead to them becoming demanding, lazy, undisciplined and precocious, traits the British usually associated with Eurasians. Lord Northcliffe remarked that the European children of 1921 Singapore seemed “happy” but their “nurses spoil them” so they had to be “ordered home when they are seven” while Katherine Sim approved of a friend’s son: “a grand little fellow, not at all an amah-spoilt child.”

One alternative was a European governess, ensuring a ‘superior’ British education and avoiding all threats to moral development. This course, adopted by some, raised the difficult problem of the governess’ position relative to other Europeans and to local servants, preserving simultaneously her inferiority to her employers and her essential superiority over the locals. Governesses occupied a similar position of finely demarcated boundaries in European households and eyebrows are raised when Jane Eyre aspires to cross the class barrier by marrying her master, but without the question of race involved.

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120 Davidoff & Hall Family Fortunes 394; Sim K. The Jungle Ends Here.; Brownfoot J. Incorporated Wife 197
121 Butcher J.G. British in Malaya 144
122 Shennan M. Midday Sun 206; McClintock A. Imperial Leather 270
123 Lord Northcliffe My Journey Round the World Bodley Head Ltd., London, 1923. 160-4
124 Sim K. Malayan Landscape 125
125 McClintock A. Imperial Leather 277
problem probably accounted for the numerical decrease in European female domestics including governesses employed in the FMS, from 42 in 1921 to 3 in 1931.\textsuperscript{126} Families like the Kennaways, on remote plantations with no accessible school, might not experience the problems of a governess in relation to other Europeans but, clearly, most European families preferred to avoid the situation.\textsuperscript{127}

Among ‘black and white’ amahs, that of baby-amah (Fig.3.16) was the most prestigious and probably the most stressful job. Although not physically strenuous, it presupposed the child to be the amah’s entire life with constant responsibility. However, while other servants were housebound, she accompanied her mistress shopping, on holiday and visits and assisted at birthday parties and family gatherings. Little that happened in the family escaped her notice and fuelled gossip at gatherings of amahs and their charges. The taboo on gossip about Chinese employers did not extend to colonials who were considered outsiders and had to accept that “there were no secrets at all. How can there be when you all stay in the same house?” European attitudes towards their baby-amahs clearly varied from appreciation to exploitation and two accounts of their daily lives, by Kwan Ah Sap and Leong Siew Kee, do not suggest excessive consideration from their mistresses. Kuan’s day, in “an English military family of five,” involved household duties as well as child-care. Between 5am and breakfast at 8am she “scrubbed and polished.” Afterwards, while the two older children were at school, she looked after the youngest and prepared lunch at 1pm for all three children. Then, while the youngest slept and the older two played, she ate her own meal and did more household chores until the child woke, when she took all three for a walk before preparing dinner. The parents went out every night till about 2 or 3 a.m. leaving her looking after the children.\textsuperscript{128}

Leong, who worked for several European families, saw her job as “much the same for all the families.” Like Kwan, her day began early and followed a similar, regular routine, possibly stipulated by her employers. Her charge’s food, “milk made from milk powder,” afternoon orange juice and dinner of “canned food usually – steamed meat and vegetables, you know, European things,” was clearly imported and

\textsuperscript{126} British Malaya Census 1921, 1931
\textsuperscript{127} Allen C. Tales 236; Brownfoot J. Incorporated Wife 204
\textsuperscript{128} Brownfoot J. Incorporated Wife 196; Gaw K. Superior Servants 112-3.
foreign to her. Likewise, she appears bemused by the two baths, "always one in the morning and one in the evening," and the puritanical insistence on potty-training, "potty again" and "back to the potty to train him," the timing being "definite." Her own personal needs were attended to hurriedly while the child slept in the daytime and after bedtime as "I could not eat while looking after him." She then had time for personal chores and went to bed around nine, sharing her charge’s room, like many other baby-amahs. Apart from indicating the demand on the amah’s time, disregard for her as an individual and the household’s precise, regular daily pattern, the most remarkable feature of these accounts is the total absence of the child’s mother and her apparent total freedom from domestic and parental duties, apart from devising the diets and routines for the amah to implement.129

As the amah often spent more time with the children than their mothers, it is hardly surprising that a deep bond often developed between them. Ann Kennaway claimed that all the servants on their estate “doted” on them while others recalled “nothing but kindness” from the servants, a “very loving and close” relationship with the amah, a “frequent companion, nurse and mentor” and “tantrums” over parting from her.130 This could lead to the mother’s resentment, especially if the amah became possessive. Many Europeans considered such relationships unhealthily obsessive and undermining to the natural mother-child bond. Language was another division. In Malaya, the colonial women spoke to amahs in Pidgin English or basic Malay, the languages between amahs and their charges, creating a linguistic bond different from that with their parents. Possibly negative responses sometimes sprang from the mother’s guilt over her own reduced involvement with her child but there were European mothers who obviously felt comfortable with the arrangement and even felt servants should be treated more equally. Betty Wardle, wife of the 1930s Singapore Chaplain of the Missions to Seamen, describes her amah as “dedicated and responsible,” accompanying her into hospital, taking charge of her daughters “from the first,” and keeping “a good steady routine” with the “care and comfort” of the children always “foremost in her mind.” She had a “great sense of humour” and “became very fond of the children, and we, of her.” Another European wife “adored both Ah Siew and Ah Choi” and “considered them friends who helped me with the

129 Gaw K. Superior Servants 104-5,118-9; Shennan M. Midday Sun 205-6
130 Shennan M. Midday Sun 205; Allen C. Tales 234; Davidoff & Hall Family Fortunes 394
children.” She claims “we did not exploit them” but “respected them as people. They were not just servants to be ordered about.” Both displayed “total devotion” and “great love for their charges” so “it was not an employee/employer relationship” but “much more than that.” Both were “very proud and very professional” with “enormous integrity, loyalty and respect” and “we were very lucky to have them.”

**Mobility, Amenities and Services**

In the larger towns where European women do not appear to have walked any distance, as well as rural areas where distances were too great for walking, transport was essential to women’s mobility and improved dramatically during this period. The rickshaw was still common (Fig.3.18) but, as it became no longer “comme il faut for a lady to be seen” in one, the private gharry became the most fashionable mode of transport. Its roof gave shade, while side and back Venetian blinds provided privacy. There were also imported European carriages (Fig.3.17) such as the brougham, phaeton, landau and barouche, “well-equipped with picturesque drivers and well-groomed horses.” Vehicles and horses were available for hire, the Straits Echo advertising “Horses and carriages, single or pair Horses, Victoria Phaeton and Mail Phaeton, Buggy, Gig, Dogcart and Trap” all “Ready at any time. Terms moderate.” Completion of the Penang Hill Railway in 1923 eliminated the earlier, uncomfortable portable chairs. The first passenger railway opened in 1885 between Port Weld and Taiping and by 1910, the line from Johore Baru to Province Wellesley was complete. In 1902, eight daily weekday trains and five on Sunday ran from Province Wellesley, two directly to Taiping. Passengers could continue to Port Weld or change for Kuala Kangsa, Ipoh or Kota Bharu. Daily, week-day trains also connected with steamers leaving Port Weld. The ‘swift’ train between Klang and KL took only 43 minutes, compared with a day by launch or road. In 1918, the FMS bought the Singapore Railway, completing the line between Penang and Singapore.

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131 Gaw Superior Servants 115-9, 157-62; Midgley C. Gender and Imperialism 23
132 Colquhoun E. Two on Travels 8
133 Bastin J. Travellers' Singapore 185
134 Straits Echo 4th July, 1903
135 Train Timetable 1st November, 1902. (Straits Echo 16th May, 1903)
Bicycles arrived in the SS between 1896 and 1900, ridden first by Europeans and "even by the more intrepid of their wives and daughters" but, by George Peet's arrival in 1923 Singapore, attitudes had changed and only the Bishop was allowed the eccentricity of riding a bicycle. Cars came to Singapore in 1896 and Penang in 1903, exceeding 200 by 1916, and rapidly increasing. People "half-way up the ladder" continued to own a gharry but, in Penang, these decreased to 20 in 1917 and disappeared completely by 1935. By December 1901, there were four cars in KL and "five are on the way out - and several are under order." By 1912, they were still a comparative rarity, a symbol of wealth, owned only by prominent members of society, and not common until after 1918. Road accidents increasingly became a risk, whether the "severe shaking" suffered by Mr. and Mrs. Highet in 1902, when their horse shied and upset the carriage or the clash of two technologies when the horse of a woman's gharry swerved to avoid a "fussy" motorcar. However, during the inter-war years, the escalating number of cars provided women with comfortable transport (Fig.3.19) on Malay's crowded roads although, as Katharine Sim complained, there was still the problem of "faces powdered with dust from the unmetalled, laterite road." Greater mobility, especially for women in rural areas, made town amenities accessible and life more comfortable and, in turn, meant more women were prepared to get married and live there.

Mobility meant women could now travel around Malaya, by 1911 a tourist destination. There was accommodation for them in hotels in the chief towns and the many Government rest-houses and the 1912 Illustrated London News describing Malaya's "nearly 3000 miles of road open for the motor-car" as the best in the Empire. The 1911 Illustrated Guide to the Federated Malay States described the journey of "two ladies, attended by a native" through the Peninsula in "a 10 hp. single cylinder Adams car" at 12 mph. The Malay driver was recommended to deal with language problems, ladies were advised to have the car hood up when travelling.

136 Georgetown City Council Penang Past and Present 56
137 Peet G. Rickshaw Reporter 74
138 Tate D.J.M. Lake Club 77-8; Turnbull C.M. History of Singapore 113, 136
139 Georgetown City Council Penang Past and Present 57-8
140 Malay Mail 7th December, 1901; Shennan M. Midday Sun 115
141 Malay Mail 25th July, 1902
142 Tate D.J.M. Lake Club 77
143 Sim K. Malayan Landscape 117; Shennan M. Midday Sun 71
apart from the indispensable topi, they could “gauge their own requirements” over
clothes, light grey, fawn or mauve being recommended over white and while a
revolver was “not strictly necessary,” there was “no harm carrying one.”

The amenities enjoyed in the SS and considered essential for European
women, did not reach the FMS until the early-20th Century. In 1882, the Singapore
telephone service opened with 43 Exchange and 16 private lines, while the 1890s saw
the completion of the Grand Hotel de L’Europe, one of the most palatial in South East
Asia, with its popular roof garden and Otis lift. After the 1905 cholera epidemic,
health standards improved with new reservoirs, a piped sewerage system and two new
hospitals. A 1907 visitor commented on the wide, macadamized streets of the
European quarter, handsome shops with plate-glass windows and varied high-class
stock and fine public buildings, and Khoo Sian Ewe was fascinated by the
proliferation of European luxuries in the stores. By 1925, there were “some first-
class English chemists,” a Kodak branch, a bookstore with up-to-date stock and the
department stores of Little (Fig.A.4.1), Robinson and Whiteway-Laidlaw, “on the
model of Harrods.” Electricity arrived, 1904 in Penang and 1906 in Singapore, for
initially public then private use. By 1907, ceiling fans had replaced punkahs and
refrigerators were making ice-chests redundant and improving the quality of food,
while, over the following years the gramophone provided entertainment and the
wireless accessed BBC news and closer contact with Europe.

After 1900, these amenities reached the FMS, by 1904 considered “in a
comparatively advanced stage of civilization” by European standards. KL already
had many “advantages of modern life,” including St Mary’s Church, consecrated
1887, Malay Mail, 1896, Chartered Bank and, in 1897, the first hotel for Europeans,
owned by a government official’s widow. Medical facilities for Europeans were
improved in the 1880s by the recruitment of British doctors for Government hospitals

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145 Turnbull C.M. History of Singapore 128
146 Bastin J. Travellers’ Singapore 185
147 Yeap J.K. The Patriarch 44
148 Bastin J. Travellers’ Singapore 209
149 Georgetown City Council Penang Past and Present 46
150 Turnbull C.M. History of Singapore 113, 137
in Taiping and Selangor and, in 1904, the European Hospital, replacing their separate ward in the General Hospital. A small school for European girls opened in 1905 and, in 1907, another Holy Infant Jesus convent-school was founded in Ipoh. By 1904, the roads were considered excellent and the railway system efficient, and Malaya described as “one of the most beautiful [countries] in the world.” In 1910, Cold Storage opened in KL, supplying meat and dairy products from Australia, the nearest Empire source and by 1914, other branches were established in Klang, Ipoh, Taiping and Telok Anson. This, plus a reliable ice supply, made imported western food now readily available throughout British Malaya. During the 1890s, ladies could patronise Monsieur Gideon Sabatier’s KL Selangor Hairdressing Salon, and “sport the very latest French coiffures.” In 1913, John Little’s opened in KL with electric lifts, fans and a refreshment room which became popular for European women’s coffee mornings. The Penang equivalents were the E & O Hotel restaurant or the Bishop Street stores, especially Whiteways, which were also patronised by wealthy Straits-Chinese women enjoying traditional English tea and cucumber sandwiches. After many complaints about KL’s poor facilities for visitors, the FMS Hotel, the Empire Hotel and the Station Hotel, opened in 1903, 1909 and 1911. By 1912, visitors found “excellent hotels in the chief towns,” and a “large number of [Government] rest-houses.” For relaxation, there were the Lake Gardens, more for the “pleasure of the public” than the “enlightenment of botanists,” but “exceedingly beautiful” and an “ideal spot for an afternoon drive or walk.” By the 1920s, even the smaller towns had cold storage and other essential amenities accessible even to women in rural areas.

There continued to be regular supplies of both necessities and luxuries from Europe and the Empire as well as the East, in food, alcohol, clothing, household requirements, “Novels and other books,” piano music for songs and dances like the Valse, Polka and Lancers and “the largest and most carefully selected stock” of

151 Malaya 5th February, 1904
152 Thor K.H. The Changing Face of KL
153 Butcher J.G. British in Malaya 59
154 Yeap J.K Of Comb. Powder & Rouge 241, 402
155 Illustrated London News 20th April, 1912
156 Malaya 22nd August, 1903
157 Turnbull C.M. History of Singapore 136
158 Georgetown City Council Penang Past and Present 29
pianos, organs and harmoniums “in the East.” To these were now added “America’s finest products” with the Yankee Novelty Company offering “very choice pieces” of glassware and California Dried Fruits besides the more prosaic Bicycles, Sewing Machines, Clocks, Watches, Stationery, Soaps, Perfumery and Canned Meats. Auctions advertised in newspapers were another source of “valuable European and Country-made” household furnishings,” while A.E.G Electric Light offered “Appliances of every description.” Services were provided by the Georgetown Dispensary for spectacles and eye-testing and it also sold “Nursery and Sickroom Requisites,” “Patent Medicines” and “Pure Natural Dragon and Cowshead Milk for Children” while Dr.R.Lamb, Graduate of Philadelphia Dental College, advertised as “Resident American Dentist.” In Singapore, Robinsons stocked all ladies’ needs for sports and travel (Fig. A4.4) as well as under-vests, West-of-England tweeds, Pears Transparent Soap and Gosnell’s Cherry toothpaste, while John Little’s offered similar stock there and KL (Figs A4.2, A4.3).\(^{159}\) Lee Kip Lee remembered Oxo and Bovril drinks, Milkmaid Condensed milk, Huntley & Palmer biscuits and Jacob’s Cream Crackers from his inter-war Singapore childhood, plus the baby’s Woodward’s Gripe Water and his parents’ Guiness and Gordon’s Gin.\(^{160}\)

In 1899 KL, Ethel Douglas Hume visited “Europeansh Chinese” shops where “the salesmen wore western garments and straw hats or bowlers above their queues” and European goods were sold at supposedly “fixed prices.”\(^{161}\) In 1921, Lord Northcliffe noted the Christmas goods in the Singapore shops and the high cost of living, similar to England.\(^{162}\) After the Great War these commodities were also enjoyed outside large towns, all districts according to the1921 census, having “everything that makes life endurable for a white woman in the tropics.”\(^{163}\) Katherine Sim, in 1939, could acquire commodities like Cadbury’s drinking chocolate, Heinz’ soups and English canned vegetables as well as Barsac, champagne and whisky, even in Lumut where they were also adopted by the locals.\(^{164}\) Local amenities were provided by hawkers (Fig.A.9.10) bringing goods to the Mem Tuans’ bungalows and

\(^{159}\) *Straits Echo* 12\(^{th}\) May, 13\(^{th}\) May, 19\(^{th}\) May, 19\(^{th}\) June, 6\(^{th}\) July, 7\(^{th}\) July, 1903.

\(^{160}\) Lee K.L. *Amber Sands* 26-8

\(^{161}\) Douglas Hume E. *Globular Jottings* 54-8

\(^{162}\) Northcliffe M* My Journey* 160-4; Bastin J. *Travellers’ Singapore* 194

\(^{163}\) British Malaya Census 1921 53

\(^{164}\) Sim K. *Malayan Landscape* 77-8
tailors copying western clothes more cheaply and “as well cut as those made in Savile Row.”

Clubs, originally male-orientated, proliferated and began to open up to female and family membership. Apart from the Selangor and Lake Clubs, those in KL included the Selangor Gymkhana Club, reorganised, in 1895, as the Selangor Turf Club, the Hunt Club and Selangor Golf Club. In 1903, the Rifle Association was extended to women (Fig.3.21), the ‘Straits Echo’ announcing “the Selangor ladies intend forming a Rifle Association forthwith to try conclusions with the ladies’ club at Taiping,” and adding “why shouldn’t the ladies have their little trips as well as our footballers and cricketers.” Some of the ladies became experts and eventually competed with the men. By 1890, there were government-sponsored clubs in virtually every Perak district containing Europeans besides the Ipoh Club, Taiping Perak Club, 1880, and exclusive New Club, 1894. In the SS, the Penang, Singapore and Malacca Clubs were exclusively-European social centres for both sexes, and were joined by others like the Tanglin and Singapore European Swimming Club. In 1884, the Singapore Ladies Lawn Tennis Club opened, exclusively for women but approved and supported by male colonials. This perhaps reflected changing attitudes towards women in England and India and, consequently, in Malaya. Victorian disapproval of women participating in outdoor sports had been reinforced by enveloping and inhibiting clothing and by male attitudes. Female emancipation eroded many taboos and women began to play a more visible role.

Occupation of Time and Social Life.

For the increasing number of career women, occupation of time was no problem but, for married women, there were still long hours to fill, especially if there were no other European women nearby. The larger towns provided more social outlets but, by 1921, 39% of Europeans lived on plantations, with many more wives facing the prospect of isolation from clubs, European company and social life and

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165 Bastin J. Travellers’ Singapore 209
166 Butcher J.G. British in Malaya 60-3. Gullick J.M. Old KL 37-8, 43
167 Straits Echo 20 May, 1903; Shennan M. Midday Sun 59
168 The Perak Annual Hand-Book and Civil Service List 1892 Taiping, 1892. 60-2
169 Bastin J. Travellers’ Singapore 223; Turnbull C.M. History of Singapore 113
170 Edwards N. Singapore House 109, 117-8; Turnbull C.M. History of Singapore 113, 126-7
making one planter question how “any decent Englishman” could “ask any decent
girl” to “forsake all that life connotes at Home to share the Godforsaken loneliness,
the soul-shattering monotony and the utter dreariness of a rubber estate.” It
provides a recurrent theme in Maugham’s stories and drives ‘heroines’ like Vesta
Grange, Lesley Crosbie, Mrs.Bronson, Violet Saffery and Millicent Skinner discreetly
into the arms of lovers or, less discreetly, to murder. Katharine Sim considered
plantation life “very lonely for wives” often “many miles off the road” through
“endless acres of rubber.” The Turners, on their ‘Over the River’ estate on the fringe
of the ulu, who had been in the country for twenty-five years, had “struggled with
Malaria and knew what loneliness meant.” The fragile-looking, White Russian wife of
a Scottish planter, coped with loneliness by making “a wonderful garden out of
nothingness” but the stress and effort meant “she hardly ever smiled.” It often
required courage and self-sufficiency to be a planter’s wife and acceptance of
unsociable hours, rising at dawn and retiring early with only occasional trips into the
nearest town for a meal and the cinema. Even Dorothy Kennaway, living on her own
estate, felt “enclosed by a wall of rubber” and, while her children, in their “happy,
unspoilt” early childhood, accepted these “monotonous straight rows,” they also later
remembered the “utter boredom and loneliness of it all.”

Wherever they lived, European women faced the problems of occupying time
and defining and justifying their own purpose where “household tasks” were “few.”
Many stressed providing a restorative haven for their husbands from the strain of
work, implying that a wife’s personality and attitude were important to her husband’s
promotion prospects, perhaps more than in Britain. Although some, like the
American director’s wife in “Tropic Fever,” became “exhausted with heat and
boredom,” others, like Katharine Sim had hobbies akin to professions like painting
or writing or, like Margaret Brooke, official positions which enhanced their
enjoyment of life there. During the inter-war years, more women took some active
interest in “outside interests” of charitable and voluntary work, playing a major role in

171 Malay Mail 8th March, 1913; Allen C. Tales 218
172 Maugham W.S. Flotsam and Jetsam. The Letter. Footprints in the Jungle. The Back of Beyond. Before the Party
173 Sim K Malayan Landscape 132, 182, 207-8, 220-1; Allen C. Tales 234-5, 239
174 Munro G. Malaya Through a Woman’s Eyes 227
175 Planter 1 August 1920 Planters’ Wives. 27,29; Gartrell B. Incorporated Wife 168
176 Szekely L. Tropic Fever 224
the development of movements like the YWCA and the Girl Guides where the importance of traditional domestic duties and feminine skills could be emphasised. The Guides had been introduced among the pupils of the Methodist Girls School, KL, in 1916 and, by the 1930s, there were companies throughout Malaya amongst all its races. However, the fact that these movements introduced young Asian women to new western ideas and also cut across the hierarchy and ‘colour’ line, brought some opposition from European men.  

Other, daily, pursuits might include embroidery, reading, gardening and, of course, writing home. Evenings probably revolved round club visits or quiet domestic activities with indoor, family-orientated activities such as singing round the piano, parlour games, or later, listening to the wireless or dancing to the gramophone, like their English suburban counterparts, with little concession to the climate. Bridge was particularly popular with European women and was played at the club, in the family and at bridge-parties at various times of the day and, during the 1920s, mah-jong also became fashionable. For the average mem, it was a life-style far removed from stories of colonial excesses. She was, however, required to be generally sociable and once the children were away at boarding school, entertaining would probably become less family-orientated and more connected to her husband’s social and business life.

An 1899 KL visitor, described a woman’s typical day as shopping followed by an afternoon siesta, then “drive, leave cards, play golf, tennis, or croquet,” between five and six and cards or reading the newspapers at the club before returning to a late dinner. In the late nineteenth century, public activities were largely tied to institutions like church and club, and events like annual balls commemorating St. George’s or St. Andrew’s Day, the King’s birthday or one-off occasions like the Coronation of Edward VII or the 1903 Federal Conference with “Malay theatres and theatricals, a grand water fete, illuminations and decorations, with the accompaniment of electric light, a ball, probably at the Lake Club.” There were seaside excursions and country picnics as well as weekend or longer trips to hill resorts or even into the

177 Butcher J.G. British in Malaya 144; Munro G Malaya Through a Woman’s Eyes 227; Shennan M. Midday Sun 193-4; Brownfoot J. Incorporated Wife 199-200; Midgley C. Gender and Imperialism 15  
178 Douglas Hume E. Globular Jottings 54-8  
179 Straits Echo 13th May, 1903
Two popular Singapore outings involved driving to the north of the island to view mainland Malaya or a round-the-island boat-ride to admire the coastline. By the 1920s, there was also the cinema.

In Singapore, there was the evening ride or promenade in the Botanical Gardens, for Europeans, all in evening dress, to enjoy the band music and refreshments. The Regimental Band also performed on the Esplanade two afternoons weekly. Besides private entertainment, there was the time-honoured custom of hospitality to strangers when resident Europeans “put us up, dined us,” “drove us about” and “photographed us in the local papers.” Penang’s drama and musical entertainments took place at the Town Hall, like the Ladies’ “At Home,” “with dancing till late,” in September 1891 or Marjorie Tempest’s Recital in January 1904, assisted by “two local amateurs.” Such amusements were clearly events to be anticipated, not everyday occurrences. In 1892, the Town Band was formed of “orderly, sober and civil” musicians, performing “William Tell” or Puccini’s “La Boheme” at the Esplanade, Golf Club, E.& O.Hotel or the public gardens at 5.30pm daily.

Public social life improved in the inter-war years. The Hotel de L’Europe was the centre of Singapore European social life, succeeded by the Raffles (Fig.3.28) with its extended lunches, twice-weekly tea-dances and dinner-dances. There were dances every week-night except Sunday, when the Sea View Hotel open-air cinema was a favourite meeting-place. The Goodwood Hall Hotel, formerly the Teutonia Club, provided lawn-tennis, tea on the veranda, musical evenings and soirees. In Penang, there were dances at the E.& O and Runnymede Hotels and New Year was celebrated with “pretty elaborate” fancy-dress balls at all the main hotels. All these events were exclusively European in food, music and attire, entry being forbidden to non-Europeans. The first films arrived in Singapore in the 1920s, appealing to all groups, but Europeans only patronising first-class cinemas while Penang’s seven theatres and cinemas were pronounced in 1921 to be “neither sanitary or safe” for Europeans.

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180 Bastin J. Traveilers’ Singapore 167
181 Colquhoun E. Two on Travels 8-12
182 Straits Echo 16th January, 1904
183 Georgetown City Council Penang Past and Present 28, 31, 37
184 Ibid 64
At the Victoria Memorial Hall, where formal evening dress was obligatory, Singapore’s Europeans, like their contemporaries in similar Penang and KL venues, could enjoy performances ranging from local amateur dramatics to visiting professional metropolitan opera and theatrical companies. Finally, the New World Amusement Park, opened in the early 1930s, was patronised by all nationalities.

In this claustrophobic and hidebound ‘Cheltenham on the equator,’ as in England and India, sport was an important part of life and women increasingly accepted as participants. Tennis was played at home and the club or, like suburban England, at informal afternoon and evening parties at private houses. An 1898 visitor found “the amount of tennis played” in Singapore “something astonishing” but good for promoting “social relations between the sexes” while the 1921 Europeans of both sexes were “wonderfully vigorous with their golf, lawn tennis and riding.” In 1903, the Penang Golf Club advertised reminders to its female members of their “entries for the Penang Golf Championship, the Ladies’ Golf Championship, the Ladies’ Singles Handicap.” Other sports for ladies were croquet and archery and, in the inter-war years, swimming became popular. Cycling, as a club activity rather than transport, was popular in turn-of-the-century Penang and Singapore, pneumatic tyres and sealed roads making it easier for the ladies, “assuming a little discretion in the manipulation of skirts, gears, and pedals.” Culturally, increasing demand in Europe for musical, literary and dramatic facilities, amateur and professional, and greater interest in libraries and museums was replicated in Malaya. Amateur musical and drama societies flourished. The 1905 Penang Amateur Dramatic Society (Fig.3,24) advertised three nights’ public performances of the play, ‘Dandy Dick’ and Ethel Proudlock was praised for her performance in a KL society production.

In May 1903, the Ipoh Gardening Club celebrated its first anniversary, thanking its “energetic secretary,” Mrs.D.Luering, for “the tasteful manner in which the pavilion was decorated and the nice things that were served out to the members and guests.” The British passion for gardening was widespread in Malaya, but with little interest in local flora, except at an academic level or in specialised cultivation of

185 Shennan M. *Midday Sun* 62-3, 118-9; Turnbull C.M. *History of Singapore* 113, 136-7
186 Colquhoun E. *Two on Travels* 194; Allen C. *Tales* 239
187 *Straits Echo* 12th June, 4th July, 1903
188 Ibid. 1st June, 1903
exotic flowers like the orchid. Gardens, as in England, were places for women to occupy themselves and for leisure activities, games and garden-parties. Their emphasis was on separateness from the local scene and identity with home, resembling suburban Britain with their well-kept lawns, flower beds and herbaceous borders.\(^{189}\) In 1928, Kathleen Gough wrote of “exceptional opportunities” in Selangor for planting flowers, fruit and vegetables which “remind us of gardens at home” and her aim was to create such a garden “as much as it is possible within reason.”\(^{190}\) In the cooler hill-stations, Katharine Sim found “neat green terraces and lawns” at 1930s Maxwell Hill with borders full of English flowers like roses, dahlias and honeysuckle\(^{191}\) while, at Fraser’s Hill “every garden is bright with blossom” of an English garden, the lawns at ‘The Lodge’ rousing the envy of every English gardener.\(^{192}\) Flower shows were as popular as in England and an annual highlight was the FMS Agricultural Horticultural Show, with an almost entirely European attendance.

Horse-races (Fig.3.23), also extremely popular, were held once or twice annually, and followed by balls and concerts at clubs or the Residency. In Singapore, the Governor usually attended the opening ceremonies and Europeans had their own compound, the occasion being “like a big family party” with Malay royalty and leading Chinese and Indians being permitted to join. The 1888 Penang races coincided with the Governor’s visit, concluding with a dance on board H.M.S. ‘Orion,’ for one hundred European guests. Specially mentioned were Mrs.J.A.Brown, the Misses Caunter, Mrs.and Miss Hogen, Mrs.and Misses Neubronner, Miss Scott and Mrs.Wray, presumably the prominent European women.\(^{193}\) The first KL races also celebrated a Governor’s visit while the 1904 Penang Race Dinner at the E&O Hotel was reported as a “great success,” where “covers were laid for upwards of a hundred guests, the band was in attendance and all went merry as a marriage bell.”\(^{194}\) Ladies could not be seen to participate in the heavy betting so tickets were purchased on their behalf by a British steward. The races were usually heralded by newspaper advertisements for ladies’ fashions and hats imported specifically for the occasion and

\(^{189}\) Davidoff & Hall *Family Fortunes* 370, 374
\(^{191}\) Sim K. *Malayan Landscape*  
\(^{192}\) JMBRAS 11. Pt.1, 1931. 2-14  
\(^{193}\) Georgetown City Council *Penang Past and Present* p. 28  
\(^{194}\) Thor K.H. *Changing Face of KL* ; *Straits Echo* 29\textsuperscript{th} January, 1904
after the last race, everyone strolled about for “good views of the dresses” while tea with ice cream was served.\textsuperscript{195}

Church attendance, the uniform, outward expression of imperial Christian values and ordered behaviour, was obligatory in the government-regulated, officially Anglican, FMS although apparently still less so in Penang, according to Charles Allen. The congregation was required to dress “as they would in England,” the ladies in “long silk or muslin dresses, with hats, bonnets, gloves and veils,”\textsuperscript{196} all rather hot for the climate, especially with the requisite ‘underpinning’ of corsets and stays (Fig.3.6). The newspapers devoted a lot of space to describing the dresses (Appendix 3) so that church attendance was an occasion to see and be seen. The Resident regularly attended St. Mary’s in KL and was believed to record those present\textsuperscript{197} so absentee would be noted, perhaps to the detriment of their careers. Ethel Proudlock, sang every Sunday afternoon in St. Mary’s choir, perhaps from enjoyment or possibly for extra visibility amongst her peers.\textsuperscript{198} Various social activities would also have been church-based, including meetings, talks, outings, concerts and other organised or informal events.

The Clubs and Colonial Society

The club was the exclusive, multi-purpose focus of European social life, where they could, theoretically, relax together unworried about their image or the ‘alien’ cultures surrounding their daily life. Even the local club ‘boys’ had become a group apart. Eventually, all communities had their government-sponsored clubs and those on large estates served as social centres for all Europeans in that area. They became synonymous with regular social life and British prestige, setting expected standards of behaviour and creating a feeling of ‘belonging.’ To be a member meant acceptance and rejection social ostracism, with possible implications for a man’s career, especially if the committee included the Resident or senior administrators.\textsuperscript{199}
The smaller clubs were usually simple and all-purpose. This was initially true of the Selangor Club, by 1899, "probably the most important institution in Kuala Lumpur," while those in the more sophisticated SS, were specialising in interests like cricket, golf or racing. The Selangor Club, providing a range of facilities, also accepted a small Asian elite as members and so, in 1890, the Lake Club was founded, exclusively for higher-ranking Europeans, a venue for "all the fashion of Kuala Lumpur." Primarily a social club, it catered for all sports, with fixtures and competitions against other clubs. Thus, as the FMS hierarchy was established, clubs followed suit, indicating a man’s social status and, by implication, that of his wife.

Following the pattern established in England, India and, later, the SS, these clubs were initially male-orientated with women kept strictly to the sidelines or out of sight (Fig.3.22), confined to their own area, like the "hen roost" annexe of the Penang Club. FMS attitudes changed faster and women were permitted to sit on the verandah or use the reading room, though not the bar. They could peruse newspapers and magazines like the Illustrated London News, Punch, Ally Sloper, Lady, Field, Pall Mall Magazine and the weekly edition of The Times, apparently taking "full advantage of the privilege afforded them." The Selangor Club offered its ladies card, reading and tiffin rooms and a separate hair-dressing salon but retained certain areas for men. A narrow passage behind the long bar let women move between different areas without intruding on this male preserve. Although heavily outnumbered, women appear to have influenced club codes of dress, language and social behaviour, their presence being perceived as a 'civilising' influence. Initially, their participation in events was confined to celebrations like the Queen’s Birthday, Christmas and New Year, the children having "their Christmas Tree on New Year's Day – thanks to the energy and kindness of the ladies of Kuala Lumpur."

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200 Malay Mail 20th January, 1899, 22nd August, 1903; Tate D.J.M. Lake Club 1-2, 10, 42; Shennan M. Midday Sun 125-6
201 Butcher J.G. British in Malaya 147, 157
202 Allen C. Tales 73; Brownfoot J. Incorporated Wife 199
203 Butcher J.G. British in Malaya 63
204 Malay Mail 22nd August, 1903
205 Malay Weekly Mail 25 May, 1922
206 Tate D.J.M. Lake Club 32
207 Selangor Journal 12th January, 1894
For the dinners, featured in the 1890s, “each lady contributed something to the common table,” a cold pie, boiled fowls, salads, fruit tarts and so on.\textsuperscript{208}

Tennis, golf and croquet were fashionable sports in which ladies could participate, with clubs like the Selangor Golf Club open to female membership.\textsuperscript{209} One annual event was the ladies-versus-men cricket match where the men bowled, fielded and batted (with broomsticks) left-handed. In the inaugural 1893 match, the ladies, despite their “heroic attempts” and “extraordinary exertions,” were defeated, with the admonition that “the grand rule” of silence should be “observed while fielding.”\textsuperscript{210}

Proficiency in singing or playing instruments was obviously an advantage and 1900 and 1902 Lake-Club-concert programmes make frequent references to the contributions of Mrs. Arnott, Mrs. Salzmann, a distinguished soprano, Mrs. Merewether, Mrs. Ebden, Mrs. Travers, Mrs. Darke and Miss Spooner\textsuperscript{211} (Figs.3.25, 3.26). Amateur dramatics were popular, at clubs or amateur-dramatic societies, locally-written shows being especially favoured and allowing participants some licence of comment on local society. Residency and club gala occasions included dinner-parties and balls, fancy dress balls being favourites and featuring an imaginative range of characters\textsuperscript{212} (Fig.3.27). The unequal sex ratio emphasised the women’s importance on such occasions, any failure to attend causing great disappointment, leading to an appeal to let “no exclusive feelings” interfere with “people’s enjoyment.” At a December 1892 Selangor Club ball, only nineteen of eighty-one present were women, although it still lasted till 4am.\textsuperscript{213} Smoking Concerts, incorporating material considered unsuitable, were the only events from which women were excluded but these engendered so much female resentment that they were eventually abandoned.

Early-20\textsuperscript{th} Century club evenings appear to have followed a routine of men playing billiards while the ladies in the reading-room “fluttered the pages” of outdated

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{208} Times of Malaya 11\textsuperscript{th} September, 1929.
\bibitem{209} Butcher J.G. British in Malaya 150
\bibitem{210} Selangor Journal Vol.2 8-9
\bibitem{211} Tate D.J.M. Lake Club pp. 51, 69; Shennan M. Midday Sun 62
\bibitem{212} Shennan M. Midday Sun 120
\bibitem{213} Selangor Journal 16\textsuperscript{th} December, 30\textsuperscript{th} December, 1892.
\end{thebibliography}
“picture papers” which they “studied conscientiously week in week out, night after night” or, alternatively, played bridge “with great concentration.” Any male intrusion elicited “a dozen pair of ears” “all attention at once.” This close scrutiny under “the very eyes and ears” of “practised gossips” seems to refute the “desperate flirtation” described by novelists as an inevitable part of life in “tropical countries” where women were “rarities.”

The increase in its numbers between 1900 and 1920, particularly in KL, reduced the intimacy and friendliness of European society and brought new conventions. It was no longer possible for everyone to be on close terms, social distinctions became clearer and new-arrivals had to make formal calls on higher-ranking couples, introducing themselves through the visiting card, a system brought from Victorian Britain and India and continued in the colonies long after it was abandoned at home. An invitation to dinner would follow. The necessity to constantly make the correct impression and not cause offence must have inhibited relaxation, frank conversation and the formation of close friendships and reduced much of the socialising to superficialities. However, for a community with few women, virtually no home life or other social alternatives and long periods of separation for married couples, the club’s advantages clearly outweighed its disadvantages. Social and club life became virtually one, part of the united front, with members attending regularly to avoid being labelled anti-social. However, the gramophone, the car and increased mobility and the pre-war cost-of-living rise made private entertaining more viable, especially for those in outlying areas of the FMS where distance and limited time restricted clubs’ advantages. This was not the same problem in the SS where distances were shorter.

The inter-war period, with its “imported London suburban atmosphere,” completed the change from the “freer, simpler, less conventional” pre-war attitudes to a “new bridle of social discipline” attributed to the increased influx of European women, encouraged by government policy seeking to stabilise colonial society and

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214 Tate D.J.M. *Lake Club* 52.
215 Tate D.J.M. *Lake Club* 58; Allen C. *Tales* 71-3; Shennan M. *Midday Sun* 71; Lewis G.E.D. *Out East* 45; Incorporated Wife Gartrell B.175, Brownfoot J. 199; Midgley C. *Gender and Imperialism* 10,12.
216 Butcher J.G. *British in Malaya* 66
217 Tate D.J.M. *Lake Club* 21, 74
seen by some ‘old hands’ as “necessary nuisances.” This larger, more inward-looking, expatriate community withdrew further from the local culture and placed importance on cultivating superiors. They observed a prescribed internal code of behaviour where minutiae mattered out of all proportion. Any lapse from the norm upset the social order and might be seen as ‘letting the side down,’ with detrimental implications for a husband’s career.  

In this artificial atmosphere, a wife’s role was rigidly defined. She was required to know her place in the hierarchy, the appropriate people with whom to socialise (Fig.3.29), to present the correct image in her demeanour, appearance and home and to make sure all guests in her home were treated correctly according to their rank. The hierarchy formally identified people and placed them in their own sphere and against local society. In Malaya, it broadly followed the same pattern as other colonial societies, government officials, professionals, planter and miners and merchants and their assistants, in that order, and reflected British class values at home. Everyone mixed professionally and socially within their own category and at their own level. The system thus effectively blocked all friendships apart from those between people of the same race, background and status – as opposed to class in England - and insisted on sociability, even amongst possibly uncongenial company meeting on a daily basis.

A wife took her status from her husband so that while she was subordinate to him, she was still higher in the hierarchy than his inferiors. Her role as a successful wife in the system required her to be a gracious hostess for her husband, an ornament at social functions, to provide hospitality for visiting Europeans and to always appear happy and satisfied so that she did not distract her husband from his work. The most senior mem took the lead and set the example for junior wives who were expected to ‘toe the line.’ It was her job to instruct new wives on norms of behaviour and protocol as well as giving practical advice on such matters as coping with servants. In such ways, as Gartrell points out, new wives’ perceptions were structured and the perpetuation of the colonial social system ensured.

218 Incorporated Wife Brownfoot J. 190, Gartrell B. 167-8, 181;
219 Gartrell B. Incorporated Wife 175, 177
220 Allen C. Tales 217-8; Shennan M. Midday Sun 196; Incorporated Wife Gartrell B. 166, 170-2,
As in India, this society even had its own ‘language’ based on acronyms and borrowings from languages round the Empire, and a daunting initiation for all newcomers.\textsuperscript{221} Club committee members’ wives were significant in ‘vetting’ new candidates, approval being confirmed by a dinner invitation from their husbands. For three months before the membership vote, candidates had to attend functions, for members to ‘look them over,’ an opportunity apparently taken up with “a unanimity positively terrifying” and, doubtless, a nerve-racking experience for both candidate and wife. However, some special social attribute, like a good dancer, might relax the procedure and make the candidate more readily acceptable.\textsuperscript{222}

Club life followed an established pattern. Between 6.00pm and 10.30pm, expatriates socialised, although sports facilities were available outside these hours. The Lake Club and Selangor Golf Club both had swimming-pools although it is not clear when women were first permitted to use them. A ‘family’ atmosphere was encouraged and, in the 1920s, dances were weekly events. The Selangor Club held a \textit{the dansant} or an evening dance every Saturday and, sometimes, on weekdays, with the latest dances from Europe. Another weekday was reserved for get-togethers where everyone “drank tea, ate sugar cakes and eyed the newspapers.” For both sexes, there was bridge, perceived to “convert the most charming and dainty” women into “impatient, tetchy viragos.”\textsuperscript{223} Large functions were popular and represented a link with home; 500 people might attend the Selangor Club’s St. Andrew’s Day ball and 700 were at the dance honouring the Prince of Wales’ 1922 visit.\textsuperscript{224}

The club’s influence over social life and domestic propriety enabled it to enforce standards of behaviour and apparent harmony within its ranks. One woman, in 1922, commented she had never before been a member of a community where so many “came from one class,” were the “product of one form of education” and whose outlook was “so uniform.”\textsuperscript{225} Conformity was essential and exclusion social exile. In “Neil MacAdam,” Darya Munro, the Museum Curator’s unconventional wife,

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181-2, Brownfoot J. 192, 199, 201-2; Midgley C. Gender and Imperialism 10-14
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\begin{flushright}
Bayly S. Oxford History of the British Empire Vol.3. 450
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\begin{flushright}
Butcher J.G. British in Malaya 153
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Tate D.J.M. Lake Club 92-5
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\begin{flushright}
Butcher J.G. British in Malaya 148
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\begin{flushright}
Malay Weekly Mail. 30th March, 1922.
\end{flushright}
describes the club men as commonplace, narrow-minded and conventional and their wives as intolerable, jealous, spiteful, lazy and priggish, “talk of nothing,” are “interested in nothing” and regard “an intellectual subject” as “indecent.” However, joining the club seals Neil’s social acceptance and introduces him to the Resident. His sporting aptitude ensures his welcome but Darya’s failure to conform places her on the fringe of society, making her the object of speculative gossip. Likewise, Jack Almond in “A Casual Affair,” is welcomed into the Singapore Club for his skill in polo and tennis but immediately ejected when he drinks too much.

