URBAN LANDSCAPE OF KUALA LUMPUR

A Geographical Survey

by

Pao-Chun Tsou

(鶴 豹 君)

Institute of Southeast Asia
Nanyang University
Singapore
1967
URBAN LANDSCAPE OF KUALA LUMPUR

A Geographical Survey

by

PAO-CHUN TSOU

(Institute of Southeast Asia
Nanyang University
SINGAPORE
1967)
## CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>iv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Chronology</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Natural Environment</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(A) Topography</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(B) Climate</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Growth of Kuala Lumpur</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(A) The Early Phase</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Original Site</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explanation of the Origin of the Name &quot;Kuala Lumpur&quot;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Houses and Streets</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(B) The Middle Phase</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Factors of Growth</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Houses and Streets</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(C) The Modern Phase</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Factors of Growth</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Racial Groups</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Functional Sections</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Notes</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Plates</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Maps</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
INTRODUCTION

This study is the story of the establishment and growth of Kuala Lumpur, which demonstrates man’s ability to mold the natural environment to his advantage and utilize it to the satisfaction of his needs. The story shows how a superbly suitable geographical site, rich natural resources, excellent lines of communications, human skills, imagination and determination, have combined to produce a modern and flourishing city in a relatively short period of time.

It was a most pleasant experience to carry out the field work and research during August and September of 1965. A special contribution of the study lies in the discovery of the original location of Kuala Lumpur, and in the linguistic analysis of the origin of this city’s name.

The study is an attempt at a brief outline of the establishment and expansion of the capital of Malaysia. Some findings and conclusions are only tentative, and will have to be proven by further research. The purpose of the study is to provide students of geography with a preliminary guide for further field work.

Singapore
March 10, 1967

PAO-CHUN TSOU

(題 猶 君)
1. CHRONOLOGY

1857: Eighty-seven Chinese miners set out by boat up the Klang River from Klang as far as the confluence of the Klang and Gombak rivers and landed at the east bank of the Klang River. They discovered a vast deposit of tin near Ampang, about four miles away.

1859: Two Chinese traders, Hiu Siew and Ah Sze Keledek, landed at the confluence of the Klang and Gombak rivers and built their store, consisting of three atap huts, not more than 400 yards to the east. The exact site is in the area of the present Lorong Pudu (Pudu Lane), which is to the south of the present Jalan Silang (former Cross Street). The first tin was exported in this year.

1862: Yap Ah Loy (1837-85), the greatest of Kuala Lumpur's early pioneers, came here from Lukut at the age of 25. He soon became wealthy because he opened many tin mines nearby.

1868: Yap Ah Loy was first appointed as "Capitan China" in Kuala Lumpur by the Chief of Klang. In 1873, he was reappointed until 1885. From 1873 to 1880, he was the virtual ruler of the interior. He was one of the Chinese leaders who proved loyal to Kuala Lumpur as well as to the Malay Ruler of Selangor in the middle of the nineteenth century.

1869: The Selangor Civil War began in February. Kuala Lumpur fell in August, 1872, and its wooden houses were burnt to the ground.

1873: Kuala Lumpur was retaken by Yap Ah Loy in March. The Selangor Civil War ended. Rehabilitation of Kuala Lumpur began at once.

1880: The capital of Selangor was transferred to prosperous Kuala Lumpur in March. The British Resident, Mr. Bloomfield Douglas (1876-82), erected his offices in the present Bluff Road area and his Residency on the present Residency Hill.

1881: The whole town of Kuala Lumpur was burnt down in January.

1882: Sir Frank Swettenham became British Resident in Selangor, staying until 1889; he made Kuala Lumpur a strong and prosperous town during his administration.

1883: The first wooden bridge was erected at the western end of Market Street.

1884: Kuala Lumpur was rebuilt, street by street, using brick or wattle with tiled roofing; by 1887 there were 518 brick houses in Kuala Lumpur. The Selangor Club was founded.
1886: The Railway between Klang and Kuala Lumpur was completed on September 15. Rawang was linked in 1892, Pudu in 1893. The Telegraph line was erected from Kuala Lumpur to Malacca.

1888: A Branch of the Chartered Bank was established at Jalan Raja.

1889: The Formal opening of Lake Gardens took place on May 13. The artificially created lake was named “Sydney Lake”. The building of the Canton-Chaoking Association was opened.