The rural club was seen as the unpretentious focal point of a small, widespread community, providing companionship between 6 pm and 8.30 pm. In the late afternoon, “a lady or two” might read “old numbers of the Illustrated London News,” and, at dusk, the men would arrive for drinks and billiards, accompanied by their wives. Once weekly, there was dancing to the gramophone, a chance for the younger generation to be “gay and abandoned,” with bridge for the older members. Susan Kennaway remembered the rows of “long cane chairs” at the Tanjong Malim Club where her parents played tennis or drank at the bar. It all contrasts dramatically with Madelon Lulofs’ description of inter-war Dutch-colonial clubs in rubber-boom Sumatra. Club-gatherings of the Indonesian colonial community, larger and apparently less socially-selective than in British Malaya clubs, appear to have degenerated, with “very few exceptions,” into orgies of sex and alcoholism, often ending, for both sexes, in “complete drunkenness.” No thought was given to “the native servants,” their “impassive” expressions, “passive faces,” and “vacant eyes” not revealing whether they “despised or disapproved” but probably wondering why “white men” could allow their women “to dance and lie in the arms of other men.”

Relations with and Impact on Locals

As in India, Europeans in Malaya disapproved of social intermingling with the local people, seeing it as a potential threat to their position as rulers. European

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226 Maugham W.S. Sixty-Five Short Stories 914-5, 920-2
227 Maugham W.S. Malaysian Stories 180-2 A Casual Affair
228 Maugham W.S. Sixty-Five Short Stories 640-6 Footprints in the Jungle; Shennan M. Midday Sun 126
229 Allen C. Tales 235, 239
women's contact with the local population, therefore, continued to be mainly through an unequal relationship with their servants, who some saw as simply 'background,' and the occasional social function. For working women during the inter-war years, this would have extended to the work-place. As the European community grew, it became increasingly self-sufficient and separate from the indigenous population and links became more distant and formal, contrasting with Emily Innes' situation in the late 1870s. It was, perhaps, closer to the Indian 'white mem' seen through the eyes of the Bengali syce in "Tropic Fever," the "unattainable" creature to whom "a dog meant more than a native" and who ranked "so high that a coloured man will not dare to approach one even in thought." The mems took no notice of "the coloured man" for "in their eyes he does not exist." Though less extreme in attitude, this period in Malaya reflects a similar emphasis on the superior, unattainable European woman, in keeping with the suburban aspirations, petty morality and insensitivity ascribed to many of them by writers like Somerset Maugham.

Despite their desire for separation, there was, with few exceptions, no official policy of segregation at public entertainments or in public facilities like cinemas, hotels, churches, or government rest houses. The KL European Hospital, until 1931, provided separate facilities for Europeans and the Raffles Hotel, while permitting non-Europeans to share the dining-room with Europeans, prohibited the dance-floor to spare European women potential embarrassment. Probably the most contentious issue was the allocation of railway carriages. During the 1890s, it was accepted that the most comfortable carriages were reserved for Europeans. When the Chinese challenged this, in 1904, the Europeans used the excuse that desegregation might subject western women to "unacceptable and barbaric manners." A behaviour code for the "very best circles" in first-class compartments, consistent with British middle-class proprieties emphasised the difference between oriental behaviour and that acceptable to European women. Ladies were guaranteed "ample seating room," and all "coarse" or local conversation in their presence, removal of shoes or dirty feet, squatting on the seats, smoking or chewing of betelnut, belched garlic fumes, clearing of the throat "promiscuously" or exposure of "naked body" parts were prohibited in their presence while gentlemen must "invariably be dressed in perfect style." As most

\[231\] Midgley C. Gender and Imperialism 22; Incorporated Wife Brownfoot J. 197, Gartrell B. 182
\[232\] Szekely L. Tropic Fever 225
Chinese preferred avoiding these restraints, unofficial segregation continued. Offence to European women’s sensibilities, by possible contact with Orientals, particularly the “English-educated” trying to show their equality with Westerners, was resolved by the introduction of smaller compartments, some, as in England, reserved for women passengers only, especially wives travelling alone.\textsuperscript{233}

As demonstrated by Emily Innes, European women believed that Asians looked to them for guidance over good behaviour and morality and correction of imperfect local standards was a Christian duty. Like their men, they perceived their imperial role as that of “a minor god,” always “an object of attention” constantly “watched by natives” and providing “an example, in conduct, wisdom and strength.”\textsuperscript{234} This, combined with natural inclination, engendered efforts at cordial public relations with Asians but no real social contact. The FMS Railways’ 1914 guidebook informed its readers that KL had separate European and Asian sectors, while the 1910 Government \textit{Illustrated Guide to the Federated Malay States}, stressed one advantage of living in KL was “Europeans and Asiatics were not required to live side by side,” a passage eventually removed in 1923.\textsuperscript{235}

Relaxing without scrutiny was difficult within the home where servants were constantly-present observers. Racially-mixed clubs raised the possibility of Asian men leaving their women at home but expecting to mix freely with European women.\textsuperscript{236} Socially-elite clubs like the Lake Club, Penang Club, Taiping New Club and the Singapore Tanglin Club, were exclusively European, while segregation was more strongly enforced in the SS than the FMS. Government-supported clubs, like the Perak Club and Selangor Club, were open to all Europeans and a few Asians and Eurasians. This may have accounted for the latter’s derogatory nickname of ‘The Spotted Dog,’ a more anodyne explanation being Mrs. Syers’ Dalmatian dogs, which accompanied her there.\textsuperscript{237} Asian membership was usually restricted to Malay royalty

\textsuperscript{233} Malay Weekly Mail 3\textsuperscript{rd} April, 1913; 14\textsuperscript{th} January, 21\textsuperscript{st} January, 1926; 30\textsuperscript{th} July, 1931; Davidoff & Hall \textit{Family Fortunes} 405


\textsuperscript{236} Midgley C. \textit{Gender and Imperialism} 23; Butcher J.G. \textit{British in Malaya} 167-70, 189

\textsuperscript{237} Gullick J.M. \textit{Syers and the Selangor Police 1875-1887} JMBRAS 51 (2) 1978 \textit{Glimpses of Selangor} 60
or prominent Asians.\textsuperscript{238} Such limited contact enabled middle-class European women to see themselves as equal, even superior to, the Asian elite. Likewise, their unchallenged matriarchal relationship with their servants facilitated their belief in their tolerance and kindness towards the locals. Occasionally, this perceived tolerance met some challenge like the 1927 Perak Club’s children’s Christmas party where the organisers invited the local Girl Guides, mostly non-European. This split the Europeans, some refusing to let their children attend and mix with local children and others disapproving of this attitude but, perhaps, not to the extent of encouraging further contact between the children. This maintenance of “two worlds,” mingling in public with Asians but not socialising, might require some explaining to children puzzled by the contrast of the “all white people” they met at home with the multi-racial mix they encountered in their early schooling and the divisions they perceived even at church where the Europeans entered to worship while the Indian punkah-pullers, rickshaw men and syces stayed outside. Even within the Christian religious sectors, Europeans and Asians worshipped at different churches.\textsuperscript{239}

Social contact outside the club between European women and locals was limited to gestures of good-will, any closer friendship risking “familiarity breeding contempt.” British colonials’ contempt for the indigenous population, equating it with the British urban poor, engendered fear that attempts at friendship might be misunderstood by Asians as implications of equality and lead to abuse.\textsuperscript{240} Only wealthy and aristocratic Asians were considered of appropriate status for socialising with Europeans and this handful participated in European functions and entertained Europeans in their homes or more formal venues. At a large European wedding in 1896 KL, Chinese-community leaders were the only non-Europeans invited, while at a 1897 KL Residency dance, there were only four non-Europeans, Chinese and Tamil communities’ leaders and two Selangor royals, among the 120 present. Asians had to ascertain in advance their welcome at public functions, to avoid “painful humiliation.”\textsuperscript{241} At reciprocal events, European guests attended the 1926 wedding of a Chinese Federal Councillor’s daughter and, that week, Europeans were at a

\textsuperscript{238} Butcher J.G. \textit{British in Malaya} 183
\textsuperscript{239} British Malaya February 1928, September 1933; Shennan M. \textit{Midday Sun} 70; Turnbull C.M. \textit{History of Singapore} 138
\textsuperscript{240} Bayly C. \textit{Imperial Meridian} 7; Butcher J.G. \textit{British in Malaya} 53
\textsuperscript{241} Malay Mail 24\textsuperscript{st} May, 1911
prominent Chinese's housewarming party, although on a different evening from the local guests. In 1939, 112 Europeans were entertained by prominent Penang Straits-Chinese leader, Khoo Sian Ewe, at a wedding dinner for his oldest daughter, again, separately from locals.

One problem at 'mixed' gatherings was the lack of clarity over the European woman's role and cultural differences could inhibit social contact. Unlike local women, traditionally remaining in the background, European women were used to joining their husbands and other men at social functions. In racially mixed gatherings, therefore, the European woman had the choice between joining the men and the embarrassment of contravening Asian etiquette or the discomfort caused by the cultural gap between European and Asian women. Few Asian women spoke English while most European women now understood only enough of the local languages to communicate with servants which imposed a strain on communication. Social mixing was further inhibited by the Malay view of dancing between the sexes being indecent, automatically excluding Malay women. This raised the question whether European prestige and European women's reputations were compromised by dancing with Malay men, in view "of the native's attitude to women." The easiest solution was avoidance, especially as Asian women, Malays in particular, often did not accept invitations, and could not receive male visitors.

There was also the problem of liaisons between local women and European men, prior to the latter's marriage, and the resulting "outcast" children. Despite efforts to protect the "pure bride" from knowledge of these liaisons and contact with the women and children, many must have been painfully aware of their existence. Colonial rules forcing men to marry relatively late in life tacitly condoned these liaisons, providing they were discreet, the alternative being "no home life, no women friends" and no social life. Plantations especially were seen as "no world for

242 Selangor Journal 17th April, 1896; Malay Mail 11th December, 1922; Malay Weekly Mail 14th January, 1926
243 Yeap J.K. The Patriarch 90-6
244 Gullick J.M. Old KL 60
245 British Malaya Census 1931; Malay Weekly Mail 21st December, 1922; Swettenham F. British Malaya 147
246 Malay Weekly Mail 23rd November, 1922
247 Butcher J.G. British in Malaya 200-1;
women," especially "respectable," "middle-class" women," while the "contract forbids it." The salary was too low to support a "respectable," "white" woman so the only alternative was "to take a black" one, "purchased like a cow" and abandoned when the "white" woman eventually appeared.\textsuperscript{248} Although privately condoned by the authorities, these relationships were hard to reconcile with public standards of Victorian morality and were officially condemned as lowering 'white' prestige. Any open acknowledgement was social suicide.\textsuperscript{249} European sympathy for the murdered Geoff Hammond, in Maugham's 'The Letter,' or his real-life counterpart, William Steward, waned when he was revealed to have a Chinese mistress. Such a man was deemed capable of anything, including the rape of a white woman\textsuperscript{250} and Ethel Proudlock was deemed to have "killed in defence of her honour" one of the "innumerable satyrs" inhabiting those Colonies where "the male population is largely in excess of the female."\textsuperscript{251}

This convenient double standard ignored the effect on a young European bride arriving in Malaya only to discover the truth after marriage. It was argued that a man in a stable relationship was less likely to contract venereal disease and pass it on to his bride. However, in Malaya, the wife faced this problem in unfamiliar surroundings, without family support, protected by a husband she had only known for maybe six months. Although some women, like Madeline Daubenys, might claim to consider such arrangements as "eminently sensible,"\textsuperscript{252} it is likely that the more common attitude is expressed through Doris, in Maugham's "The Force of Circumstance" who arrived in Sarawak, to discover her husband's Malay mistress and their three children. Her inability to accept the relationship, although now ended, eventually forces her to leave her husband and return to England but few women would have had this option and would simply have had to accommodate to the situation, however that strained the marriage. In 1922 newspaper-letters, European women denounced the double standard which tolerated behaviour in men that it condemned in women and produced "countless disillusioned brides." They demanded changes in the marriage rules to

\textsuperscript{248} Szekely L. \textit{Tropic Fever}\ 157-8, 202, 238-9
\textsuperscript{249} Midgley C. \textit{Gender and Imperialism}\ 4; Shennan M. \textit{Midday Sun}\ 66-7; Brownfoot J. \textit{Incorporated Wife}\ 191-2
\textsuperscript{250} Appendix 6; Maugham W.S. \textit{Sixty-Five Short Stories}\ 861-883; Butcher J.G. \textit{British in Malaya}\ 233-8; Lawlor E. \textit{Murder on the Verandah}
\textsuperscript{251} Butcher J.G. \textit{British in Malaya}\ 238
\textsuperscript{252} Allen C. \textit{Tales}\ 220
transform the situation. This moral indignation also cloaks racial prejudice. Ultimately, it is not Guy’s moral lapse which drives Doris away but “a physical thing,” something “stronger than I am.” The thought of “those thin, black arms of hers round you” and “those little black babies in your arms” was “loathsome” and filled her with “physical nausea,” making even Guy’s touch “odious.” A newspaper correspondent echoes the same sentiment: “I am not a prude, and know few men are pure on their marriage – but I draw the line at colour.”

The system presented another unpalatable concept to European women. The perceived correct feelings for a local mistress, defined in Hugh Clifford’s “Since the Beginning,” were “not dignified with the name of love” but “born of that overwhelming attraction which the physical beauty of a woman may have for a man,” without “his heart or his intellect being in any way influenced by her.” All the higher feelings were reserved for European women with the local woman as a “sorry makeshift” for the “girl of his own race” who could not be expected to endure his initial hardships in Malaya. However, Guy’s ten-year liaison, prior to marriage, does not appear to be based simply on physical necessity. One woman, calling herself ‘All White,’ asked “surely it is not that they prefer black to white” and claimed “this is truly what hurts us women” that men might “prefer a native woman to one of their own,” a fear expressed by European women in other parts of the empire. Madelon Lulof explores this preference through, Dunk, a rubber-plantation assistant, who disliked the “Oriental unreserved” in sexual relationships” but, nevertheless, preferred “an Eastern woman than a Western,” as “so much more submissive,” “adaptable” and “womanly.” During this period, government policy of an improved European sex-ratio in Malaya, plus the wider distribution of women, does appear to have coincided with a reduction of local liaisons. The wider European female presence implied greater influence over unmarried men, requiring, at least, an outward display of respectability. Any hint of ‘moral laxity’ risked social ostracism and the possible

253 Malay Weekly Mail 16th November, 1922; 23rd November, 1922; McClintock A. Imperial Leather 287; Brownfoot J. Incorporated Wife 191
254 Maugham W.S. Malaysian Stories, 72
255 Malay Weekly Mail 23rd November, 1922.
256 Clifford H. Since the Beginning. London, 1898. 134
257 Malay Weekly Mail 23rd November, 1922; Young R.J.C. Colonial Desire 175
258 Lulofs M. Coolie 93–7.
259 Census Tables Selangor 1891; FMS 1901, 1911; British Malaya 1921, 1931; Midgley C. Gender and Imperialism 4
displeasure of superiors influenced by their wives, which could jeopardise their jobs. This ‘vigilante’ female behaviour with its insistence on observance of moral standards, protected European prestige and also supported women newly-arrived from Europe. Their strength lay in the men’s desire for good terms with them, especially those young, single and seeking potential wives.\(^{260}\) By 1935, it was claimed that “whatever loosening of standards may have occurred in the old days of loneliness” and “lack of social intercourse,” “such immorality” no longer existed, thanks to improved communications bringing “neighbours, clubs and relaxation in easy reach of us all.”\(^{261}\)

Although Malayan Europeans claimed their relationship with the locals lacked the racial tension of India, they still appear to have felt some insecurity over their isolation among this larger population but with few obvious substantial grounds. This was, effectively, frontier society with great inequalities of wealth. There were robberies, especially in isolated areas, like Emily Innes’ Pangkor experience, but Asians were attacked as much as Europeans. However, some saw such attacks involving Europeans as particular threats, the “white planting manager” and his family being “at the mercy of a horde of yellows.”\(^{262}\) The encouragement by anti-Manchu Chinese for the Straits Chinese to cut off their queues, a symbol of adherence to traditional manners, aroused European unease about the loyalty of their household servants.\(^{263}\) The uncoiled queue signalled respect and Emily Innes always refused to order dinner if her cook’s pigtail was “curled round his head.”\(^{264}\) Other perceived indications of Chinese assertion were the KL dhobies changing to a charge per item rather than overall monthly, thereby doubling their earnings and increasing European household expenditure, the refusal of incoming Chinese workers to comply with quarantine regulations and causing a possible health hazard and refusal to give precedence to Europeans, one woman complaining that Chinese prostitutes were served before her. However, these were isolated incidents and even in the 1912 KL

\(^{260}\) Butcher J.G. _British in Malaya_ 210-12

\(^{261}\) Straits Times 5th August, 1935

\(^{262}\) Butcher J.G. _British in Malaya_ 114

\(^{263}\) Bayly S. _Oxford History of the British Empire_ Vol.3. 457; Turnbull C.M. _History of Singapore_ 105; Shennan M. _Midday Sun_ 71

\(^{264}\) Innes E. _Chersonese_ Vol. 1. 214-5
Chinese-New-Year riots, only the Chinese suffered fatalities, Europeans merely experiencing domestic inconveniences.\textsuperscript{265}

The one exception was the 1915 Singapore mutiny which took the British by surprise despite the mounting tension. European families were evacuated to British ships in the harbour, packed to overflowing, reminiscent of the European evacuation of Macau before the 1839 Opium War.\textsuperscript{266} One wife recalled "I never felt more frightened in my life." The Indian Mutiny "flashed into my mind," along with the realisation that there were no "white troops." Women and children spent the night at Government House in confusion and uncertainty, "sitting waiting to be told what to do" with "no one knowing where the trouble was." The staircase was barricaded by armed guards until their transference to a ship. Comparison with the 1857 Indian Mutiny where mutineers "did not hesitate to kill women" and the knowledge that she might have to shoot herself must have intensified a terrifying experience for any woman. There were casualties, including a young, newly-married couple but, within twenty-four hours, the situation was under control and normality restored.\textsuperscript{267}

One underlying cause for apprehension may have been the implicit colour bar. While Europeans indoctrinated the locals with their language, education system, standards and leisure pursuits, they also invented reasons for excluding Asians from their rights, privileges and positions, aided and abetted by local English newspapers.\textsuperscript{268} They considered "the business of the ruling race" was to rule "through men of its own blood and colour," who either "worked at the top" or "not at all."\textsuperscript{269} Few locals were perceived to have the essential "mental capabilities" or "moral character" which made them worthy of "positions of trust."\textsuperscript{270} The papers rationalised that Asians preferred "the pure-bred Europeans" as rulers, this being the "natural order."\textsuperscript{271} Promotion controls in the professions applied to women as well as men. European nurses regarded Asian doctors as subordinates and any complaints about

\textsuperscript{265} Butcher J.G. \textit{British in Malaya} 113, 115; Turnbull C.M. \textit{History of Singapore} 53, 138.
\textsuperscript{266} Hoe S. \textit{Private Life} 3, 23
\textsuperscript{267} Blackwood’s Magazine \textit{A Lady’s Experiences in the Singapore Mutiny} No. MCCII,1915. 781-94; Turnbull C.M. \textit{History of Singapore} 126-7; Shennan M. \textit{Midday Sun} 88-102
\textsuperscript{268} Bayly C. \textit{Imperial Meridian} 8-9; Porter A. \textit{Oxford History of the British Empire} Vol.3. 24
\textsuperscript{269} \textit{Straits Times} 5\textsuperscript{th} November, 1924; Allen C. \textit{Tales} 82; Turnbull C.M. \textit{History of Singapore} 116
\textsuperscript{270} \textit{Times of Malaya} 15\textsuperscript{th} January, 1930. \textit{Malay Mail} 20\textsuperscript{th} July, 1912.
\textsuperscript{271} \textit{Straits Times} 4\textsuperscript{th} March, 1912.
this to European doctors were ignored.\textsuperscript{272} Janet Lim comments on the lack of personal contact between Asian nurses in the Singapore Mission Hospital and European medical staff. Although not bullied or ill-treated, the nurses felt "a lack of understanding and sympathy" from Europeans who failed to "enter into our lives" or "identify themselves with our ideas and with our feelings." Asians were not allowed to use the telephone or lift, having to "climb the endless steps to the roof where the European sisters and doctors were sipping cups of tea." Even after work, "Europe and Asia did not mix."\textsuperscript{273}

This attitude also applied to Eurasians. The closer cultural ties between the British and Eurasians only strengthened British determination to maintain separation, contrasting with the Dutch who treated Eurasians as Europeans. Most Eurasians were government employees but in subordinate positions with restricted promotion and discouraged from claims to be European. Their English pronunciation was ridiculed and they were generally seen as a threat to European purity, lacking "those robust, rugged, manly attributes which have helped the Anglo-Saxon race go forth and found the greatest Empire the world has ever seen."\textsuperscript{274} Izzard, in Maugham's "The Yellow Streak," defines the colonial view of the "half-caste" child, whose "touch of the tarbrush" leaves it "no chance in the world. Ever." He is of "mixed blood," his mother being part Malay, and feels this has blighted both his career and his personal life, rendering him unable to marry a girl "of good family" as no self-respecting "white" woman would consider him. He attributes his cowardice to his "drop of native blood" and lives in dread of its revelation. He blames his "Spanish grandmother" for his swarthy complexion, well aware that the truth would instantly discount all his popular social skills and he would become "damned familiar" and "inefficient" with everyone waiting for "the expected failure at the critical moment," knowing that Eurasians "sooner or later" would "let you down."\textsuperscript{275}

These demarcation lines also applied among the women. European-1880s-KL society ostracised Mrs. Syers, the Commissioner-of-Police's wife, for being part Siamese, despite her husband’s prominent position and the couple's generous

\textsuperscript{272} Butcher J.G. \textit{British in Malaya} 178
\textsuperscript{273} Lim J. \textit{Sold for Silver} 96-7, 104.
\textsuperscript{274} \textit{Malay Mail} 1\textsuperscript{st} October, 1897
\textsuperscript{275} Maugham W.S. \textit{Sixty-Five Short Stories} 269-74
hospitality.\textsuperscript{276} When Edward VIII, then Prince of Wales, visited KL, he caused a furore amongst the leading hostesses at the official Selangor Club dinner by selecting a young planter’s attractive Eurasian wife to partner him for the first dance.\textsuperscript{277} Few European men married locals as this usually meant exclusion from European society, with employers, “both Government and Commercial,” expecting them to “remain European in every way.”\textsuperscript{278} Furlough privileges for police inspectors and their wives only applied “provided the wife is not a native of the East.”\textsuperscript{279} Just a few, well-established figures like Charleton Maxwell could avoid such discrimination.\textsuperscript{280} In “The Jungle Ends Here,” the troubles of Jo, an English planter, originate from his marriage to the Malay girl, Putheh, (ironically Malay for ‘white’). Her preference for her Malay lover leads to Jo’s murder while his conversion to Islam and failed communication between English friends and Putheh, perceived as her fault, cause inevitable distance between him and his peer group.\textsuperscript{281} Ladislao Szekely opined that a man living in the tropics will “still remain a European,” while the “native” “remains a native.” While “East is east, and west is west,” a woman of any local racial group could only be accepted at the physical level but friend or wife “she could not be.”\textsuperscript{282}

The reverse situation was more uncommon and was discouraged as it upset imperial class and racial hierarchies and undermined the image of the desirable but subordinate ‘white’ woman in need of protection against Asian men. During the interwar years, a few Malay men, usually studying abroad, married European women. On return to Malaya, these wives experienced great difficulties unless their husbands were of sufficiently high rank to overcome objections. Otherwise, acceptance by their husbands’ families was unlikely, even when they conformed to the Asian wife’s expected role. The Sultan of Perak, backed by the High Commissioner, Secretary of State and British Colonial Office, declared that no Perak Malay with a European wife could hold state-government office or expect government assistance for his return to Malaya unless he left his wife behind. As these wives often came from low-class

\begin{footnotes}
\footnotetext{277}{Tate D.J.M. Lake Club 95; Allen C. Tales 74}
\footnotetext{278}{Butcher J.G. British in Malaya 212 (J.S.Potter – Guthrie employee)}
\footnotetext{279}{F.M.S. Civil Service List 1904 xxvi}
\footnotetext{280}{Tate d.J.M. Lake Club 96; Butcher J.G. British in Malaya 208; Shennan M. Midday Sun 68}
\footnotetext{281}{Sim K. The Jungle Ends Here}
\footnotetext{282}{Szekely L. Tropic Fever 221}
\end{footnotes}
backgrounds and were perceived as having ‘broken ranks’, they were not accepted by Malayan European society either. Even European wives socially acceptable to aristocratic Malay families, were considered disruptive to local custom and possible causes of succession disputes. Few such marriages lasted. Other relationships between Asian men and European women appear comparatively rare and, like Sydney Swettenham’s, eradicated with dispassionate speed. A 1937 letter from the High Commissioner to the Colonial Office, reporting a “very near” scandal in Perak where “a European woman allowed herself to become the mistress of a Malay,” employs language portraying the woman as a victim, allowing herself to be seduced rather than actively seeking the relationship.283

The impact of European women on local society operated on two levels, direct contact and indirect influence. The former involved missionary and educational work, organisation of refuges for Chinese girl slaves and orphans and nursing and medical services. At the second level, aristocratic Malays were open to limited Western influence in education, sport and club membership but those most influenced were the anglophile Straits Chinese who amalgamated East and West in food, furnishings, transport, entertainment, music and clothing. The women dressed their daughters in western-style dresses and encouraged European accomplishments, imported English baby clothes, incorporated western bridal dresses in traditional marriage ceremonies, adopted European underwear and frequented European department stores for shopping and afternoon tea. Many of their daughters went to convent and missionary schools, which, initially, enhanced their marriage value and, eventually, led to careers and choice over marriage partners.284

Health and the Hill Stations

The comfort of European women in this period was further improved by great advances in tropical medicine like the understanding and effective treatment of malaria. By 1896, malaria was rare among FMS Europeans except those living on

283 Butcher J.G. British in Malaya 185-6, 263; Midgley C. Gender and Imperialism 4-5; Incorporated Wife Brownfoot J. 205-6, Gartrell B. 169, 177
284 Yeap J.K. The Patriarch 50, 82-3, 90, 95, 101, 168-9; Edwards N. Singapore House 151-79
new estates but there were outbreaks in Singapore and Penang until 1936. In Penang, malaria-related deaths for the entire population fell from 103 in 1929 to 25 in 1939. Europeans were now more likely to contract the urban, mosquito-born fever, dengue which, unlike malaria, was not recurrent but could be fatal. Overcrowding and substandard government hospitals had led to 1870s Singapore being described as a “nursery for disease,” while outbreaks of typhoid, Bubonic Plague, 1889, 1895, 1899, smallpox 1891, cholera 1896 and inter-war influenza epidemics which wiped out whole families, all attributable to medical deficiencies, bad drains, poor water supply, ineffectual sanitation and rats, made Penang a “somewhat unhealthy and fever-stricken place.” Although these conditions mostly affected the local population, they must have frightened European families. With government assumption of responsibility for health in the colonies, a new policy of hospital-building benefited general health while, for women, the Penang King Edward VII Maternity Hospital, 1915, 1936 Maternity and Child Welfare Centre and similar facilities in Singapore provided great improvements for childbirth and child-care.

All newcomers were prone to a form of ringworm nicknamed ‘dhoby itch,’ believed to be contracted from clothing returned from the dhoby. This affected the groin, a painful preparation being the only treatment until the skin established some immunity. ‘Singapore foot,’ a perpetual itching between the toes was another hazard, caused by a fungus on the cement bathroom floors which could become serious if neglected. The risk of contracting hook-worm or being stung by spiders or scorpions or bitten by snakes meant children could not go bare-foot and there was danger from tigers for families in rural areas. A sudden high temperature could also be terrifying when there was no doctor within reach. Such problems contributed to the European belief that the tropical climate was harmful to health.

Failure to adapt completely to their new environment placed a strain on European constitutions, the heat and humidity of “perpetual summer” leaving them “completely without surplus energy” mentally or physically, with exercise “even in

285 Bastin J. Travellers’ Singapore 235
286 Pinang Gazette 28th February, 15th July, 1890, 12th May, 1899; Georgetown City Council Penang Past and Present 41-5, 69; Turnbull C.M. History of Singapore 113; Shennan M. Midday Sun 104
287 Georgetown City Council Penang Past and Present 44, 71; Turnbull C.M. History of Singapore 128
288 Peet G. Rickshaw Reporter 302
289 Allen C. Tales 227; Shennan M. Midday Sun 202-3
the cool of the evening” seen as an “effort.” They believed this made them more vulnerable to fever, like chills at home, and nervous disorders. Although there is no clear evidence, women were considered to bear the greater risk, “alone” in the house throughout the “long hot morning,” “too weary” to do anything to dispel the “monotony that gets on your nerves.” Given the energy they displayed in tennis and dancing, such lapses could probably be attributed more to boredom or depression than poor physical health.

Susceptibility to the climate could, they believed, be averted by correct clothing, especially flannel underclothing to absorb perspiration and religiously wearing topis, the “badge of the ruling class,” even when swimming, to prevent sunstroke. As sunstroke is an extreme over-heating of the whole body, not then understood, the topi actually served little practical purpose, its function for its wearers being mainly psychological. Such unsuitable European clothing, linked to the ideology of maintaining identity and self-respect, must have contributed substantially to women’s feelings of lassitude and ill-health which improved as customs like dressing formally for dinner were abandoned and fashion dictated lighter, washable dresses and discarding of stays and voluminous petticoats. However, absorbent light-woollen underclothes were still considered essential. One problem for both sexes was diet, both in quantity and quality. From the start, Europeans appear to have eaten large meals and much social life seemed to centre round the dining-table. Even between the wars, despite warnings about “alcohol in moderation” and a “sensible diet,” “most Europeans over-ate,” their diet containing too much protein and carbohydrate and not enough fruit and vegetables. Cold storage preserved imported European food, bypassing fresh local meat, fish and butter in favour of frozen produce while canned vegetables, stewed fruit and milk caused vitamin deficiency, probably partly to blame for the lack of energy attributed to climate.

290 Bastin J. Travellers’ Singapore 233
291 Shennan M. Midday Sun 198; Brownfoot J. Incorporated Wife 198
292 MacMillan M. Women of Raj 41
293 Aiken S.R. Imperial Belvederes 58; Allen C. Tales 217; Midgley C. Gender and Imperialism 10; Brownfoot J. Incorporated Wife 198
294 Peet G. Rickshaw Reporter 58; Shennan M. Midday Sun 127
295 Bastin J. Travellers’ Singapore 208, 234
Initially, as in India, mortality rates appear to have been higher than in England. In the 1920s they dropped to half of those in Great Britain, perhaps because Europeans retired home at fifty-five, probably younger for wives. Nevertheless, many women had to cope with illness, miscarriage, childbirth and problems of rearing young children with limited western medical facilities and without the support of female relatives. Some of the western methods available were adopted by locals. Khoo Sian Ewe’s daughter employed an obstetrician rather than the traditional family midwife, and also bought English baby-clothes. Another climate-related problem was the average age of menstruation for European girls, born and raised in the tropics, earlier than in England, promoted the fear that these girls might also mature sexually earlier than in Britain, thereby posing undesirable problems. Unsatisfactory standards in primary schools or amongst children taught at home, interruptions for furlough, lack of peer-group competition and exposure to servants’ perceived lax moral standards and pidgin English and to the more lurid aspects of local life, such as the Indian festival of Thaipusam, were further seen as detrimental to children’s education and moral development. Consequently, Europeans believed that children would degenerate physically and mentally unless removed at five years, seven at the latest. For the wife, this enforced a choice between a long separation from her children or from her husband if she accompanied them. In Europe, she might have little contact with children at boarding schools, while worrying how her husband would react to her absence. The decision was not an easy one but many wives appear to have elected to return, some believing “there really was no choice” and the children “took it quite for granted,” while others saw it as “constant conflict,” always feeling “split” and never quite sure “where my duty lay.” As children could be as young as 5 or 6 when they left for Europe, the experience must have been even more traumatic for many of them than for their mothers. Some women compromised, returning after the children had settled into boarding school. As this exodus also included single women, some must have gone purely for their own health reasons, believing that “almost every woman recovers her bloom after she has been home.” A few men,
like Mr. Pasqual, Penang Chairman of the Miners’ Association, could return with his family, “the indifferent health of his youngest son” necessitating “some months in the South of France” but, for most families, this separation, “the tragedy of the East,” especially characteristic of Malaya, must have frequently caused great stress and mental disorders like depression or breakdown. In the early 1920s, around 30% of FMS wives were temporarily separated from their husbands, dropping to 23% by the early 1930s. Health became a public issue, promoting the 1929 appeal for the government to hasten hill-station development: “if you strip the ladies of their lipstick and their face powder, who do you get?” Women “entirely worn out” with health “breaking up” and children “pale and anaemic” who “should not be in the country as long as they are.”

The inadequacy of the four-yearly furloughs home necessitated some alternative. The great hill-stations of India and, closer to home, Penang Hill (Fig. 3.33), provided the solution, recreating the idea of the holiday resort then popular in contemporary metropolitan Europe. Maxwell Hill, Taiping (Fig. 3.34), for the Resident and government officers’ families and Gunong Kledang, near Ipoh were both small and simple although Maxwell Hill was self-sufficient in vegetables, milk and butter and Taiping Chinese shopkeepers supplied other daily requirements. The Crag Hotel, 1895, acquired and improved in 1905 by the Sarkies, extended Penang Hill’s facilities and became a popular European venue.

Bukit Kutu, Selangor’s first hill-station, accommodated one family or two sharing and was reached by early train from KL and a four-hour journey by foot, horseback or chair for invalids, older women and babies. Each family was allocated the bungalow for two weeks or a month for two families sharing, each husband joining in for his own fortnight. Families took their own servants and provisions for the entire stay while the caretaker supplied fresh vegetables. One such party took two sheep, crates of fowl and quantities of tinned food with twenty porters carrying the baggage. Activities included tennis and walking while a fire in the cooler evenings

302 Straits Echo 31st May, 1903
303 Midgley C Gender and Imperialism 14; Gartrell B. Incorporated Wife 177
304 Butcher J.G. British in Malaya 68-72; British Malaya Census 1921, 1931
305 Davidoff & Hall Family Fortunes 359
306 Aiken S.R. Imperial Belvederes 39, 61
made visitors feel closer to home. These early stations were all small with preference given to government officials. This plus the termination of all home-leave during the Great War led to urgent demand for further developments.

Fraser’s Hill, near KL, was larger with over a dozen government bungalows, four Red Cross bungalows, a small golf course, a branch of the Selangor Club, a public house, the Maxwell Arms and a boarding school for European children, originally St.Margaret’s Church of England School but, by the mid-1930s, known under the name of its new owner, Mrs. Davidson. By 1930, the number of bungalows had risen to 63, in carefully demarcated compounds, with the daily rent for a Government bungalow at $4.50 or $2.10 per room, “complete with well-trained servants – Chinese of course,” and a private KL firm of rented cars replacing the traditional transport by chair. Here visitors could enjoy “the comforts of a well run hotel” with the “privacy of a home” and a “glorious log fire” in the cool evenings. Fraser’s Hill was soon too small for demand, preference still being given to government employees and resulting in a ‘government atmosphere’ and many Europeans, like Katharine Sim, preferred Sumatran Brastagi to Malaya’s “cramped and shut in” hill-stations.

Only the Cameron Highlands came close to fulfilling European expectations. The government constructed a rest house, some minor roads and a golf course, leaving the rest to private enterprise. By 1935, there were two European private boarding schools, the Pensionnat Notre Dame Convent School and the Tanglin School, employing teachers from England and founded by Anne Griffith-Jones who came from an old colonial family and had previously run a nursery-school in Singapore’s Tanglin Club. Between them, these schools provided British education for about one hundred European children up to the age of 13 and common entrance into English public school, thus postponing a wife’s need to choose between husband and children. Some planting families began to consider retirement there, the

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308 Shennan M. Midday Sun 127-8, 200
309 Aiken S.R. Imperial Belvederes 44; Wilson M. Malaya
In 1930, SS1 = 2s.4d.
310 Sim K. Malayan Landscape 167; Shennan M. Midday Sun 128
311 Shennan M. Midday Sun 128-30, 201
312 Letters of Mrs.Nancy Barson 18th May, 1941 ( British in Malaya 164 )
climate being ideal for them besides the financial advantages of small estates supplementing pensions and no income tax. By 1935, about fifty, mainly planting families, regarded their small Cameron-Highland estates as home, more like some of the early SS European planters than those in the FMS.

Hill stations provided a British club-like atmosphere where Europeans could relax amongst their own kind while the cool, dry, invigorating climate encouraged nostalgic illusions of home. Cool nights permitted fires in the hearth. Sir Frederick and Alice Weld felt that their 1886 stay at the ‘The Cottage’ on Maxwell Hill had done “a wonderful amount of good,” with its “English April weather, without the harsh winds” and “fires every evening,” not because “the cold made it necessary” but because “it looked bright and cheery.” Katharine Sim also relished fireside teatime, hot-water bottles and warm clothes. At the same time, Eastern amenities were still accessible, like the “innumerable amahs” to take care of the children. Limited facilities made leisure occupations simple and mainly outdoor, such as walking and gardening and sports like tennis, croquet, cricket, golf, polo, horse-racing, riding and hunting, with occasional social events at the club or hotel. For the less physically-active there was reading, writing, sketching, chess or studying the local flora. Intrusions of reality like rhino pugs, snakes and jungle incursions were clearly sources of unease and reassurance was sought through the Englishness of the domestic animals and the flowers, fruit and vegetables cultivated there. Visitors could consume strawberries and cream while watching cows in a field or admiring English flowers in “another world...so much nearer to England.” Most bungalows had English names and their gardens where “old English flowers, so dear to us, flourished.” Europeans probably owed their renewed health to the unaccustomed diet of fresh food as well as the psychological effect of surroundings and climate on their emotional needs.

**Katharine Sim and Malayan Landscape**

Katharine Sim arrived in Malaya in 1939 and Malayan Landscape, written in 1946 as a reconstruction from memory, records her life and expectations, explored more fully in Appendix 9. She married Customs officer, Stuart Sim, while he was on

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313 Aiken S.R. Imperial Belvederes 62
314 Sim K. Malayan Landscape 138-40, 223
furlough following his first term of office and returned with him to Malaya, initially
to Parit Buntar on the state boundary between Province Wellesley and Perak and then
to Lumut on the Dindings Coast. Unlike Emily Innes’ rural isolation, these were both
small towns with networks of communication with larger European settlements. Also
contrasting with Emily, Katharine claimed “love with undying warmth” for Malaya
and, in 1947, the Sims returned until Stuart’s premature retirement in 1960. 315

From the start, the facilities awaiting Katharine and her contemporaries at
Penang, on arrival in Malaya, were far superior to Emily’s reception in Klang and
more conducive to positive first impressions. This, in Katharine’s case, was probably
enhanced by her artist’s response to her new surroundings. The improved
communications of a train service also meant that the last lap of her journey to Parit
Buntar and, later, the move to Lumut, could be made with greater speed, comfort and
privacy than that available to Emily. At Parit Buntar and Lumut, she found
comfortable accommodation, small-town amenities and local shops which supplied
their essential needs, improved mobility which afforded her access to the facilities of
larger towns, a European enclave and an established colonial social life centred round
the club (Figs. A.9.3, A.9.5, A.9.7). She was welcomed at Parit Buntar by the wife of
Stuart’s superior who was on hand to provide support. At Lumut, she was the only
woman in its small official community but access to a car enabled her to establish a
network of friendships with other European wives in the locality and farther afield
and to participate in activities in neighbouring towns. 316

Her homes in both places were typical, black-and-white Government houses,
furnished with PWD furniture which she supplemented with their personal
possessions and extras made by local carpenters from Heal’s catalogues. Although
less modern and fashionable than housing in KL and Singapore and despite
drawbacks like no daytime electricity at Lumut and traditional bathing and sanitation
facilities, Katharine fared better than contemporaries in more spartan rural areas and
she did eventually get European toilets at Lumut. The Sims employed the five
servants customary for a colonial household of the time, a Chinese house-boy, Ah

315 Ibid. 7-12, 18;
316 Sim K. Malayan Landscape 17-24, 60-3, 76, 87, 99, 114, 125, 132-3, 207-8, 220-1; Shennan M.
Midday Sun 118; Allen C. Tales 209
Seng (Fig.9.8) who had been with Stuart prior to his marriage, Chinese cook and
amah, Malay syce and Javanese gardener. The Sims assumed paternalistic
responsibility for the welfare of the servants and their families and there appears to
have been an easy employer-employee relationship, all the servants remaining with
them until the 1941 evacuation. As Katharine initially spoke no local languages, she
communicated with them through Ah Seng who spoke English, and later in basic
Malay. Apart from Katharine’s visits to the Chinese shop in Lumut, which she
enjoyed, ‘Kuki’ did all the daily marketing while she, like many colonial wives of her
generation, distanced herself from all household matters apart from management of
the accounts.317

She made the usual initial complaints about the “intolerable” heat and
“oppressive” humidity but had the advantages over her predecessors of improved
local medical facilities, easier access to those in places like Penang, electric fans,
clothing better suited to the climate and food only previously obtainable in large
towns. She considered the English diet more healthy than oriental meals, which were
relegated to once or twice weekly. The heavy curry tiffin, however, was a colonial
ritual and, therefore, much as Katharine resented it, unavoidable. Penang Cold
Storage delivered twice weekly to Parit Buntar and it was customary for the colonials
there to hold their dinner-parties on these days. At Lumut, Katharine used the
Sitiawan Cold Storage but was eventually able to order most of her western
requirements through the local Chinese shop and claimed that English food became
quite popular amongst its local customers. Fresh vegetables were available at the
market and fish from nearby Pangor, giving Katharine access to a comparatively wide
choice of good food.318

Her rural environment in both places and proximity to the jungle at Lumut
exposed Katharine to constant battles with insects and wildlife, reminiscent of those
described by Emily. Protection from mosquitoes was now understood to be essential,
through bed nets, the evening retreat to the mosquito-house and careful covering of
exposed arms and legs when they were outside. Even so, Katharine suffered from

317 Sim K. Malayan Landscape 18-9,28-9, 63-7, 70-5,122, 126, 131, 195; Allen C. Tales 163, 210, 218,
238; Shennan M. Midday Sun 196; Incorporated Wife Brownfoot J. 195-6, Gartrell B. 176
318 Sim K. Malayan Landscape 77-8, 85, 143-5; Ong Blood and Soil 144-8; Allen C. Tales 218;
Shennan M. Midday Sun 206; Brooke S. Queen of Head-hunters 113
malaria and dengue. Otherwise, there were tarantulas, cockroaches, hornets, poisonous centipedes and scorpions and the customary varieties of ants, despite the regular ministerings of the Government White-Ant Man. At Parit Buntar, fruit-bats were a particular problem but Katharine did not have Emily's close encounters with tigers. To balance, there were always the more attractive creatures which she enjoyed watching.\textsuperscript{319}

Like all her inter-war contemporaries, she also had the option of retreat to the cooler climate and English atmosphere of a choice of hill stations and she visited Taiping Hill, Fraser's Hill and the Cameron Highlands. At Taiping Hill, there was still the discomfort of a journey by sedan chair and, on steep ascents, Katharine found herself on her back with her legs "precipitously higher" than her head. This, however, did not dampen the enthusiasm she, like many of her contemporaries, expressed for the hill stations' restorative cool air and their nostalgic reminders of home in "homeside" teas, roaring log fires, hot-water bottles and blankets, the abundance of English flowers, fruit and vegetables and European architecture. She found it all an escape from the tropics and orientalism to "another" more familiar world and appears disturbed by any intrusions, like rhino pug-marks or incursions of the jungle, into its "pretty" English "provincialism."\textsuperscript{320}

Stuart Sim, like James Innes, worked at home or nearby when he was not on duty-tours. Katharine often accompanied him on these and shared interests, like painting (Fig.A.9.1), with him, suggesting a more companionable relationship than that of the Inneses or the Brookes. Consequently, she never complained of the loneliness experienced by Emily and some of her own, more rurally-based contemporaries but her circumstances were closer to those of women in the larger towns than to theirs. However, like her predecessors and contemporaries, Sarawak rajah's wife included, she needed daily routines and occupations. Apart from reading and correspondence home, there was her writing and painting which provided some contact with her local surroundings. She and Stuart created English-style gardens at both homes, nostalgic reminders of home in the activity and the result. Katharine

\textsuperscript{319} Allen C. Tales 216-7, 235-6; Brooke S. Queenof Head-hunters 57; Sim K. Malayan Landscape 17-23, 30-1,53, 100-9, 113, 127-8, 178, 184-5,201, 209, 218.

\textsuperscript{320} Sim K. Malayan Landscape 139-41, 189, 223-4; Allen C. Tales 208, 223; Shennan M. Midday Sun 128-9
found them pleasantly "compact" and "homely" in comparison to the rampant wildness of Malaya's natural beauty and a good way to make friends through exchange of advice and practical help. She also enjoyed playing tennis at the clubs or houses of friends, swimming, walking and watching hockey matches, but not participating. Some evenings they danced to the radio or gramophone, thanks to widened options for home entertainment.\(^{321}\)

In Parit Buntar's bug-infested cinema, they watched heavily-censored old films and Westerns and they attended church every Sunday (Fig.A.9.4) where Katharine, like Isabella Bird at Singapore, claimed to have wondered about the thoughts of the Tamil punkah-pullers and mused on the intolerance of Christianity. Ownership of a car widened their recreation and relaxation opportunities far beyond Emily's limited options, with picnics and excursions inland or to the coast, often in the company of other Europeans. From Parit Buntar, they went to Penang, for which, like many colonials, they felt great affection. From Lumut, they visited Taiping and, three times monthly, made the two-hour journey to Ipoh to enjoy its "entertainments, comforts and sophistications" and to "jostle shoulders" with other Europeans, reminiscent of Emily's pleasure over the "white faces" at Singapore. Here, cinema newsreels also provided direct glimpses of home. Singapore and KL were accessible destinations where Katharine enjoyed being an "up-country visitor" and "childishly" derived pleasure from familiar touches like red pillar-boxes and the national anthem after shows.\(^{322}\)

While Katharine, like many of her contemporaries, appears to have enjoyed her time in Malaya and claimed some identity with the country, terming herself a 'Malayan,' she did not see herself as a permanent settler. In fact, she drew contrasting pictures, in this respect, between the Dutch in Sumatra and the British in Malaya. In the conversations which defined her attitude towards local society, she also articulated her views on some of the problems facing European society in Malaya and defended it against possible accusations at home of a sybaritic and decadent life-style. She painted a sympathetic picture of women attempting to come to terms with isolation

\(^{321}\) Allen C. Tales 210-11,225; Sim K. Malayan Landscape 23-5, 32-7, 48-52, 69-74, 104, 127, 173,181, 205-12, 225-6; Brooke S. Queen of Head-hunters 112-3, 126, 119, 172-4
\(^{322}\) Sim K. Malayan Landscape 27-8, 39-40, 50-4, 80-94, 107-11, 117-8, 194-5, 204-5, 219-20; Shennan M. Midday Sun 110; Allen C. Tales 239
from the familiarity of home and to establish a life in an ‘alien’ country and climate where lack of seasons blurred all sense of time. Some even lacked the social life of a club or the mutual support of other European women. Those more fortunate in their circumstances were not, she argued, “decadent victims of luxury.” Their situation and the climate necessitated a higher percentage of servants and cars than at home, most were “temperate,” *s’tengahs* merely providing relaxation at the end of a hot day and *pahit* (drinks) parties were no more frequent than in middle-class Britain and provided essential contact, if not friendship, in a mobile colonial community.\(^3\)

Like the rest of her peer group, Katharine accepted as natural the retreat into an exclusive European world, based round the club, entertainment at each others’ houses and hill-station holidays, reinforced by lack of any knowledge of local languages and more immediate access to home through cinema, radio and faster mail service. She found none of the severe club rules described by Sylvia Brooke at Kuching or the problems faced by women in Somerset Maugham’s stories nor did she mention any question of formal hierarchy and appeared to enjoy a relaxed relationship with Stuart’s superior’s wife at Parit Buntar. However, she did remember “wilting” under the disapproving gaze of a “real Mem” on one occasion at Lumut and accepted the protocol ruling that their house should stand lower than that of the District Officer, thus depriving her of a view. She questioned the necessity of the perplexing colonial idiom but obviously adopted it and while she could see the incongruity of traditional celebrations like Christmas in a tropical climate, in a pre-war style that was already an anachronism in England, she still conformed to the general belief such rituals were essential and held that European celebrations were superior to the local variety.\(^4\)

Katharine, living in European enclaves and at greater distance from the local population, manifested little of Emily’s sense of isolation and vulnerability but much of her feeling of superiority. She claimed affection for Malaya but accepted, without question, her membership of the elite ruling body. In common with her predecessors

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323 Incorporated Wife Brownfoot J. 188, Gartrell B. 178; Bayly C. Imperial Meridian 7; Louis W.M.R. Oxford History History of the British Empire Vol.4. 20; Sim K. Malayan Landscape 149-54, 185, 196, 204
324 Allen C. Tales 81,228; Sim K. Malayan Landscape 20-1, 95-9,137, 175,185, 193; Bayly S. Oxford History of the British Empire Vol.3. 450; Brooke S. Queen of Head-hunters 80-1; Maugham W.S. Malaysian Stories xix; Maugham W.S. Borneo Stories Mandarin Paperbacks, Singapore, 1992 169-263
and contemporaries like Sylvia Brooke, she employed the ‘civilizing mission’ language to convey her satisfaction with the ‘improvements’ colonial rule had brought to Malaya and her pride in being English. She subscribed to the superiority of Christianity and European literature, science and architecture and to the need for British validation of any oriental architectural style such as the KL public buildings and considered the best culture in Malaya to be that imported from Europe. Local short-comings were attributed to the debilitating climate and the “barrenness” and destructive nature of Islam. While appreciating Malay and Chinese traditions, she maintained the detachment of the observer rather than the participator, and was quick to condemn any local breach of established boundaries or unacceptable western aspirations. Equally strong was her condemnation of Eurasians or any sign of ‘going native’ by the Europeans. In contrast with Emily and Margaret Brooke, Katharine’s social life, like that of her urban peers, was predominantly European and contact with locals, apart from servants and painting models, confined mainly to official functions. Even here, she was naively surprised at the Sultan’s command of “perfect English” while her own deficiency in Malay rendered her unable to converse with his wife. At the same time, she gave no indication that she considered herself anything but his equal. 325

She used the familiar stereotyping when describing the local people, the indolent, “childlike” Malay and the industrious “stoical” Chinese, employing adjectives like “effeminate,” “dapper” and “slight” which reduce them in comparison with the larger, more powerful Europeans. She does not, however, use Emily’s favourite word “savages” preferring terms like “peasants” and “fine specimen.” Her reaction to the “sub-human,” “indescribably pagan” Bataks of Sumatra was stronger, perhaps revolted by their history of canabalism and their consumption of dog-meat or perhaps discomforted by her unaccustomed isolation from other European company. 326

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325 Sim K. Malayan Landscape 20, 34, 41-8, 57, 60, 76, 97-9 117, 145-51, 181, 189, 214-6; Brooke S. Queen of Head-hunters 101-6, 114-5, 121, 142, 156; Allen C. Tales 82-3; McClintock A. Imperial Leather 27; Selangor Journal 2nd April, 1897. 233; Oxford History of the British Empire Metcalf T.R. Vol.5. 588, 590-1, Bayly S. Vol.3. 455, 460-1.

326 Brooke S. Queen of Head-hunters 102; Sim K. Malayan Landscape 23, 33, 45, 57, 84, 98, 104, 137, 165-73, 210-12; Oxford History of the British Empire Vol.5. Washbrook D.A. 597-9, Wylie D. 287
While Emily feared her vulnerability among the indigenous population, danger for Katharine came from external forces, World War 2 and the Japanese occupation of Malaya. Her early attitudes, however, mirrored the general dismissal of any immediate threat, the concentration on danger to loved ones in Europe and the failure to comprehend Malaya's fragile position. Likewise, she shared her peer group's responses of shock and disorientation over their abrupt evacuation, their fear, panic, humiliation and disbelief at the disintegration of their world and their shame and guilt over the locals abandoned to an unknown fate. Additionally, there was the frustration with Europeans encountered on the journey south who still refused to accept the seriousness of the situation. For Katharine's small group, these feelings were counterbalanced by courage, a veneer of bravado and intensified mutual support. In overcrowded Singapore, she participated in the determination to preserve an appearance of normality by any possible means, surviving the waiting, confusion and the "noxious-sweet stench" of death following the daily bombing raids. Katharine's eventual departure must also have been an experience common to many European women there with its hasty final arrangements and "swift, dreadful partings" from husbands, not knowing when or if they would meet again. Conditions on board ship were far from ideal but Katharine fared better than the women forced to remain behind to be interned in Japanese prisoner-of-war camps.\(^{327}\)

**Conclusion**

During this period, many practical advances in health, amenities and social ambience made living conditions more comfortable for European women, while improved communications facilitated closer contact with home. The annexing of the Malay States brought greater direct and indirect government control over colonial public and private life than in the earlier, trade-based SS and included tighter regulations over marriage and social behaviour. The enlargement of the colonial population reflected the wider definition of 'middle-class' in Europe and led to greater outward uniformity and a more tightly-defined internal hierarchy, manifested most

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obviously through housing and clubs. The changing role of women in Europe, due to female suffrage and a diminished male work-force after the Great War, was reflected in the increased number of European working women in Malaya while the improved communications initiated a change over commitment to Malaya, now regarded as a temporary residence with Britain as the constant point of reference. Advances in infrastructure and technology, reflected in improved communications, also brought the amenities of the larger towns to women, like Katharine, living in the network of smaller towns and communities outside them. This not only enabled women there to live more comfortably and in a style closer to that of their urban peers than previously possible but also reduced isolation by opening up social opportunities denied to predecessors like Emily Innes.

Despite these changes, European women continued to subscribe to the imperial belief of 'Christian White' superiority over 'Native Other' and to enforce their perceptions of 'civilisation.' In attitudes and expectations, there are obvious similarities between Emily and Katharine except that the larger numbers of the later period and closer communication with England, for most, encouraged greater self-containment and complacency than their predecessors, increased separation from the local scene and avoidance of Malaya’s oriental aspect and undeterred determination to recreate a miniature suburban England wherever possible. While Emily was dependent on the local scene in her daily life, women of Katharine’s generation could see it as simply a colourful background. Such insularity must have contributed to their boredom, rootlessness and disorientation while, simultaneously, encouraging an unwavering faith in the Empire’s invincibility. However, while Emily’s faith in the empire went unchallenged, Katharine witnessed the failure and disintegration of its power in Malaya.
(The Development of British Malaya 1896-1909, Chai Hon-Chan)
Malaya’s Hill Stations (The British in Malaya 1880 – 1941, J.G. Butcher)
SARAWAK GOVERNMENT OFFICES,
MILLBANK HOUSE.
WESTMINSTER, S.W.1

G.635
5th June, 1946.

Dear Sir,

With reference to your letter of the 30th May, I have received a telegram from Sarawak that your request to marry is approved.

Yours faithfully,

[Signature]
Government Agent.

In this instance leave to marry was granted three months before the required eight years of service in Sarawak had been completed.

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Fig. 3.1 Official permission to marry (Tales from the South China Seas, C. Allen)
Fig. 3.2 The family of C.E. Spooner, Railway General Manager c.1907-10. Father (right) and son-in-law look about the same age (Old Kuala Lumpur, J.M. Gullick)

Fig. 3.3 'A'beach' wedding at the E&O hotel Penang 1920 (Kennaway family albums, Tales from the South China Seas, C. Allen)
Fig. 3.4 Boarders and lay teachers in their Sunday best. Convent School of the Holy Infant Jesus, Singapore early 20th Century

Fig. 3.5 School Life 1924
Both figures from Convent Chronicles, L. Kong, S.A. Low and J. Yip
Fig. 3.6 Tea Time. A lady in front of her bungalow. Singapore 1908
(Antiques of the Orient, Singapore)

Fig. 3.7 The veranda, ‘Balaclava’. Singapore 1890
(The Singapore House and Residential Life 1819 – 1939, N. Edwards)
Fig. 3.8 European residence and servants. Singapore late 19th century
(National Museum Singapore)

Fig. 3.9 Black and white house. Meyer Road, Singapore 1920
(The Singapore House and Residential Life 1819 – 1939, N. Edwards)
98. Plan of house for "an Electrician", Telok Blangah Road, Singapore; 1908.


Figs 3.10 above and 3.11 below. (The Singapore House and Residential Life 1819 - 1939, N. Edwards)
Fig. 3.12 Black and white house, Meyer Road Singapore pre 1920s.
(The Singapore House and Residential Life 1819 – 1939, N. Edwards)

Fig. 3.13 European residence, Singapore 1930
(The Singapore House and Residential Life 1819 – 1939, N. Edwards)
Fig. 3.14 Kellie's Castle near Ipoh (1999).
Early 20\textsuperscript{th} century plantation house, unfinished due to owner's death. The square tower was intended to house an elevator.
Photographs by P. Tilley
Fig. 3.15  Amah and child. Singapore early 1900s.

Fig. 3.16  Black and white amah and child. Singapore 1941.
Both figures from Superior Servants, K. Gaw
Fig. 3.17 European woman and child with amah and syce (early 1900s).

Fig. 3.18 European woman in a rickshaw 1900.

Both figures from National Archive of Singapore
Fig. 3.19 The motor car 1920s; author’s wife in her car. (Rickshaw Reporter, G.L. Peet)

Fig. 3.20 Fording the Perak river on elephant back 1927
(Tales from the South China Seas, C. Allen)
Fig. 3.21 Perak Ladies' Rifle Association, early 1900s  
(Murder on the Verandah. E. Lawlor)

Fig. 3.22 Singapore Cricket Club 1880s, with females in the gallery.  
(National Museum of Singapore)
Fig. 3.23 Ladies’ stand at KL races 1928 (from the Kennaway family albums, Tales from the South China Seas, C. Allen)

Fig. 3.24 Penang Amateur Dramatic Society (early 1900s). (Murder on the Verandah, E. Lawlor)
MUSIC AT THE LAKE CLUB.

The musical At Home at the Lake Club on Saturday evening was without doubt a great success. The drawing-room concert being most thoroughly enjoyed and appreciated by the guests. Mrs. Salzmann's rendering of "Dinah" will remain a very pleasant memory to those who heard it; the full rich tones of the artiste's voice gave a treat, seldom enjoyed in Kuala Lumpur or indeed in many other places. Mrs. Arnott's song from the Geisha gave such pleasure, as did also her encore—a Coon Song. Mrs. Ebden and Miss Salzmann accompanied well. Mr. Bourne, Mr. Severn, Dr. Gerrard and Captain Ainalie gave a happy rendering of their respective songs and were most enthusiastically encored. At the close of the concert people were heard to say it had not been long enough; which speaks for itself. An impromptu dance followed and seemed a fitting conclusion to a most pleasant evening, and made one wish they might look forward to another such at no very distant date.

The full programme was as follows:

1 Selection ... Song at Eventide ... Falke
   The Band.
2 Song ... An Old Garden ... Hope Temple
   Mr. G. H. D. Bourne.
3 Song ... The dear little Jappy-Jap-Jappy ...
   The Geisha
   Mrs. Arnott.
4 Song ... I'll sing thee songs of Araby ... F. Clay
   Mr. C. Severn.
5 Song & Chorus ... Dinah ... L. Barnes
   Mrs. Salzmann.

1 Selection ... The Lost Chord ... Sullivan
   The Band.
2 Song ... A May Morning ... L. Denzu
   Dr. Gerrard.
3 Song ... Wedding Bells.
   Captain Ainalie.
4 Song ... Good-bye ...
   Testi
   Mrs. Salzmann.
5 Song ... The Devout Lover ... M. V. White
   Mr. C. H. D. Bourne.
6 Selection ... I hear the soft note ...
   Sullivan

DANCES.
1 Waltz ... Toreador
2 Waltz ... Thine Alone
3 Waltz ... Swengal
4 Waltz ... Love's Old Sweet Song
5 Lancers Duke of Fife

Malay Mail, 26 November 1900

Fig. 3.25 Lake Club concert programme 1900.
(The Lake Club Book 1890 – 1990, D.J.M. Tate)
### THE CONCERT AT THE LAKE CLUB.

(Specially contributed.)

Last night at the Lake Club a concert took place under the direction of Mr. Claud Severn. Some excellent music was given and a most enjoyable evening was spent, a general wish being expressed that such entertainments should be arranged more frequently.

Mrs. Salzmann, the finest Soprano in the Straits, was one of the performers and gave an exquisite rendering of Ethel Dick's pretty little ballad "Spring is Come."

After this the songs took rather a sombre tone, dealing largely in corpse, human misfortunes, death, burial and the future life.

Mrs. Travers sang Hullah's weird song with great effect, although apparently rather nervous, and Miss Spooner's voice was heard to advantage in a song new to Kuala Lumpur audiences, "If Thou Wert Blind," by Noel Johnson. The songs chosen by Mr. Severn were hardly suitable to his voice and "The Fairy's Lullaby" should never be sung except by a Soprano, if the full effect is to be given to this delightful piece of music. Both Mr. Severn and Mr. Bourne were most successful in two old favourites of which one never tires—"The Pale Young Curate" and "An Old Garden." Mrs. Darke's masterly execution in two pianoforte solos was much appreciated. Mrs. Merewether and Miss Hoffman bore the burthen of the accompaniments. Is it not a pity that a piano is not provided at the Lake Club? We might then have the opportunity of hearing these performers a little more often and the Committee would not be obliged to fall back upon such an execrable instrument on these occasions as that which they provided last night.

The audience highly appreciated the excellent music provided and many "encores" were called for and kindly given. We think it is somewhat inconsiderate to insist upon ladies giving a second song in such a climate and with punckas stopped, and we recommend them to strike against a custom, which often spoils the effect of a good song, and also subjects them to unnecessary fatigue.

The programme was as follows.

#### PROGRAMME.

24th April, 1902.

| No. | Piano Solo | Singer/Singer
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>&quot;March Hare&quot;</td>
<td>Henry Kowalski</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>&quot;A Rose in June&quot;</td>
<td>German</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>&quot;A Creole Love Song&quot;</td>
<td>Mrs. Monieroff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>&quot;The Worldly Hope men set their Hearts upon&quot;</td>
<td>Liza Lehmann, Miss Spooner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>&quot;God Save the King&quot;</td>
<td>Mrs. Darke</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Fig. 3.26 Lake Club concert programme 1902  
(The Lake Club Book 1890—1990, D.J.M. Tate)
Fig. 3.27 Report of Lake Club Fancy Dress Ball 1901.
(The Lake Club Book 1890 – 1990, D.J.M. Tate)
A Few of our Notable Patrons:

Their Majesties the King and Queen of Siam

H.I.H. Grand Duke Cyril of Russia.
H.S.H. Prince Adalbert of Germany.
H.I.H. Prince Kao-ia of Japan.
H.R.H. Prince Damrong of Siam.
His Grace the Duke of Newcastle.
Rt. Hon. the Earl of Dysart.
Rt. Hon. Earl of Crawford.

Sir John Anderson, K.C.M.G.
Sir Frank Swettenham, K.C.M.G.
The Late M. Verestchagin.
Late Admiral Sir Henry Keppel.
Admiral Sir Cyrian Bridge.
Admiral Sir Henry Seymour.
General Stoessel.
H.H. Sultan Ibrahim of Johore.

H.I.H. Prince Iwakura of Japan.
Lord Cecil.
Maharaja of Gwalior, G.C.S.I.
Maharaja of Kapurthala.
Sir Francis Lowel.
Sir Lionel Cox, C.J. Justice.
Lord Dormer.
Admiral Skeydloff.
General Yamaguchi, &c., &c.

Note: non diners are charged $1/- to see the floor show.
‘Mrs A. D. O.’ refers to the wife of the Assistant District Officer, ‘Mrs P. W. D.’ to the Public Works Department.
From Straits Produce, 1922

Fig. 3.29 A question of protocol. (Straits Produce 1922)

She—You know darling, I shall never learn this language—Do ask the Boy for some matches. Hr—Matches, Boy.

Fig. 3.30 Coping with the local language (Straits Produce 1927)
Fig. 3.31 A scarcity of women.

Fig. 3.32 Film advertisement for ‘Rain’. The undesirable image.

Both figures from The Lake Club Book 1890 – 1990, D.J.M. Tate
Fig. 3.33 Upper picture. Relaxing on Penang Hill (complete with topi) at the Crag Hotel 1908. (Old Penang, S.H. Hoyt)

Fig. 3.34 Lower picture. Mrs Treacher (wife of the Resident of Perak) at 'The Hut'. Maxwell Hill 1890s. (Imperial Belvederes, S.R. Aiken)
Chapter 4

Conclusion

This thesis has looked at European women in Malaya over a span of 150 years which coincides with the high point of the British Empire, a time of national pride and economic and technological expansion. It has examined how they lived and the changes which took place in their standard and mode of living as well as their expectations and attitudes towards the country and its inhabitants. The first section has dealt with the early period and their arrival in the newly-established SS while Ch.3 has presented a wider scene with the annexation of the Malay States, formation of the FMS and British expansion over the entire Malay Peninsula. Chapters 2 and 3 have been concerned mainly with the general picture in the larger urban centres with their greater concentration of European women while specific references to Emily Innes and Katharine Sim have demonstrated an adherence to the European pattern of life and attitudes in Malaya and also extended this general picture. Emily has shown how women in rural areas managed to survive and maintain the standards in which they believed while Katharine Sim was an example of women living in small rural towns on the fringe of mainstream European life.

The small numbers of European women arriving in the early SS could expect spacious housing, compared to that of social superiors at home, servants and a supply of commodities shipped from Europe. Otherwise, they faced the tropical climate and, initially, the isolation, dangers, unknown diseases and limited facilities of a basically ‘frontier’ society with a self-made social life. Over the first seven decades of the 19th Century, improved social and practical facilities and technological advances provided closer communications with home and a greater standard of comfort in their lives. The electric telegraph by means of underwater cables opened up the possibility of almost instantaneous contact with home while the replacement of sail by steam ships together with the construction of the Suez Canal meant that the journey time from England to Malaya came down from a minimum of six months at the beginning of the 19th Century to a reliable six weeks by the end of the century. This affected not only the passage of people but also the transport of mail, newspapers and magazines.
In the later period, conditions in the pre-annexation Malay States and early FMS echoed those of the early SS but were more quickly modified as much of the essential technology was already *in situ*. Health standards were boosted by the scientific understanding of malaria and its linking to mosquitoes led eventually to the eradication of this previously mysterious disease from settled areas. Two electrical innovations, refrigeration and the electric fan, greatly improved personal comfort while the radio provided an effective means of keeping in touch with ‘Home’ and the phonograph opened up possibilities for domestic entertainment. Communications and personal mobility were further advanced by the development of a rail network linking major centres and, later, by the introduction of the motor car. How much easier might Emily Innes’s life have been if she had not been reliant on the loan of a boat from the irascible Douglas! During the inter-war years, air transport also provided a significant improvement in the mail service, although not yet in personal mobility. However, these advances, at the same time, produced a change in attitude towards Malaya, enabling Europeans to see it as a temporary home during their working lives but not a place for retirement. More than ever, Europe, especially Britain, became the focal point of reference with a British lifestyle established as far as possible in Malaya. Thus the framework within which European women lived in the SS and FMS continued to change and conditions for them improve throughout the 150 years and, with it, their own expectations over the lifestyle they might experience there.

While the early SS, especially Penang, reflected the attitudes of a more liberal, *laissez-faire* era, Victorian values, with their emphasis on self-promotion through labour, took over in mid-19th Century Singapore. Although Penang and Singapore were both trade-based in this period with greater personal autonomy for their Europeans, Singapore, along with greater material success, showed a clearer tendency than Penang to conform in such matters as religion. Annexation of the Malay States and formation of the FMS brought greater Government control over both public affairs and private lives and a move to a mining- and plantation-based economy which further boosted trade in the SS. For women, the changes which now took place implied greater restrictions. In the freer days of the SS, marriage was a matter of prudent personal decision with perhaps some peer-group pressure. In the more official FMS, with its greater direct and indirect Government intervention in peoples’ lives, stringent rules were imposed over marriage and private behaviour. Problems caused
by imprudent early marriages were perceived as possible threats to the smooth running of Government and business and damaging to British prestige in the eyes of the locals. Wives, besides an extra expense, could also be a distraction from matters more important to the Colonial Government. At the same time, insistence on conformity and a more formal hierarchy, stated though housing and clubs, imposed a rigid code of behaviour with less scope for personal freedom.

Although their framework changed, there was no corresponding advance or change in their attitudes or expectations. Pride in their position as representatives of a great empire, unquestioned confidence in its and their superiority and patriarchal condescension towards and distancing from the local population continued up to the Japanese invasion. Their role in imperial ideology was principally as domestic icons representing all that was best in family life, out of reach of the indigenous peoples with their image carefully protected. The inter-war period, with an increased British middle-class, saw a greater influx of European women in Malaya including a number of working women, principally in the teaching and medical professions. These, however, were a tiny percentage of an already small group, whose main function remained as wives and dependants supporting their menfolk. The rarity value engendered by the small number of these women clearly led them to expect greater consideration than they would have received at home and some 'civilising' influence over moral and social values within their own community, perhaps provoked by the restrictions imposed on their own behaviour by their high visibility.

As the percentage of European women in the workplace was small, their contact with the local people was mainly limited to their servants. The main change created by greater influx of European women during the inter-war years and the larger colonial group, was their increased inter-dependence and self-sufficiency which intensified rather than changed their attitudes. They were now able to live a completely European lifestyle centred round their clubs and hill stations which distanced them even further from the local population and reduced and formalized any social contact. Within the larger context, India was always the closest point of reference within the area, in matters of housing, social facilities and attitude towards the country and its inhabitants although Malaya lacked India's large military presence. At the same time, in stark contrast to the comparative comforts of life in Malaya were
the deprivations experienced by European women arriving in Australia and New Zealand during this period as part of the drive to populate the Dominions.

While this thesis has attempted to understand the lives and expectations of European women in colonial Malaya between 1786 and 1941, its scope means it must be seen as a synoptic account setting a general framework which could provide a spring-board for further, more detailed studies.
Appendix 1

Emergence of a Colonial Public Sector in Singapore, Penang and The Federated Malay States.

Singapore

1819  Singapore founded by Raffles  
Botanical Gardens established in Tanglin area  
First Missionary School founded
1821  Guthries established
1822  Raffles Institution founded (completed 1837)
1823  Mission Chapel founded with grant from East India Company  
First street lamps introduced
1824-30  Singapore Chronicle
1825  Raffles Club founded
1826  Parliament House opened
1827  Court House built  
Bousted & Co. founded
1829  Billiard Club founded  
Road from New Harbour to town almost completed
1829-47  Five more Missionary schools established
1830  Public Exchange Room, Reading and News-Room and Circulating Library opened
1831  Administrative centre of Straits Settlements transferred from Penang  
London Hotel opened
1831-37  Singapore Chronicle & Commercial Register
1834  St. Andrew’s Church (Anglican) opened  
Christian cemetery at Fort Canning consecrated
1835  Armenian Church founded  
Singapore Free Press  
First St. Andrew’s Night celebration
1836  First Regatta
1837  Raffles Institution completed  
First cricket match
1839  Girls’ boarding school opened
1840  Racecourse opened. First races  
First tiger hunt
1841  Gaol built
1842  John Little’s store opened  
Singapore Sporting Club founded
1844  Girls’ School opened in Raffles Institution  
Public Library established
1845  Straits Times first printed (until 1942)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1846</td>
<td>Cathedral of the Good Shepherd (Catholic) consecrated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1851</td>
<td>Sea wall built</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Horsburgh Lighthouse built (designed by John Turnbull Thomson)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Borneo Company established in Singapore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1852</td>
<td>Singapore Cricket Club founded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>St. Joseph's School opened</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>P &amp; O representatives established in Singapore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1853</td>
<td>John Little's store becomes John Little &amp; Co.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1854</td>
<td>Convent of the Holy Infant Jesus opened.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>New Court House built</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ice House built for storage of ice from Boston, U.S.A.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Police Force established</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1855</td>
<td>Hotel de L'Europe established</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Town Hall built</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Victoria Theatre and Memorial Hall opened</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mercantile Bank of India, London and China opened.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1856</td>
<td>German Teutonia Club founded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>First Presbyterian minister appointed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1856-71</td>
<td>Freemason's Lodge established (in the house of the Resident Councillor)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1858</td>
<td>Robinson &amp; Company established</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1858-82</td>
<td>Singapore Daily Times</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1859</td>
<td>Chartered Bank of India, Australia and China opened</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1861</td>
<td>Singapore Club founded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Chartered Banks in all of the Straits Settlements give authority to issue banknotes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1862</td>
<td>New St. Andrew's Church consecrated and opened</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1863</td>
<td>Adelphi Hotel opened</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1864</td>
<td>New Government Offices in Empress Place built</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Gas street lights installed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1865</td>
<td>Gas installed at Raffles Institution for teaching Science</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tanglin Club founded.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hongkong &amp; Shanghai Banking Corporation founded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ocean Steamship Company (Blue Funnel Line) opened</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1865-70</td>
<td>Exchange Building built</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1866</td>
<td>Swimming Club founded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1867</td>
<td>Transfer of government of Straits Settlement from East India Company in Calcutta to Crown in London. They become a Crown Colony with Singapore as centre of local government</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>St. Joseph's Institution built</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Singapore Dollar introduced</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1869</td>
<td>New Government House (The Istana) erected off Orchard Road</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Suez Canal opened</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1870</td>
<td>Opening of the 'Tiffin Rooms' by Captain &amp; Mrs. Dare</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1871</td>
<td>Hongkong and Shanghai Banking Corporation open agency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Telegraph link with Western Europe completed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Police Station built</td>
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<td>Year</td>
<td>Event</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>1873</td>
<td>Raffles Library opened</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B.P. de Silva jewellers opened</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Post Office opened</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1874</td>
<td>First Singapore tennis championships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1875</td>
<td>Hongkong and Shanghai Bank open Singapore branch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1878</td>
<td>Presbyterian Church opened</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1880</td>
<td>Singapore Club moved to Exchange Buildings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rickshaws introduced from Shanghai</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1881</td>
<td>Girls’ School founded (behind Raffles Institution)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1882</td>
<td>Telephone service installed. (43 Exchange &amp; 16 Private lines)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>General Hospital constructed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1883</td>
<td>Recreation Club opened</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Aerated Water Company established</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1884</td>
<td>Ladies Lawn Tennis Club founded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1885</td>
<td>First Methodist Chapel opened</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>American Methodist Mission set up base in Singapore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1886</td>
<td>Anglo-Chinese School founded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1887</td>
<td>National Museum opened</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Straits Trading Company founded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Methodist Girls’ School founded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1888</td>
<td>Fire Brigade founded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1889</td>
<td>Fire Station built</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1890</td>
<td>Cycling Club formed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1894</td>
<td>Straits Budget (until 1942)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1896</td>
<td>Raffles Hotel opened</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>First car imported into Singapore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1903</td>
<td>Construction of Singapore Railway</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Straits Dollar introduced</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1905</td>
<td>Hotel de L’Europe moves to Esplanade site.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1906</td>
<td>Electric lights and fans replaced oil-lamps and punkahs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1907</td>
<td>Telephone House opened</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fire Brigade motorised</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1911</td>
<td>YMCA opened</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1912</td>
<td>British Council Building opened</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1913</td>
<td>Sewerage system introduced</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>First motorized ambulance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1914-51</td>
<td>Malaya Tribune</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1920</td>
<td>Swimming Pool built at Fort Canning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Arrival of first black-and-white movies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1923</td>
<td>Johore Causeway opened to road and rail traffic.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1929</td>
<td>Introduction of electrified trolley-buses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1931</td>
<td>Capitol Cinema opened</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1932</td>
<td>Johore Causeway terminus built.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1937</td>
<td>Supreme Court built</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Penang

1786 Penang founded by Francis Light
Fort Cornwallis established
1792 Road cut from town to waterfall
1800 Province Wellesley acquired
1806-27 **Prince of Wales Island Gazette**
1809 Supreme Court building erected
1816 Penang Free School founded
1817 Penang Free School for girls founded.
St. George’s Church (Anglican) founded
1827-8 **Penang Register & Miscellany**
1828 Girls’ School reopened
1838 **Pinang Gazette & Straits Chronicle** (until 1941)
1853 Convent and School of Holy Infant Jesus for girls founded
1857 New laws to provide for reservoirs, clean streets and drains.
1860 Half of Penang already cleared for plantations
1890 Town Band formed
1894-6 **Straits Maritime Journal & General News**
1895 Crag Hotel on Penang Hill opened
E. & O. Hotel opened
1903 E. & O. Hotel ballroom built
First cars arrive in Penang
Town Hall renovated
1903-39 **Straits Echo**
1904 Arrival of electricity
1905 Crag Hotel acquired by Sarkie brothers
Supreme Court rebuilt
1906 Opening of electric tramways
1907 Electric ceiling fans replace punkahs
1908 Health Department established
1913 Middleton Isolation Hospital opened
1915 Maternity Hospital opened
1919 First private bus service opened
1920 Arrival of first black-and-white movies
1923 Completion of funicular railway up Penang Hill
1925 Public trolley-buses introduced
1926 Outram General Hospital opened
1928 Kandang Kerbau Maternity Hospital opened
New General Post Office opened
1931 Adventist Hospital opened
1936 Maternity and Child Welfare Centre opened
1941 Trishaw replaces jinrikisha

Federated Malay States

1874 Treaty of Pangkor
1879 Arrival of first Europeans in Kuala Lumpur
1880 Perak Club founded in Taiping
First regular postal service in Kuala Lumpur
1884 Royal Selangor Club founded in Kuala Lumpur
1887 St. Mary’s Church, Kuala Lumpur, consecrated
1890 First printing press. Selangor Government Gazette published
Selangor Gymkhana Club formed
1891 Lake Club founded in Kuala Lumpur
1892 Selangor Journal first printed in Kuala Lumpur
Opening of Gunong Kledang near Ipoh as a hill-station
Extension of facilities on Maxwell’s Hill, Taiping
First pillar-boxes in Kuala Lumpur
First telephone switchboard in Kuala Lumpur
1893 Selangor Golf Club founded in Kuala Lumpur
Victoria Institution founded
1894 New Club founded in Taiping
1895 Establishment of the FMS
Selangor Gymkhana Club, Kuala Lumpur reorganised as
Selangor Turf Club
1896 Malay Mail first printed in Kuala Lumpur
1897 First European hotel in Kuala Lumpur opened by the widow
of a government officer
New Law Courts completed
First gathering of FMS Rulers at Kuala Kangsa
Carcosa House built for Resident, in Lake Gardens, Kuala Lumpur
1903 FMS Hotel opened in Kuala Lumpur
New Town Hall & Post Office completed, Kuala Lumpur
1904 European Hospital opened in Kuala Lumpur, replacing the
European section of the General Hospital
St. John’s Institution secondary school for boys opened
1905 A small school for European girls opened in Kuala Lumpur
1906 Technical College established in Kuala Lumpur
1907 Convent and School of Holy Infant Jesus for girls opened in
Ipoh
1909 Empire Hotel (for Europeans) opened in Kuala Lumpur
First meeting of FMS Federal Council at Kuala Kangsa
1910 Main railway line completed
Cold Storage opens in Kuala Lumpur
1911 Station Hotel (for Europeans) opened in Kuala Lumpur
New Railway Station completed
Proudlock murder trial
1913 John Little’s opens a branch in Kuala Lumpur
King’s House (Government House) built for High
Commissioner
1918 Singapore Railway sold to FMS & becomes FMS Railway
1920 Arrival of first black-and-white movies
1921 Development of Fraser’s Hill, Selangor, as hill-station
1925 Rotary Club launched in Kuala Lumpur
1931 Completion of road to Cameron Highlands. Commencement
of development as a hill-station
1932 Majestic Hotel opened, Kuala Lumpur
# Appendix 2

## Glossary of Malay Terms Used in the Text

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Amah</td>
<td>Female house-servant, usually Chinese, often in charge of the children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Atap</td>
<td>Traditional roofing made of rattan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ayah</td>
<td>As in 'amah' but applied to Indian or Malay women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boy</td>
<td>Male house-servant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chichak</td>
<td>Small house-lizard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chiks</td>
<td>Bamboo blinds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dhobie</td>
<td>Washerman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Five footway</td>
<td>Covered passageway fronting Chinese shop-houses, traditionally five feet deep</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gula Malacca</td>
<td>Sweet dish traditionally made from sago and served with molasses and coconut milk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Istana</td>
<td>Malay Sultan’s palace</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jamban</td>
<td>Toilet, conical enamel bucket in a metal frame with a wooden seat.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kampong</td>
<td>Malay village</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keringas</td>
<td>Flying ants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kling</td>
<td>Indian esp. Tamil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kolek</td>
<td>Light Malay boat propelled by oars</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kramat</td>
<td>Saint; holy person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lalang</td>
<td>Tall, coarse grass</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Madras Chunam</td>
<td>Mixture of lime without sand, whites of eggs and coarse sugar, beaten to a paste and then mixed with water in which the husks of coconuts had been steeped. After walls had been plastered with this, they were rubbed with rock crystal or rounded stones until their surface was smooth and glossy. Madras chunam was known about in England but seldom used there.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mahmee</td>
<td>Chinese dish made of noodles, strips of thin omelette, fried prawns and crab, decorated with sliced lettuce or beans and flavoured with a very savoury soya sauce</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mandi</td>
<td>Bath</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manora</td>
<td>Malay ballet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mem</td>
<td>Shortened form of Memsahib; a European woman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nasi Goreng</td>
<td>Chinese dish of fried rice, cubes of fish, hard-boiled egg, raisins and tiny squares of fried bread.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orang</td>
<td>Man</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Padang</td>
<td>Piece of open ground, usually for parades or sports</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pahit</td>
<td>Drink; literally ‘bitter,’ used for gin and bitters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Punkah</td>
<td>Large, swinging ceiling fan, made of white cotton covering a large frame of light wood and sometimes stretching the entire length of a room. Anglo-Indian device used for cooling all the principal rooms and worked by means of attached cords to promote a constant breeze, initially manually, usually by young Indian boys but, later, electrically [Hindi origin]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Puteh  White
Ronggeng  Malay dance; a woman performing such a dance
Sakit  Ill; in pain
Sambals  Small dishes served with curry and containing such items as chopped cucumber, tomato, banana, chutney and chili paste
Sati  Small pieces of marinaded meat fixed on a wooden skewer, cooked over an open flame and eaten with a spicy peanut sauce
S'tengah  Half measure of whisky and soda or whisky and water. Literally ‘half’
A ‘Sumatra’  Name of a particularly violent West Coast storm originating in Sumatra
Syce  Groom; chauffeur
Taxi dancer  Professional Chinese female dancer, partner for patrons of dance-halls.
Towkay  Wealthy Chinese businessman
Tuan  Man with authority; ‘Master;’ ‘boss;’ Traditional Asian form of address used to a European man
Tuan besar  European of great importance such as a high-ranking government official, manager of a large estate or head of a firm. Literally ‘big boss’
Tukang ayer  Water carrier
Tukang kebun  Gardener
Ulu  Jungle; uninhabited forest land
Wayang Kulit  Shadow puppet theatre
‘tarekh orang puteh lari’  Literally ‘when the white men ran’
Appendix 3

Extracts from nineteenth-century accounts

The Dinner Party  J. Turnbull Thomson

But to proceed, the first visitor arrives at seven pm exactly. He drives up in his buggy drawn by a smart piebalded Acheen pony. His servant, or as he calls him his boy, sits beside him, and his groom or syce runs by the side. He is dressed in snow-white trousers and waistcoat. His coat is black, a forage cap, with white cover, is on his head, and his shoes are of canvas, pipeclayed, excepting at the extreme points of the toes, where they are of black japanned leather. He steps down, and is conducted by the host up-stairs to a verandah brilliantly lighted for the occasion. Here he is introduced to the hostess sitting in state. Compliments are passed, and mine host asks him if he has brought his white jacket. If so, he retires and dons the easy, cool, upper dress of India. Other visitors arrive, and the same process is gone through. Such gentlemen as have brought their ladies, hand them over to the obliging care of the hostess and her maid servants or ayahs. Sherry and bitters stand on a side table for the gentlemen to partake of, and whet their torpid appetites. All having arrived, the first difficulties of the host commence. The ladies and gentlemen are apportioned, and the rights of precedence weighed with the strictest regard to rule, not always giving entire satisfaction to the ladies. The party proceeds down stairs and enters the dining hall, where the family silver is spread in its full extent and variety. The visitors now advance solemnly to their respective positions. The ladies seat themselves, and the gentlemen follow. Exquisitely white napkins and fancy bread are laid before each chair. If a clergyman be present, in deference to him, a grace is asked for. Different soups in silver tureens, occupy the ends and middle of the table - mock turtle and mulligatawny being the favourites. The native servants, in their gaudy liveries, advance and stand with folded arms behind their masters and mistresses. Now the soups are served, and the clattering of spoons commences; the ice is broken, and the joke, laugh, and repartee go round.