1891: The Pudu Jail at Jalan Pudu was completed. The Yap Clan Shrine was completed at Yap Ah Loy Street.

1893: The Victoria Institution was opened.

1894: The Tung Shin Hospital was opened in the autumn at Jalan Pudu. A small Hospital was founded by Capitan Yap Quan Seng in 1881.

1895: The Railway Station acquired electric light.

1896: Kuala Lumpur became the capital of the Federated Malay States. The Government buildings were completed at Jalan Raja. In April the first piped water supply was constructed. In December, *The Malay Mail* was published.

1897: The present Government office facing the Padang was opened. *The Kong See Boo Poe* (The Chinese Daily News) was published.

1904: Port Swettenham started to emerge as the Federated States' leading port.

1906: Electricity was installed in the Government offices.

1907: The present General Post Office Building was completed in June.

1909: The chief Mosque was opened on December 23.

1910: The present Railway Station was opened in August.

1917: The Malayan Railway Administration’s headquarters office was completed.

1921: The Selangor Golf Club, at its present site, was opened in September.

1928: Meanders of the Klang River below the Central Police Station were straightened to prevent severe floods.

1929: Kuala Lumpur’s first radio station on Petaling Hill began broadcasting. The Selangor Chinese Recreation Club was opened at Jalan Pudu in October.

1937: The present home of the Rubber Research Institute, set up in 1925, was opened in May at Jalan Ampang.
1940: The present Fui Chew Building at Leboh Raya Foch was completed. The Fui Chew Association had been established in 1875.

1942: Kuala Lumpur was captured by Japanese forces on January 11.

1945: Surrender of Japanese forces was taken in the Victoria Institute on September 13. From September 1945 to April 1946 Kuala Lumpur was under British Military Administration.

1947: Malayan Airways Ltd. began regular services in May.

1948: Kuala Lumpur became the capital of the Federation of Malaya on February 1, and also a municipality on March 15.

1953: The present Chin Woo Building was opened in December.

1956: Regular international air services through Kuala Lumpur began in August.

1957: Merdeka Stadium was opened on August 30. Kuala Lumpur became the capital of the independent Federation of Malaya. Malaya's independence was proclaimed in the new Merdeka Stadium on August 31. Lectures for first year students of the Kuala Lumpur Division of the University of Malaya started in temporary buildings at the Technical College.

1958: The Tunku Abdul Rahman Hall was opened in March. The Tunku Abdul Rahman Park was opened in April. The Engineering Faculty of the University of Malaya in the Pantai Valley was established in July.

1959: The dam of the Klang Gate was completed. The reservoir of the Klang Gate can supply forty-one million gallons of water daily. A modern viaduct, north of the Railway Station, was opened on March 15. The Centenary Celebrations of Kuala Lumpur arranged by the Municipal Councillors, were held from June 13 to June 15.

1961: Municipal affairs of Kuala Lumpur began to be administered by a Commissioner on April 1.

1962: Malaysia's National Stadium at Davidson Road was opened on April 19. The Lee Wah Bank (13-storied) Building was opened on November 6.

1963: Kuala Lumpur became the capital of Malaysia on September 16. Malaysia's Parliament House in Lake Gardens was opened on November 2.
Chetawarn Buddhist Temple at Jalan Pantai of Petaling Jaya was opened on October 29.

1965: American International Building, belonging to the American International Assurance Co. (AIA), was opened on February 16. On February 25, a giant building for the Chartered Bank was opened on Ampang Road. The National Mosque, west of the viaduct, was opened on August 27.

Subang International Airport, fifteen miles from Kuala Lumpur, with a runway 11,400 feet long, was completed on August 30.

1966: Malaysia's National Monument in Lake Gardens was unveiled on February 8.

The Bank Bumiputra Malaysia Ltd. was opened on March 10 at Leboh Ampang.

The National Electricity Board (13-storied) Building at Jalan Bungsar was opened on March 26.
2. NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

(A) TOPOGRAPHY

The present built-up area of Kuala Lumpur lies on the undulating region of Kenny Hills to the west, and on the irregular tectonic basin of Kuala Lumpur to the east. The tectonic basin and its surrounding hills are the two most prominent landscape features in the State of Selangor. In the east, the tectonic basin is bounded by the rugged Mesozoic granite Main Range (the Central Range), which is frequently termed the "backbone" of Malaya, and which penetrates well to the west. The range begins at the Thai border and stretches southwards over three hundred miles to the State of Malacca.\(^1\) In the north and the south, the basin is bounded by two low granite spurs which extend westwards from the Main Range separately. The north one stretches as far as the eastern suburb of Rawang, and the south one ends near the tin-mining village of Sungei Besi.