Soups over, mine host asks his leading lady guest to take wine; this example is followed by all the other gentlemen. Meantime the soup has been cleared off, and the next course (fish) takes its place. Now if any one wishes to partake of good fish, Penang is the place. The sole and the snangan of Penang exceed in delicacy of flavour the fish of all other parts. Here again the brisk clatter of forks proves the goodness of the entertainment.

The fish is cleared off, and now come joints of sweet Bengal mutton, Chinese capons, Kedda fowls and Sangora ducks, Yorkshire hams, Java potatoes, and Malay ubis. The conversation waxes louder and the ladies unbend from their rigidity. This course comes to an end and a general round of drinking healths takes place. Meanwhile the table is cleared, and the next course, which is a short one of rice and curry, succeeds; this is accompanied with sambals of pungent taste, Bombay ducks, and Campar roes, salted turtle eggs, and omlettes.
The introduced neighbours condescend to take wine with each other; meanwhile the table is cleared and the dessert succeeds, - macaroni puddings, shapes, and custards. Now champagne is more freely poured forth, and a huge cheese is placed on the table. This is discussed with libations of pale ale. A rosy pink for the first time blushes in the cheeks of the climate worn and pale ladies - a brilliant moment of their former selves. The gentlemen discuss the topics of the day. These topics are not often political, but generally passing events, such as the last government ball, the last case of piracy, or the progress of the Keddah war now raging. Tuanku Mahomed Saad is a hero in their eyes, though a ruffianly pirate in the eyes of the Company’s officials. At last the table is cleared of its cloth, and numerous fruits, with wine, are placed on the polished red wood. The inimitable durian is excluded, as also the coarser jack and chumpada; but the mangosteen, mango, pumaloe, langsat, rose apple, popya, and plantain find a place. The excellencies of each draw abundant attention, surprising the stranger with their variety of qualities - peculiarities of flavour enchanting to the most fastidious taste.

It is now 9p.m. and the ladies retire to the drawing-room on the upper floor. The gentlemen sit awhile, probably a quarter to half an hour, and then follow. The drawing-room is capacious, high, and airy. Its walls and ceiling are whitewashed; the floor is covered with Bengal mats. To the English taste, the furniture is plain. Glass shaded lamps are arranged round the walls. The effect of this is pleasing and brilliant. The white dresses and jewellery of the ladies are now set off to the best advantage. Coffee and tea are served, and form an antidote to the stronger beverages previously indulged in. The ladies now receive that expected attention from the more gallant portion of the gentlemen visitors. The piano is opened, and a duet is played. The card players retire to a snug cool end of the verandah, where also brandy and water may be had ad libitum. The young ladies take their turn at the piano, and it may be the room is cleared for dancing. The China scarf over that young officer’s shoulder shows where his heart has gone to. A swarm of butterflies flicker round that young English rose just arrived - she is enraptured, and pities her pale sisters - poor things! The hostess is all smiles and complacency, indulgently anxious about the comforts and amusements of her visitors, and our host seeks out with generous affability such young and unknown strangers as have had entrée to the entertainment.

‘Tis 11; now the matrons show symptoms of moving. The party is broken up, and long strings of conveyances, with their spangling lamps, are soon moving homewards along the level street.¹

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Housing in 1865 Singapore. John Cameron

The greatest number of European residences are about two miles out, but some are twice that distance. Those nearer the town, where ground is more valuable, are built tolerably close together, with perhaps one or two acres each; those at a greater distance are more apart, generally crowning the summits of the innumerable little hills, which are such a geological peculiarity of Singapore, and surrounded by ten or fifteen acres of ground, either covered with patches of jungle or planted with nutmeg and fruit trees.

The residences are built very similar to one another, and generally of brick. Bungalows, a term often applied to any style of dwelling-house in the East, are,

¹ Thomson J.T. Some Glimpses into Life in Malayan Lands
properly speaking, only of one story, elevated some five or six feet from the ground upon arched masonry. A moderate-sized building of this description might be 90 feet long, 60 or 70 deep, usually a parallelogram in form, but sometimes varied in shape to suit the arrangement of the rooms inside. The walls from the flooring to the roof are seldom less than fifteen feet high, which gives a lofty ceiling to the apartments, and the roof is covered with tiles. The most striking feature of these buildings, however, is the broad verandah which runs right round the house about eight or ten feet in width, resting on the plinths of the pillars that, extending upwards in round columns with neatly moulded capitals, support the continuation of the roof which projects some four feet beyond the pillars, forming deep overhanging eaves. On to the verandah, which is surrounded by a neat railing, all the doors of the bungalow open, and as these also serve the purpose of windows, they are pretty numerous; they are in two halves, opening down the centre like cottage doors at home, with the lower panels plain and the two upper ones fitted with Venetians to open or close at pleasure. From the centre of the building in front a portico projects some twenty-five or thirty feet, and generally about twenty-five broad, covering the carriage way and a broad flight of stone steps leading from the ground to the verandah. The pillars and walls are chennamed to a snowy whiteness, the doors are painted a light green, the tiled roof in time becomes a dark brown, and the whole forms a very pleasing picture, especially in contrast with the foliage around.

Those residences which are not bungalows have no peculiar local denomination. They are two stories high, and very similar in construction to the others.

The interiors of all the houses are lofty, for in addition to the side walls being seldom less than fifteen feet high, the ceilings of the principal rooms are alcoved. There are numerous columns and arches inside as well as outside, and the Chinese builders make very neat cornices to the doorways and ceilings. The rooms are never papered, but the entire plasterwork – ceilings, walls and pillars – is kept beautifully white with chenam. The floors are matted, not carpeted, and the apartments not overcrowded with furniture. The wooden doors leading from room to room are usually thrown open, there being silk screens on hinges attached to each doorway, which, while they maintain a sufficient privacy, admit of a free ventilation throughout the house. From the ceilings are suspended a very liberal supply of hanging argand lamps, which, when lit up, give a brilliant effect to the rooms. Punkahs are used in the dining-rooms, but not in the sleeping apartments, as is the case in India.

The kitchen, stables, and servants’ rooms are always built at a good distance from the house, and connected with it by a covered passage. There is little remarkable about these, except perhaps in the internal arrangements of the kitchens, which, though for the use of Europeans, are thoroughly oriental in character......

The grounds around the European residences are for the most part tastefully kept. A couple of gardeners cost eight or nine dollars a month, and to such good effect can nature be cultivated that the expenditure is seldom begrudged.\footnote{Cameron J.\textit{ Our Tropical Possessions in Malayan India} 51-72}
Appendix 4
Extracts From Newspaper Advertisements and Announcements

The Singapore Chronicle and Commercial Register 1824-1837

Housing

1st January, 1829

Sale
To be disposed of, by public auction or private contract, that beautiful hill called Mount Erskine situated to the South West of Mr. C. Scott's hill, commanding an extensive view of the interior and also of the Town and Anchorage. The top of the hill has been cut away and leveled and is in every respect ready for building on.

17th December, 1829

To Let
The large and commodious House at present occupied by Mr. D. S. Napier, situated at Kampong Glam and having a larger Compound than any other house in the same situation.

11th February, 1830

For Sale or To Let.
That Bungalow at Campong Glam, lately occupied by Clamont Tabor Esq. – The Bungalow is ready furnished and has got an elegant Billiards Table.

2nd December, 1830

To Let
That Fine Substantial Built House, situated at Campong Glam near the Institution, consisting of a Drawing Room, and 4 Bed rooms with a Verandah of 90 feet by 20 on the Upper; and Dining Room, Billiard Room, etc on the Ground Floor.

16th December, 1830

To Let
A Commodious Dwelling House, the property of the late R. J. Cuthbertson Esq. The house is conveniently situated and commands a view of the sea; has a verandah 50 feet by 12, a dining-room, 2 side-rooms, and 2 bedrooms, matted; also 2 bathing rooms, and 2 good storerooms on the ground floor, with all requisite out-offices.
30th December, 1830

To Let
That well-known House on the Plain, lately in the occupation of Kenneth Murchison Esqr. completely matted with every other accommodation for a Family, and superior Out-houses of every description.

Property

15th January, 1829

Notice
Letters of Administration to the Estate and effects of the late Captain William Flint R.N. having been this day granted to Mary Anne Flint, widow of the deceased, all persons indebted to the said estate are requested to pay their debts, and all persons having claims thereon to send in the same to the undersigned

22nd October, 1829

Probate of the last Will and Testament of Wm. Temperton, late of Singapore, Shipwright, deceased, having been granted by the Court of Judicature of Prince of Wales Island, Singapore and Malacca to Elizabeth Temperton, the sole Executrix in the said Will named. All persons having demands against the Estate of the said deceased, will be pleased to make the same known to the said Executrix, to whom also those indebted to the Estate are requested to make Payment without delay.

22nd April, 1830

Probate granted to Anne Presgrave for the estate of Edward Presgrave Esqr. late Deputy Resident of Singapore

Amenities

13th August, 1829

For sale at the Godowns of George Armstrong & Co. the works of Scott, Byron, Moore, Dryden and other eminent authors, handsomely bound in Calf and Morocco.

Penang Register and Miscellany 1827-1828

Housing

21st August, 1827

For Private Sale
That Well Known Elegant and Commodious Residence at present occupied by K.Murchison, Esq. At a rent of 90 Dollars per Month.
The Grounds are extensive with a good Supply of Water, and well stocked with very productive Fruit and Spice Trees.

31st October, 1827

To Be Sold or Let
That Beautiful and Desirable Hill Residence and Estate ‘Mount Elvira,’ consisting of a new, substantial, most comfortable and well arranged Dwelling House with suitable Outhouses and every convenience requisite for the accommodation of two families; and surrounded by a promising Plantation of Cloves and other valuable Trees in a very flourishing state.

The prospect from this Hill is universally allowed to be unrivalled, and the Climate as fine as any part of the Island: in fact it equals if not surpasses in every respect the so justly celebrated Belle Retiro, the Hill being finely watered, laid out with pleasant walks and roads, and replete with every possible convenience.

Property

28th March, 1828

Notification
Probate of the last Will and Testament of Richard Allan, late of this Island, deceased, having been granted by the Court of Judicature of this Settlement, to Isabella Allan, he Executrix therein named. All persons having claims on the Estate of the said deceased, are requested to make them known to the above Executrix, and those indebted thereto are required to make payment without delay.

Amenities

21st August, 1827

George Porter
Begs to inform the Public that in addition to his Investments per HC Ships Duke of Sussex & Buckinghamshire, he has just landed from the HC Ship Farquharson the well selected INVESTMENT of Captain Cruickshank, consisting of Plump Yorkshire hams, Fine Moist Pine and Double Gloucester Cheese, fresh Pickled Salmon, Herrings and Tongues, Hoffman’s Confectionary, Fashionable Paget-shaped Hats from Bucknell & Moore, Boots and Shoes from E. Goatley, Sadlery of all descriptions from Milroy & Laurie, Elegant Plain and Cut Glassware from John De Croz, and a variety of other Articles.

George Porter has also received per Arjuna from Calcutta, a few Jars of fresh Tamarind and Mango Fish, Soda Water and Hookah Tobacco.

NB A fine fresh Parmesan Cheese is now exposed for Sale at 1 Dollar per lb.

F. Grenon
Offers English Claret, Burgundy, Fine Sparkling Champagne, Noyeau, Silver Watches, Choice and Beautiful prints, Pump Tacks, Table Cutlery, Europe Rope and An Elegant and truly Handsome Epergne, complete.
A.M’Intyre
Begs to acquaint the Public that he has just received from the HC Ship Farquharson the following EUROPE GOODS: Fine Plump Yorkshire Hams, Pine and Loaf Cheese, White Herrings and salted salmon, Hoffman’s Fruit for Tarts, Ditto Jams and Jellies, Ditto Cherry Brandy and Rum Shrub, Capital Durham Mustard, Pearl Barley, Oatmeal and Arrow Root, Sedlitz Powder, Perfumery consisting of Lavender Water, Rose and Russian Oil, Essence of Peppermint and Ginger Pomatum, etc, etc, Stationary, Superfine Scarlet, Blue, Purple, Sky Blue and Yellow Broad Cloth.

27th August, 1827

Lowe Amme
Begs Leave respectfully to acquaint the Ladies and Gentlemen of the Settlement and the Public in general, that in consequence of increasing age and infirmity, he has relinquished his Bakery in favour of Chunhong, and takes the present opportunity of returning his most grateful thanks for the liberal support and patronage he has experienced during the last twenty-six years.

19th September, 1827

Fresh Millinery, Hosiery, etc
F.Grenon has just received and exposed for Sale at his Godowns in Beach Street a few Articles of Fresh French Millinery and Dresses of the latest Fashion – also a few Europe-made Lady’s Shoes and Gentleman and Lady’s Cotton Hose.
Terms – Ready Money

5th December, 1827

Advertisement
A.M’Intyre will expose for Private Sale, tomorrow, Thursday the 6th Instant, an Invoice of Europe made Children’s Toys.

19th December, 1827

Notice
Danial Cadwell begs leave to inform the Ladies and Gentlemen of this Island and the Public in general, that he intends opening on the 1st of January next, a Butcher’s Shop in Love Lane, where he will supply Good Beef at a reasonable price; and from the attention and care he will bestow to his business, he hopes to merit the Patronage of the Settlement.

13th February, 1828

Advertisement
Geo. Porter has just received a small Assortment of fancy Ribbons, Ladies Long and Short White Kid Gloves, Gentlemen’s White Doeskin Gloves, A variety of elegant Artificial Wreaths, Sprigs, Bouquets, etc, Ladies English and French Shoes, Fancy Gauze Handkerchiefs.
For Sale
By Messrs. Ritter & Laurent the following Goods just landed from *Le Fils de France* at Messrs. Carnegy & Co.'s Godowns, Galignani's English Popular Authors, Chateau Margaux Claret in cases, — Medoc Claret in wood, — Constantia Wine in ditto, - Blue and Black Broad Cloth, - Superfine Flannel, - Shawls, Ternaux Cashmeres, - Gowns, Barege Ditto, - Scarfs, Neckcloths, and Tippets, - Jewellery and a few Gold Watches, (Repeaters) – Glassware, - Looking Glasses, - Phosphorick Matches, - Lythographic Prints, - A variety of Music for the Piano Forte and Harp, - Glass, Ebony and Cocoa wood Flutes, - Percussion and other Fowling Pieces, - percussion Caps, - Sulfate Kinine, - Carpenter's and Joiner's Tools, - Bengal Gunny bags, etc, etc, etc.

**Philanthropy**

13th August, 1828

Penang Free School

Extract of Proceedings at a Special Meeting of the Directors of the Penang Free School held on Wednesday the 6th August 1828 which resolved:

That as it has long been the wish of the Directors to re-establish the Girls School which was formerly discontinued in consequence of the want of a proper person to superintend it, the necessary arrangements be made for the commencement of a daily School for Girls on the 1st proximo. That Mrs. Smith, the wife of the Master of the Free School for Boys, be appointed Mistress of the said School.

That a letter be addressed to the Honourable the Governor in Council notifying the intended re-establishment of the Female School, and requesting the support and patronage of Government to the proposed undertaking.

That the Ladies of the Settlement be particularly requested to afford their patronage and protection to an Establishment designed solely for the advantage and improvement of their own sex – and the Directors desire to impress upon them that the success of such an Institution must materially depend on the increase of a vigilant superintendence on their parts.

That the Directors be requested individually to take such steps as may appear to them most likely to promote the object in view, and make known the opening of a Female Free School.

All applications for admission to be addressed to the Acting Secretary.

We have much pleasure in calling the attention of the public to an extract of the proceedings of a meeting of the Directors of the Prince of Wales Island Free School on Wednesday last, when resolutions were entered into for the immediate formation of a School for Girls, to be taught reading, writing, common arithmetic and useful needful work, for which a competent Instructress has been procured. We understand that the funds of the present establishment are found fully adequate to commence the undertaking without waiting for any pecuniary aid and that nothing more is required at present to attain and prosper this most desirable object than the patronizing superintendence of the Ladies of the Island, some of whom have long since evinced the laudable wish of promoting the female institution and will
doubtlessly be soon joined by others in so benevolent and gratifying a care as that of interposing such religious and moral instruction and such means of gaining an honest livelihood, as may save hundreds of their sex from a vicious and degrading course of life.

**Malay Mail July 1902**

25th July, 1902

Last night shortly after 8 o’clock, as Mr. & Mrs. Highet were leaving in their carriage, the horse shied at a pool of water on the road, which was reflected by a lamp, and dashed through the trees on the right-hand side. The carriage was upset but the occupants managed to jump out and escape with a severe shaking. The syce was thrown off the box, and the traces breaking, the horse ran away for a short distance.

We hereby congratulate Mr. & Mrs. Highet on escaping from what might have been a serious accident.

We hear that Mrs. Ebden nearly participated in this accident as she had been offered a place in Mr. Highet’s carriage.

**Straits Echo May 1903**

12th May, 1903

Important Auction Sale

Favoured with Instructions, the undersigned will sell at ‘The Warren’ Scotland Road All the Valuable European and Country-made Household Furniture etc Comprising Best Quality, Double and Single English Iron Bedsteads, Dining Room, Drawing Room and Bedroom Suites, Polished Almirahs, Chairs, Lamps, Piano, Crockery and Glassware Finest Quality Shanghai Bathing Tubs, Bicycles, Ladies’ Davenport, Pictures, Carpets, Screens. Ping-Pong Table, Kitchen Utensils, Wire Netting and Poles And a Fine Collection of Plants Etc, Etc

The Property of J. Paton Kee Esq. and Mrs. Walter Scott

Terms: Cash Before Delivery.

13th May, 1903

The Leading Musical Establishment in the East, Misquith & Co, Burma & Straits Musical Agency, Beach Street, Penang

Importers and Makers of Pianos, Organs, Harmoniums.


Tuning and Repairs undertaken at Moderate Rates

Music. The largest and most carefully selected Stock in the East
Pritchard & Co Penang
Tailors and Breeches Makers; Drapers, Silk Mercers & Milliners; Ladies’ and Gents’ Complete Outfitters; Stationers & Booksellers; Wine, Spirit & Provision Merchants; Jewellers & Silversmiths; Cigar & Tobacco Merchants; China, Glass, Ironmongery; Lampware & General Furnishing; Harness, Saddlery & Stable Requisites; Photographic Materials; Curiosities; Croquet, Cricketing, Golf & Tennis Requisites; ‘The Rover’ English Cycles; Electro-Plated Cutlery; Fowling Pieces, Rifles & Cartridges; Perambulators & Go-carts; Wheeler & Wilson’s Sewing Machines; Cabinet & Picture Frame Makers; Furniture & General House Furnishers.

The George Town Dispensary Ltd. (Penang)
Wholesale and Retail Chemists, Druddists & Opticians; Toilet, Nursery and SickRoom Requisites; Patent Medicines & Proprietary Articles; Dealers in Perfumery; Veterinary medicines.
Special Quotations to Hospitals, Dispensaries, Shipping, Estates etc Spectacles & Eye-Sight Testing a Speciality.

Pure Natural Milk Sterilized, Dragon and Cowshead Brand (Gianelli Majno’s). The Best and most wholesome in the world. The only Reliable Milk for Children & Invalids. Absolutely free from germs of disease and fermentation.
To be obtained At All the Leading Stores
Sole Importers Huttenbach Bros. & Co.
(Also Offering ) Perrier Jouett Champagnes

19th May, 1903

Heldsleek Champagnes - the same as shipped to the United States
Real Mountain Dew Whisky – the oldest brand of Scotch Whisky, from John Gillon & Co. Leith.
House of Lords Old Scotch Whisky – from J.G.Gower & Co. As supplied to Members of the House of Lords

Dr. R.H. Lamb
Graduate of Philadelphia Dental College. 28 Years’ Practice. Resident American Dentist
Farquhar Street. Opposite Sea View Hotel

Yankee Novelty Co. (Farquhar St. Penang)
(Importers of American and Japanese Goods)
Bicycles, Sewing Machines, Clocks, Watches, Hammocks, Bath Cabins, Baby Jumpers, Glassware, Stationary, California Prints, Confectionary, Fine China Ware, Lacquered Ware, Embroidered Screens, Bead Curtains, Lamps, Soaps, Perfumery, Canned Meats, Vegetables, Condiments, etc.
All fresh new goods at the very lowest Cash prices.

Breakfast Bacon, Stilton Cheese in Jars, Cheddar Cheese
St. Raphael’s Champagne – Excellent dry wine at moderate prices.
Price per case 12 quarts $40
St. Raphael’s Brandy XXXXX
Price per case of 12 quarts $26
St. Raphael’s Dessert Wine
Price per case of 12 quarts $22

6th July, 1903

Yankee Novelty Company
If you want something nice in glassware, we can supply it for we have the assortment from which to select some very choice pieces for your table.
In the way of tinned meats, fruits and vegetables we have a variety unequalled by anyone in Penang. Many of our importations are entirely new here and they represent some of America’s finest products. We keep in stock a good line of California dried fruits such as peaches, apricots, nectarines, prunes and apple rings.

Taik Ho & Co.
European Goods of the highest quality. Imported wholesale direct from the manufacturers.

Extra Steamers
With excellent accommodation for a limited number of 1st Saloon passengers. Special rates for Europe
Fare to London by sea $450
Fare to London by rail from Marseilles $480

P&O SNC 2ce a month
Penang to London Single $625 (1st), $450 (2nd)
Special return tickets – valid for 2 years from departure date and date of arrival on return.
London and back by sea or rail from Marseilles $940 (1st), $610 (2nd).

New Straits Times Annual 1981

The Menu for a Formal Dinner in 1890s Kuala Lumpur

The meal started off with Russian caviar and baked red fish, went on to mutton cutlets and truffled pheasants... roast capon and ham and iced asparagus and slowly settled with Frankfurt pudding, Glace Melba, cheese and coffee. After which they shook it all up by dancing... the Quadrille, the Polka, the Schottische and the Gallop.

Women’s Fashions
Newspapers gave a lot of space to detailing the dresses that the ladies wore for church:-
“One was made out of black and white French lawn, with three bands of black ribbon round the skirt, and epaulettes of lawn edged with black ribbon which also terminated the high collar. To go with this checkered creation was a large hat of black lace with
feathers and jet. Another was made out of heliotrope crepe sprayed with flowers of a darker shade. It had a pointed waist band and a large bodice bow with long floating ends. The body had a vest and gauntlet cuffs of fine white guipure. Topping it all was a white bonnet with puffed velvet brim, velvet strings and bundles of violets."

Advertisement

Stearns’ Wine and Holloway’s Pills for all ailments including ‘female irregularities.’
Fig. A4.1 John Little’s Store, Singapore 1910
(Singapore Then and Now, R. Tyres)
RATTAN FURNITURE—continued.

Fig. F540. Rattan Smoking Chair, with 2 Round Baskets and revolving Basket Arm ... ... $7.35

Fig. F509. Lady's Reclining Chair in Rattan, $3.85

No. F570a. Rangoon Lounge Chair with Adjustable back, and folding Leg Rests, $16.50

Fig. F570. Strong Bombay Chair, with fixed or folding Leg Rests.
Polished Meranti ... $7.50
Polished Teak ... $9.50

Fig. F571. Rattan Arm Chair, $3.00

Fig. F572. Rattan Arm Chair, $3.35

Fig. F573. Low Rattan Settee. $6.50

Fig. F547. Deck Chair, without arms...
No. F547a...
      ... with arms and Leg Rests...
      ... $7.50...

Fig. F548. Rattan Couch, assembled and upholstered in Cotton and draped. $21.00

Fig. F580a. Rattan only, 6.00.

PRICES ARE SUBJECT TO MARKET FLUCTUATIONS WITHOUT NOTICE.
NOTICE

Robinson & Co. beg to announce the arrival per S. S. Glenfruin and other lately arrived steamers, of a complete assortment of new goods, including

- Gents' Black Felt Hats.
- Fancy Rustic hats for Lawn Tennis.
- Felt helmets. Straw hats.
- Gent's Socks in striped and plain, cotton, merino and cashmere.
- White Shirts, with and without Shakespeare collar.
- Oxford and Regatta shirts.
- Waterproof coats and caps.
- Calf, Patent, Canvas and Lawn Tennis Shoes.
- Towels. umbrellas. tin travelling trunks, railway rugs, undervests and a large assortment of West of England tweeds, worsted coatings, broadcloths and Bedford Cord.

- Lawn Tennis Bats and Balls.
- Pears' Transparent Soap.
- Pears' shaving sticks.
- Gosnell's Cherry tooth paste.
- Gosnell's Cherry tooth powder.
- Rimmel's Brilliantine.

Singapore, 5th April, 1883.

NOTICE

Robinson & Co. are now opening a large shipment of Ladies' new dress materials:—

- French Cashmeres, Alpacas, Sateens.
- Zephyr and Nuns' cloth &c., in all the newest colors.
- Satins, Ribbons and Velvet to match.
- Fancy check Silks for Trimming.
- Broché Satins in Black and colors.
- Pompadour Sateens, Oatmeal cloth.
- New Sash Ribbons.
- Velveteens, Serges and Grenadines.
- Fringes, Chenille and Silk in every shade.
- Colored Silk and Metal buttons.
- Lawn Tennis Pinafores, in the latest patterns of Pompadours, trimmed Lace.
- A good stock of Laces, Frillings, Gloves, Mittens, &c., &c.
- Six button, Black suede Kid Gloves.
- Ladies' Lace Shoes in Calf and Kid.
- Button Shoes.
- Evening Shoes, fancy bows.
- Morocco Shoes, embroidered toes.
- White Satin Shoes.
- Children's Boots and Shoes.

Singapore, 5th April, 1883.

Fig. A4.4 Advertisements for Robinsons store, Singapore 1883
(Old Singapore, M. Jayapal)
Appendix 5

Two Colonial Wives. Part 1. Emily Innes

Introduction

Colonial women outside the larger urban areas did not always enjoy the same advantages although they may have shared the same assumptions and attitudes of their urban sisters. Closer study of two such women gives some idea of their experiences in Malaya and how they fitted into the colonial pattern both in lifestyle and expectations. Emily Innes and Katharine Sim, both wives of Government officials, have left the fullest accounts available of their time in Malaya, Emily between 1876 and 1882, in rural areas and Katharine, 1938 to 1942, in small towns. Both women left Malaya abruptly and subsequently, for different reasons and with contrasting attitudes wrote their accounts. After her husband’s resignation of his post in Malaya, in 1882, Emily “re-entered the late Victorian middle-class world” of England.1 While Innes tried, unsuccessfully, to make a living as a tea merchant, Emily wrote The Chersonese with the Gilding Off but, in the 1890s, they moved to Inverness to live on inherited money. After James’ death in 1901, Emily lived with her sister in Oxford, returning, in 1916, to Scotland and the circle of Lord Finlay, her husband’s brother-in-law, Lord Chancellor from 1914 to 1918. On her death, in 1927, her estate, “mainly investments,” was valued at “just under 10,000 pounds” with a share in the income of family trusts and, by 1920’s standards, “comfortable circumstances” for a widow.2 This chapter deals with Emily Innes, seen mainly through her own words in The Chersonese with the Gilding Off, brief references to her in the Bloomfield Douglas diaries and the research of J.M.Gullick as, apart from these sources, nothing else by or about her survives.3 Comparison with some of her contemporaries in the region puts her experiences and attitudes in context with other colonial women of her period.

1 Gullick J.M. Keeping Up. 192.
2 Gullick J.M. Emily Innes 1843-1929. 192
3 Innes E. Chersonese Vol.2. 244.
Early Background

Emily was born in 1843 at Boxley, Kent, the third child of its curate, James Robertson and his wife Julia. In 1843, Robertson achieved literary fame through his book, *How Shall We Conform to the Liturgy*, explaining the Church’s historical traditions and observances to a clergy with awakening interest in such matters. The family moved to Bekesbourne vicarage, Emily’s home until she was sixteen. Robertson became the leading Church historian and, in 1859, was appointed a canon of Canterbury and Cathedral librarian. In 1864, he became Professor of Ecclesiastical History at King’s College, London and a member of the Athenaeum Club. Emily, by sixteen, was living in the Canterbury cathedral precincts, on the fringes of its social world. Isabella Bird (Fig. A.5.1) was also the daughter of an Anglican clergyman, but while Emily grew up in the “genteel conservatism” of Canterbury cathedral life, Isabella’s father, although related to prominent families, was a radical reformer whose views often conflicted with those of his influential parishioners. Thus both girls were probably influenced by evangelicalism and by the fictional literature it engendered like Trollope’s Barchester novels, while the disparity between their fathers was possibly reflected in the daughters’ attitudes. Thus Emily expected respect and comfort while Isabella saw the necessity to forge her own future. Emily, like Isabella, was probably educated at home and *The Chersonese with the Gilding Off*, written in clear, if unimaginative prose, with an intelligent eye for detail, suggests a good education. Both women’s education may have included literature, history, drawing, French and Scripture. Isabella’s father also trained her powers of observation and description of nature, obvious in her writings, a facility Emily only partly shared. Their initiation into travel also differed, Isabella’s deriving from the attempt to cure ill-health and developing into a life-long passion while Emily’s was simply a result of marriage. Emily, as the youngest daughter, was expected to remain at home as her mother’s companion, her father being frequently absent. While Isabella was travelling and writing, Emily endured the tedium of home-life, enlivened by visits of eminent churchmen and occasional trips to London.

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4 Hall C. White. Male 188
5 Gullick J.M. Adventurous Women 119, 201; Barr P. A Curious Life 163-73
She probably met James Innes while visiting Scottish relatives in 1870. In January 1875, after a three-year engagement, Emily, then almost 32, married James, 39, in Canterbury Cathedral at what appears to have been a grand occasion. James was the son of Cosmo Innes, Principal Clerk of Session in the High Court of Scotland and Professor of Civil Law at the University of Edinburgh. He had spent some time in Hong Kong, possibly returning bankrupt. In 1871, he entered the Sarawak civil service as Assistant Resident at Sibu, swiftly rising to Sarawak Government Treasurer. After their marriage, the couple returned to Kuching, Emily’s first experience of the East. She appears to have coped with the small, status-ridden European community in Kuching, her upbringing perhaps enabling her to understand its rules. However, James’ increasing incompetence ended in his dismissal in 1876 but difficulty in finding recruits for Malaya, meant he obtained the appointment as collector and magistrate at Langat in Selangor. Status-conscious Emily pointed out that, of the three coastal districts, this collectorate was “the first in rank in the State of Selangor,” and “Mr. Innes was to receive $2,400, equivalent to about £500 pounds, as well as being “next in rank to the Resident.” Langat was the residence of the Sultan of Selangor who was ‘protected’ by England. Part of Innes’ duty was to make sure “this old man did not get into mischief,” patronizing but probably a simple statement of the contemporary British view.

**The Chersonese with the Gilding Off**

Emily’s book covers her time at Langat and Jugra, and later at Durian Sabatang in Perak, where Innes covered the leave of the Superintendent of Lower Perak. It was written from memory on her return to England after James’ premature resignation in 1882. This perhaps explains its loosely chronological, unstructured form. In the Inneses’ opinion, James was forced into resignation and subsequent failure to obtain either pension or compensation for his Malaya years, instigating the writing of the book, probably in a spirit of vengeance against the Colonial Office. However, the Colonial Office denied his claim despite Emily’s persistent campaign. The book was also a response to *The Golden Chersonese*, Isabella Bird’s account of her travels in Malaya in 1879, which Emily had read and enjoyed. Emily wished to

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*Gullick J.M. Emily Innes 1843-1929*
record her own experiences in Malaya, compared to those of Isabella. The differing styles and attitudes provide a startling contrast, Emily’s “stark, brutal and almost abusive”\(^8\) language against Isabella’s positive stance, greater finesse and more literary expression. One explanation is that Isabella aimed at enlightening her public about a country she considered “destined to afford increasing employment to British capital” while entertaining them with “those small details” and “frequent magnification of trifles” which “the lesser educated” seemed to “greatly prefer.”\(^9\) Emily’s targeted audience was not interested in colourful travel books, however detailed and enquiring. Although the writing of both women always reinforced the conventional British Victorian norms, Khoo Kay Kim saw Isabella Bird’s style as “impersonal” because she was “an observer from afar” who probably saw the best of Malaya during her brief visit whereas Emily “wrote primarily about personal relationships” and as “a participant.” Thus, while she recorded what she saw “with considerable accuracy,” her personal experiences may have clouded and biased her interpretation, making her a “tactless but candid commentator” rather than someone with a “distorted vision of local culture.”\(^10\) Emily, contrasting the “brilliancy” of Isabella’s descriptions, with the “dullness and gloom” of her own, allows that Isabella’s account “is perfectly and literally true” while maintaining “so is mine,” because “she and I saw the Malayan country under totally different circumstances.” Isabella’s visits were short and she could leave whenever she wished. At Langat, “she took a passing glimpse, and admired it very much,” but, Emily enquired, would she have liked “to vegetate there for years, without books, friends, or wholesome food, and with mosquitoes?”\(^11\)

Isabella was at “remote and beautiful” Langat less than two days, travelling in comfort on the Resident’s yacht and attentively entertained by the Sultan. Emily pointed out that the views of a courteously received, experienced traveller with influential contacts, might well differ from those of an inexperienced junior official’s wife, forced to spend six years in isolated and uncomfortable places. According to Florence Caddy, visiting Singapore in 1889, and her friends there, Emily’s account was “regarded here as truthful.”\(^13\) Finally, while both women shared the practical

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\(^7\) Innes E. Chersonese Vol.1 2-3
\(^8\) Khoo Kay Kim Introduction xii
\(^9\) Barr P. A Curious Life 122
\(^10\) Khoo Kay Kim Introduction v, vii, xiii; Midgley C. Gender and Imperialism 36-7, 39
\(^11\) Innes E. Chersonese Vol. 2. 243
\(^12\) Bird I. Golden Chersonese. 234
\(^13\) Caddy F. To Siam and Malaya in the Duke of Sutherland’s Yacht Sans Peur Hurst & Blackett,
ability and steadiness essential in remote places, Isabella, according to her contemporaries, seemed almost addicted to danger and hardship and the resulting celebrity\(^\text{14}\) whereas Emily had no choice and expected no accolade.

Although the principally urban, Straits Settlements were already established under British rule, it would be some years before the FMS was considered fit for European women. A generation later, Emily would have been able to "cocoon herself" in a "European, predominantly official, society" which she would have recognised. As it was, her isolation from Europeans, exposed her to "culture contact in a painful form."\(^\text{15}\) In the Malay Native States, British administrators living in their Districts, occasionally visited the urban meccas of Singapore, Penang or Malacca. Before Emily’s arrival, one official had advised Innes on the inadvisability of her living in Langat’s “mud-swamp,” in an attap house with no garden and “no bath-room attached,” the “bathing-place” being “at some distance.” The isolation of the place implied “sheer imprisonment to any Englishwoman” while the absence of any European “within a day’s journey” raised the question of her safety when her husband was away. Emily found all this true with the exception that, in James’ absence, everyone “from the Sultan downwards” seemed to consider themselves responsible for her “safety and comfort.”\(^\text{16}\)

The Journey to Langat

The difference between Emily’s situation and that of her urban contemporaries was almost immediately obvious. Her journey, on her own as Innes had preceded her, was via the Selangor capital, Klang, where she stayed, briefly, with the Resident. As his wife had not yet arrived, “there being no house fit to receive a lady,” Emily was the first English woman to visit Klang. This evoked great interest among the local population which came out in force to look at her. Such focussed attention, not usually experienced by her SS peers, initially amused her, while she felt in control. However, she saw no need for tolerance or politeness when her bedroom and privacy were invaded by “low-class women of three nations.” The final stage of her journey

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\(^\text{14}\) Gullick J.M. Adventure Women, 196
\(^\text{15}\) Ibid 193
was along the Langat River in a ‘native’ boat and, following local custom but irritating to Emily, she was accompanied by an old woman, “frowzy in her garments and very dirty in her habits,” as attendant and chaperone. She found the boat extremely uncomfortable, the low awning making it impossible to do anything but lie down “in a very uncomfortable position.” Moreover, “thousands” of mosquitoses and “many hundreds” of ants “swarmed over” her clothing and she had no book or view of the river-bank to distract her attention. Lack of privacy and refusal to conform to local style, prevented her “from taking any baths,” a discomfort she had to endure longer than anticipated as the laxity of the boatmen protracted the expected eight-hour journey to twenty-four hours. This enforced lapse from European standards of cleanliness made a deep impression and the highlight of the Innesses’ 1880 return to Jugra seems to have been their time with the Lieutenant-Governor of Malacca and his wife, and “that first of necessities” and “greatest of luxuries in the East – a bath.”

In similar circumstances, the more flexible attitude of Margaret Brooke, enabled her, with sarong, cake of soap and palm-leaf dipper, to “obtain a fairly enjoyable bath” in a jungle pool although she complained about the leeches, “fastened on my feet and legs” which “drew blood and did dreadful things.” Emily could not compromise but she could cope with the unexpected when she found she had to jump from the boat “in a crouching posture” and “alight on a slippery rung of a sort of hurdle” hanging loosely over the mudbank. It was not the disembarkment required of her urban peers and certainly not the easiest feat for a middle-class, English lady in hampering garments!

Homes in Langat, Jugra and Durian Sabatang

Emily’s home in Langat (Fig.A.5.4), hardly a prestige statement, contrasted sharply with the Palladian residences her SS counterparts and must have been a shock to her sense of English superiority, perhaps even a suggestion of ‘going native.’ Even worse than she had expected, although traditionally suited to its environment, it was, to her, simply a “Malay wigwam,” made of dried palm-leaves and wooden boards,

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16 Innes E. Chersonese Vol.1 3-4, 6.
17 Ibid Vol.1 7-13; Vol.2 173
18 Brooke M. My Life in Sarawak 111
19 Dewindt M. Good Morning 187
20 Innes E. Chersonese Vol.1 5.
raised “about four feet from the ground” on “wooden piles.” Inside consisted of “a biggish loft,” Innes’ Courtroom, and “two or three little compartments.” The roof was “tolerably watertight” but with no verandas, the only way of keeping out the frequent rain-storms was to close the wooden shutters and sit in darkness or, alternatively, leave the shutters open and later retrieve the furniture from the mud below. Emily had never before experienced anything like those violent storms like a thick “cotton-wool” wall of mist blotting out the landscape. Any movement between rooms involved donning galoshes, hat and ulster, tucking up skirts and making a rush. Unsurprisingly, she felt that any prospect of remaining remain in that “fearful place” meant they must “either leave the service” or “commit suicide.” In fact, she remained two years before moving to the new house on Jugra hill when the Sultan also moved, transferring the royal capital to Jugra.

Emily was delighted with their comparatively “lovely,” “extremely healthy” and more “civilized” new home which was probably, closer to her expectations. By most standards, it was a fairly large house, with three rooms twenty feet square, a Courtroom twenty by thirty feet plus kitchen and servants’ quarters in a separate building. After the later additions of verandas and two palm-leaf bathrooms, Emily finally considered the house in keeping with their position. The extra furniture needed came from England and some tables and cabinets from the Klang carpenters. Unfortunately, the move to the Durian Sabatang house, “sufficiently” though “roughly” furnished by the Government, forced them to sell many of their new acquisitions.

Durian Sabatang, “a wretched Chinese village” on a “flat mud-swamp,” with the reputation of a ‘white man’s grave,’ was a more brutal shock than Langat (Fig.A.5.6). The Inneses’ Government bungalow was “an ancient shed” with access by ladder, in which Emily claimed “no respectable English farmer would have put a respectable English cow.” She compared the bedrooms, sectioned off by palm-leaf fences, to sheep enclosures and the kitchen to a “dog-kennel” that even their Chinese house-boy would not endure. The frequent rain poured through holes in the roof “as if

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21 Ibid. Vol.1 15-19, 31-32
22 Gullick J.M. Glimpses 8
23 Innes E. Chersonese Vol.1 167-72, 238-9; Vol.2 158-9
from buckets" while "rats of all sizes" sat along the roof-poles. Outside, there was only one road, half a mile long and "no Christian church." In her condemnation of Durian Sabatang’s barbarity, Emily appears to have forgotten that there was no Christian church at Langat or Jugra. Emily blamed Durian Sabatang for "all our subsequent misfortunes," their return to Jugra, two years later, being over-shadowed by arguments with the Resident, Bloomfield Douglas, and James’ resignation.24

Servants and Housekeeping

Emily’s dissatisfaction with her circumstances in Malaya was often expressed through bitter comparisons with the privileges and larger salaries of higher-ranking officials which she considered unacceptable and unjustifiable. Unlike urban officials with at least seven servants, the Inneses initially employed only the two already with them in Sarawak, Taip, the Malay cook and Apat, the Chinese ‘boy.’ An orderly, water-carrier and gardener were provided by the Government and their washing went fortnightly to a Klang dhoby. However, Emily considered herself fortunate have Taip and Apat as “no Singapore servant could have been induced to come and live in so desolate a country” even for “any amount of wages” and local servants, in her eyes “untrained…savages,” did not meet her requirements. With her expectations, she was unlikely to find any servant measuring up to her standards but perhaps her isolation and sense of diminished prestige made her the more determined to uphold her authority in the household. Thus her exemption from physical household labour was counterbalanced by the constant battle to control her servants. Throughout her time in Malaya, Emily seems immovable in her prejudices. She refused to have ayahs in the house, believing them to be “the most degraded in the land” ready to “steal, lie, drink, poison their master and mistress, or join in a plot for murdering them at any moment,”25 a reflection of European contempt for the local people and belief in their degeneracy.26 Convinced that leniency resulted in poorer service, Emily’s ploy was to harry rather than beat servants into submission.

24 Ibid. Vol.2 55-64, 70-3.
25 Ibid. Vol.1 24, 193-4; Vol.2 147, 187
26 McClintock A. Imperial Leather 48-9; Bayly C. Imperial Meridian 7; Midgley C. Gender and Imperialism 24-5
Taip, "a capital cook when he chose" and Innes' servant before his marriage, was accustomed to doing everything his own way. He, therefore, was disinclined to "abdicate" or even "obey," ignoring most of Emily's orders and refusing to be subservient to a female. This was not uncommon in colonial households but Emily could not accept her husband's advice that the less "I looked into my own kitchen" and "knew about household matters," the more "smoothly things were likely to go in the East," men-servants being unaccustomed to "petticoat government." Eventually she took over "supervision in all" in "self-defence" against Taip's fondness for alcohol and his dirty, untidy habits which conflicted with her crusade for the 'civilising' standards of Christian cleanliness. She rode zealously rough-shod over Islam, telling local Muslims that "the Prophet Mohamet's regulations" were "rather short-sighted," in failing to make his followers "refined and clean in their habits," and only succeeded in making them "particularly dirty." She even saw her failure to change Taip and his inevitable dismissal as a kind of victory, declaring he learnt by the experience that "it was a mistake to try to ignore an English mem," and, in consequence, became the "abject slave" of his next mistress.

Although Emily found all her cooks unsatisfactory, she had some affection for Apat, also with Innes before his marriage. However, even her 'kindly' description of him, effectually degrading him to a savage or lower, automatically reflects colonial contempt, the confidence in its superiority and racial stereotyping. She considered him different from many Chinese 'coolies' who were "the refuse of China." Instead, he displayed a "sort of canine fidelity" and was "unusually honest and truthful for a Chinaman." After Apat's death, his replacement was a "wizened old creature of at least seventy summers, parcel-deaf and parcel blind," the Inneses' Singapore friends finding it impossible to find servants willing to go to Selangor. Emily had the usual battles with him over cleanliness, clearly demonstrating her annoyance at his keeping his spare pigtail in one of her teacups or her distaste for his smell by standing "afar off when ordering dinner." She felt tact was unnecessary, giving him a cake of soap with which to wash and explaining with forthright certainty, this was "no insult

27 Innes E. Chersonese Vol.1 221-3.
28 McClintock A. Imperial Leather 207-12; 223
29 Innes E. Chersonese Vol.1 228-30
30 Bayly C. Imperial Meridian 7; Oxford History of the British Empire Porter A. Vol.3. 23-4; Metcalf T.R. Vol.5. 588
to a Chinaman of the coolie class" who "sees no disgrace in being dirty." In this, she reflected the imperial belief that soap symbolised not only cleanliness but British superiority and its "civilizing mission" of "washing and clothing the savage," which equated hygiene with imperial progress and domestic ideology while establishing such familiar domestic rituals must have helped in coping with her present unfamiliar, 'alien' situation.

Emily preferred Malay servants, considering them more versatile than the Chinese or the "rather troublesome" Klings (Tamils), more "faithful and devoted," and having a "quiet dignity" devoid of vulgarity and snobbishness which she attributed to them being "savages," unexposed to "civilization." Even so, she made few allowances. Their "petticoated" Malay boy at Durian Sabatang was "slipshod" while Suteh, their orderly, nicknamed 'disorderly' for his untidy habits, incurred her impatience over his slowness in mastering European cutlery. She referred to his "savage instincts" and his "dirty little black hand," "dirty" apparently equating with "black." However, she did have enough sensitivity not to laugh openly at their mistakes, not wishing to hurt them.

Punctuality was another issue, Emily bemoaning her difficulty in making the servants understand that "when we named a certain hour" we "meant it literally." Upholding British prestige was paramount and she would never tolerate "outward marks of disrespect," considering it a mistake to "allow natives to do things" they knew to be "insulting." Her response to impertinence "to the mem," in a Chinese servant, usually expressed through "his pigtail curled round his head, and no jacket on," was always to send him back to dress properly before she would "condescend" to order dinner. It took time, she claimed, to overcome the "Oriental contempt for women" and to train new servants to respect an English mistress. Any "freshly caught savages," perhaps echoing Benjamin Kidd’s description "new-caught, sullen peoples," who attempted to disobey her when James was away, soon learned that

\[\text{31} \text{ Innes E. Chersonese Vol.1 231-2; Vol.2 92-3, 150.} \]
\[\text{32} \text{ McClintock A. Imperial Leather 207-11} \]
\[\text{33} \text{ Porter A. Oxford History of the British Empire Vol.3 24; Turnbull C.M. History of Singapore 105} \]
she assumed the role of “Tuan” in his absence, as well as paying their monthly wages.\textsuperscript{34}

Emily was a conscientious housekeeper but food was always a problem and their diet was limited and of poor quality. The flow of imported goods readily accessible to her urban contemporaries, was for her erratic and expensive, by the time it reached Langat often double its price in “a civilized country.” At Jugra, some distance from any source of local produce, they had to accept imported goods put “pell-mell together in coarse salt,” or in “rusted and leaking” tins, rattling about in a “half-empty” chest. Eventually, transferring their grocery order from Singapore suppliers to the Civil Service Supply Association in England proved cheaper, saving eighty pounds annually and the goods were in better condition. However, they had to order four or five months in advance and sometimes ran out of stores. Such occasions demanded ingenuity, Innes revealing to his astonished wife his ability to produce a “delicious dish” from the few unpromising commodities that “lingered on the shelves.” Emily kept chickens which were useful in catering for the Resident’s impromptu visits but often needed supplementing with inferior local fowl at “fabulous prices.” Besides suffering the humiliation of having to bargain for these, Emily had to help catch them, the locals knowing she had no alternative. Fish was only eaten occasionally, river-fish being unappetisingly “muddy” and sea-fish “rather high” when it reached Bandar. They grew some fresh produce in their Jugra garden: sweet potatoes or yams, caladium, tapioca, a type of spinach, a variety of haricot-bean, Indian corn and egg-plant. At Durian Sabatang, constant flooding made this impossible and Emily considered the vegetables in the “squalid Chinese shops” unfit to eat. Consequently, their diet was reduced to river fish, the occasional piece of pork and, mostly, to tinned meats, often climate-damaged, while unpredictable steamer schedules and the impossibility of keeping large stocks of food and drink meant there were times when they were “literally half-starved.” Drinking water came from the river, just yards downstream from where the whole village washed and dumped refuse so it is hardly surprising that Emily was frequently ill.\textsuperscript{35}

\textsuperscript{34} Innes E. C\textsc{hersonese}  Vol.1. 189-90, 213-5; Vol.2. 7-23.
\textsuperscript{35} Ibid. Vol.1. 27, 124-128; Vol.2. 28-9, 63-71
Cooking fat, butter and fresh milk also presented problems. The comparatively cheap local ghee came in leaky tins, a thirty shilling tin possibly containing only five shillings' worth, with no chance of any refund. Consequently, the Inneses imported English lard and butter, fresher than anything "under that name" locally. The only source of fresh milk in Langat was the Sultan's cows which were never milked. The Sultan once loaned Emily a cow but attempts to milk it proved fruitless while the animal almost "pulled the house down" attempting to escape and roared till the "whole village came up" to see what was the matter. The solution was tinned, condensed milk, an essential component of Emily's "solitary comfort," her afternoon cup of tea, café noir being acceptable for breakfast but not in the afternoon. Her attempts to substitute local honey for ant-infested sugar was defeated by the Malays' failure to understand keeping the honeycombs at Emily's approved level of cleanliness and all attempts to 'Europeanise' her larder appear to have been frustrated. Her account of erratic supplies and bare shelves present a very different picture from the ready supplies and lavish meals in Singapore and Penang houses while her limited resources meant she had to know how to provide "enough for your guests" but "very little more," where nothing would keep "beyond a few hours." A last-minute change of plans once left her with a dinner for ten which had to be thrown away, there being no-one else to eat it.36

Household duties for Emily, like her contemporaries in Britain, included a great deal of sewing, mainly mending clothes and household linen, as the Inneses never wore anything that would not wash and everything came back from the Klang dhoby "in a sad state." Her prejudice against female servants meant she received no help in this task, which "if done properly," would have taken "three of me to execute." Every male servant swore he never "had a needle in his hand in his life" and, if Emily persisted, would keep a garment for weeks, returning it so badly mended that its "last state" was "worse than the first."37

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36 Ibid Vol.2. 25-36, 210-11
37 Innes E. Chersonese Vol.1. 21-3; Davidoff & Hall Family Fortunes 387
Occupations and Interests

Life in such an isolated place, with no other European company, could be monotonous. Emily’s life, like Margaret Brooke’s, was dominated by her husband’s career, but with less independence than Margaret’s status permitted. Emily admitted to “many hours” when, like “a prisoner,” she had “nothing to do” or “could do nothing, from heat, ennui, and mosquitoes.” However, she devised occupations out of “rather unpromising materials.” Like Margaret, she learnt to read and write Malay quite fluently, a skill less essential to peers in an urban community with other European company. Unlike Margaret’s Inchi Sawal, a “celebrity in Kuching circles,” no professional Malay scholar was available for Emily and printed Malay language books did not yet exist. Emily’s knowledge was “gleaned entirely” from books in Malay, no doubt requiring great perseverance. Anxious to learn colloquial Malay, she practised on her local visitors and appears to have managed conversations fluent enough to help in her detailed, perceptive observations of local society. While trying to understand these observations, she never attempted any analysis but was not slow to make judgments. Her approach differed from Isabella Bird who always gave explanations, backed by local expert information, official papers and other relevant literature.

Like her contemporaries, Emily took great interest in local flora and fauna. Her interest often went deeper than simple observations about, for example the different leafing seasons of trees of the same species. Four pages of her book are devoted to the growth pattern of the wild ginger, tepus, concluding with the hope that the next botanist visiting Langat would “find out all about it, and tell me.” Tepus was later to prove equally fascinating to Katharine Sim. Margaret Brooke showed a similar amateur enthusiasm under the guidance of Marianne North, both she and Emily contrasting with Isabella Bird’s more detailed botanical descriptions, perhaps a legacy of the discussions with her father during her childhood training. At Jugra, Emily and her Chinese gardener established a garden where she grew vegetables and,
like many colonials, both tropical and European flowers, her only disappointment
being that so few were perfumed. She was interested in the local fruit-trees and
planted bananas, betel-nut, limes, jambus, pomegranates, custard-apples and
mangosteens. While she appears to have enjoyed the “lusious” durian, a source of
mixed reactions among Europeans, she disliked the pomegranate and champada. The
jack-fruit’s smell and colour reminded her of “railway-butter,” the ambachang’s taste
of “string and turpentine” and the soursop of “cotton-wool steeped in sugar and water,
with the juice of two or three green gooseberries,” almost identical to Margaret
Brooke’s description.45

Other occupations included the customary leisure pursuits, reading and piano-
playing. Her “cottage piano,” a wedding present from her family, was made
“expressly for a tropical climate.” Its “unusual quantity of brass” made it a “very
heavy” problem for the move to Jugra, needing forty Malays to carry it, slung on
bamboo poles. Emily never mentioned playing for her own pleasure but noted that the
‘singing-box’ fascinated the local women who “teased” her into, grudgingly,
“obliging” with “a few tunes.” In contrast, Margaret Brooke seems to have
genuinely enjoyed music, readily volunteering her piano-playing skills to entertain
local audiences or at the weekly astana dinner-parties for the Kuching Europeans.47
Sometimes, the reaction was unexpected, like frenzied dancing by a party of Dyak
warriors to her rendering of Ascher’s Danse Negre.48 The absence of Europeans at
Jugra and Durian Sabatang deprived Emily of such opportunities to display her skills.
On leaving Durian Sabatang, James sold Emily’s piano, in her absence and at “a
considerable loss” which must have irritated her. However she never criticised her
husband, here or elsewhere, and whatever her private feelings about him or
recognition of his short-comings, her public stance was one of unfailing loyalty.

The lack of books features in her outcry against “butcherless, bakerless,
tailorless, cobblerless, doctorless, bookless, milkless, postless and altogether

43 Brooke M. My Life in Sarawak 151-3
44 Innes E. Chersonese Vol.1. 245-9
45 Brooke M. My Life in Sarawak 2
46 Innes E Chersonese Vol.1. 75-6, 235
47 Dewindt M. Good Morning 101, 113, 168-9
48 Brooke M, My Life in Sarawak 68-70
comfortless" Langat. The main European settlements would probably have had a circulating library and Margaret Brooke speaks of the availability in Kuching of novels by authors like "Miss Braddon, Whyte-Melville, Mrs. Henry Wood, Ouida" as well as the "fine library" at the Astana, with its "instructive and very highbrow" books. A book would probably have made the journey to Langat more bearable for Emily and, later, she complained of the Resident deliberately delaying her post and books from England, leaving her "heartsick and indignant." Initially, the Inneses attempted to join the Singapore Circulating Library but failed because they were the only two Europeans at Langat, with no means of "regular communication" with "the outside world," personified, in this case, by Singapore. Emily also claims that books, newspapers and magazines on regular order from England, "especially the illustrated ones," were often stolen or delayed for several months, due to misunderstandings about their address. Her reading does not appear to have been heavyweight, the magazines mentioned being Punch and Saturday Review, but its English nature provided contact with home and the Resident’s failure to deliver a "whole mail of letters and newspapers" must have caused deep anger and frustration. In Durian Sabatang, the fortnightly steamer bringing letters and newspapers, was the only contact with the outside world, the days between being "weary, stale, flat and unprofitable."

Active occupations included tennis and walking. Tennis was gaining popularity in Europe and the Empire and was well-suited to the Inneses’ situation, only needing two players. At Jugra, the Chinese gardener made a really flat lawn, closely supervised by Emily until she was satisfied with the result. The Inneses often "played for an hour tete-a-tete" or with visitors like the Tunku Panglima Raja, whose lack of understanding of the game amused Emily. At Durian Sabatang, they played on the "bit of swampy turf" behind "the residential shed" but were restricted by the weather and limited company, namely the young English Superintendent of Police and Mr. Kerr, a Scotsman. They managed an evening game of lawn-tennis, weather permitting, although the monthly high tide often submerged the garden for two or three days and confined Emily indoors. After the floods, "a rash player" risked

49 Innes E. Chersonese  Vol.2. 176  
50 Dewindt M. Good Morning  108-9  
51 Innes E. Chersonese  Vol.1.  34-5, 264, 269; Vol.2. 71.
“sitting unexpectedly” on the ground, to the “detriment of his white clothes” and “the amusement of the rest.”

Unlike her urban contemporaries, Emily walked everywhere, either with James or alone. Her daily, Langat constitutional, accompanied by a Malay ‘orderly’ carrying a loaded gun for her protection, never varied from the Malay village and the single-file path through “seething black mud” ending abruptly in a swamp. More pleasurable was the evening walk at Jugra, through a “wonderful variety of vegetation” to the hilltop view of the sea (Fig. A.5.5). In wet weather, exercise was confined to the back veranda. The Brookes were more fortunate in having “about a mile and a half” of road at their disposal, offering Margaret the alternative of riding.

Not all Emily’s walks were uneventful. One involved scrambling over recently-felled trees, up to her knees in swamp-water, with her “idiotic frilled skirts of Europe,” now “fearfully heavy,” weighing her down and hampering her movement. Their slow progress meant it was pitch dark before they reached home, with Emily facing the equally terrifying possibilities of a night in the swamp or a tiger in the long grass. The experience made her stone-deaf for nearly two days but she offers no reproach or criticism of James who initiated it.

Relationship with her Husband

Emily’s apparently unswerving loyalty could have various explanations; rigid views on correct behaviour instilled by upbringing; the intention of her book to present him in the best possible light to his former employers; desire to uphold the required European image of marriage and family relationships and, most likely, genuine affection. Even critics of the Inneses, like Douglas, never imply anything but an easy relationship between them. Her formal references to ‘Mr.Innes,’ never ‘James’ and rarely ‘my husband’ were not unusual for that period and say little about her feelings. Similarly, Margaret Brooke usually referred to her husband as “the

52 Ibid. Vol.1. 237; Vol.2. 6-7, 75-6
53 Ibid. Vol.1. 18-19; Vol.2. 4, 239-41
54 Brooke M. My Life in Sarawak 65
55 Innes E. Chersonese Vol.1. 136-42
56 Gullick J.M. Adventurous Women 153
Rajah.” Although less outspoken than Margaret, Emily does not give any impression of her marriage being a love-match or even particularly passionate but, instead, one founded on companionship. She spoke with Victorian prudery about the “forward and impudent” manners and “objectionable” talk of the uninhibited Malay women who “have no idea” that some subjects might be “tabooed in polite society” and whose frank questions on sexual matters “would make an English reader’s hair stand on end with horror.” Failing to understand local conventions, she obviously felt that natural modesty was outraged by such matters being openly raised. Margaret Brooke, discreet over her relationship with her husband in one book but more forthcoming in the other, gives the impression of a successful, if loveless, marriage. Although admitting that her husband became “bored” with her and indifferent to her presence, she emphasises that they never quarrelled. Her daughter-in-law described the marriage as an uneasy union between an emotional, highly-strung woman and a man “gaunt and unapproachable,” frozen in a “cold discipline and rigid uprightness,” “awkward and pompous,” “hopelessly and pitifully British, chilly, aloof” and “totally unable to express himself.” It was a disparity probably experienced by many young colonial brides who had not known their husbands for long before marriage. The privileged, like Margaret, could cope by returning to England and living apart from their husbands but this was not a general option.

Emily never mentioned her childlessness but the gentleness with which she speaks about the Malay children who “surrounded” her on walks at Langat and her disappointment if they failed to appear, suggests that she might have liked her own. She was fond of the Tunku Muda’s son, “a charming...gentle-mannered and amiable boy” and was concerned for the safety of the Lloyd children in the Pangkor incident. However, childlessness spared her the terrifying “kindly admonitions” Margaret Brooke received on the dangers of pregnancy and childbirth or Margaret’s “hopelessness and misery” over her “empty nurseries” when her three babies died of cholera, all within three days. Even Margaret did not suffer the privations of Emma Marsh who, six months pregnant with twins, travelled on foot and by pack-horse from Dunedin to Clyde in Otago, New Zealand and, “in the shelter of a large rock,” gave

57 Innes E. Chersonese Vol.1. 74-5
58 Dewindt M. Good Morning 263
59 Brooke S. Queen of Head-hunters 27, 58-9, 61, 172
birth with her husband acting as midwife.\footnote{Innes E. Chersonese Vol.1. 158; Vol.2. 4-5, 103.} In Emily’s isolated situation, motherhood would have brought its problems without its ensuing benefits of companionship and if she did not experience the female bond of mutual interest provided by children neither did she suffer the sadness of long separations, “the problem of so many English wives whose husbands’ avocations happen to be on the other side of the world.” For Margaret, like many such wives, her children’s education, medical problems and her own deteriorating health meant a lengthy return to England and, for her, the effectual end of her marriage.\footnote{Aspinall P. Skirt Tales 87}

Emily only twice appears to be critical of her position as a married woman. The first time she appeared to openly question this was over James’ refusal on her behalf, of a gift from the Sultan, on the grounds that “anything given to his wife was given to him” and “belonged to him.” Emily was “inclined to demur” about this but comments that “the Married Women’s Property Act had not yet been passed,” contrasting with Margaret Brooke’s apparent acceptance that she and her possessions all belonged to her husband.\footnote{Dewindt M. Good Morning. 62, 132, 142-3, 206, 213-4} On the second occasion, Hugh Low, Resident of Perak, failed to convince her of the merits of bond-slavery which provoked him to taunt “You are a slave yourself, you know – all married women are slaves.” Emily’s tart reply, “Just so. That is precisely why I can sympathize with other slaves” may have been her own instinctive reaction or a reflection of the accepted feminist language of the period concerning women’s status, their exclusion from direct decision-making and the disadvantages and frustrations of the established gender patterns.\footnote{Innes E. Chersonese Vol.1. 47} Apart from these two occasions, her contemptuous references to Malay women’s back-scene manoeuvrings to gain some influence with their husbands and her eventual assumption of her husband’s cause against the Colonial Office, Emily reveals no particular feminist sympathies so probably these examples can be seen as simply irritated reactions to specific events. However, growing up in a prominent evangelical home, she must have been well-informed about the 1830s anti-slavery movement and middle-class women’s identification with female slaves which enabled them to underline their own position in society but within defined limits of difference between

\footnote{McClintock A. Imperial Leather 6, 31, 62}
‘native’ and European. Margaret Brooke’s reaction to feminism is more straightforward. While nominally approving of the idea of female suffrage, she disliked females who “turn themselves into bad imitations of men” or “shriek” at crowds about “affairs better handled by men,” while their power really lay in “persuasion, kind words” and “good advice.” Both women, however, were in agreement over the importance of their marriages at least appearing to be successful, perhaps as fulfillment of their colonial role, and in the avoidance of any disarray detrimental to prestige.

Emily’s knowledge of James’ nickname, Tuan ‘Senang’ or ‘Easygoing,’ possibly indicates her recognition of his incompetence. Isabella Bird described him as having a “feeble, despairing manner” and “vague unfocussed eyes” and being a “very dreary and unintelligent companion.” To Hugh Low, he was lazy, “utterly inefficient” as a “man of business” and would “ruin the place” while Douglas attributed his alleged ill-health to imprudence and over-indulgence in alcohol. It is unlikely that all these people could be completely wrong, even allowing for grievances against him. Emily, staunchly loyal in her presentation of him, chose to ignore his failures, perhaps because they would have been detrimental to the purpose of her book, and portrayed him as a decent, honest, well-meaning man with integrity, genuinely trying to do his best for the local people. She emphasized the great confidence the Resident had originally expressed in him, blaming his unpopularity and lack of advancement on his refusal to collaborate with his superiors over policies, like slave-bondage, which he considered indefensible. Her actions appear to indicate she accepted she was the stronger personality but preferred not to openly admit it, maintaining the conventional image of the domestic, subordinate wife. She oversaw the construction of the new house, dealing with the contractor, a “tolerably honest” man, “as Chinamen go” paying the contract money “in parsimonious driblets” to minimize the danger of a half-completed job. In James’ absence, she made decisions over matters like the move to Jugra, where even the transporting and security of the

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55 Etherington N. Oxford History of the British Empire Vol.5. 306; Hall C. White, Male 26-33, 92; Midgley C. Gender and Imperialism 52
56 Dewindt M. Good Morning 244
57 Gullick J.M. Emily Innes 1843-1927 166
58 Khoo Kay Kim Chersonese Introduction x; Gullick J.M. Adventurous Women 153
59 Chai Hon-Chan Development of British Malaya 8
60 McClintock A. Imperial Leather 62
Government safe became her responsibility. Margaret Brooke also made decisions in the Rajah’s absence, some involving considerable responsibility and exposing her to possible danger. However, this could be seen as simply an extension of the role women in Britain might assume in their husbands’ absence but with the added dimension of unfamiliar surroundings.

**Isolation and Furloughs**

Emily frequently refers to “our greatest trials,” boredom, solitude and isolation, when her husband was her only companion. Unlike Margaret Brooke, she rarely accompanied him on official trips, leaving her alone for up to four months without any news of him. As Malay etiquette prohibited men from calling on a lady in her husband’s absence, she was also deprived of local company. This all made her appreciate having “some one to talk to” even though it might be only “in order to grumble.” Transport for her being mainly by water, her situation was exacerbated by the Resident’s retention of the government launch, the only comfortable boat available, another focus for bitterness. Freer access to the launch might have inclined her, like Margaret Brooke, to travel more extensively. She found days at Langat “longer” and “more of them” than anywhere else and life inconceivably “dull and gloomy.” However, this was still not the true isolation experienced by Jessie McPherson in Central Otago, New Zealand, for whom sometimes eighteen months passed and, once, “two full years” without seeing the “face of a living woman.”

The annual, three-week ‘privilege leave’ broke the monotony. Their first was spent in Singapore, described by Margaret Brooke as “a privileged place” with “charming residents.” They stayed at the fashionable Hotel de l’Europe, visited friends, attended lawn-tennis parties, balls and dances and theatre evenings and enjoyed “fresh beef and mutton” as a welcome change to the “eternal fowl.” They hired a carriage, driving along the busiest streets “for the mere pleasure of seeing a crowd.” Emily emphasized her enjoyment at being surrounded once more by “white

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71 Innes E. Chersonese Vol.1. 216-7, 233-6; Vol.2. 184-5
72 Brooke M. My Life in Sarawak 122-8
73 Hall C. White. Male 113, 183
74 Innes E. Chersonese Vol.1. 63-4, 169, 211-3; Vol.2. 243-6
75 Kennedy &Murray Early Pioneers 32
faces,” relaxing in a familiar, “civilised” atmosphere which contrasted with her feelings of ‘difference’ and isolation at Jugra and Durian Sabatang. During her last two years at Jugra, Emily only saw “white faces” five times,” all male, official and on flying visits. Return to “being buried alive” in Langat was a wrench, having failed to persuade Singapore friends to visit them there. Emily acknowledged that the friendship of “even the most devoted” only went “as far as promising” but this left them virtually friendless. Their second furlough was in Java, popular with Europeans for its “cool air” while other breaks included a return to England, Emily’s ill-fated visit to Pangkor (Appendix 7) and short excursions to Klang, Penang and Taiping. A more flexible attitude, for example over Mrs.Douglas, the only other local European woman, might have helped, but her conversations with other colonial ladies, on the journey to England, suggest that she was more isolated than most of her peers.

Emily’s rigid standards, derived from a conventional upbringing, involved precise understanding of social hierarchy. In Kuching or Singapore’s “veritable snake-pit of would-be fashionable women,” such knowledge would have been an asset but in Selangor, it merely increased her isolation. In Kuching, as an official’s wife, she would probably have fitted into the small group of European women, understanding its rules, conventions and preoccupation with status. In contrast, Margaret Brooke appears to have found its petty manoeuvrings and bickerings too stilted and unfriendly, preferring the company of the wives of her husband’s senior Malay officials. Her husband also encouraged her to avoid becoming “too intimate with the English ladies at Kuching,” and their attempts at self-aggrandisement. Emily gives the impression of sociability among her equals but with a clear view of what constituted an equal. This must have caused some unhappy experiences, Emily’s resentment subsequently being exorcised by naming her Langat chickens after those who had offended her and cheerfully consigning them to the cooking-pot. Attitudes towards hospitality among Europeans were affected by isolation and the need to appear united where the “English are so rare” and “to a certain extent brothers” so, after an illness at Durian Sabatang, Emily accepted “without scruple” an invitation to

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76 Dewindt M. *Good Morning* 129
77 Innes E. *Chersonese* Vol.1 170-1; Vol.2. 52, 148-9, 187-9, 244
78 Gullick J.M. *Adventurous Women* 155
79 Brooke M. *My Life in Sarawak*
80 Dewindt M. *Good Morning* 45-51
stay with Captain Lloyd, Superintendent of Pangkor and his wife, even though she had “never seen either of them.” Later, a two-day visit to Taiping was a “welcome change,” where she met “several Europeans” and had “some delightful walks and drives” with two of the ladies. However, these friendships were all transitory, perhaps due to Emily’s rather awkward personality as much as problems of communication.

**European Social Life**

Amongst Emily’s limited European company at Langat, her most frequent visitor was the Resident, Bloomfield Douglas (Fig.A.5.8), her husband’s career necessitating a good relationship between them. She found his background, as nephew to Sir James Brooke, acceptable but she was sarcastic about his career and disliked the overbearing insensitivity of a man who “never stopped shouting” as if “giving orders during a storm at sea.” Isabella Bird, who certainly received better treatment from Douglas than the Inneses, also mentioned his “strong voice” and “authoritative tones,” and, in private letters, described him as “the most fiendish human being I have ever seen,” a violent and “very ‘ugly customer,”’ without a redeeming point in his character. Nevertheless, Emily was hostess to Douglas on many occasions before his family arrived in Klang, including visits with an entourage to shoot snipe which depleted her provisions and involved preparation of baths, beds and mosquito-curtains. According to Douglas’ diary, these visits occurred monthly, conflicting with Emily’s “irregular intervals,” sometimes “two or three times a week” but perhaps she exaggerated because she found their disruption and expense an “unmitigated nuisance.” Initially, Douglas considered Emily “very pleasant indeed,” providing the rare enjoyment of “ladies society,” took her for walks and boat rides at Klang and encouraged her to take up shooting and noted approvingly the progress “both Mr. and Mrs.Innes” had made over the “friendship of the natives.” It all appeared propitiously amicable.

81 Innes E. Chersonese Vol.2. 91, 128.
82 Ibid. Vol.1. 263
83 Bird I. Golden Chersonese 217
84 Isabella Bird to John Murray, November 16th, November 28th 1882. Glimpses of Selangor 89-90
85 Innes E. Chersonese Vol.1 pp. 119, 123, 263.
The trouble began with the arrival, in 1877, of Douglas's family. Initial contact was friendly and Emily appears to have been particularly kind to his daughter, Helen. Emily's problem was that Mrs. Douglas, described by Isabella Bird as "gentle" and "dignified and gracious," was the daughter of a Northumbrian yeoman farmer and not, in Emily's eyes, a 'lady.' Her social scruples remained unmoved even by Mrs. Douglas's "ceaseless devotion" to an "afflicted daughter" which Isabella found so touching. Moreover, the manners of the Australian-reared children may not have been refined enough for Emily's sensibilities although, the eldest, Harriet (Daly), later an authoress and London correspondent for an Australian newspaper, could hardly be seen as an intellectual inferior. Isabella Bird appears to have found her acceptable company on a journey between Klang and Penang. Emily did not describe Mrs. Douglas or of her children in her book, perhaps seeing discretion as the best course. The disastrous implications of an open rift for James' career and for appearance of uniformity essential to British prestige and control made essential, as Emily was aware, maintenance of at least superficial "good terms" with the "only other English family in the country." However, like the select EIC wives in 1820's Macau, who excluded all others from their ranks, Emily kept a cool and discreet distance from the Douglas family, who she considered her social inferiors and declined several invitations, on the grounds that "the less the two families saw of each other," the more chance they had of preserving a cordial relationship. This "friction," provoked Douglas' vindictive animosity and his ominous comment that the "very small number of British officials" made their friendly terms "indispensable" for the sake of appearances "before the natives" and this requirement the Inneses had seen fit to ignore.

Mrs. Douglas was not the sole object of Emily's discrimination. While considering some of Douglas' entourage to be "of a superior class" who made "polite small-talk" like "callers in England," Emily saw most of them as "old habitues of Langat," and also socially inferior. One sneering reference to "English policemen of

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86 Douglas diary. May and December 1876. JMBRAS 48 (2) & Glimpses of Selangor 177
87 Ibid.
88 Bird I. Golden Chersonese 218, 224, 241
89 Brownfoot J. Incorporated Wife 203; Gullick J.M. Emily Innes 1843-1929 178
90 Hoe S. Private Life 9
91 Innes E. Chersonese Vol.1 pp. 267-8; Vol.2 p.188
the rough-and-ready order" whose "arts" were in the right place" but "whose h's were decidedly in the wrong," was an intolerant and misjudged description of Harry Syers, later FMS Commissioner of Police. Isabella Bird formed a "very high" opinion of him, as "thoroughly efficient," "unpretending" "conscientious and careful" in his "rather complicated position," with a "sympathetic understanding" of the Malays,, a view apparently shared by society in general apart from Emily in her preoccupation with pronunciation and social boundaries.

Hugh Low was the only other European Emily recorded in any detail. He arranged comfortable transport for her after the Pangkor ordeal and the Inneses spent Christmas with him at Kuala Kangsar. Emily's first elephant-back ride on the journey there evoked a spontaneously positive response, for once contrasting in her favour with Isabella's shattered dream of there being "something splendid in riding on an elephant." However, the supply of European luxuries at the residency fed her envy of those in higher positions, particularly those she considered socially inferior, and caused her to reflect somewhat acidly on the contrasting position of Low's subordinates, especially themselves. She saw them as having sacrificed personal independence and comfort while Low enjoyed a higher standard of living than he could ever have hoped for in England, where "colonial governors are nobodies." Maybe, as Khoo Kay Kim suggests, her real disappointment and frustration was over Innes and her failed aspirations rather than her perceived shortcomings of the Colonial Service.

Like Emily, Isabella Bird discussed debt-bondage with Low, but conceded that his gradualist policy was an attempt to avoid the disasters of his predecessor, Birch rather than perpetuate bond-slavery in Perak. Emily's subsequent claim that "slavery would never have been abolished in Perak had it not been for the letter to the London and China Express written by Mr. Innes," (Appendix 6), would, therefore, appear pure self-delusion. In the letter's tone and its direct attack on Low, it may be

93 Innes E. Chersonese, Vol.1. 122, 129.
94 Bird I. Golden Chersonese 248
95 Ibid 302
96 Innes E. Chersonese Vol. 2. 133-4
97 Khoo Kay Kim Chersonese Introduction vi, vii
98 Innes E. Chersonese Vol.2. 241-2
possible to detect the hand of Emily herself. Conceivably, Low’s annoyance with Emily prompted Isabella’s comments in a letter to John Murray that “Perak is fortunate in not having any English ladies,” as “the total want of occupation for any but the best kind of woman” causes them to “tattle and make mischief, and create jealousies and undermine civil servants” with the aim of “pushing forward their husbands and keep the little communities in constant hot water.” Her conclusion that there being no “European woman within 12 hours journey of Qualla Kangsar” was “a happy thing” may have been an oblique reference to Emily who, at Durian Sabatang, was about twelve hours’ distance from Kuala Kangsa. Unlike Emily, Isabella saw Low as a “greatly esteemed,” “excessively cautious” man with “singular kindness of heart” and “sympathetic insight into Malay character” and even her account of his life-style contradicts Emily. Isabella claimed she understood the danger “hasty and inaccurate judgements” and the risk of “seeing things through official spectacles” as a result of her special treatment. Emily shows little self-criticism but might justifiably contend that Isabella saw what she was intended to see on her comparatively short time in Malaya and also lacked Emily’s cause for bitterness and envy.

Over Turney, Innes’ Eurasian subordinate Collector and eventual Langat replacement, Emily voiced the British contempt for Eurasians, who they saw as flawed copies of themselves with no true identity of their own. To Emily, Turney was simply “the Eurasian,” “whitey-brown,” the “little man” who accepted favours and repaid them with the typical ingratitude “of Eurasian nature!” She refused to face the “threatened invasion” of “Eurasian babies,” Turney’s children, a problem, in her eyes, on the same level as his flock of goats which did have the advantage that they could be “warehoused in the godown” or handed over to the police. Her tone suggests regret that the children could not be treated in a similar fashion. Her attitude reflects that of the ‘pure-blooded’ British towards the Anglo-Indians or to the Creoles in the West Indies, which surfaces in the literature of the period. In Jane Eyre, the Creole, Bertha Mason, with her ‘tainted blood,’ is portrayed as the epitome of

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99 Appendix 6
100 Gullick J.M. Adventurous Women 229
101 Bird I. Golden Chersonese 323-4, 347
102 McClintock A. Imperial Leather 62-3
103 Innes E. Chersonese Vol.2. 177-80, 227.
depravity and insanity, her marriage to the naïve and unsuspecting Rochester bringing him only misery and disaster. Similarly, Isabella Bird described the Malaccan Portuguese “lowered by native marriages” and “hardly to be taken into account,” referring contemptuously to the “race of half-breeds” left by both Dutch and Portuguese. Margaret Brooke’s liberal statement that “different coloured skins” was an “absurd” bar to friendship between “white and dark people,” does not extend as far as sexual relationships.

Interaction with Local Society.

Emily’s lack of European company resulted in greater interaction than her urban contemporaries with a local population which she clearly considered inferior, to be kept at a distance and treated with patronizing contempt. Her automatic assumptions of European superiority, the childlike mentality of the local people and the need to impose European standards obviated any need for diplomacy and allowed her to disclaim offensiveness as Christian duty. A cholera epidemic elicited condemnations like “you never see white men die of cholera” except when living near some “dirty Malay house” or drink dirty ditch-water “as you Malays are so fond of doing” with the supporting claim of Divine approval, “Heaven has sent Mr. Innes and me.”

On arrival, probably all Emily knew about the local people was information gleaned from James’ experiences in Sarawak and Hong Kong and perhaps from lectures by missionaries, plus British perceptions of local stereotypes. Once there, her views on her safety underwent a rapid change but the opinions she formed about the moral characters of the various local ethnicities remained biased and unaltered. The Malays, with whom she had most contact, received her sharpest comments whenever their viewpoints clashed. At her kindest, she was patronizing about the “unsophisticated Malay” who had not “mixed much with Europeans” but often she saw them as “savages,” to whom “stealing comes as naturally” as “breathing,” by

\[104\] Bronte C. Jane Eyre. London 1847. Ch.27
\[105\] Bird I. Golden Chersonese 130-2, 226-34
\[106\] Brooke M. My Life in Sarawak 61, 169
\[107\] McClintock A. Imperial Leather. 17, 32, 49-51, 66.
\[108\] Innes E. Chersonese Vol.1. 152-3
nature “the laziest being on the face of the earth” and while there were “some limits”
to an Englishman’s “mendacity” in the interests of “courtesy,” there were “none
whatever to a Malay’s.” The Chinese, she simply saw as “all of the coolie class” and
“absolutely brutal.” Isabella Bird, likewise, had her stereotypes, referring to
“creeping Malays” and “pilfering Chinamen” and wondering how many of the
feelings “which we call human” existed in the “lower order of Orientals.” This
equation of the colonized with ‘lower orders’ also surfaces in her reference to the
“monkey-like faces” of Sultan Abdulla’s sons. Isabella regarded the relationship
between the British and the Malays, or any of the dark-skinned Oriental races, as
merely “skin deep,” while the Chinese seemed “especially inscrutable” so that “no
one seems really to understand them.” Similarly, Margaret Brooke saw the Chinese
as “curious Eastern people” whom Europeans were “not able to fathom.” As the
representative of a great power, Emily felt the necessity to impress English superiority
upon the Malays, in such matters as comparative sizes of English-speaking and
Malay-speaking countries and different sizes of population, observations which were
not well-received. Ultimately, though, “we liked some of the natives,” the Inneses
withdrew from attempts to impress their culture on the locals, attributing their failure
to Malay insularity. In the language of European colonialism, the Malays were
“intelligent children” who could ask questions but “rarely give any interesting
information” because “like children,” they had “no knowledge” of “what is, and what
is not, interesting to other people.”

As the first European woman in Langat, Emily, initially, was subjected to
greater scrutiny than her urban counterparts. Not understanding the local custom of
impromptu visiting, she was upset when her house was “invaded” and filled with the
“detestable” smell of “moist unpleasant bodies,” finally snubbing her visitors in a
manner which even she conceded to be extremely rude. Her English ‘At Home’
entertaining was not understood by local women whose culture lacked precise rules
and regulations and who invaded her privacy “at all hours of the day” and failed to

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109 Andaya & Andaya History of Malaysia 175-6
110 Innes E. Chersonese Vol.1. 157, 187-8; Vol.2. 2, 195
111 Bird I. Golden Chersonese 128, 140, 247, 281
112 Brooke M. My Life in Sarawak 180
113 Innes E. Chersonese Vol.1. 98-9
114 McClintock A. Imperial Leather 50-1; Innes E. Chersonese Vol.2. 219
take her hints about leaving. Another irritation was the Malay habit of enquiring the price of everything and requesting presents, which Emily considered vulgar even though she knew it was simply local etiquette. She was also offended by their "improper," objectionable conversation and morals which she perceived as her Christian duty to improve but found "past my mending." Perhaps, like Isabella Bird, she attributed such moral behaviour to Malaya being a "dark Peninsula" with its people "wholly given to idolatry." Eventually, she decided she had nothing to learn from or to teach these women and certainly no obligation to them and ended the contact.

Although her upbringing enabled Emily to recognise Malay aristocracy, she does not appear to have understood, or perhaps saw no interest in, the rest of Malay society or that women she had dismissed as "of the lowest class possible" and not really "above the rank of slaves," were, in fact, the middle-class wives of local headmen and minor court officials, in local terms, probably her equals. Margaret Brooke's more open-minded approach and understanding of Malay society seems to have brought her greater friendship with the locals. She preferred their less-formal style of entertaining to English dinner-parties and encouraged "frequent morning visits" as "new and interesting" experiences free from European conventionality.

However, even her claims to an enlightened attitude, are sometimes contradicted by the use of terms like "primitive" for the indigenous people, the unquestioned acceptance of European culture as "superior" and a complacently paternalistic stance. She sometimes employs language similar to Emily's, bracketing the "simple, useful orderliness" of the "home lives" of the indigenous Kuching people, with the "excellent advice regarding personal matters," in Stopford Brooke's lectures to British "workmen and artisans," which taught the "so-called lower classes" the "better and nobler lessons of life." Similarly, Sarawak, "sunk in a state of barbarism" before the first Rajah brought "enlightenment," was now "civilized" and would remain so in the hands of a white Rajah and English officers "experienced in colonial government" and safeguarding "primitive people and their interests." 

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116 Bird I. Golden Chersonese 362
117 Innes E. Chersonese Vol.1. 73-7, 83-4; Gullick J.M. Adventurous Women 173
118 Brownfoot J. Incorporated Wife 201
119 Brooke M. My Life in Sarawak 22-9, 61, 84, 176, 192, 260, 268, 312; Dewindt M. Good Morning 102, 162-5, 218, 229-31.
Emily was more at ease with locals of “slightly superior rank,” by no means seen as equals, who “announced their visits beforehand” European-style. However, she considered the rajahs’ wives “hardly at all superior in manner or in intelligence” to the “common women” and “just as intrusive and tiresome.” Margaret Brooke claimed to enjoy her “two different worlds” one containing her “stilted conventional English friends” and the other her “warm-hearted Malay women,” but described the latter as the “best friends I ever had,” with “better manners than most Europeans,” who had “no capacity for enjoying anything that was not European.” However, despite Margaret’s frequent claims to lack of concern over status, her main objection to the European women was their preoccupation with rank and questioning of her title, while the Malays’ charm lay in their tact and discretion, never at any time forgetting “the respect” due to “their Rajah’s wife.” In her position of privilege and authority, she was always in control and treated with respect, perhaps making it easier to adapt to a new lifestyle and to cross conventional boundaries. She also eventually had the company of a new wave of younger, less aggressively status-ridden European women who were “always kind to me.” These included Mrs. Kemp, the “young, charming, most kind” wife of the Bishop’s chaplain, with whom Margaret formed a close friendship, based on mutual interest in each other’s children. Finally, Margaret could feel closer to home through visitors like botanical artist, Marianne North, her view from the astana of European ships and European bungalows with pleasant gardens and the regular arrival of the mail-steamer, a very different scene from Jugra or Durian Sabatang.