The undulating region of the Kenny Hills, mentioned above, consists of two parts. The eastern part, which has varying heights from one hundred feet to about two hundred feet, is composed of Carboniferous sandstone and shales; the western part, rather higher in elevation, consists of Mesozoic granite.\(^2\) Both form an isolated, picturesque hilly region. In the northeast part of the Kuala Lumpur basin appears an outcrop of lower Palaeozoic sediments composed of schist, forming the foothills of the Main Range. The flat bottom of the basin is paved with extensive tin-bearing alluvium, beneath which is a very thick layer of limestone.

The irregular form of the Kuala Lumpur basin, with a general NW-SE axis, may be divided into two unequal parts. The bigger northwestern part, north of the Klang River, is quadrangular in shape and includes many satellite towns, such as Setapak, Gombak, Batu, Batu Caves, Kepong, Jinjang, Segambut, and the Central Workshops. The southern part is triangular, covering the little towns of Ampang, Pudu and Salak South. Near the northern corner of the quadrangular part is a giant outcrop of limestone forming an isolated residual hill, known as "hum" in Karst Phenomena; this houses the famous Batu Caves.\(^3\) The caves are situated seven miles north of the central part of the city. South of the Batu Caves is an extensive alluvial plain, flat and fertile, stretching as far as Pudu and Ampang. There are many faults, long and short, in the southeastern part of the basin. The longest one is the Ampang Fault, NW-SE in direction, between the limestone basin and the granite foothills.

The basin of Kuala Lumpur is within the area drained by the upper Klang River and its longest tributary, the Gombak River. Its headwater rises in the central part of the Main Range, flows southwestward into the foothill region
and then receives the Ampang River from the south and the Gombak River from the north. Then it flows through the central part of Kuala Lumpur, turns westward, emptying into the Straits of Malacca. In the south, at the mouth of the Klang River, is the old harbour of Port Swettenham; its modern section is in the Klang Straits, about three miles north of the river mouth. Because of this, the valley of the Klang River is the most populous and booming area in the country. In the past, it was Klang's and Kuala Lumpur's lifeline. Now it accommodates not only the biggest city, Kuala Lumpur, and the busiest port, Port Swettenham, but also the prospering industrial town of Petaling Jaya. Even the modern Subang International Airport is not far from the mid-course of the Klang River. In brief, the Kenny Hills and the Kuala Lumpur basin formed an ideal area on which the city of Kuala Lumpur could develop.

(B) **CLIMATE**

Generally speaking, a tangle of greenery extends in an unbroken expanse in equatorial Malaya, except of course in the developed areas. Kuala Lumpur itself is bounded by lush jungle, favoured by a fairly uniform high temperature throughout the year, and by heavy rainfall. The fundamental characteristics of the Kuala Lumpur climate are of the "Af" type in Koppen's climatic system in Southeast Asia, and the equatorial type of Professor Stamp's climatic scheme. Temperature and rainfall are slightly affected by local conditions. The climate of Kuala Lumpur may thus vary slightly from that of other cities in Malaya and Singapore.

**TEMPERATURE AND RAINFALL**

The city of Kuala Lumpur is situated between latitudes 3°05' and 3°11' north, about two hundred miles from the equator, so that the variation of average daily temperature throughout the year is extremely small. The average daily minimum temperature seldom falls below 72°F., and the average daily maximum temperature seldom exceeds 90°F. The highest maximum recorded is 95°F., and the lowest minimum recorded is 64°F. The days are generally oppressive due to high humidity; the nights are generally cool and pleasant. The coolest monthly average is 78.4°F., while the average for the warmest month is 80.2°F. — a difference of only 1.8°F. The daily range of temperature is large, from 10°F. to 18°F. However, the high day temperature, experienced in continental tropical areas, are never found. The rainfall of the Kuala Lumpur basin is not only abundant but also well distributed throughout the year. The wettest months are April and October (See Table I — IV). In spite of heavy rains, there are long periods of bright sunshine. Roughly speaking, Kuala Lumpur has an average of more than 2,200 hours of sunshine annually.