Eventually, Emily confined her local contacts to members of the Malay royal household, like Sultan Abdul Samad (Fig. A.5.9) whom she had known quite informally since her arrival at Langat and for whom she acknowledged “a feeling of warm friendship” and even “respect.” She even showed some insight and sympathy over his loss of dignity through “his revenue being collected, and his laws altered and administered for him” by “aliens.” However, she still saw him as an “unclothed old savage” and laughed at his “impertinence” in assuming authority over “us, free-born

121 Dewindt M. Good Morning 64, 100-2, 231, 244, 262
122 Brooke M. My Life in Sarawak 19, 61-3, 92-3, 150-5, 263
Britons” even though the country might be his. In contrast, Isabella Bird considered him the “most prepossessing Malay” she had ever seen but Isabella, as a temporary visitor, was unhampered by Emily’s preoccupation with her status in the local community. Gullick judged the Sultan to be a more complex character and more difficult to understand than either of the women’s assessments, with a “disposition to dissimulate” but a “realistic acceptance” of his “thankless position.”

Emily invited the “more civilized” rajas to tea “if they happened to call at the right time” and made friends with Raja Muda Musa (Fig.A.5.7) and Tunku Panglima Raja. With the latter, she discussed the relative merits of eating with fingers oriental-style or utensils in Western fashion and finally admitted that he had the best of the argument. One raja she disliked was the Sultan’s son-in-law, Tunku Dia Udin, despite his lighter complexion, “not much darker” than “an Italian or a Spaniard.” This “crucial sign of otherness” appears to have been, for her, the only point in his favour while his attempted adoption of Western habits caused an irreconcilable clash of cultures between them through his incomprehension and her intolerance. During his visit to the Inneses, she was infuriated by his servants taking over her house, normal in Malay etiquette, a fact she later acknowledged. Her anger at this perceived affront to her authority was voiced through her scorn over the unhygienic slovenliness of “his savages” and their misconception of western dining standards. Her subsequent insistence on being served by her own staff engendered a battle for superiority, fought principally through the servants and the rivalry Emily’s convictions promoted between them. Isabella Bird expressed similar views about Rajah Dris’s apparent inadequacies, demonstrated by his “much soiled” tablecloth and “very bad taste” in china and glass. Perhaps greater sympathy can be felt for Emily’s condemnation of the “extremely nasty” manners of Raja Kahar who “cut his bread-and-butter and his toe-nails alternately with his knife” and “made the most horrible noises in his throat” to show he had enjoyed his meal. Although such behaviour was perfectly

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123 Innes E. Chersonese Vol.1. 39-44
124 Bird I. Golden Chersonese 231
125 Gullick J.M. Glimpses of Selangor 19, 197
126 Innes E. Chersonese Vol.1. 100-3
127 McClintock A. Imperial Leather 52
128 Innes E. Chersonese Vol.1. 173-81; Andaya & Andaya History of Malaysia 147-8, 151.
129 Bird I. Golden Chersonese 325
130 Innes E. Chersonese Vol.1. 106-7
acceptable within Malay society, it clashed with western norms and could only reinforce Emily's conviction of the unbridgeable gap between locals and Europeans.

Apart from a visit by the "Sultan's womenkind" which she duly returned, Emily mentions only one other Malay woman, Tunku Chi, the Sultan's daughter, who she met just once. As the Tunku lived apart from her husband, Malay custom prohibited a return visit. Although attributed with "the temper of a tigress," she appeared to Emily "the picture of modesty and gentleness" arousing her respect and admiration for the Tunku's "unbending attitude," "conservative views," and her "stronger character" than "either her husband or her father." Perhaps this is an indication of the different perception European women were supposed to hold of oriental women, less denigrating than their male contemporaries, or perhaps it simply suggests the qualities Emily considered desirable in a woman, while simultaneously expressing some dissatisfaction with the inequality between the sexes. Whichever is the case, there is no suggestion Emily saw a Malay sultan's daughter as the social equal of a British administrator's wife.

Emily was interested in relationships between the sexes in Malay society but her observations about Malay women employ the language of the imperial 'civilising' mission which stressed the downtrodden, underprivileged position of their Eastern 'sisters,' from which it was the European's duty to rescue them. She, therefore, blamed what she perceived as trivial lives and ignorant conversation on their inferior position enforced by their husbands, "low and insignificant" chattels with no rights. Their lives were confined to domestic matters, allowing their brains to "lie forever fallow." This forced them, she claimed, into "listening behind curtains and other underhand practices," in order to obtain information which they then used to their own ends. As many of Emily's comments could also be applied to the relative situation of European women of this period, she must have been aware of a parallel between the Malay woman behind her curtain and herself in her room off the Courtroom, gleaning information about Government business and later, apparently, influencing James' decisions or goading him into action. For her decisive nature, lack

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131 Ibid Vol.1. 87-96; Vol.2. 49-51
132 Strobel M. European Women 10, 13
133 Chauduri & Strobel Western Women 108-112, 137
of open involvement must have been frustrating and her sharp comments about the undervaluation of Malay women, her references to female slavery in conversations with Low and her approval of the Married Women’s Property Act, further suggest her awareness, if not open acknowledgement, of the analogies and the book was her only outlet.\textsuperscript{134}

Her comments about the relationship between Malays and Chinese were also sharp, noting that the Malay was “no more fit to cope with the irrepressible Chinaman” than “coaches are with steam-engines” and “cannot stand before Chinese and Kling competition” as the loss of control over shipping at Penang and Singapore proved. In similar vein, Isabella Bird commented that, although the Malays were the “nominal possessors of the country,” the Chinese were “everywhere,” and the Malays “nowhere.”\textsuperscript{135} This approval of Chinese industry by both women perhaps simply reflected current stereotyping and imperial ideology of the rise of the ‘savage’ to ‘civilisation’ through personal industry and endeavour combined with British influence.

**Health and Safety**

Emily, like many of her colonial contemporaries, was prone to ill-health, attributed to “debility” caused by malaria, boredom and poor diet. Refusal to make concessions to an alien climate must have been another contributory factor as well as the stress and frustration, usually caused by her own nature. Illness often took the form of “constant colds in the head” when she “did nothing but sneeze all day and all night” and was treated with “strong chicken-broth.” Ill-health forced her to return to England after Durian Sabatang, when, she claimed her old friends described her as “a wreck” who had “only just come home in time” to save her life. After the Pangkor attack, Emily and Mrs.Lloyd were diagnosed as suffering from malnutrition, after living for some years “chiefly on tinned meats, etc.” This, in fact, proved an advantage as the danger of “fever and inflammation” would have been greater with a

\textsuperscript{134} Strobel M. European Women 13

\textsuperscript{135} Bird I. Golden Chersonese 201
“more generous diet.” Even the climate did not encourage appetite and mealtimes usually ended in “sitting” and “looking at food.”\textsuperscript{136}

Compared with the towns, medical facilities for Emily were minimal, the only Government support at Jugra, being a Klang apothecary whose remedies were “all mixed up with water” and “quickly turned putrid.” The Inneses soon became “general practitioners to the whole neighbourhood.”\textsuperscript{137} Once, Emily treated a serious stab wound near the heart with only a ‘simple dressing’ at her disposal. At Durian Sabatang, there was no doctor and the locals again turned to the Inneses, expecting “all English to have a knowledge of doctoring.” Margaret Brook experienced a similar touching faith in her capacity to cure all illnesses\textsuperscript{138} and, like Emily, administered common western remedies like quinine, chlorodyne, and castor-oil, which apparently worked reasonably well. Emily tolerated no nonsense and when she suspected someone of “shamming,” insisted on his swallowing a dose of Epsom salts, or “something equally nasty,” which “always cured him at once.”\textsuperscript{139} Even the presence of a western doctor did not always ensure successful diagnosis or treatment. The Rajah’s beef tea “reinforced with a good dose of brandy,” not the doctor’s prescription, restored Margaret Brooke’s health after the birth of her still-born baby while she owed her recovery from malaria, diagnosed as hysteria by the doctors, mainly to an old Chinese water-bearer’s unorthodox treatment.\textsuperscript{140} No sick Government officer was allowed leave without official permission and when James visited Emily after the Pangkor incident, he risked “dire disgrace,” a “half-murdered wife” not being an admissible excuse “in official circles.”\textsuperscript{141} Here again, Margaret had the advantage of needing no-one’s permission for recuperative periods in England, beneficial respites from an “enervating” climate, “trying to the health of any woman” and a chance to relax with friends.\textsuperscript{142} Once, Emily mentioned medical treatment in Singapore, an expensive and rarely used option. She returned with a

\textsuperscript{136} Innes E., Chersonese Vol.1. 36, 230; Vol.2. 144-6
\textsuperscript{137} Ibid. Vol.1. 67
\textsuperscript{138} Brooke M. My Life in Sarawak 73-5; 181-2
\textsuperscript{139} Innes E. Chersonese Vol.1 68-9
\textsuperscript{140} Dewindt M. Good Morning 131-2, 200-3
\textsuperscript{141} Innes E. Chersonese Vol.2. 117, 152-4.
\textsuperscript{142} Brooke M. My Life in Sarawak 93; Dewindt M. Good Morning 132, 141, 203, 208
puppy, named Berowald, an unusual pet for the jungle but, no doubt, excellent therapy to “cheer” her solitude.\(^\text{143}\)

The most common health hazards among Malayan Europeans were fever [malaria], cholera and sunstroke, any of which could “carry off a strong man in a few hours.” A cholera epidemic at Langat in their first year there, killed fifty, one third of the inhabitants. Emily correctly traced its source to the “foul and brackish” water, the preceding drought and the conditions in which the Malays lived. The Inneses, supplied almost daily with fresh water from the Government water-boat, tried to ensure a fresh supply for Malays too poor or, as Emily acidly remarked, “too lazy to take the trouble” but locals continued to drink ditchwater. Lack of rain, the traditional, and, to Emily, primitive, method of cleansing the streets, and the people’s fatalistic attitude further exacerbated the situation. The Inneses did not have the protection enjoyed by urban European enclaves living separately from the locals and, in one house, about fifty yards from their home, James found an old woman cooking her meal in the same room as a rotting body which she could not afford to remove or give the customary funeral. Innes, working at close quarters to the dead and dying, was constantly at risk but neither he nor Emily succumbed. As cholera was “an affair of three hours” from the first symptom until “all was over” and there was not even a medicine-chest in Langat, it must have been a terrifying experience.\(^\text{144}\) An interesting feature of descriptions by Emily and Margaret of such epidemics, is the tone of calm detachment with which they appear to have accepted their close proximity to danger but this could be attributed to the time-lapse between events and writing.\(^\text{145}\) Emily accorded their survival to “European sanitary notions,” zealously explaining to the Malays, in the language of paternalistic colonial authority which equated refusal to change traditional habits with idleness, that as they were “abominably lazy” and “not quick at understanding Heaven’s ways,” “Heaven has sent Mr.Innes and me here to tell it you.”\(^\text{146}\)

\(^{143}\) Innes E. Chersonese Vol.2. 201
\(^{144}\) Ibid. Vol.1. 143-9; Vol.2. 69
\(^{145}\) Brooke M. My Life in Sarawak 177-83
\(^{146}\) Innes E. Chersonese Vol.1. 152-3; McClintock A. Imperial Leather 17; Hall C. White, Male 79; Davidoff & Hall Family Fortunes 252, 382
Refusal to concede to the climate resulted in most European women wearing unsuitable clothing. Emily was no exception. The heat and humidity must have caused her constant physical discomfort, despite bathing and changing her attire two or three times daily. She might describe European attire as "ugly and inconvenient" and "doubly so in the East" (Fig.A.5.10) with their "badly ironed" frills, colours "faded from frequent washing" and trains "dirty in a few minutes;" she might also deride the "European lady of Singapore" in "whalebone and steel," with "kilted plaitings," "angular frills," "pinched-in waist" and "distended skirts;" but she could not, like Margaret Brooke, adopt the cooler, more comfortable Malay dress (Fig.A.5.3). It suggested 'going native,' bound up, for the European, with suggestions of engulfment and degeneracy. Margaret was better placed than Emily to make her own rules about wearing this "simple, cool and graceful-looking" costume rather the "mid-Victorian horrors of steel and whale-bone" worn by "fashionable females" but even she returned to "fashions from Bond Street or the Rue de la Paix" for "parties with the Europeans." However, Emily thought that Malay costume made women look like "shapeless bundles," their veils suggesting they had "brought away part of the window curtains by mistake." Moreover, she considered it impossible to keep the sarong "safe and tight" for any length of time which was extremely inconvenient and might result in unthinkable lapses of propriety. Even Margaret had to admit that no European woman, accustomed to "freedom, exercise" and "abrupt movement," could wear it with the same grace as local women.

Emily was scathing about the "bad imitation of the Malay dress" adopted by the Javan Dutch ladies, which was "ungraceful and cumbrous" but admired the Indian costume, unsuitable, however, for "English ladies" who "play lawn-tennis, ride, and indulge in other active exercises." She suffered a climate that "grilled an unfortunate European in Malaya" both day and night. In case "English ladies should be shocked at my speaking to the cook in my sleeping costume," Emily’s night-attire comprised "a toilette of thin flannel as a protection against rheumatism" and "chintz dressing-gown, or ‘morning robe.’" As sheets were "unendurable," personal garments were the only night-covering so it was necessary her nightdress be a "presentable costume," ready

147 McClintock A. Imperial Leather 27, 49, 67.
148 Brooke M. My Life in Sarawak 26-9, 110; Dewindt M. Good Morning 69-70
149 Innes E. Chersonese Vol.1. 109-112
for any emergency, like “a mail-boat arriving, or a murder, or a fire.” It could not have been possible to sleep well in such clothing and resulting dehydration may have contributed to her illnesses.

For Emily, more than her urban contemporaries, life was a constant battle with insects. At Langat, mosquitoes came “by tens” during the day and “in their thousands” after sunset. Margaret Brooke described with “repulsion,” their nightly invasion, falling “in clouds” on her hastily-eaten, evening meal. Their bites, “tortures,” were treated with weak carbolic acid and the only escape, especially during the evening, was the ‘mosquito-house.’ This was a “large square cage” of wooden bars with mosquito-net nailed to them, housing “a couple of rattan lounges, and a small table” and intensely hot inside. The Inneses’ was in the Court-room and unavailable to Emily during the day. In the wet season, mosquitoes were “more vicious than ever” while the “malaria from the swamp” pervaded the house with invisible masses of vapour. The nature of malaria was not understood until the discoveries of Laveran and Ross, 1880 to 1898, and Emily and her contemporaries believed it was caused by malaria, bad jungle air, or “evil odours” in the atmosphere with a “pernicious effect on the health of Europeans.” Emily would have seen the mosquito as simply a nuisance, ignorant of its true danger or its breeding-grounds in the surrounding stagnant ditches.

At Jugra, apart from kumbangs, “the size of a humming-bird” but harmless, there were inch-long hornets and, as in urban areas, the daily invasion of “red ants, black ants, some an inch long,” causing the greatest problems over food-storage. The larder’s legs stood in bowls of water and containers of sweet things were isolated in vessels of kerosene oil or oil and water but nothing was completely successful. Evening meals were disrupted by insects attracted by the lamplight, carpenter beetles in the soup, locusts in the tumblers and hornets in Emily’s hair. Snakes “glided along the verandas” and scorpions “ran about with tails erect below the house.”

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150 Brooke M. My Life in Sarawak 28
151 Innes E. Chersonese Vol.2. 21-3, 206-7
152 Ibid. Vol.1. 33, 36
153 Brooke M. My Life in Sarawak 71, 76, 117
154 Innes E. Chersonese Vol.1. 36-7, 215.
155 Chai Hon-Chan Development of British Malaya 217-8
156 Brooke M. My Life in Sarawak 71
Surprisingly, Emily was never bitten or stung at Jugra but, at Durian Sabatang, she suffered from centipedes crawling up from the damp bath-rooms and hiding in the beds. Their sting inflicted pain unlike “anything I had ever felt before.” She never seems to complain about these ‘invasions,’ describing them almost objectively, and Khoo Kay Kim sees this acceptance of life in lonely, remote places as indicating “the mettle of which she was made,” remarking that her dislike of these “swampy and unhealthy” places was “not totally unjustified,” as any visit to them would still verify.

Emily faced physical danger more often than urban Europeans and described several close encounters with tigers. At Langat, they prowled round the house “night after night for weeks together.” The house, “only four feet from the ground” with “no railing of any kind,” was too frail to barricade effectively and attempts to kill the tigers failed. However, Emily found she could “awe them into silence” by creaking a door or moving a lamp. At Jugra, their walks were sometimes interrupted by the “crashing of some heavy body” or “low growls” in the impenetrable greenery and once a nine-foot tiger was trapped and killed close to where they had been standing. Tigers also came to the paling around the house but never entered the enclosure, and Emily could eventually sleep in the middle of even the loudest growls.

Birch’s assassination, 1875, and subsequent Malay insurrections in Perak, Selangor and Sungei Ujong, raised the question of European safety in Malaya. In Malacca, Isabella Bird “bolted and barred” all entries to her Stadhaus room, comforted to hear “the clank of the British sentries” and at Singapore, she was reassured by the “roll of the British drum,” “garrison, defensive works” and “ships of war.” In Selangor, Residents were “constantly warned” by Downing Street that their job was to advise and not rule. In contrast, Margaret Brooke claimed that the absence of “British guns” in Sarawak indicated an acceptance of the European

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157 Innes E. Chersonese Vol.1. 254-61; Vol.2. 77-8
158 Khoo Kay Kim Chersonese Introduction xi, xiv-v
159 Innes E. Chersonese Vol.1. 160-6; Vol.2. 9, 36-46
160 Andaya & Andaya History of Malaysia 160-3
161 Gullick J.M. Adventurous Women 156
162 Bird I. Golden Chersonese 109, 129
163 Gullick J.M. Adventurous Women 156-7, 161
However, Emily’s initial fear of the “treacherous, bloodthirsty, and cruel” Malay soon reversed to the opinion that Malaya was “far more peaceful” than England, and life and property “more secure” than in London, citing her husband’s “perfect safety” among “the natives.” Her attitude towards the provisions for her own protection appear to have oscillated between amusement, irritation and exasperation over the incompetence of the guards.

She felt more uneasy about the Chinese. Perhaps she had heard about the violent crime perpetrated by Chinese gangs in 1840s and 1850s Singapore. At Durian Sabatang, she described the “Chinese coolies” as “hideous,” “nine-tenths-naked,” “repulsive,” “villainous” and “opium-eaters to a man.” Many were convicts, assigned to housework for the three resident Europeans, so Emily was “surrounded” by “murderers and villains of the deepest dye.” The Pangkor attack (Appendix 7) simply reinforced her opinion and emphasized the fragile position of the Europeans. The incident demanded an official reaction and, on her journey to Penang, to give evidence, Emily noted “the unwonted presence” of two British men-of-war anchored near Pangkor, an indication of the “somewhat tardy care” which “the British Government takes of its officials,” and, possibly, a warning to the locals against violence to British citizens.

Conclusion

By Emily’s arrival in 1876, the SS were firmly established under British control, offering an urban life with many amenities. In contrast, the newly annexed, government-orientated Malay States were still in their infancy. Women like Emily lived in remote and sometimes hostile conditions and, in their husbands’ absence, were isolated from other Europeans, often for long periods, in circumstances far removed from the privileges, comforts and amenities of their urban contemporaries. Besides monotony and loneliness, Emily contended with poor diet, lack of amenities, rudimentary medical supplies, a difficult climate and housing which, although not Sophia Raffles’ earthquake-damaged “ruin and dilapidation” at Bencoolen, hardly

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164 Brooke M. *My Life in Sarawak* 95
165 Innes E. *Chersonese* Vol.1. 19, 40-2, 64-5.
166 Turnbull C.M. *History of Singapore* 53-8
lived up to her expectations. Sometimes she had to cope with cholera, sudden death or tigers at her front door while her mobility was severely restricted, mainly to places accessible on foot.

Like her urban contemporaries, she came from the professional middle-class and saw herself as a representative of a great empire. Clinging tenaciously to the colonial creed of status and superiority over the ‘colonised,’ she sought to impose ‘civilized’ standards of morality and cleanliness but her struggle to maintain standards only alienated local Europeans, antagonized her servants and caused her bitterness and unhappiness. Unlike her urban sisters, she was closer to the local scene and, although many of her attempts to establish contact failed, she did appear to ‘strike a cord’ with members of the Sultan’s family, occasionally acknowledging the validity of their opinions and making intelligent, if acerbic, observations about a scene she found uncongenial. She could be acrimonious, envious and snobbish but, on the positive side, she was hardy and self-reliant, and, for six years, coped valiantly and resourcefully in circumstances which would have defeated many women.

167 Innes E. Chersonese Vol.2. 65-8, 97, 110-1, 127, 142
168 Gullick J.M. Adventurous Women 12
Langat and Jugra 1870s
(Adventurous Women in S.E. Asia, J.M. Gullick)
Fig. A5.1  Isabella Bird at her wedding, 1881
(Adventurous Women in S.E. Asia, J.M. Gullick)

Fig. A5.2  Margaret and Sylvia Brooke
(Queen of the Head-hunters, S. Brooke)
Fig. A5.3 Margaret Brooke (in local dress) and amah in front of the mosquito cage.  
(My Life in Sarawak, M. Brooke) 

Fig. A5.4 The Inneses' bungalow at Langat, sketch by Emily Innes 
(The Chersonese with the Gilding Off, E. Innes)
Fig. A5.5

Upper picture. The view from Jugra Hill (1999)

Lower picture. Part of Emily’s walking route at Jugra and remains of the Sultan’s Istana (1999)

(photographs by P. Tilley)
Fig. A5.6

Upper picture. Emily's view from Durian Sabatang (1999)

Lower picture. Local house at Durian Sabatang (1999)

(photographs by P. Tilley)
Fig. A5.7  Tunku Muda  
(Sketch by Emily)

Fig. A5.8  Bloomfield Douglas  
(Glimpses of Selangor 1860 – 1898, J.M. Gullick)

Sultan Abdul Samad and his followers. His grandson, Raja Sulaiman sits on the Sultan's left. Outside the new Istana at Jugra. 1874.  
Photo Muzium Negara.

Fig. A5.9  Emily's Sultan (centre)  
(Glimpses of Selangor 1860 – 1898, J.M. Gullick)
Fig. A5.10  Comfort versus Fashion and Propriety
From three sketches by Henry N. Shore (1847 – 1926), National Museum of Singapore
Appendix 6

James Birch and The Slave-Bondage Issue

In 1874, James Birch was appointed Resident of Perak and sent to sort out the problems of what was perceived by the Colonial Government, as inefficient government by the local chiefs. It was a delicate diplomatic situation but Birch’s attitude was that local rulers were “perfectly incapable of good government or even of maintaining order, without the guidance and assistance from a stronger hand” and that “nothing but decision is necessary with these people.” Moreover, he expressed the opinion that “it concerns us little what were the old customs of the country, nor do I think they are worthy of our consideration.” He completely disregarded the territorial chiefs apart from the Sultan and refused to take part in any discussions over the handling of local problems, including the key issue of debt-slavery.

In 1875, Birch posted proclamations in all the villages announcing the proposed administrative reforms, in spite of growing hostility among the Malays and the lack of European troops in the area to protect him. On 2nd November, 1875, there was an uprising in the village of Pasik Salak, where Birch was staying, and he was speared to death while taking his bath at the edge of the river. The uprising was suppressed by British forces but this was the incident, focussed against the symbol of an interfering and hated foreign Power, which preceded Emily Innes’ arrival in Selangor and instigated the bodyguard protection for Government officers and their wives which she found so irksome (See Appendix 5). It also served as a warning over the need for tact and diplomacy when dealing with the local population and its rulers and the need to establish a system which they considered satisfactory. It may also help to explain the cautious attitude of Birch’s successor, Hugh Low, over the question of debt-slavery, mentioned in his conversations with both Emily Innes and Isabella Bird.¹

Correspondence Over The Slave-Bondage Issue.

1. The Right Honourable the Earl of Kimberley to Governor Sir F.A.Weld, K.G.M.G.

Downing Street, June 2, 1882

Sir,

With reference to my Dispatch of the 4th of March, I have the honour to enclose a copy of a letter which has been addressed to the editor of the ‘London and China Telegraph’ by Mr.James Innes on ‘Slavery in Perak’, and appeared in that journal on the 30th ultimo.

I shall be glad to have your observations on this communication at your early convenience.

I have, Etc.,

(Signed) Kimberley.

¹ Chai Hon-Chan Development of British Malaya pp. 9-11; Andaya & Andaya A History of Malaysia 160
SLAVERY IN PERAK

(To the Editor of the 'London and China Telegraph)

Sir,

I observe that in the House of Commons and elsewhere attention is being directed to the subject of debt slavery in Perak. Having lately been in the Perak Government service, I am in position to testify to the fact that the debt slavery spoken of not only exists, but is approved of and practically encouraged by the English Resident of Perak, and by the Government of the Straits Settlements.

From the 8th of August 1878, I was Acting Superintendent of Lower Perak. I had not long been in that position before I discovered, to my surprise, that in my character of magistrate I was expected to issue warrants for the recapture of runaway slaves, and to see those warrants carried out.

I inquired of other officials, and found that this had been done by my predecessor, and also by themselves, but always with great reluctance, and only in obedience to the express orders of the English Resident, Mr. Low. I found also on inquiry that such of these slaves as were women were generally impelled to run away through their hatred of the immoral life they were forced to lead for the pecuniary benefit of their masters or mistresses; that they often wished to marry and live respectfully, but had no chance of doing so except by a successful escape; and that when returned to their masters they were always treated with great cruelty, being sometimes even tortured to death. This was done to deter others from following their example. I found that English officials had on several occasions paid money out of their own pockets to redeem these unfortunates, rather than return them to their masters.

I, of course, wished to obey my chief in all things lawful, but I felt that to carry out this part of his orders would be equivalent to aiding and abetting murder, or, in the case of young women, something even worse. I, therefore, after much consideration, refused.

As I left Perak more than two years ago, my information might be thought out of date, I therefore subjoin extracts from a letter just received from those parts:

The debt slavery that exists in Perak is, I consider, worse than the slavery I have seen in Borneo, where the slaves are sold openly like sheep; in Borneo slaves are as a rule well treated, fed, clothed and armed, and only occasionally killed for a serious fault. In Perak, from what I have seen, the slaves are badly fed and badly clothed. It seems strange that while slavery was so easily abolished in Selangor it should still be permitted in the adjoining State of Perak. I do not think that because the ruler of the latter State happens to be a slaveholder himself people should still continue to be deprived of their liberty for their whole lives. It amounts to that, for it is nearly an impossibility for a slave debtor to collect even twenty-five dollars, and if he do happen to become possessed of a few dollars by thrift or theft he is obliged to bury them, to prevent his master from stealing them.

The system of girl slavery in Perak is, perhaps, the most iniquitous form of all, as they in many instances are a profitable source of income to their mistresses. The abolition of slavery would of course check this evil, and the inchis would have to seek an income in some manner less objectionable, and more in accordance with the precepts of Islam.

Numbers of grey-haired men and women could be found in Perak still in debt slavery, but it would be useless to make inquiry on the spot. The slave debtors could
tell a great deal if they only dared to do so; but now unfortunately they know that their
masters have legally a recognised right of property in them for debt as strong as they
had in the days of yore under the infamous rule of their Rajahs, with the one
exception that they cannot now legally be killed. So much for the so-called
‘protection’ afforded to the natives by the English Government.

I entirely agree with Sir P. Benson Maxwell that slavery is not a necessary
institution in any Malay State, but if discountenanced by the authorities will come to
an end of itself, as is proved by Selangor, Sungei Ujong, and Sarawak. The slavery
existing now in Sarawak is the mildest form of feudal power. It is doomed, and will, I
have no doubt, come to an end very soon; if the British North Borneo Company adopt
the same principle as Rajah Brooke there will be no disgraceful slavery in their
territory.

I have, etc,
(Signed) James Innes,
Lately Collector and Magistrate
At Langat, Selangor.


Thaiping, Perak, July 9, 1882.

My Lord,

In reply to your Lordship’s Despatch of 2nd June 1882, I have the honour to
transmit to you a report from Mr. Hugh Low, C.M.G., Resident of Perak, commenting
upon the letter to the ‘London and China Telegraph’ newspaper, by Mr. James Innes
on slavery in Perak, which you have enclosed to me, and also one addressed to the
Resident by a most able and honest Malay prince, Rajah Idris, the Chief Justice of
Perak, which was spontaneously written and may be unhesitatingly accepted as
expressing his true opinion.

2. The statement that debt slavery is approved of and practically managed by the
English Resident of Perak and by the Government of the Straits Settlements is not
only directly opposed to fact, but evinces such unblushing disregard to fact, and is so
completely disproved by the course of action steadily pursued both by the Resident
and by myself and by the sure though gradual results of that action, that it will be
hardly necessary for me to do more than to request your Lordship to read the enclosed
documents and my previous Dispatches.

3. Since I have been Governor of the Straits Settlements the only case which has
come to my knowledge (and your Lordship is aware that I devote much time and
labour to native affairs by personal inspection and otherwise) in which a European
officer in the Native States has been accused of favouring slavery, was in regard to
Mr. Innes himself, who was censured, not groundlessly, by the Resident of Selangor
for encouraging slavery, for allowing two boys to be handed over to a Selangor chief.
I admit that I considered the censure somewhat harsh, and as the boys wished to
remain I allowed them to do so, care being taken to warn the chief and their own
friends that they were free and might leave at any time. This lenient view of Mr. Innes’
conduct on that occasion may be the ground of that gentleman's present assertion that the Straits Government practically encourages slavery in Perak. I know no other possible.

4. Had Mr. Innes known that in Perak, where slavery, though in course of extinction, is not yet finally abolished, cases of ill-treatment still occurred, it was his duty, under orders from the Resident, immediately to set the victims free, if in his own district, and if not to report to his superior officer. But he never did so.

5. Mr. Innes has had full opportunity since my arrival of bringing such matters under my notice, but he has never done so, though he could have easily learned if he did not know what my immediate and decisive action would certainly have been, by what it was soon after my first arrival, in the case of the vexed question of Chinese brothel slavery at Taiping.

6. With regard to the statement of Mr. Innes' correspondent, no officer of the Perak Government could have honestly written such a letter if he had read the written orders and instructions of his own superiors, and any officer who permitted such a state of things to exist, or believed them to exist without taking immediate steps to remedy the evil, would be instantly dismissed the service of the State.

7. It may not here be out of place to state - as the contrary has, I am informed, been authoritatively stated in England, though not by Mr. Innes - that debt slavery in any form has been abolished in Selangor and Sungei Ujong.

I have, etc,

(Signed) Fred. A. Weld
Governor

The Right Honourable,
The Earl of Kimberley

4. Hugh Low, Resident of Perak to Sir Frederick Weld.

The Residency,
Kwala Kangsa, July 1, 1882.

Sir,

I have the honour to acknowledge the receipt of your Excellency's Minute of the 28th June on the Despatch of Her Majesty's Secretary of State of the 2nd June 1882, forwarding copy of a letter by Mr. James Innes on the subject of slavery and debt slavery in Perak, extracted from the "London and China Telegraph" newspaper of the 30th May and calling for my remarks upon it.

2. I saw the letter of Mr. Innes in the "Singapore Daily Times" of the 24th ultimo, which reached me on the 28th, and I at once drafted a letter to the present Superintendent of Lower Perak, calling upon him for a report and for full information on every point referred to in it.

3. The practice in regard to slavery and debt-slavery in Perak has been faithfully reported from time to time in my correspondence.... And the regulations which were made public on my first arrival have been carried out, and every year, as the country became more settled, has permitted these to be further modified in practice in favour of the servile classes.

4. It is quite true that Mr. Innes, when acting, in the absence of Mr. Paul, as Superintendent of Lower Perak, expressed to me his disinclination to carry out the
regulations of the Government he served, but I do not remember or believe that any pressure was put upon him to do so.

5. Have never known, since I have been in the State, of any Malay woman being hired out by her master or mistress, or forced to prostitute herself for their profit, and neither Mr. Innes nor any other officer of this Government has ever brought such a case to my notice; that women of this class have been tortured to death, when recaptured after escape, is utterly incredible, and any such case brought to the notice of Government, would have been dealt with as one of ordinary murder.

6. I have myself, as a Judge of the Supreme Court, on several occasions released without any compensation to their owners, slaves or slave debtors who have been treated with anything resembling cruelty.

A girl who was beaten with a Malacca cane by her owner, the greatest and most conservative Chief in Kinta, was thus freed in 1880, and two females belonging to his Highness the Regent were likewise emancipated without compensation. Many others during the years I have advised this Government have been dealt with in the same manner.

7. I have been more familiar with slavery and debt slavery in Borneo over a greater extent of territory than Mr. Innes’ correspondent ever visited, and my experience is that in those parts of that country which have not been influenced by European intercourse these institutions are very much more abused than I have known them to be in Perak.

8. I have in former correspondence explained the circumstances under which, in my opinion, it would have been neither just, politic, nor possible in Perak to bring about the manumission of the servile classes in an arbitrary manner in the early years of my residence, and in the correspondence will be found reported the deterioration of the property of this kind which has taken place in consequence of the steady discouragement of the practice by the Government, and your Excellency is aware that for some time a measure has been under consideration by the Council of this State which it is hoped will bring about— if not in 1883, as I recommended and wished, at the latest in the following year—the manumission of every slave and slave debtor either at the cost of Government or on equitable terms.

9. I enclose in this a letter from His Highness Raja Idris, the Chief Justice of the State, who has sometime since freed without compensation all his own slaves or debtors and who happened to be with me on business this morning when I received your Excellency’s Minute.

I have, etc,
(Signed) Hugh Low.

His Excellency Sir F.A. Weld, K.C.M.G.


We inform our friend that on Saturday the 1st July we went to see our friend, about 9a.m., when our friend read to us a letter by a gentleman named Innes, who acted formerly as Superintendent of Lower Perak, in which we noticed that he stated that the Perak people inflicted cruel treatment on their slaves and refused them food and
clothing; also that the female slaves were allowed by their masters to prostitute themselves for the latters' profit.

Now, when we heard these remarks we were greatly surprised, for we have never heard that anything like what Mr. Innes mentions has happened: the masters do not go so far as to cause the death of their slaves or slave debtors. If anyone even so much as beats his slave in the least, our friend is sure to cause him to be freed. For instance, we remember some time ago a slave of his Highness the Regent was freed by our friend, and one belonging to a high chief in Kinta was treated in the same way without compensation of any sort being made; and this was the case also with slaves belonging to other people.

While we have presided over the court at Kwala Kangsa we have released many slaves and slave debtors in the same way in accordance with advice given us by our friend.

Moreover, on our friend's first arrival in Perak, our friend gave us all to understand that he wished to get all the slaves and slave debtors in the country liberated, and from that time up to the present the matter has been before the Council. As for ourselves, we have concurred in our friend's view, and we have informed our friend that as far as we are concerned we have no objection.

We would add that a great many of the slaves and slave debtors have been freed by their masters; some on agreements to pay their debts by installments, and others by payments outright mutually agreed upon, and the masters all know that they have no power to prevent this being done. If a slave wishes to purchase his liberty at a fair price, he must be released, and this we have constantly given the people to understand in court; as a result the slaves are coming to an understanding with their masters.

Moreover, we think that there are numbers of people who have come to the conclusion that there is no advantage gained in keeping their slaves, but as long as the question of their emancipation remains unsettled, there will be slaves in the country. The masters look after their slaves fairly well because they know that the orders of the Government which is advising the state of Perak are just.

That is what we wish to say, and we have very much confidence in the overshadowing protection of the Government.

(Signed) Raja Idris bin Iskunder
July 1, 1882.

6. Extract from the Original Diary Kept by James Innes, Esq., When Acting as Superintendent of Lower Perak. [This was sent to the Earl of Kimberley by Sir Frederick Weld on August 8, 1882, as evidence of the real sentiments of Mr. Innes regarding the policy pursued by the Perak Government before he (Innes) learned that Hugh Low as well as the Resident of Selangor considered him to be an inefficient officer.]

Thursday, December 26, 1878.

Mem, not to be copied. Slavery could not be done away with in Perak by a 'coup de main'. It would create a revolution. I do not think an armed resistance, but an intense hatred leading to dangerous conspiracy against the English from slave owners, and after the first possible burst of gratitude from the freed, quite as great a hatred from
them, because the slaves from their nature and the easiness of their masters and mistresses, are extraordinarily lazy, and now certainly could not earn fair wages enough to live upon if not fed and clothed by their owners.

If freed and their own masters, they would simply become paupers and thieves, and the women prostitutes; therefore as according to the present regulations there can be no new slaves made and no born slaves, the thing must die out, and the whole difficulty resolves itself into some possibly squeamish scruples of a few Englishmen who object to catch slaves and be called slave catchers. This being so it seems either that these Englishmen had better leave the Perak Government service, or if the Perak Government considers their services valuable enough to be retained, that some arrangement should be made to free them from this unpleasant part of their duty – a duty they are seldom called upon to perform – the easiest plan would be simply to let all the slave cases be referred to Kwala Kangsa, settled there, and warrants of arrest issued from thence.
Appendix 7

The Pangkor Incident

This incident in Emily Innes’ life occurred in October 1878 and was preceded by events which took place on a sugar plantation in Lumut. The European owner, on becoming bankrupt, had left without paying his Chinese labourers their wages and they were now on the point of mutiny. James Innes, in his capacity of magistrate, went to try and sort out the situation and, on arrival, had not only his life openly threatened by the headman but also those of “all the Englishmen in the State.” Nonetheless, Innes offered the labourers food, free passage to Penang and the guarantee that he would report their case to the authorities there who would, no doubt, find them employment. He then saw them off on the steamer and hoped that was the end of the matter. On his way back to Durian Sabatang, he called on Captain Lloyd, Superintendent at Pangkor, and, in the course of conversation, mentioned that Emily had been unwell. The Lloyds immediately invited her to stay with them, thinking that the sea air would speed her recovery and although Emily had “never seen either of them” before, she accepted “without scruple” as “in a country where English are so rare...all are to a certain extent brothers.” She went alone, work preventing James from accompanying her.

On her arrival, she was told that all of the Lloyds’ Chinese servants had absconded after receiving their wages which did not surprise Emily whose only comment was that servants were seen as “the refuse of China.” They were left with two Kling servants, hastily hired as house-boy and under-nurse, and Apat, who Emily had taken with her and who provided invaluable help in the kitchen, at table and in the house in general. What none of them realised was that one of the servants had gone to inform the plantation labourers about the Government safe in the Lloyds’ house from which they could, by robbery, recover their wages.

On the first day of Emily’s visit, she and the Lloyds visited Lumut and separated for the night soon after nine. At about eleven p.m., she was woken by “a great shouting and a great light overhead” followed by the sound of gunshots. Thinking at first it was some kind of Chinese festival and unwilling to leave her room as her nightdress was “hardly the thing for mixed company,” she climbed onto a table and peered over the partition into the next room. What she saw was “two Chinamen dashing open a box with hatchets.” At that point, one of them looked up and saw her, “marched gravely and solidly into the middle of the room” and in a manner which she later described as “calm, composed, phlegmatic” and “without the smallest change of expression,” proceeded to deal blows to her head with his hatchet until she was unconscious. Later, she was found to have four cuts, three “trifling” and one “about four inches long and tolerably deep.” Eventually, she recovered consciousness to find herself on the floor under a bed, where presumably she had been pushed by her attackers who were under the impression that she was dead. All she could hear was the sound of Malay voices calling for her, but, in the light of her recent experiences, she was reluctant to reveal her whereabouts until she recognised Apat’s “nasal drawl” and overheard the Malay Penghulu dictating a letter to Mr.Innes, urging him to “come at once and to bring plenty of police.” On emerging from her hiding-place, she was shown the body of Captain Lloyd, who had been murdered and the apparently lifeless form of Mrs. Lloyd on the bed under which Emily had been pushed. Although just alive, Mrs. Lloyd was not expected to recover and “her eyes were closed, and her face
deathly pale, except where it was covered with blood, or black from the bruises of the hammers."

Emily’s practical spirit did not desert her now and she decided that some English medical assistance should be sought. Assured that Mrs. Lloyd would not regain consciousness for some hours and that she could be of no assistance there, she agreed that she should be the one to go for help. After checking on the Lloyd children, who were unharmed and “placidly asleep in their little cribs,” she then considered some adjustments to her own appearance. On seeing her reflection in a mirror, she admitted she was “a ghastly sight” with her face, hair and clothes covered with stains and masses of clotted blood but her only comment on this was a phlegmatic “I could not attempt to alter this, as I did not wish to keep the steam-launch waiting; so I merely added a hat and a long cloak to the clothes that I already wore, and started.” On board, she had time to try and wash her face but this proved too painful as the skin was bruised, although the only actual wounds she sustained were on the top of her head. Eventually, they reached help in the form of the trading steamer which Emily now boarded, sending Apat on to Durian Sabatang in the launch, to inform Mr. Innes.

On their return to Pangkor, a coffin was made for Captain Lloyd’s body and it plus the still unconscious Mrs. Lloyd and the children were carried on board the steamer, to be taken to Penang. Emily was persuaded to accompany them to attend on Mrs. Lloyd, obtain medical attention for her own wounds and give her testimony at the inquest. Her only complaint at this point was that the shaving of part of her head in order to dress her wounds “hurt me terribly, whereas up to that moment I had felt no pain or discomfort from them.” At Penang, “the English authorities...were soon in attendance,” an inquest was held on board and then Emily was removed to the house of Sir Archibald Anson, the Lieutenant-Governor of Penang where she was shortly joined by her husband. Mrs. Lloyd was not considered able to make the journey to the Ansons’ house, it being “several miles off,” so she remained with friends “close at hand,” where, contrary to the original prediction, she made a full recovery and the three intervening weeks before the preliminary inquiry “had already obliterated almost all trace of scars.”

Investigations now revealed that the party which perpetrated the murders was composed partly of professional gang-robbers and partly of the Lumut plantation workers who had not been given work by the Penang Government and who had, for some unknown reason, transferred their grudge to Captain Lloyd, seeing him as responsible for their loss of wages. At this juncture, they were joined by the Lloyds’ absconding servants who also felt they had a grievance against Captain Lloyd and, moreover, knew about the Government safe in his house, although they were unclear about the nature of its contents. It was believed, from the testimony of several independent witnesses, that about sixty Chinese took part in the assault, carrying off the money in the safe, jewelry and other valuables, and attempting to burn down the house in order to cover their traces. One of the ring-leaders was Tan Ah Teck, the headman who had threatened James Innes’ life and he was eventually caught and convicted. Of the forty Chinese who were arrested, most were let off for want of sufficient evidence although, Emily declared, “there were proofs clear to every European mind of their guilt.” Among others who “got off scot-free” for lack of evidence, were the Chinese ayah who was believed to have removed Captain Lloyd’s revolver so that he had no weapon with which to defend himself, the twelve Malay guards who were supposed to guard the Residency but who fled at the approach of danger and the Eurasian Superintendent who was thought to have been an accessory before the fact. Emily was too ill to attend the final trial in Penang but heard that, in
the end, only three were convicted, one, who had admitted his guilt from the start, being hanged and the other two, one being Tan Ah Teck, sentenced to penal servitude for life. As a final comment it should be noted that all those suspected of involvement in this incident, in one way or another, were Chinese, Malays and a Eurasian, perhaps an indication of simmering resentment against the European who had managed to establish his authority in Malaya.²

² Innes E The Chersonese with the Gilding Off Vol.2 85-123; Gullick J.M. (edt.) Adventurous Women in South-East Asia 184-5; Gullick J. M. Emily Innes 1876-1882 JMBRAS 55 (2) 171-2
Appendix 8

'The Letter' Case

'The Letter,' one of the better known of Somerset Maugham's Malayan stories, was based on an incident which took place in Kuala Lumpur in 1911. On 23rd April, 1911, Mrs. Ethel Proudlock, wife of the acting headmaster of the Victoria Institution, shot and killed William Steward at her bungalow in the grounds of the school in Kuala Lumpur. Like her fictional counterpart, Leslie Crosbie, she continued to fire until all six chambers of the revolver were emptied into the body of the man who was later rumoured to have been her lover. When her husband and the police arrived on the scene, Ethel Proudlock made the same statement that Maugham was later to use for fictional purposes, that Steward had tried to rape her and she had shot him in self-defense. After a brief magisterial enquiry, Mrs. Proudlock was charged with murder and committed for trial. This took place in June 1911 and was covered in full by the Malay Mail 24th April, 1st & 3rd May, 7th to 10th June and 12th to 16th June, 1911. Throughout her trial, Mrs. Proudlock's youth - she was only twenty-three, -her fragile appearance and the general feeling that no European woman could be guilty of such a crime, gained her much sympathy from the European community in Kuala Lumpur, especially from the women. There was also a certain amount of feeling of injustice among the Europeans that Mrs. Proudlock was to be tried by a judge assisted by two assessors, both planters, rather than by a jury, trial by jury having been abolished in 1899 in the FMS, in spite of attempts to retain it for Europeans.

Ethel Proudlock's testimony never wavered throughout the trial. While accepting that she had killed Steward, she pleaded 'Not Guilty' to murder. She described Steward, a consulting engineer for a Singapore firm, as a friend of both her and her husband. He had occasionally visited them at their bungalow or met William Proudlock for drinks at the Selangor Club but they had not seen him for some time. This had prompted her, on a chance meeting at the Selangor Club in April 22nd, to invite him to visit them some evening. However, she was taken by surprise when he arrived unexpectedly the next evening while her husband was out. When she later decided it was time for him to leave and, instead he attempted first to seduce her and then to rape her, she panicked. All she remembered was shooting him with a revolver with which her hand “came in contact” but nothing of what followed. Various problems arose from this testimony. Although the public prosecutor was unable to find any evidence of an existing relationship between Ethel Proudlock and Steward, neither could medical examinations support her story of attempted rape. Steward's body had been found some distance outside the bungalow and the rickshaw puller waiting to convey him home had witnessed her following him and continuing to fire as he tried to make his escape. Her defense blamed her inability to recall this part of the events on a temporary mental instability and shock, claiming that it was impossible for this young woman to have actually planned such an atrocious murder. However, she was found guilty and sentenced to hang. The judge promised to make a recommendation for mercy, to have the sentence commuted to imprisonment.

Meanwhile, there was outraged public outcry in Malaya. William Proudlock, supported by many of the European women in Kuala Lumpur, sent a telegram to England asking the King to set aside the verdict and pardon his wife. However, the King's response was that he did not have that authority and that such a decision lay entirely with the Sultan of Selangor who was awaiting the outcome of Mrs. Proudlock's appeal. At the last moment, Ethel Proudlock, still protesting her
innocence, withdrew her appeal, on the grounds that she could not endure the strain of another trial. She threw herself on the mercy of the Sultan who then decided to grant her a free pardon, influenced by the fact that she was a mother and also in poor health and by the thousands of petitions he had received on her behalf. Maybe he also felt that the hanging, or even the long-term imprisonment, of a European woman in Kuala Lumpur might raise problems with which he did not wish to deal. However, the pardon did specify that she leave Malaya as soon as possible. His decision went unchallenged by the Resident or the official members of the council who had defended their original verdict and still had reservations about it being overturned. Ethel Proudlock was released from prison and sailed for England two days later. Her husband remained for a while in Kuala Lumpur where his rash accusations over the conducting of the trial involved him in a libel action against him, which he lost. Shortly after this, he joined his wife in England, having been informed by the Colonial Office that they would be unable to offer him another appointment.

In ‘The Letter,’ written eleven years later, when Maugham was visiting Malaya, he used the Proudlock trial as the basis of the story but altered some of the facts, for literary and dramatic purposes. The most obvious was the change in the setting. Ethel Proudlock lived in Kuala Lumpur with the life and amenities its tightly-regulated colonial society had to offer. Leslie Crosbie is the wife of a planter. Although this setting might have the appeal of the ‘exotic,’ Maugham also suggests the attendant connotations of the isolation of life on a remote plantation, the loneliness and the boredom which might drive a woman into the arms of a lover and then to murder when she discovers that he has tired of her. Maugham, however, goes further, giving body to what was merely rumour. Thus, with writer’s license, he was able to turn speculation into fact. Throughout the trial and the period following it, although speculation did abound within the European community of Kuala Lumpur over the true nature of Ethel Proudlock’s relationship with William Steward, no evidence ever emerged to prove that they had been lovers, the Colonial Office subsequently destroying all correspondence dealing with the case. The only fact which was made public and was also used in the story was that Steward, like his literary counterpart, Geoff Hammond, had been living with a Chinese mistress prior to his death. For both men, real and fictitious, this lapse in the eyes of the colonial European society, was a blow to their standing in that society, their credibility and any sympathy which their violent deaths might have aroused there. It also had the effect of temporarily increasing the sympathy for the woman at the centre of this unthinkable situation, namely a ‘white woman’ on public trial for murder. In “The Letter,” it is the discovery of the existence of this Chinese woman that drove Leslie Crosbie to murder with the, unproven, implication, perhaps that it may have had the same effect on Ethel Proudlock. In the story, Leslie Crosbie’s guilt is made clear by her letter to Hammond, retrieved, at great cost to her husband, from the possession of the Chinese mistress. This section also serves to underline one line of European perception of the Chinese in the greed and devious behaviour of the mistress and her companions. Unlike Ethel Proudlock who was found guilty and sentenced to hang, the retrieval of the letter which would condemn Leslie Crosbie, removes all evidence against her and she is acquitted, thus escaping justice. In a final twist to the story, she discovers that her husband, who had believed totally in her innocence, has read the letter and discovered the truth. She realises that her real punishment is to be the loss of his love and support. Although the apportioning of guilt and the final punishments differ between the factual and fictional accounts of this incident, one attitude remains common to them both, namely the unwillingness of the European colonial community
to accept, at least publicly, that a 'white woman' could be guilty of immorality and murder and the need to protect her and that community in general, whether by acquittal or pardon, from the ultimate disgrace of execution.³

³ Butcher J.G. The British in Malaya 1880-1941 Appendix 2 'The Letter Case'; Lawlor E. Murder on the Verandah; Maugham W.S. The Letter; Malay Mail 23rd April, 1st & 3rd May, 7th-10th June, 12th-16th June, 1911; Shennan M. Out in the Midday Sun. The British in Malaya 1880-1960 63-5; Lewis G.D.E. Out East in the Malay Peninsula 207-9; Davidoff & Hall Family Fortunes 76-95
Appendix 9

Two Colonial Wives. Part 2 Katharine Sim

Introduction

Between Emily Innes' departure and Katharine Sim's arrival in 1937, several major changes had occurred affecting the Malayan European population. With proportionally more women, even in rural areas, improved communications with Europe and access to other parts of Malaya, isolation was, for most, no longer a problem. This chapter looks at the implications for one European woman, living outside the large towns and, principally through her own words and contemporary memoirs and records, examines how far her life fitted into the general pattern. Like Emily, Katharine Sim was the wife of a minor official, her husband, Stuart, working for the Customs, initially at Parit Buntar "one of the least popular of Government appointments" but "quite a busy customs post" on the state boundary between Province Wellesley and Perak and later at Lumut, on the Dindings coast. Stuart, following government rulings, had completed at least one term of office before marrying Katharine, on furlough in England. Katharine's book, Malayan Landscape, 1946, like Emily’s, was a reconstruction from memory of earlier years in Malaya, written in England after her evacuation from Singapore on January 31\textsuperscript{st} 1941. Also, like Emily’s, it is the most complete account by a Malayan woman colonial of that period. Here, however, the similarity ends. Despite her precipitate exit and separation from a husband remaining behind to endure "the rigours of two Japanese P.O.W. camps in Sumatra and two torpedoings," Katharine claimed "love with undying warmth" for Malaya, returning there in 1947. Even her style differed from Emily's, her more positive attitude reflected in the pleasure of observations made more evocative by her talent as a writer and an artist, with "no detail, no scent, no murmur from the Malayan scene" escaping her.\footnote{Sim K. Malayan Landscape 7-12, 18}
After the war, Katharine, Stuart and their two sons lived in Malaya until 1960 (Fig.A.9.2), when they “retired prematurely,” with regret. In Penang she “studied things Hindu and...Chinese,” while their move to the “truly Malay state” of Negri Sembilan gave her the opportunity to learn Malay “seriously for the first time,” and, like Emily, acquire “a better understanding of Malay customs and the Malay way of life.” She spent the final five years in KL and, under the pseudonym, ‘Nuraini,’ wrote a series of articles, ‘Profiles and Personalities,’ for the Malay Mail. These brought her contact with “a wide cross-section of the public,” including diplomats, dancing girls, priests, teachers, East Coast fishermen and silversmiths. Other writings included the novel The Jungle Ends Here, published 1959, Flowers of the Sun, on the Malay quatrain and Journey Out of Asia, describing their return, from Penang to Calcutta and overland to England, to “stretch the silver cord, not break it.”

Arrival and First Impressions

Katharine, like Emily, arrived by boat but passenger-boat into Penang and with her husband, rather than alone in the restricted confines of a local river-boat. She had the privacy of her own cabin even if she preferred sleeping on a long chair on deck, with the “freshened,” “less sticky” air providing some relief from her first encounter with Malaya’s heat and humidity. This, plus the opportunity to bathe, change and eat a meal at Penang’s Runnymede Hotel, “one of the most attractive in Malaya,” underline the changes since Emily’s arrival, no doubt encouraging Katharine’s optimistic feeling that Malaya was going to be “quite pleasant after all.”

The Runnymede, “a lovely place with everything that could be luxurious” had a similar effect on the first impressions of the newly-wed Nancy Madoc, an FMS police officer’s wife reviving earlier feelings that Malaya would be a “romantic place to live.”

\[\text{Ibid. 7-10}\]
\[\text{Sim K. The Jungle Ends Here. 1959}\]
\[\text{Sim K. The Jungle Ends Here 17; Shennan M. Midday Sun 118}\]
\[\text{Allen C. Tales 209}\]
From mainland Butterworth, the Sims travelled by train to Parit Buntar, transport no longer depending on waterways. During this short, hot journey, their disappointment over the posting to Parit Buntar “in the mosquito-ridden paddy lands of Krian” revived, every station seeming “rather more scruffy than the last” and considerably dampening their spirits, reminiscent of Emily’s arrival in Langat. However, Katharine’s journey did not end with isolation, a local-style house, no amenities or means of escape. A kind welcome awaited her from ‘Mac of the Customs’ and his wife, while colonial development ensured acceptable accommodation, small-town amenities, improved mobility and access to larger towns and European social life centred round the club. Before taking possession of their house, they stayed in the Rest House’s ‘Federal Wing’, “one rather dark room encircled by a very public verandah” with a stone bathroom opposite. Here Katharine first encountered the ‘Shanghai jar’ bathing-system which she pronounced “deliciously cool” and “delightfully abandoned,” making English bathrooms seem “rather restricted.” She was less charmed by the sanitary arrangements which were “definitely not modern.” The jambans, emptied twice daily by a Tamil who “padded up the outside stairs with a pail and a large black umbrella,” was also the sanitary system in their house, the only “push and pull” lavatory in 1938 Parit Buntar being at the club. Downstairs, she found the very small ‘meat-safe’ room “extremely depressing and damp” but a necessary nightly refuge from the mosquitoes. In The Jungle Ends Here, Joan gives a feeling description of Government-Rest-House shortcomings which, probably, reflected Katharine’s own experience.

Of Parit Buntar itself, her first impressions from her verandah ‘grand-stand view’ were, like many of her peers, of colour and sound. The ‘click-clack’ of the Chinese women’s wooden sandals, ‘flip-flop’ of the rickshaw-pullers, harsh Chinese voices and wailing Tamils, someone spitting with “guttural thoroughness,” all mingled with the clatter of the food sellers’ castanets, twittering of birds and distant temple gongs. Similarly, noise struck Sylvia Brooke, on arrival in Sarawak, the sound of bazaar hawkers, mosque gongs beating, “the wailing of a one-stringed instrument lingering in the air” and, at night, “the eternal chorus of tree-frogs, bull frogs and

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6 Sim K. Malayan Landscape 18-9
strange beetles." There were also new smells, bad ones of mud, rotting fish, drains, ripe fruit, Tamil coconut-oil, smoky Chinese houses, Malay musk, sickly ghee, cattle, bat guano, the "dankness of the jungle" and, "outsmelling everything," the "unspeakable" durian. Counterbalancing were the "heady wafts" of pigeon orchid, sweet frangipani, "spicy" joss-stick smoke and "fragrant, hungry smell" of curry. As an artist, Katharine revelled in the vivid colours now surrounding her, claiming to feel quite 'drunk' with, the "magenta pinks, the golds, the dark blues and peacock greens" worn by Tamils, "violets and pinks, purples and crimsons, light checks and pretty floral patterns" of the Malays and the austere Chinese "black or blue and pastel pinks and mauves or spotless white," all against a background of "great pink lotus flowers," "tender green" rice fields and blue mountains. Her appreciation of this rich medley contrasts with Emily's drier, sharper style but Emily's situation gave less cause for optimism.

Housing, Amenities and Servants

Both Emily and Katharine's husbands were provided with furnished Government housing. However, Emily's Malay-style "wig-wams" at Langat and Durian Sabatang bore no resemblance to Katharine's typical 'black-and-white,' chik-verandahed house by the padang in the small, Parit Buntar, European sector. Despite her initial shock over its filthy state and depressing "black-painted Government furniture...crammed into...the mosquito-proof room," its hall, "attractive" dining-room, "big, stone-floored" studio and two large bedrooms with bathrooms and dressing-rooms was accommodation far superior to Emily's first home. However, there was still a great difference between towns, even smaller ones like Parit Buntar and Lumut and the more spartan rural areas. While the large towns had a bigger European population and more fashionable housing, the smaller ones still offered a club and comfortable accommodation even if it was mainly built to the same basic Public Works Department (PWD) design, contained identical PWD furniture and defied most attempts to personalise it except for addition of personal possessions, curtains and other soft furnishings. Nancy Madoc, in Kuala Selangor, was less fortunate than Katharine. Her "old-fashioned" rural Government bungalow,
approached by "a flight of eighty steps" with its kerosene lamps and "terrible old bathroom" was closer to Emily's accommodation, as was her outlook over the "muddy Selangor river and the mangrove swamps."⁹

The Sims' move to Lumut was accomplished with greater speed and comfort than Emily's to Jugra. Their luggage, 119 cases and boxes plus a nursery-garden of plants, went on railway lorries, supervised by servants, while Katharine and Stuart travelled in comfort by air-conditioned mail-train and hired car. Katharine found the air-conditioning "delicious," away from the "suffocating" outside heat. She also enjoyed the chance "to stare at the people" through the smoked glass "instead of being stared at by them," their curiosity perhaps as discomforting to Katharine as it was to Emily.¹⁰ It all contrasts sharply with Emily's physically and mentally exhausting, single-handed supervision of the move from Langat to Jugra.

The Lumut house, Katharine's home from 1939, was 300 feet above the town, between jungle and sea and surrounded by "majestic" trees. She described this house, stone-built to withstand the 'Sumatras,' with its cream wash, wide eaves, red tiles and black and white chiks, as "loveable." Smaller but more solid than the Parit Buntar house, it comprised one large, downstairs room which served as dining-room, hall and studio, a verandah-room with fourteen large windows and two bedrooms, each with a small bathroom. One disadvantage was the absence of electric bells, forcing them to shout to summon the servants. Katharine considered this "very uncivilized" and unlikely to work at night so she kept a large elephant bell within reach, which "would have awakened the dead" if necessary. As there was no electricity between 7a.m. and 6p.m. she relished the cooling, noonday sea breeze, "much better than any electric fan." Initially, she still had the "jambons and the Jeyes Fluid" but, later that year, these, to her delight, were replaced with European-style "push-and-pulls" although bathing continued to be by Shanghai jar.¹¹

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⁸ Sim K. Malayan Landscape 20-4
⁹ Allen C. Tales 163, 210, 218; Shennan M. Midday Sun 196; Incorporated Wife Brownfoot J. 195, Gartrell B. 176
¹⁰ Sim K. Malayan Landscape 60-1
¹¹ Sim K. Malayan Landscape 63-7, 75, 126; Allen C. Tales 238
Lumat, like Parit Buntar and other small European settlements, was centred round the *padang* with its Government buildings, Customs Office and Post Office. A short street of Chinese shops separated it from the river. The police station, court house, District offices and Public Works Department were clustered together on the road leading to the waterfront, named Downing Street (Fig.A.9.6) as a humorous reminder of home, with the Rest House just beyond. The four government officials’ black-and-white bungalows stood on the lower spurs of two hills behind the village. Hierarchical requirements were observed with District Officer’s (DO) and Customs’ Officer’s status rating houses at the top of hills and the Policeman and the Engineer living just below with a small golf-course in the valley. ‘Departmental dignity’ required the Custom’s Officer’s house to be just below the hill-crest thus making it lower than the DO’s. Katharine attributed this to the Dindings originally belonging to the SS with an older system of protocol.  

Parit Buntar’s “three short streets of semi-Chinese” shop-houses (Fig.A.9.3) supplied most essential needs, while a riverside open-market sold fresh vegetables and fruit. On her first shopping expedition, Katharine found all she needed in a “sort of general store,” including curtain material “for the incredible sum of 4 1/2d. a yard.” Later, as in Emily’s time, the Chinese carpenter made bookcases and tables “from pictures in Heal’s catalogues.” It was all easier than Emily’s struggles with companies in Singapore and England and skirmishes with local vendors, although she, too, had been pleased with her locally-made furniture. Bath tubs, not local items, caused the Sims problems but, finally, the tinsmith made one, “rather like a sarcophagus” but a “definite improvement.” The heavy PWD furniture at Lumut was “particularly nice,” including a “unique” sofa, unlike the usual hard cane. Katharine attributed this furniture’s acceptability to Lumut “having once belonged to the Straits Settlements” which “supplied better furniture than the Federated Malay States.” Mattresses, cushions, easy chairs, carpets, bookcases and extras were their responsibility but they had brought a small amount from home and Stuart had accumulated “some nice things” before Katharine’s arrival. The rest, again, was acquired locally from a Chinese carpenter who “made almost anything you could ask for.”  

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12 Sim K. Malayan Landscape 61-3, 99
Maintaining an English-based diet continued to be a colonial link with home. Catering at Parit Buntar was helped by closeness to Penang Cold Storage which delivered twice weekly. In order to offer fresh food, it was customary to invite people to dinner on ‘Cold Storage days,’ involving a rush to be first with invitations as variety of menu was limited by communal use of the same firm. These problems pale into insignificance beside Emily’s difficulties over feeding large, unexpected parties of hungry men out of her depleted larder. Improved kitchen facilities now made the servants’ life easier and entertaining simpler. At Lumut, provisions were initially ordered from Sitiawan Cold Storage, seven miles away but the nearest source of European food. Later, the Chinese village shop agreed to order tinned food more cheaply and eventually stocked all the Sims’ requirements including “Bottles of Barsac, champagne and whisky, tins of MacVita, Cadbury’s drinking chocolate, Heinz’ soups and English canned vegetables.” Katharine found it “great fun” shopping there and keeping accounts in a large ledger, a relic of the “chit” system. She claims the shop did a “roaring trade,” English food becoming popular with the locals. Meat, bread, cheese, butter and fruit not available locally, still came from Cold Storage and vegetables from Maxwell Hill. Sometimes fish arrived from Pangkor Island with the daily ice supply, the Sims’ taste for whitebait amusing the servants who considered it “coolie food.” Pangkor also supplied the “biggest and most luscious” pineapples. Compared with Emily’s situation, improved facilities and communications now ensured food was fresher, better quality, more easily available and wider in choice.

Katharine initially used local and Chinese food but, eventually, decided European meals were healthier and limited oriental dishes to once or twice a week, her favourites being mahmee and nasi goring. They also ate curry once a week, usually on Sunday according to European custom, preferring prawn or fish with eggs and vegetables served with saffron rice and sambals. This was traditionally followed by Gula Malacca, a “cooling and delicious...tapioca jelly.” Katharine, however, disliked the colonial custom of Sunday curry parties, where eating never began before

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13 Ibid 29, 67, 74
14 Ibid. 77-8, 85, 144
15 Appendix 2
16 Ong Blood and Soil 141-8 Gula Malacca was made with sago not tapioca but Katharine, like many Europeans, could not tell the difference between the two in their ‘pearl’ form.
2 pm and lasted “through the hot afternoon to four or even later.” She felt this wasted the one clear day of the week and resented the “miserable effect” of “gin in quantity after beer, followed by an enormous curry,” a sentiment echoed by Nancy Madoc. Sylvia Brooke had fewer objections to Sunday curry parties but did remark that “there was not much outside entertainment in Sarawak.”

Their first servant, the Chinese House-Boy Ah Seng (Fig.A.9.8), as was not uncommon in colonial households, had been Stuart’s servant before marriage and Katharine found him an “efficient” and “cheerful little creature.” Proximity to the town and a personal-recommendation system meant Katharine did not have Emily’s problems finding good servants and she had none of Emily’s objections to amahs. Ah Seng was soon joined by his sister, Ah Chi and her husband, Ah Lam, as amah and cook respectively, Kassim, the Javanese gardener and Mat, the Malay syce. This constituted the average number of servants for a colonial household. As Mat was also married, the establishment, larger than the Inneses’, included two families. Katharine appears to have had none of Emily’s difficulties with the servants, perhaps because, consistent with her generation, she was less prone to intervention or interest in household matters. Tamsin Broome, formerly Luckham, voiced the same attitude that the “whole business of overseeing meals” should be done “by word of mouth” any incursions into the kitchen being an “invasion” of the servants’ privacy. Ah Lam, nicknamed Kuki, went marketing every morning, a practice in many colonial households, returning with his bicycle loaded. Although some European women did their own marketing, Katharine did not relish getting hot and exhausted so early in the day “just for the sake of knocking off a few cents.” Kuki was “extremely honest” and it was easier to let him go. Like many of her peers, Katharine had virtually no knowledge of the local languages, apart from a little, basic Malay, perhaps, like Nancy Madoc, taught her by her husband. Tamsin Broome viewed the inability to hold “long conversations” with the servants as no barrier to being “very great friends,” with none of the difficulties “one got in India.” Initially, Katharine communicated with the Chinese servants though Ah Seng who understood English but eventually Ah Chi learned some Malay so that she could speak directly with Katharine. The two women appear to have established an understanding, Katharine’s

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17 Sim K. Malayan Landscape 143-5; Allen C. Tales 218; Shennan M. Midday Sun 206
childlessness removing any possible problem over children’s upbringing. Katharine was aware of this area of contention, applauding one friend’s son as “a grand little fellow” for not being “amah-spoilt.” However, if The Jungle Ends Here is semi-autobiographical, she later enjoyed a good relationship with her own baby-amah while Tamsin also praised her amah for knowing “how to bring up a newborn baby.”

The employer-servant relationship appears to have worked in the Sim household as all the servants, except the gardeners, transferred to Lumut and remained with them until the 1941 evacuation. At Lumut, they acquired their predecessor’s gardener, Kandasami, a Tamil boy, described by Katharine as willing but often ill with malaria and with a weakness for toddy. This could sometimes cause embarrassment and he was later replaced by Ramasami, “old, hideously ugly, but very amiable and quiet.” The Sims, like many colonial Europeans, assumed paternalistic responsibility for the welfare of their servants and their families, supporting Mat during matrimonial problems, taking in Ah Chi’s daughter who arrived unexpectedly from China, making sure they had medical care and providing a good example in matters like regular taking of quinine. Occasionally they rewarded them like children, with treats. One Christmas evening excursion to Penang, they took Ah Seng and Mat with them, letting them loose on the town while Katharine and Stuart drank champagne cocktails at the Runnymede Hotel. This paternalism, however, did not imply laxity. Mat’s job often involved driving for more than half the night but he still was expected on duty early next morning. The final parting in 1941, appears to have involved sadness on both sides and, before Stuart’s eventual retreat to KL, he returned to the house, seemingly at some personal risk, to ensure the safe dispersal of those servants still there.

Insects and Other Wild Life

Like Emily, Katharine had a constant battle with insects and other wild life and, likewise, the two things Nancy Madoc found “constantly trying” were ants and

18 Brooke S. Queen of Head-hunters 113
19 Sim K. Malayan Landscape 22, 25, 65, 125, 142-3; Allen C. Tales 212-16
20 Sim K. Malayan Landscape 28, 70, 122, 131, 195; Brownfoot J. Incorporated Wife 196
the mosquitoes which “never stopped biting me.” Mosquitoes’ role in malaria was now understood although not fully under control so, at Parit Buntar, after 6pm, the Sims retreated to the ‘meat-safe’ room. If they were outside during the evening, sarongs for feet and legs “were served round with the drinks as a matter of course,” making them look “like competitors in a sack race.” While dressing for dinner, they wore long sarongs to protect the feet although the mosquitoes still attacked unprotected arms and shoulders. At night, Katharine, like Emily, slept under a vast mosquito-net, “like a room within a room,” giving “a comfortable feeling of security.” Susan Kennaway remembered the “great, white, net cages” and Sylvia Brooke also enjoyed the security of her ‘cage,’ where “no mosquitoes, no wandering animals or creepy-crawly things could nestle under my pillow.” Other insects, nicknamed ‘poochies,’ included coconut spiders, cockroaches and a nameless amphibious bug, so that “one did not feel safe even in the bath.” Moreover, very small insects could penetrate the ‘meat-safe’ wire “in their clouds” and become “entangled in one’s hair.” Fruit bats were an easier problem. While Katharine shut herself in the ‘meat-safe,’ Ah Seng, using a mop on a pole, would drive the bats upstairs to the landing where Stuart hit them with his tennis racquet. One Sunday morning, they recorded killing fifteen bats, not the record however, as a local planter claimed fifty the previous week.

At Lumut, proximity to the jungle made insect-life almost the same problem as in Emily’s time. The deafening evening noise of cicadas and other creatures was a constant reminder of isolation, while brown cicadas the size of a mouse might stun themselves on the ceiling and fall painfully on heads below. Mosquitoes, not so numerous as at Parit Buntar, carried dengue and yellow fever rather than malaria and sand-flies were constantly active and small enough to penetrate the mosquito net. There were also stick insects, stink bugs, small emerald beetles with a very rank odour, hairy coconut spiders, tarantulas which killed one of their cats, hornets and poisonous scarlet centipedes. Common bathroom invaders were scorpions, some six inches long. Katharine mentions killing several. She was stung once but suffered no ill effects, apart from intense pain, due to prompt applications of gin both externally and internally. Ants were the same problem as in Emily’s time. Nancy Madoc

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21 Allen C. Tales 216
22 Allen C. Tales 235; Brooke S. Queen of Head-hunters 57
23 Sim K. Malayan Landscape 20, 30-1
complained of them in both the clothes and the food "unless you watched like a hawk" and Susan Kennaway recalled the meatsafes standing in bowls of water as a preventative. Although Katharine and Ah Seng "waged battles" with "fire and water, with treacle and poison," nothing seemed effective. Most, she hated the flying ants, invading in thousands, shedding their wings and crawling over the floor. The Government White-Ant Man visited regularly, smearing poison over wooden steps and posts, but the only answer to flying ants was retreat under the mosquito net, leaving the chichak to clean up. The nearest Katharine came to Emily's experiences with tigers was pug marks near the club or, occasionally, their "alarming growl" or "coughing" below her window. Snakes were a greater, though not daily, hazard and crocodiles occasionally appeared in the bay. However, like Emily, Katharine enjoyed many aspects of nature, the humming-bird moth hovering over the chalk-blue plumbago blossoms, the swallow-tailed butterflies of the jungle and the large night-blue butterflies as big as birds. There were also turtle sightings, sea otters, hornbills and the exotic marine world of white corals, "electric-blue" jelly fish, "striped black and white sea-angels" and "large, luminous blue fish" like a "cloud of frozen fire." 

Climate and Health

Like most colonials, Katharine initially found the climate a problem with the "intolerable" heat of the "white noon-day sun," the "intensity" of the light and the "oppressive" humidity. She describes stifling, breathless heat and the sun "blazing down from an enamelled sky" with afternoons when she could only "lie sweating under an electric fan longing for the evening." The only respite came with the cool air of the "delicious" mornings and after rain. Like Emily, she was fascinated by the storm's "alarming suddenness" and unfamiliar force, especially the violent 'Sumatras' at Lumut and, like Emily, watched helplessly while "papers were swept off tables" and "photographs and vases crashed down." When the storm lasted several days, she too, sat inside a darkened house with closed shutters although she had the benefit of glass window-tops. However, Katharine found the heat less debilitating than Emily, partly due to improved medical facilities, more sensible clothing and electric fans. Moreover, she was not isolated from other Europeans, like Emily, which possibly

24 Sim K. Malayan Landscape 103-9, 127-8,178, 185, 201; Allen C. Tales 216-17, 236
encouraged a more positive mental attitude. She mentions her friend, Jean’s, “bad go of malaria” and her own bouts of dengue, making her feel as if her bones had “jellified” and her head had become too heavy for her body. Twice she also underwent treatment for some unspecified condition, first in Penang and at least once in Singapore, destinations and medical facilities now more easily accessible.

Another advantage was the development of hill-stations providing Europeans with breaks from the debilitating tropical climate, among their own kind and in surroundings created to feel familiar. The Sims were excited about their first hill-holiday, spent, during Chinese New Year, 1939 at ‘The Cottage’ on Taiping Hill, owned by an Englishwoman, Mrs. Turner. They started before dawn to drive to the foot of the hill whence “incredibly strong and fast” Tamil porters carried them nine miles by chair to the summit. At times, Katharine clearly found this extremely uncomfortable, where negotiation of steep ground threw her onto her back with her legs “precipitously higher” than her head. At the Rest House, the view and cold air reminded them of Switzerland. Their constant references to Europe, and England in particular, pinpoint their enjoyment of similarities to home, like the “neat green terraces and lawns” and European flowers of Maxwell Hill. At Taiping Hill, with its “charm completely of its own,” they sat on the verandah, wrapped in warm coats against the nostalgic cold, or played tennis with the other guests. Katharine never discusses these, perhaps because there was nothing remarkable about their presence there so no comment was necessary. The restricted space of Taiping and Maxwell Hill would have limited their numbers. A large “homeside” tea after the afternoon rest, was followed by croquet or a walk to the peak. Katharine found it “an unreal world,” “a kind of No-Man’s land” where she was “snatched up out of the tropics.” “Cool as an English summer,” it restored her to “an almost English energy.” She relished the abundant English flowers, roaring wood fire in their room, luxury of a hot-water bottle, chill touch of wood and metal, tingling coldness of water in the Shanghai jar and the cool dryness of her skin. It was “delicious to be cold again” and dispense with the mosquito net and their return to the tropical heat was with “spirits sinking accordingly.”

Similarly, Una Ebden enjoyed the “fresh” air of the Cameron

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25 Sim K. *Malayan Landscape* 17-23, 30, 53, 100-2, 113, 184, 209, 218
26 Ibid. 139-41
Highlands and the “treat” of “wood fires in the evening” and “blankets on the bed,” reminiscent of home.\textsuperscript{27}

Descriptions of subsequent hill-station breaks all emphasised their coolness and Englishness, their escape from an unfamiliar world to one Europeans created, moulded and understood. At Fraser’s Hill, Katharine speaks of isolation and unreality, of “being in another world” separate from the country below. Fraser’s Hill was a “neat, polite little place,” rather cramped due to being constructed on narrow ledges of jungle hillside. Here again, they pursued an ‘English’ lifestyle, walking, playing golf, reading, playing chess by the fireside in the evenings and consuming a bottle of red wine. There were disturbing reminders of reality, rhino pug marks at Maxwell Hill and the “rapacious, many-fingered beast,” the jungle with its “forest peaks on every side” overshadowing all this European “pretty provincialism.” Katharine’s language suggests disquiet over the jungle as opposed to the orderliness imposed by her countrymen. Madeline Daubeny also saw the jungle as a “very strange world,” “very alarming” and creating an impression of “enclosure.” Katharine obviously preferred the “artificial” unreality of the partially-developed Cameron Highlands with “delightful modern” houses, “bright,” colourful ‘English’ gardens, European school, inevitable golf course and “real English” cows in the valleys. Here, apart from visiting tea plantations, activities included admiring the trout at the Hatcherries, the begonias at the Agricultural Gardens and the plethora of English flowers at the Tudor-style Smoke House Inn. It was “an English summer, spring and autumn rolled into one,” offering simultaneously the autumn pleasures of hot rum at the Smoke House and summer’s strawberries, cream and fresh vegetables.\textsuperscript{28}

Like the Inneses, the Sims also visited Indonesia. Emily gives the impression, without detailed description, of enjoying her time in Java, while Katharine includes greater detail of the Sumatran hill station, Brastagi. To her, the Dutch houses were “more solid and better designed” than those in Malaya while the hill-stations were better developed, with “modern houses,” “delightful gardens,” “wide views” and “far more entertainments” than the “more cramped and shut in” Malayan hill stations. The “delicious cold” Brastagi atmosphere and large Dutch meals gave the Sims

\textsuperscript{27} Allen C. Tales 208
renewed energy to explore the countryside and climb the active volcanoes Sinaboeng and Sibayak. The Easter-weekend celebrations were agreeably European with riding before breakfast, golf, swimming, tennis after tea and dancing until four in the morning. Numbers were swelled by neighbouring Dutch and visiting French, Czechs, English and Americans, pleasing Katharine to see “so many Europeans,” reminiscent of Emily’s delight over so many “white faces” in Singapore. On their return, Katharine claimed to feel the invigorating benefit of the holiday and renewal of “mental energy,” anticipated by European colonials after a break from routine and the Malayan climate.  

**Occupation of Time and Social Life**

Like Emily, Katharine was childless during this period in Malaya and, therefore, had to address the problems of time and loneliness. The latter was less pressing for her with Europeans nearby and, as she often accompanied Stuart on his duty-tours, she did not have long periods of separation from her husband. The Sims’ relationship also appears closer than those of the Inneses or the Brookes, perhaps simply the result of changing conventions or differences in rank. Katharine’s participation in Stuart’s patrols never seems to have placed her at risk or elicited any fear, even of the “bloodthirsty pirates” of the Chinese junk crews. While threats to Emily’s safety had come from within the country, danger for Katharine was to come later from an external force. Meanwhile, Stuart’s patrols allowed her a temporary escape from “the enclosed feeling of the town” to the natural life of the countryside and the coastal scenery which fascinated her. The loan of Stuart’s superior’s car, then their own, a second-hand Hillman and, later, a Ford Prefect, gave Katharine another advantage over Emily, whose distaste for public boats and lack of private transport confined her to her own locality. Improved transport meant Stuart’s official duties, overseeing ships unloading, eradicating smuggling and opium trafficking and controlling local opium farming and addiction, lasted hours rather than weeks. At home, he worked from his house, like James Innes, or from the Customs building, where his office was visible from their house. Although Guy Madoc’s work-place was, like Stuart’s, near enough to their home for Nancy to actually hear him in his

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28 Allen C. Tales 223; Sim K. Malayan Landscape 189, 223-4; Shennan M. Midday Sun 128-9
office, it took her longer than Katharine to settle and overcome feeling “very homesick,” “pretty miserable” and “alone an awful lot of the time,” only then realising the implications of no club or other European women in such a rural area. Katharine claims she “never felt lonely” during the day but, like Margaret Brooke, she only had to look out of her window to feel part of the busy, larger Lumut scene. However, on evenings when Stuart was on duty or downstairs interviewing informers “for what seemed like hours on end,” she, like Emily, was glad to have a pet, a cat called Caesar. Sylvia Brooke’s choice was more exotic, two baby orang-utans christened Gin and Bitters. Contact with Britain was still principally by post, arriving on the Ipoh mail bus, and Katharine’s short stories were sent back to England for publication. Improvement in frequency of communication with home, elicited her comment that “it was always cheering” to see the Imperial Airways mail-plane go over, as a “visible if not exactly tangible link with England.” Newsreels were the highlight of any cinema show while radio gave more immediate access than newspapers to European events. However, the arrival of a British ship could still rouse “unexpected pleasure” over the “shrill Cockney voices” and a “sudden sharp pang of nostalgia for London.”

Like her predecessors and urban contemporaries, Katharine needed to establish a daily routine. For women of status, like Sylvia Brooke, official duties occupied part of every day, the remainder being divided between her own interests, swimming, shopping or visiting friends. Late afternoons might involve golf or tennis and evenings were spent at the Club, playing billiards or Mah-Jong. It was a leisured life-style, transposed from London to Kuching and endowed with privilege and power, reflecting Emily’s tart observations about the inflated status of the Malayan Residents. For the Brookes post-Sarawak England was a difficult world requiring adjustment from “emperors” to “ordinary, ageing people, two misfits” and resulting in feelings of “isolation” and days without “reason” or “anything to do.”

29 Sim K. Malayan Landscape 152-170  
30 Allen C. Tales 210-11  
31 Sim K. Malayan Landscape 23-5, 37, 73-4, 205-6  
32 Brooke S. Queen of Head-hunters 117  
33 Sim K. Malayan Landscape 95-6, 175; Allen C. Tales 81  
34 Brooke S. Queen of Head-hunters 112-3, 119, 172-4
Katharine’s chief occupations were writing and painting, like Madeline Daubeny who “missed books” but “drew a great deal” and Sylvia Brooke who found an outlet in descriptions and depictions of Sarawak. As soon as they were settled in their Parit Buntar house, Stuart organised her studio and laid out her painting equipment. Her work mainly comprised portraits and local scenes, the former providing some contact with the locals but tending to conform to the conventional European view of racial stereotypes. Subjects included her servants, Meri, a little Tamil girl, Pin, a fisherman, her husband’s colleagues, the Malay police, local society, Chinese ‘taxi dancers’ and Tamil plantation workers. She was disappointed not to paint female nudes but understood not to “offend the modesty of Moslem Malay women” in this way. Painting was done in the cool “wonderfully long, free” mornings or just before sunset, when she and Stuart went out sketching and exploring the countryside, outings suggesting a closer companionship with her husband than that described by Emily, Margaret or Sylvia (Fig.A.9.1).

Other popular activities, in a society which placed emphasis on physical activity, included tennis, walking and gardening. At Parit Buntar, Katharine and Stuart created an English-style garden from a “barren wilderness” using seeds from South Africa and Australia, generous cuttings, advice and practical help from friends like Mac’s wife, Jean. Heavy work was done by local employees. The Taiping priest, “an ardent gardener,” instructed them in the local flora including that in their garden and even their syce entered into the gardening spirit. Katharine returns often to the British desire to grow flowers reminiscent of home, and the bonding created through the exchange of cuttings and advice. When they moved to Lumut, pot plants and cuttings went with them. Here the garden was smaller and more manageable and they worked in it almost every evening, as they might have done in England, calling in at the club afterwards for a shandy. To the colourful array of local flowers already there, they added “home-like” European varieties and enjoyed creating a rockery but had little enthusiasm for vegetables, despite their success with the carrots and tomatoes. The speed of growth compared with England surprised them, with sunflowers growing 4” each day, zinnias taking just three weeks from planting to flowering and the feeling of despair if seeds “did not come up within three days of sowing.” At the

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35 Brooke S. Queen of Head-hunters 126; Allen C. Tales 225
Cameron Highlands, she admired and envied the Smoke House’s abundance and variety of English flowers but some of her most nostalgic moments were spent in the walled garden of a colonial who commissioned her to paint it. It was “so like an English garden,” for Katharine, a “compact,” “lovely” and “homely” reminder of home and, perhaps, a safe haven from the “big and wild” natural beauty of Malaya. Although Englishness predominated, Katharine, like Emily, was fascinated by local flora like the crimson ginger, white spider lily or Chinese Keng Hua which blooms and dies within a single night and which she compared to a Yehudi Menuhin solo. 37

Tennis was still fashionable and Katharine mentions playing at both the club (Fig.A.9.7) and private houses, usually during the “cooler hours” between tea and sundown. She and Stuart sometimes took part in matches at Lumut, the Sitiawan Asiatic Club or at Taiping, following up with other social engagements. Another sport now open to women was swimming in the sea or, for Katharine, at the Taiping bathing pool, “one of the loveliest of places.” Sometimes she and Stuart went fishing and, occasionally, there was a crocodile-shooting expedition in the mangrove swamps. She also enjoyed watching hockey between teams from The Penang Ladies and The Ipoh Ladies, although she never joined them. Some evenings, she and Stuart rolled up the carpet and danced to radio or gramophone music, technical advances providing Katharine’s generation with sources of informal, domestic entertainment not available to Emily. 38

There appears to have been reasonable social life within the small, European Parit Buntar community, with parties, picnics and excursions, dining at each others’ houses and evenings at the club (Fig.A.9.5). While this lacked the range of larger towns, it was a great improvement on Emily’s rural isolation. One new experience was a Sati party where Katharine enjoyed a delicious meal from the Malay sati-man’s “glowing brazier” and “sticks and dishes of sauce and lumps of chicken”(Fig.A.9.10). At Parit Buntar there was a small cinema known as the ‘bug-house’ which screened heavily-censored, old films and Wild West thrillers. For evenings there, they fended off the rattan bugs and mosquitoes with sarongs sewn at the bottom, long-sleeved

36 Sim K. Malayan Landscape. 32-4, 173, 209-12
37 Ibid. 48-52, 69-70, 127, 181, 225-6
38 Ibid. 51-2, 104
jackets, white gloves and, for Katharine, a heavily-perfumed handkerchief to counteract smells "better not described" but "only too identifiable." Despite the discomfort and constant noise from the local audience, they enjoyed the show. On Sunday, they attended the tiny church (Fig.A.9.4) which "smelt of damp and wood rot," their gardening friend, the padre, driving from Taiping to conduct a service punctuated by their "rather reedy hymn-droning." Like Isabella at Singapore, Katharine sometimes mused about the thoughts of the Tamil punkah-puller and the intolerant attitudes of Christianity. 39

At Lumut, Katharine was the only European woman, in a small Government circle comprising a Malay District Officer, an Indian Government doctor, a Eurasian Forest Officer and an Engineer and police officer who were both Europeans but unmarried. The Europeans in the district, usually planters and their wives, were few in number and up to fifteen miles away. However, improved roads and their own transport meant distance was not, for the Sims, the problem of Emily’s day. They established and maintained friendships, some long-lasting, with many of these people. Katharine writes of their generous hospitality, especially the Steeles, in their estate-bungalow at Sitiawan, and of excursions into the country, including Over the River on the fringes of the ulu, which seems to have held a special fascination for her. This later found expression through Joan, in The Jungle Ends Here. Stuart accompanied her on some visits and on others she went alone, finding them an opportunity to discover new painting-models. 40

Improved mobility through the car also extended their range of excursions over Emily’s limited options. They liked Taiping, “a peaceful little town” despite its loud military bands, a place which kept cool “longer than most,” and there were walks and picnics near home, at Bukit Merah or Bukit Panchor. However their favourite and most frequent destination from Parit Buntar was Penang. Mabel Price, wife of Whiteaway Laidlow’s manager, voices the same affection for Penang, a “beautiful island” where “life for all creatures was easy.” 41 Katharine describes two excursions there just before their transfer to Lumut, one up the Hill by the little mountain

39 Ibid. 39-40, 50-1  
40 Ibid. 63, 76, 87, 114, 125, 132-3, 207-8, 220-1.  
41 Shennan M. Midday Sun 110
railway, the English flowers growing at the top making her "quite homesick." The other was round the island with a picnic tea and bath, dinner and dancing at the Runnymede before the last ferry. Apart from the setting, both excursions are evocative of the social amusements of middle-class England. Penang was near enough for them to drive to Butterworth after work and cross by ferry, for "a real long bath" at the Runnymead, walk by the sea wall "unplagued by mosquitoes," swim in the salt-water pool, ride through the busy streets of Chinese shops and food stalls or a dance. One evening, they tried out all the Penang dance-halls from the E&O Hotel with its professional Chinese 'taxi-girls' to the less-refined, Chinese Elysee. Occasionally they hired rickshaws but Katharine never liked this "barbaric" transport with its "human beast of burden." At Lumut, there was sandy Telok Muroh opposite Pangkor for painting and sketching or the miniature bay near Batu Kawan for picnics, reading and swimming. Another picnic destination, usually with European friends was the Lumut Forest Reserve while Pangkor was a regular choice for walking or bathing, with Stuart or other European wives. At the tranquil uninhabited island of Rumbia (Fig.A.9.9), they lived on the launch, sleeping on deck to avoid the cockroaches and there Katharine first experienced turtle eggs, "funny little damp ping-pong balls" with a texture "repulsive" even to their "hardened stomachs." Such forms of recreation and relaxation, unavailable to Emily, were, for Katharine, an accepted part of life.

From Lumut, Ipoh, sixty-five miles away and two hours by car, provided some of Penang's amenities and the European facilities of the Ipoh Club. Katharine enjoyed the journey there, with its continuous procession of different nationalities and brightly-coloured costumes. The night-journey back was more alarming with rural hazards of wild pigs dashing in front of the car, tigers, snakes slithering across the roadway, glimpses of civet-cats, close misses from falling coconuts and the danger of driving off the narrow road into the deep dykes. However the "entertainment and comforts and sophistications" of Ipoh were a change from the Sims' "extremely rural existence at Lumut" and they went two or three times a month. They would shop and "jostle shoulders" with other Europeans, again reminiscent of Emily's pleasure over the "white faces" in Singapore. This was followed by dancing or the cinema, as popular here as in Europe and America, although Katharine did not find that films
compensated for the lack of theatres and galleries. “Best of all” were the newsreels, and the “indescribable thrill” of a glimpse of home, momentarily bringing England closer. Another favourite place was a small café reminding them of Soho, where a pianist played Viennese songs and waltzes. In similar vein, Susan Kennaway recalled Saturdays in KL, the mornings spent shopping and “having clothes made,” perhaps the cinema in the afternoon and then the drive home.43

Further afield, KL and Singapore, although not near, were reasonably accessible, destinations for short visits rather than the infrequent, longer holidays of Emily’s time. Katharine’s first KL visit coincided with the Malayan Agricultural and Horticultural Exhibition and included the city sights and a weekend of parties. Like Emily, she found Singapore “civilized and conventional,” a place to meet Europeans, many of whom had never left Singapore, except for a hill-station holiday, and knew very little about the rest of Malaya. Katharine enjoyed being an “up-country visitor to the metropolis” with its shopping, sight-seeing, parties and dancing at the Tanglin, Coconut Grove and Raffles Hotel. She “childishly” derived pleasure from familiar touches, manifestations of “the homely solidarity of the British,” like red pillar boxes instead of the Malay States silver 44 and the national anthem after shows. However, unlike Emily, she did not like Singapore, describing it as a “curious place” with no particular charm or character.45

Relationship with the Local Population

Katharine claimed greater ease than Emily had manifested with the local population and less concern when “a crowd of people appeared from nowhere and gaped at us” or at being the “lonely cynosure of many bright black eyes” when “crowds of children came out to gape.” However, the fact that she mentioned such incidents may indicate that she really found them unnerving reminders of the fragile European position. Although numerically greater and more firmly established than in Emily’s day, the Europeans were still heavily outnumbered and depended heavily on prestige, confidence and presenting a solid front. Emily’s writing manifests certainty

43 Sim K. Malayan Landscape 90-4; Allen C. Tales 239
44 Perhaps in deference to the Malays, red being traditionally associated with the Chinese.
45 Sim K. Malayan Landscape 117-8, 194-5, 219-20
in her superiority over the local people which closer contact adjusted a little but did not dispel. There is also an underlying understanding of her vulnerability created by isolation from European society and the fragility of British rule in Malaya. Katharine, living within European enclaves, conveys little sense of nervousness or isolation in her writing. Although she had to adjust to a new lifestyle, she does not indicate any feeling of threat from outside or within her household. She appears to have been at ease with her servants and the locals although she admitted to feeling more relaxed within the SS boundaries, where she felt “actually on British soil again after being in a protected Malay State.” However, despite her expressions of affection for Malaya and its people, she never appears to question her membership of an elite ruling body. Perhaps her style, less forceful than Emily’s, is influenced by a more established European position and greater distance from the local population.

Over western superiority, Katharine’s views are similar to those Sylvia Brooke expresses about Sarawak. Sylvia claimed the people “light-hearted and mischievous as children,” needed benign guidance from an experienced European with the right to determine their future: in the White Rajah’s case, the succession, questions of democracy and cession to the British Crown. To Sylvia, her husband was “a shepherd over his flock,” their “friend and counsellor; their examiner” and, sometimes, “much to his regret their executioner.” Like his two predecessors, he had “worked for the good of the people” and “unaided” brought “peace, law, good government, and prosperity to the land,” rescuing Sarawak from “savagery and barbarism” and making it a place where “people had felt secure under Brooke rule.” Within this paternalistic framework, local dissenters were seen as “troublemakers” and banished to distant Lundu. Similar sentiments, expressed in a 1897 Selangor Journal, compared Malaya to “a wilderness” whose inhabitants were “the beasts of the forests” and where, previously, “civilized ‘man,’” namely the British, had “scarce ever trod.”

Katharine appears to have shared Emily’s and Sylvia’s racial stereotyping. While Sylvia Brooke saw the Malays as “an unambitious race, content as long as they

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46 Ibid. 20, 34, 76
47 Brooke S. Queen of Head-hunters 101-6, 121, 142, 156.
48 Selangor Journal 2nd April, 1897. 233; Metcalf T.R. Oxford History of the British Empire Vol.5. 588
had their rice, their sweet drinks" and "as many wives as they could afford," Katharine wrote of the "apparent indolence" of the "peaceful, childlike" and "happy-go-lucky, smiling, kindly" Malays, contrasting with "the ceaseless industry of the Chinese," the "most tireless workers on earth" who are "stoical and philosophical, ingenious, cheerful and smiling." She does not, like Emily, describe Malays as "savages" but to her the people at Batu Kawan were "peasants" and her models a "useful person," an "excellent type" or a "fine specimen." In acknowledging Chinese industry and business-sense, particularly in shipping and fishing, she echoes Isabella Bird and Emily. Here, again, she contrasts the "natural energy" of the Chinese in their motorboats, with the "less industrious" Malays who "pottered about in their graceful koleks." Apart from perceived similarities in business and the work ethic, Katharine draws further links between the British and the Chinese in shared love of family life, so central to British ideology. Perhaps affinities were further increased from both having settled in and profited from another man's land.

Katharine's view of Malaya reflects the complacent colonial conception of "a model country," "a prosperous, happy place" with "an atmosphere of cheerful friendliness" where many nationalities lived "amicably together." Of course, her British public, knowing very little about Malaya, might welcome such statements. In her reassuring opinion, all the people were "well cared for; there were no destitute, no tramps or beggars; even the poor had their gay clothes; the sick were encouraged to go to hospitals, the coolie children given free milk each day on the estates." Moreover, "everyone was learning and being encouraged to learn simple rules for better health" and "hospitals, education, agriculture and industry proceeded along carefully organized lines." This accolade centres on colonial achievements in health, medicine and social welfare, assumed to improve local conditions and thus validate the European presence in Malaya. Her underlying implication was local contentment with British rule, perceived as doing a splendid job. It made her "very proud to be English, very proud" and when she does describe colonial society as parasitic, it is in relation to war-threatened Britain, not Malaya.

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49 Brooke S. Queen of Head-hunters 102
50 Sim K. Malayan Landscape 23, 33, 45, 84, 137, 173, 210-12
51 Ibid 60, 189
Katharine expresses her perceptions most fully in her discussions with Roger Bacon, the Lumut Engineer, presenting what she appears to consider incontestable facts. She further conforms to European self-validation and domination through insistence on and belief in the superiority of Christianity and European literature, science and architecture. Even an adoption of oriental architectural style was perceived to need British validation. Katharine describes the KL public buildings as "More-or-less style" rather than Moorish and "simply encrusted" with "British Byzantinism." She attributes what she sees as Malaya’s spiritual deprivations and lack of great indigenous art or literature, to humidity causing "mental tiredness," to Islam’s “medieval pattern” of civilisation and to too “few Europeans in the land.” Explicitly, she claims that the Malays “are not nowadays an artistic people,” Islam having “killed” art and “something about the country” causing "laziness, inertia, lack of originality; almost a barrenness.” Islam is seen as destructive and art not conforming to Western standards as valueless. While appearing to acknowledge some affinity between the English and the Chinese, both “imbued with poetry inspired by their respective countries,” Katharine and Bacon imply that the best culture for Malaya was one imposed from outside. Good music and films were imported but not art because European masterpieces could not withstand ants and mildew. There could be no great writers, painters, musicians, scientists or engineers because they could see no alternative to these being European and the colonial community was too small to produce such “supermen” and, in general, valued physical activity over mental or cultural stimuli. These are statements of western superiority over local ‘other,’ unchanged since before Emily’s day but mostly concerning the Malays. Katharine appears to have recognised that the Chinese had an accepted culture while the Indians, except on plantations, were a very small presence.\(^52\)

Katharine’s attitudes are also expressed through contacts with local people. Local adoption of some aspects and corresponding aspirations of British culture, led to rifts within the Asian societies and to the British desire to create new social demarcations to keep westernised locals out of power.\(^53\) Katharine’s appreciation of the traditional Malay hospitality she received at Batu Kawan bay contrasts with her condemnation of a young Chinese she met there for his European aspirations and his

\(^{52}\) Metcalf T.R. *Oxford History of the British Empire* 590-1; Sim K. *Malayan Landscape* 117, 145-51
attempt to break from old traditions. While the Malays remained within their expected boundaries, he appeared unaware that acceptance of superior European standards did not permit breaching those boundaries. This stance, for Katharine and her peers, allows for apparently genuine appreciation of Asian culture while, simultaneously maintaining distance. The same aloof attitude is expressed towards a Malay wedding in Sitiawan. Here, Katharine copes with fortitude and detached amusement with local customs, the segregation of the women in a “very hot and stuffy” room, the uncomfortable sitting-position with legs tucked under the body which eventually defeated her and eating a very hot curry with her fingers, helped by “a scrawny, greasy brown hand” which “shot out and delved” in her plate. She welcomes the wedding-cake as something “clean and easy to eat at last” and recognisably European and airily dismisses her failure to understand the local ritual surrounding it. As a European, she has already done enough to satisfy local customs. The bride’s wedding outfit, - not a “correct Malay” dress but a “half-Europeanized garment of a lurid peppermint pink,” again arouses her disapproval and unease over locals moving outside their perceived boundaries.\(^54\)

While Emily’s social life was based in the male-orientated, local scene and both Sylvia and Margaret Brooke formed friendships among local women, the reverse was true for Katharine whose social contact was predominantly European, as had always been the case for European women in the larger towns. \(^55\) Apart from servants, shopkeepers, painting models and the occasional social event, Katharine was more an observer and recorder of local life than a participator. The small amount of social contact with locals was mainly confined to club or official functions. One such function was the 1939 ball at the Kuala Kangsar istana, celebrating the new Sultan’s installation. Katharine appreciated the colourful scene but, probably totally unaware of the Sultan’s English education, \(^56\) was naively surprised that he was able to chat in “perfect English,” in a “charming” and “easy” manner. It was a grander occasion than any of Emily’s meetings with her Sultan but Emily was undoubtedly on closer terms

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\(^{53}\) Bayly S. *Oxford History of the British Empire* Vol.3 455, 460-1

\(^{54}\) Sim K. *Malayan Landscape* 43-8, 214-6

\(^{55}\) Brooke S. *Queen of Head-hunters* 114, 115

\(^{56}\) Malay College, Kuala Kangsar and England.
with the Malay aristocracy. However, like Emily, Katharine appears to consider herself the Sultan’s social equal.\textsuperscript{57}

The opening of the new Lumut mosque, attended by the Resident and his wife, planters and wives and the Government officials, brought another meeting with the Sultan. Unbending British etiquette demanded that the Europeans don “stockings and shoes, hats, ties and coats” and swelter through a “very conventional” speech and lunch, where the Sultan’s son’s fluent knowledge of English and England again surprised Katharine. Later, at the Club, Katharine is not surprised by an invitation to sit with the Sultan’s wife, during a tennis exhibition match. Like most of her contemporaries, her Malay was “not up to polite conversational standards,” so she and the Sultan’s wife had barely a language in common. Katharine acquitted herself less gracefully than Emily might have done in similar circumstances, or even the “real Mem of the Old School” standing behind the Consort and “fixedly” gazing at Katharine in a “devastating manner,” for letting the side down.\textsuperscript{58}

The colonial ideology of “manly, civilized and white” superiority which automatically imposed inferiority on ‘Others,’ effectively de-masculinated local men, making them appear effeminate to Europeans.\textsuperscript{59} Katharine reflects these views. The small stature of the Malays appears to have fascinated her and, at a school sports event, where she and Stuart presented the prizes, she refers to the “funny little school-children,” some Malay boys in the sack-race being “so tiny” they could run inside their sacks. Another time, she applies words like “effeminate,” “dapper,” “little” and “slight” to the Malay men, automatically reducing their perceived standing as well as stature, in comparison with the larger, more powerful Westerners. The same language surfaces in references to the “delightful little school-mistress wife,” of one of their Chinese friends and tennis-partners at the Sitiawan Asiatic Club and the “sturdy specimens” of the “dusky little” rubber-tappers.\textsuperscript{60}

Her visit to Lake Toba in Sumatra produced even stronger reactions to the local Bataks whom she described as “qualified to please the anthropologist,” having

\textsuperscript{57} Sim K. Malayan Landscape 41-3
\textsuperscript{58} Ibid. 57, 97-9
\textsuperscript{59} Oxford History of the British Empire Vol.5 Washbrook D.A. 597-9; Wylie D. 287.
something “dark, earthy, rather sub-human” and “indescribably pagan” about them. This, again, reflects the colonial ideology of the primitive nature of local races in need of a ‘civilising’ influence. Some of Katharine’s aversion may understandably be attributed to the Bataks’ cannibalistic habits, prior to their conversion by the missionaries in 1916 as well as to fear of their fierce disposition. She considered their village, Harangol, “one of the smelliest places on earth” with its overpowering stench of “mud, excrement, sweat, betel juice, durians and dog” and was nauseated to discover that the Bataks ate dog flesh – another sensitive area for Europeans - and were buying the “horrible-looking carcasses” in the market. The Sims’ discomfort and insecurity were clearly increased by their unaccustomed isolation as the only Europeans there, confronted by customs which were outside the boundaries familiar or acceptable to Europeans. This disconcerting experience was repeated in the “unwelcome atmosphere” of Kampong Brastagi where they were mobbed, without warning, by a “hateful swarm” of young men “howling,” “clamouring ferociously for money” and sticking “like leeches” so that Katharine was “glad to be out of it.”

Attitude Towards Colonial Society

Katharine’s discussions with Bacon also indicate her attitude towards the current colonial attitude and its inconsistencies. Many of them enjoyed their time in Malaya and had some sense of Malay identity, but not as permanent settlers. Thus, while referring to themselves as “Malayans,” thus making some claim on the country, they also describe themselves as “exiles” whose best way is “the line of least resistance.” To Katharine, this contrasted with the Sumatran Dutch, “settlers in the deepest and more permanent sense of the word” who “live differently from us in their colonies,” accepting the country “as if it were their own home” and not a place “where work has to be done.” As she remarks, the average contemporary Briton knew little of Malaya, apart from Singapore, and generally continued to take little interest in British possessions overseas. In this respect, little had changed from the previous period. Although women, like herself, were able to enjoy their lives, Katharine was aware of continuing problems of isolation, particularly for the “quietly unhappy”

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60 Sim K. Malayan Landscape 23, 57, 98, 104
61 Ibid. 165-7
62 Brownfoot J. Incorporated Wife 188
women trying "to live in one place with their hearts in another" and, consequently, "shut away in themselves." Although Malaya was beautiful, she perceived also a "nerve-wracking" country "of violent change," producing equally volatile reactions in its European residents, oscillating between love one moment to hate the next. Moreover, the "Anglo-Malayan" still had to adjust to a world with "no common shape," where absence of definite seasons removed any real sense of time. The only solution continued to be a world removed from the local scene, both British and regulated. Combined with conviction of British superiority, this increased contempt for local systems and the need to superimpose something "nearer to our own ideas." This applied in both public and private arenas, one small, example being preference for the "cheerful bustle" of parties at home compared to the "sitting-down and staying-put" of the Malayan variety.63

Retreat into a European world increased the importance of traditional celebrations like Christmas. Katharine describes the incongruities of the tropical climate and the stubborn pursuit of European winter-time ritual: morning church, heavy Christmas dinner, the King's speech on the wireless and even a Christmas tree, decorated with "candles and snow and baubles," all providing an "unexpectedly exotic" contrast to the blazing sun outside. Similarly, Madeline Daubeney saw "plum pudding" and "cold-storage turkey" from Australia as indispensable to Christmas celebrations. The lavish nature of the celebrations reminded Katharine of descriptions of the "already fabulous ones of Edwardian days at home" one way in which colonial Malaya "had not progressed beyond pre-Great War standards and traditions."64 In contrast, as Europe experienced depression and moved towards war, this colonial perception of England became an anachronism.

While condemning colonial complacency and lack of competition, arising, in Stuart's opinion from official "security of tenure" and safety of jobs for merchants and planters, Bacon and the Sims defended the community against anti-colonial sentiment at home.65 They were not "decadent victims of luxury." While many did possess cars, England was already following America in that direction. Servants,

63 Sim K. Malayan Landscape 149-54; Bayly C. Imperial Meridian 7; Gartrell B. Incorporated Wife 178
64 Sim K. Malayan Landscape 137, 193; Allen C. Tales 228
65 Louis W.M.R. Oxford History of the British Empire Vol.4. 20
already disappearing from middle-class Europe, were, they argued, "not exactly a luxury" in the tropical heat. Although S'tengahs were "quite a nightly ritual," especially among older Europeans, Katharine argues this brought revival after a hot day and that, "without exaggeration," most colonial Europeans were "temperate." Likewise, the Pahit [drinks] parties, a feature of Malayan life, were no more a boring cliché in Malaya than in middle-class Britain, when a "very mixed community" was thrown together with perhaps no common interests or tastes. Moreover, they might be more necessary to a colonial community, providing some contacts for a mobile society which, as Katharine acknowledges, was more likely to produce acquaintances than lasting friends. One unacceptable alternative was 'going native' with all its accompanying fears of engulfment by the local population, a colonial attitude to which Katharine clearly subscribed.\textsuperscript{56} She claims to have only seen one ‘case,’ an elderly, retired Englishman, married to a Malay and living as one. In her eyes, he was a "strange figure" in his " decayed and alien garden" with "something at once pitable and repulsive about him."\textsuperscript{67} Having broken ranks and let the side down, he was now an outcast like the children of such unions, the "half-castes" and "Eurasians," described by Sylvia Brooke as inhabiting a "lost and twilit world."\textsuperscript{68}

Adversity also drew the colonial community together. War was the prime example but it was evident at a local level. There was the "very unpleasant" double murder at the Over the River estate, on which Katharine does not enlarge but which probably inspired The Jungle Ends Here, and, also, the suicide of the Lumut Policeman. The latter, so "appallingly unexpected," shook every European in that small community "to the core of his being," taking on "a far more personal and terrifying aspect" than it would in England and representing a significant percentage-loss to its European population. There were times when obscure fevers struck or a friend, exhausted by overwork, died suddenly. In a community so small and inward-looking, such events affected them all.\textsuperscript{69}

Insularity was further increased by the colonial society's newly-created conventions, including its own idiom, full of 'borrowings' from other Empire

\textsuperscript{56} Allen C. Tales 82-3; McClintock A. Imperial Leather 27
\textsuperscript{67} Sim K. Malayan Landscape 145, 150-1, 181
\textsuperscript{68} Brooke S. Queen of Head-hunters 121
languages and acronyms. New-arrivals, like Katharine, were immediately confronted with this perplexing, and, she claims, unnecessary, initiation into their ranks with remarks like “The D.O. (District Officer) from K.K. (Kuala Kangsa) came in for pahits before tiffin yesterday” or “he’s living in the P.W.D. bungalow at T.A. (Telok Anson) His Mem has been rather sakit (ill) lately,” or, perhaps the question “Will you have your mandi (bath) now and a pahit after?” Another result of this increased distance was the removal of any practical reason for learning Malay, contrasting with Emily’s interest in Malay customs and dependence on the language for company.

Katharine fared better than Sylvia Brooke who arrived in Sarawak to find no mixed club, leaving “five or six disconsolate women” with nothing better to do every evening but sit around the bar in a wooden bungalow “solemnly dedicated to THE LADIES.” By order of the second Rajah, no men were allowed up “those chaste wooden steps.” Katharine found no such rules at the Parit Buntar club, nor any suggestion, there or at Lumut, of the gossip or threat of ostracised non-conformers which feature in Somerset Maugham’s stories. Perhaps she and Stuart were simply the “good, decent, normal people,” who “led humdrum lives and did very much the same things every day,” rather than unconventional misfits like Darya in Neil MacAdam. However, there clearly was a hierarchy and rules to be obeyed. A junior mem was expected to defer to the senior mems, accepting any advice and help they might offer. This does not appear to have caused any problems for Katharine although she did mention “wilting” under the critical gaze of a “real Mem” at Lumut and claimed some of the younger generation were “almost scared” of an “old school” planter in the next district who “rather liked to think he ruled it” and could “wreck careers.”

War

The great historical event overhanging Katharine’s narrative was World War II, tarekh orang puteh lari, “when the white men ran,” and the myth of the British

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69 Sim K. Malayan Landscape 185, 196, 204
70 Sim K. Malayan Landscape 20-1; Bayly S. Oxford History of the British Empire Vol.3. 450
71 Brooke S. Queen of Head-hunters 80-1
73 Sim K. Malayan Landscape 99, 185
Empire’s invincibility was shattered. In retrospect, when she wrote the book, Katharine realised the implications of events in Europe, signs unheeded by the Malayan Europeans until it was too late. Katharine describes their initial sense of detachment from the “depressing” events in Europe which contrasted with their “glorious days in wild unspoilt places.” Momentary reminders of reality, refugees from Japanese-occupied China, cancellation of home-leave and precautionary food-rationing arrangements failed to dispel the impression of being “far away from it all.” Dorothy Hawkins was struck by the “peacefulness of life” in a Malaya which “seemed so calm and quiet” with everything “running so smoothly.” Even Mona Gardner, an American journalist and author with considerable experience of South-East Asia, considered that Singapore was capable of “remaining invulnerable to attack by an invading force” and that that the British forces could counter any major landing in Malaya. While the “long and arduous overland trek” and “insurmountable barrier of hundreds of miles of mountainous jungle” would render any enemy “a perfect target for plane attack,” the new military and naval bases on Singapore declared “definitely and explicitly” that “Great Britain is not retiring from Asia,” a false optimism and complacency shared by those living in Singapore and echoed by Nancy Wynne in her letters home, that “we are ready for them [the Japanese] here.”

After declaration of war in Europe, Katharine describes “agonizing worry” and “helplessness” about families at home but the impression that it was still “very far away.” Most colonial war-efforts appear to have marginalised the situation, mainly centring round social events and involving “an enormous amount of expenditure on petrol and drink.” This contrasts with the more serious attitude of the Chinese, even the young ones who had never visited China but were well-informed about outside events. Only the 1940 invasion of Holland made them realise the full implication of events in Europe but still, Katharine notes, with no sense of Malaya’s fragile position. A more immediate concern for parents with children at English schools was the

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74 Allen C. Tales 254
75 Sim K. Malayan Landscape 80
76 Allen C. Tales 204
77 Gardner Mona. Menacing Sun The Travel Book Club, London, 1940. 171-6; Shennan M. Midday Sun 224; Turnbull C.M. History of Singapore 159-64, 171.
78 Turnbull C.M. History of Singapore 129-30

By 1939, the Overseas Chinese had been raising money for China for eight years and were fully informed about the Japanese occupation of Manchuria, 1931, and the Rape of Nanjing, 1938.
choice between leaving their offspring to an uncertain fate in England or wrecking their education by bringing them back. The ending of furlough also separated couples where wives in England were now unable to obtain passage back to Malaya. The six-week lapse of mail, after the Imperial Air Mail ceased, relegated the "Jap scare" further to "secondary importance." European men were ordered to remain at work supplying vital commodities rather than enlist but a half-hearted Volunteer Camp was set up on the Ipoh race-course, with training interrupted for the races. All the women could do was send food-parcels to their families suffering rationing in Europe or make low-key gestures like Josephine Foss, headmistress of the Pudu girls' school who refused to continue using the Selangor Club hairdresser, although the best in town, because he was Japanese. Meanwhile, even precautionary preparations became social occasions which "relieved the monotony," like Blackout Parties and Katharine's First Aid courses, conducted with an air of "extreme homeliness" by a doctor who "adored a good laugh." The small European community closed ranks in mutual support. While Stuart was at Volunteer Camp, Katharine could rely on their friends but for planters' wives on remote estates, their husbands' absences at Camp, would have been much harder.

According to Harrison and Crossfield employee, Cecil Lee, no-one knew "the extent of the danger or how near it was," the limited capacity of the "forces we had to resist," nor, in the words of Gerald Scott, a Shell engineer in Singapore, that "we were in a hell of a shambles" and "the Japs could come in through the back door" and "knock the place sideways." With hindsight, Katharine realised that the defence preparations were a "thin camouflage" over Malaya's "helplessness," not one of the "many hundreds of Japs" there being deceived by it. She was struck by the lack of secrecy and ease of access to Singapore's Naval Base in contrast to Japanese refusal to allow anyone near their "great island bases." Until September 1941, the official line described Japan as "a blot on the Far Eastern scene," "unlikely to bother anyone very much" and local papers discussed the "impossibility of over-running Malaya," propaganda which deluded the Europeans but not the Japanese. In practical terms, petrol rationing reduced mobility so the Sims saw less of distant friends and

79 Gullick J.M. Old KL 71
80 Sim K. Malayan Landscape 172-82, 188; Shennan M. Midday Sun 219-22
81 Allen C. Tales 86, 247-8, 252
entertainment was reduced to playing billiards at the club but rice was the only rationed food and there were no real deprivations. Until December 1941, Katharine claimed to feel “safe, protected” and “out of it all” but, on December 7th, Pearl Harbour and Singapore were bombed, the Japanese landed at Kota Bharu and evacuation south began. Even then, failure to really understand the situation, increased by newspaper censorship, led to last-minute panic. Mabel Price could not accept there was any real emergency in Penang until she witnessed the bombing of the harbour, while for Penang lawyer Charles Samuel and his wife, Violet the sudden departure was “traumatic” and “a terrible break with the past.” Others, according to teacher, Esther Muthiah, then a voluntary worker in Penang Hospital, knew of the preparations to evacuate but kept that knowledge from the locals, Esther’s understanding of English enabling her to follow their conversations.

Like Nancy Wynne, who had evacuees staying with her, “every other night,” Katharine was preparing to billet Penang refugees when the order came to evacuate. In the end, confusion and speed left her almost unable to accept she was leaving her home and husband, perhaps for the last time. Her clearest memories of those final hours were of trivial details like unopened Christmas presents, a half-finished portrait and trying to persuade frightened servants and herself she would be back for Christmas. It was a scene probably repeated in many European households. One of ten women in a four-car convoy, she joined the “steady stream” of cars south towards Singapore, driven by European women or their Malay syces, with children inside and “baggage and perambulators on top.” Some, like Tamsin Broome, took their servants with them. They departed, in the words of Bousted employee, Edward Tokeley, “as the vanquished” with the frightened Asians “seeing you going.” To Cecil Lee, they were part of “a society in dissolution.” Despite the courage the situation demanded of them, their deeper feelings must have been a mixture of confusion, fear and disbelief at the unexpected disintegration of their world as well as humiliation at being forced, so ignominiously, to relinquish their position as rulers and all their possessions, including much-loved pets. One of Katharine’s companions tried to disguise her feelings in a show of bravado, taking special care over her appearance. Another

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82 Lewis G.E.D Out East 54-5
83 Turnbull C.M. History of Singapore 168, 173
84 Shennan M Midday Sun 234-6
emotion for Katharine was shame as she registered the bewildered, frightened faces of abandoned locals they passed, claiming it “stuck very unpleasantly” to leave them “in the lurch” and she felt “guilty” and “horribly conspicuous.” Una Ebden also remembered being “rather low and rather frightened,” reflecting “how badly let down” her Asiatic contemporaries must be feeling while Muriel Reilly, the Governor’s cipher officer, shared Katharine’s shame that “the white race ‘let down’ hundreds of faithful servants who trusted in us.” Although European women might salve their conscience knowing that the Military had ordered them to leave, this must have been an uncomfortable experience for even the most self-focussed.

Fear, disorientation and the abrupt removal of their husbands’ support, would have increased these women’s interdependence while their training to present a calm, orderly appearance must have been tested by disorderly evacuation, in some cases with “no more than a toothbrush,” and by the chaos they encountered further south. At their first stop, Katherine was struck by the incongruity of their situation, the “light-coloured summer frocks” and “crowds of children” looking more like a “children’s party” than flight from an invading enemy. She also felt frustrated that many Europeans still could not accept the seriousness of the situation. The KL European women she encountered regarded arranging billeting as merely an annoying disruption of their morning bridge while Civil Servant, Sjovald Cunyngham-Brown, described the “sort of perpetual cocktail party that went on interminably” at Johore as “old friends and acquaintances” from “up-country” poured in. For Katherine, Christmas Eve at Jasin, south of Malacca, was “a hell of an evening” where everyone “was very gay” and did not seem to have any idea of events further north. Any advice about precautions met with a smile and “the Japs would never get right down there.” Christmas Day, likewise, was “interminable,” an occasion “to be lived through somehow.” It was the same in Hong Kong immediately prior to the Japanese invasion. Women like Hilda Selwyn-Clarke, wife of Hong Kong’s Director of Medical Services, writer and activist, Agnes Smedley and Margaret Watson, Hong Kong’s first almoner might understand the true situation but most Europeans “went on

85 Sim K. Malayan Landscape 60, 179, 183, 192-3, 200-4, 220-9
86 Allen C. Tales 214, 251-5, 267; Shennan M. Midday Sun 235-8; Sim K. Malayan Landscape 236
87 Sim K. Malayan Landscape 111, 237
88 Allen C. Tales 256
89 Sim K. Malayan Landscape 240
living as if nothing were happening.” In *Twilight in Hong Kong* Ellen Field emphasised her ‘little woman’ mentality in pre-war Hong Kong right up to her last-minute crossing to temporary safety, “in high heels and overl Laden with luggage,” only just ahead of the Japanese.90

For Katharine, like most colonial women, this time was spent in inactivity, anxiously waiting for news, especially of husbands, and attempting to maintain some semblance of normality. After the fall of Hong Kong, she and a friend went on to Singapore which was still regarded as impregnable and was, by now, overcrowded with around a million refugees, more than doubling its peacetime population and stretching its resources to the limit.91 Una Ebden describes people “sleeping in the corridors and on the verandas” while she and her mother ended up at the Swiss Club, “because there was nowhere else to go.” Overcrowding presented further problems of competition for the limited supply of clothes and “small essentials” in the shops but Katharine claimed “a sense of exhilaration” in this relief from possessions. Many, like Ann Kennaway, were still “totally in cloud cuckoo land.” Her days were spent at the Tanglin Club swimming pool, with evenings at the cinema or at the Raffles Hotel’s nightly dances, as if nothing unusual was happening. With nothing else but “social life and very little cultural life” it was, she claimed difficult not to be “frivolous” and her younger sister’s reaction was simply “relief that I wasn’t going back to school for the next term.” Organised evacuation of women was opposed by the authorities as potentially demoralising the local population, a policy which led to final chaos and “tremendous losses.”92 As priority, anyhow, would be given to women with children, Katharine was unlikely to obtain a passage out which left her, like many of her contemporaries, feeling “very small and useless” and with time to occupy. Work was the obvious antidote, giving some sense of purpose but, with so many women in the same situation, there was heavy competition for any job. She eventually found temporary employment at the Customs Food Control Office, writing short stories for the Malayan Broadcasting Company, at the Naval Control Office and, finally, at the

90 Hoe S. *Private Life* 266-81
91 Lewis G.E.D. *Out East* 65
92 Allen C. *Tales* 240-3, 256, 259; Turnbull C.M. *History of Singapore* 168, 169, 173, 174; Lewis G.E.D. *Out East* 54, 64
Anzac Club Canteen where, one afternoon, three women fried and served six hundred eggs in four hours.93

Preserving a sense of normality became a necessity. Dorothy Hawkings decided she would be “much happier” married to her fiancé, estate manager Peter Lucy, and, one week before Singapore fell, organised a “perfectly beautiful wedding” in Singapore Cathedral, followed by a reception, complete with cake, and guests “straight from the front line.” The first night of their two-day honeymoon was spent in an air-raid bunker, sheltering from the bombing. Likewise, Tamsin Broome, arriving in Singapore in an advanced stage of pregnancy, dismissed a bombing raid as not “a very comfortable time to be having a baby,” making it difficult to “take cover when you’ve just delivered.” Both mother and son survived.94

For Katharine, lack of news and anxiety about Stuart, ended in January when he was transferred to Singapore, following the evacuation of KL. Their reunion, like many others, was short. Daytime raids, often three times daily, increased the confusion and brought the appalling “warm, noxious-sweet stench” of unburied bodies which Katharine never forgot, an equal shock to Ann Kennaway who had never “witnessed death” before and now faced the reality of war. Soon after, a Japanese convoy arrived in the Macassar Straits. Despite the continuing official, no-evacuation policy and Katharine’s reluctance to be separated again from Stuart, she obtained a passage on the Empress of Japan, the last ship to leave before Singapore fell. Her last few hours were spent packing, saying goodbyes and arranging money and necessities for the journey, occupation perhaps deferring the pain of impending separation. She appears to have been calmer and better organised than Ann Kennaway who “didn’t know what to pack” and ended up with a suitcase “stuffed with evening dresses.” Final separation was fast, as Stuart went ashore immediately while she watched him “far below threading his way swiftly through the dense crowd.” All she was left with was the knowledge he planned to join the R.N.V.R. and the hope that “life still had something, more than mere survival, to offer.” She spent the next “dazed half-hour” as one of the “quiet, tragic-eyed women” wandering among the “swift dreadful partings.” The Kennaway sisters recalled the same sense of confusion

93 Sim K. Malayan Landscape 242-8; Turnbull C.M. History of Singapore 169, 173
and loss over the separation of their family when, finally, “reality took over.” The two younger sisters obtained passage to Australia and sailed “happily enough” only to realise they were “a long way from home” and “homesick and afraid.” The older two returned to England, leaving their father in Singapore, eventually at Changi camp and their mother to join the two daughters in Australia. It was even harder for the 550 women and children from Penang, evacuated with only the money and clothes they could carry in a suitcase and unable to tell their husbands where they were going.\(^5\)

Waiting to sail was made worse, according to Katharine, by delay and the “very unpleasant,” overcrowded atmosphere, with about two thousand four hundred women and two hundred children on board, including Tamsin Broome and her children. Katharine was fortunate enough to encounter a friend amongst the crowd which at least ensured companionship for the journey. Conditions on board were far from ideal. The women slept on the intensely hot, airless, blacked-out troop deck, “with the foul stench from the troops’ filthy latrine” and disturbed by the constant movement of Indian soldiers. They feared the crew who had a low opinion of the British, the ship having previously evacuated English women from Hong Kong, leaving the locals to the mercy of the Japanese. However, they fared better than Katharine’s friend Vanessa or Ellen Field and Hilda Selwyn-Clarke in Hong Kong, who volunteered to remain behind and were later interred in Japanese prisoner-of-war camps or even than the nurses evacuated on the *Empire Star*, because “everybody knew what Japanese soldiers did to nurses.” The recently-married Dorothy Hawkins, now a VAD nurse, described their journey to Sumatra as “down a hold with only one ladder,” “thousands up above” and “bombed the whole way,” their only sustenance being asparagus and some cases of Guinness.\(^6\)

**Conclusion**

What, then, had changed in the period that separates Emily and Katharine? Clearly, there had been great advances in infrastructure and technology, improved roads, railways and communications bringing the improved amenities of the large

\(^{94}\) Allen C. Tales 257-60
\(^{95}\) Allen C. Tales 243-4; Shennan M. Midday Sun 248; Sim K. Malayan Landscape 243-50
\(^{96}\) Sim K. Malayan Landscape 250-2; Hoe S. Private Life 278-81; Allen C. Tales 261-2
towns to the smaller communities outside them. The network of smaller towns reduced the rural isolation experienced by Emily and enabled their pockets of European society to live comfortably, maintain a satisfactory social life and to communicate with each other on a regular basis. In this respect, although Katharine did not live in a large town at this stage, her circumstances are closer to women there than to Emily’s rural existence. However, in attitude and expectation, there appears to have been little change with no obvious difference between Emily and Katharine in their desire to maintain separateness from the local people and to regard them as inferiors. For Katharine, the gap may have been even greater, increased numbers of Europeans and improved communications with Europe encouraging further retreat into insularity, manifested in exclusively-European clubs and hill stations. However, while both Emily and Katharine met ‘civilised’ behaviour among the Malay aristocracy with the polite surprise of British superiority, Emily was dependent on the local scene in her daily life and had to accept it in its entirety. For Katharine, it was a colourful background which she could dismiss when it became uncomfortable and, in this respect, she was closer to Emily’s urban contemporaries. For both women, as for their entire peer group, England and English standards were the points of reference so while Emily and Katharine might have their furniture made by local carpenters the design came from English magazines. The closer and more regular contact with England, during the later period appears to have increased this demand for reassurance through everything, clothes, food, sanitation, even the garden flowers, being as English as possible. However, one great difference between Emily and Katharine was that Emily’s time in Malaya was one of confidence in the British Empire’s invulnerability, while Katharine was to witness its failure and, ultimately, the disintegration of its power there.
Map of Malaya by Katharine Sim
(Malayan Landscape, K. Sim)
Sketch map of Lumut and islands by Katharine Sim
(Malayan Landscape, K. Sim)
Fig. A9.1 Katharine and Stuart Sim late 1930s
(Malayan Landscape, K. Sim)

Fig. A9.2 Katharine Sim (third from left) with the King (right), Tunku Abdul Rahman, at his 64th birthday party 1959.
(Out East in the Malay Peninsula, G.E.D. Lewis)
Fig. A9.3 Upper picture. Chinese shops at Parit Buntar (1999).

Fig. A9.4 Lower picture. The Colonial Church at Parit Buntar (1999)

(Photographs by P. Tilley)
Fig. A9.5 The Club at Parit Buntar 1999. Upper picture front view. Lower picture rear view.

(Photographs by P. Tilley)
Fig. A9.6 Upper picture. Downing Street, Lumut (1999)

Fig. A9.7 Lower picture. The Club, Lumut (1999)

(Photographs by P. Tilley)
Fig. A9.8 Ah Seng (by Katharine Sim)

Fig. A9.9 Rumbia (by Katharine Sim)

(Both figures from Malayan Landscape, K. Sim)
Fig. A9.10 Hawkers (Cultural Scenes, Voices Design Cards)
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