

A SOCIO-CULTURAL HISTORY OF FOOTBALL  
IN MALAYA, 1880-1950

BY

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A dissertation submitted in fulfilment of the requirement for  
the degree of Master of Human Sciences in History and  
Civilization

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## ABSTRACT

This study explores the socio-cultural history of football in Malaya from the 1880s to the 1950s. It begins by examining how football was introduced during the British colonial period as a leisure activity among European social clubs. British and European officials originally set up the clubs and became some of the earliest venues for the introduction and promotion of this sport. Football started as a recreational pursuit but gradually moved beyond the European circles and grew into organised state-level competitions in Penang, Selangor, Malacca, Perak, and Negri Sembilan. Public spaces such as open fields and club grounds served as important venues where football gained visibility and acceptance among local communities. Over time, the sport attracted widespread attention from the Malays, Chinese, and Indians who began to take part as players, supporters, and organisers. Local football teams were formed, with the regular matches held, leading to the creation of state football leagues and administrative structures. These developments were crucial in transforming football from a colonial pastime into a structured part of Malayan public life. The formation of early football associations helped lay the foundation for future national-level organisation. The study also discusses the process that led to the institutionalisation of football in Malaya through the establishment of the Malayan Football Association, which played a significant role in organising and governing the sport in a broader scale. This study uses historical records, newspapers, memoirs, and archives to understand better how football grew during the colonial period. It highlights the ways in which football became a common platform for social interaction across different races. This study provides a fresh narrative in the history of football in this region by focusing on its early growth, its integration into public life, and its lasting cultural impact on Malayan society.

## ملخص البحث

تتناول هذه الدراسة التاريخ الاجتماعي والثقافي لكرة القدم في ملايا خلال الفترة الممتدة من 1880 إلى 1950. تبدأ الدراسة بتحليل كيفية دخول كرة القدم إلى المنطقة من خلال الأنشطة الترفيهية التي كانت تُمارس في الأندية الاجتماعية الأوروبية، والتي أسسها المسؤولون البريطانيون والأوروبيون، وأصبحت من أوائل الأماكن التي نُظمت فيها الرياضات الحديثة. تطورت كرة القدم من نشاط ترفيهي للنخبة إلى منافسات منظمّة على مستوى الولايات في بينانغ وسلانغور وملقا وبيراك ونيجري سميلان. وقد أصبحت المساحات العامة، مثل الساحات والميادين والمواقع الرئيسية لاكتساب اللعبة شعبية واسعة بين المجتمعات المحلية. ومع مرور الوقت، جذبت كرة القدم اهتمام الملايو والصينيين والهنود، الذين شاركوا فيها كلاعبين ومشجعين ومنظمين. ساهم تشكيل الفرق المحلية وتنظيم المباريات المنتظمة في ظهور روابط ودوريات على مستوى الولايات، مما عزز من ترسيخ اللعبة كجزء من الحياة العامة. كما أدى ذلك إلى نشأة اتحادات كروية محلية أرسيت الأساس لتأسيس اتحاد كرة القدم المالايوي، الذي ساهم لاحقًا في تنظيم اللعبة على المستوى الوطني. تعتمد هذه الدراسة على مصادر تاريخية تشمل السجلات والصحف والمذكرات والوثائق الأرشيفية، لتقديم فهم أعمق لتطور كرة القدم خلال الحقبة الاستعمارية. وتُبرز الدراسة كيف أصبحت كرة القدم منصة للتفاعل الاجتماعي بين الأعراق المختلفة، وعاملًا ثقافيًا ساهم في تشكيل الهوية الاجتماعية في ملايا. تقدم هذه الدراسة سردًا جديدًا لتاريخ كرة القدم في المنطقة، يركز على نموها المبكر، ودورها في الحياة العامة، وتأثيرها الثقافي الطويل المدى في المجتمع المالايوي.

## APPROVAL PAGE

I certify that I have supervised and read this study and that in my opinion, it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Master of Human Sciences in History and Civilization.

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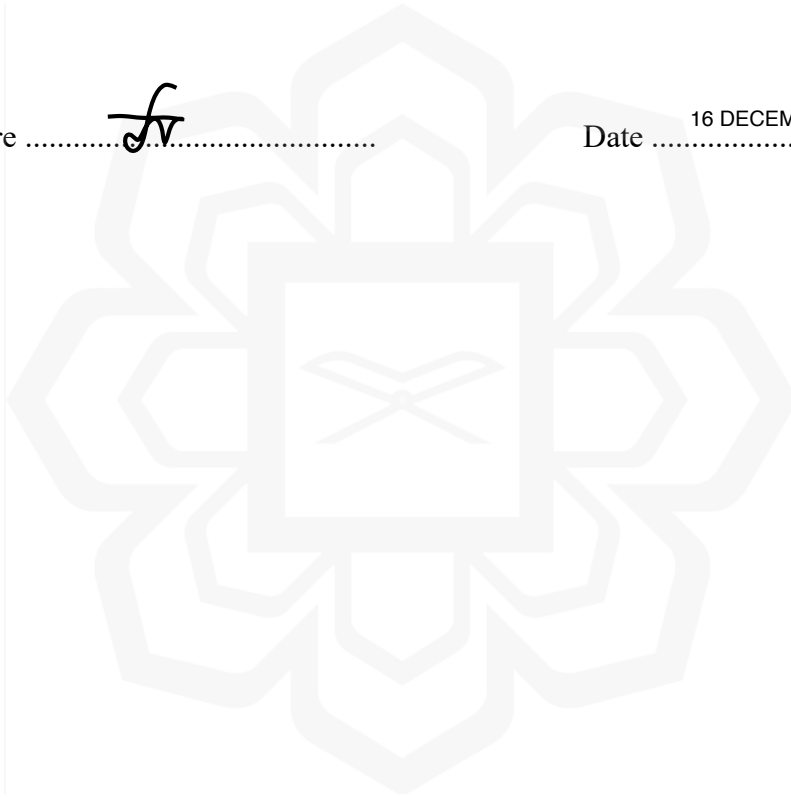
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## DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this dissertation is the result of my own investigations, except where otherwise stated. I also declare that it has not been previously or concurrently submitted as a whole for any other degrees at IIUM or other institutions.

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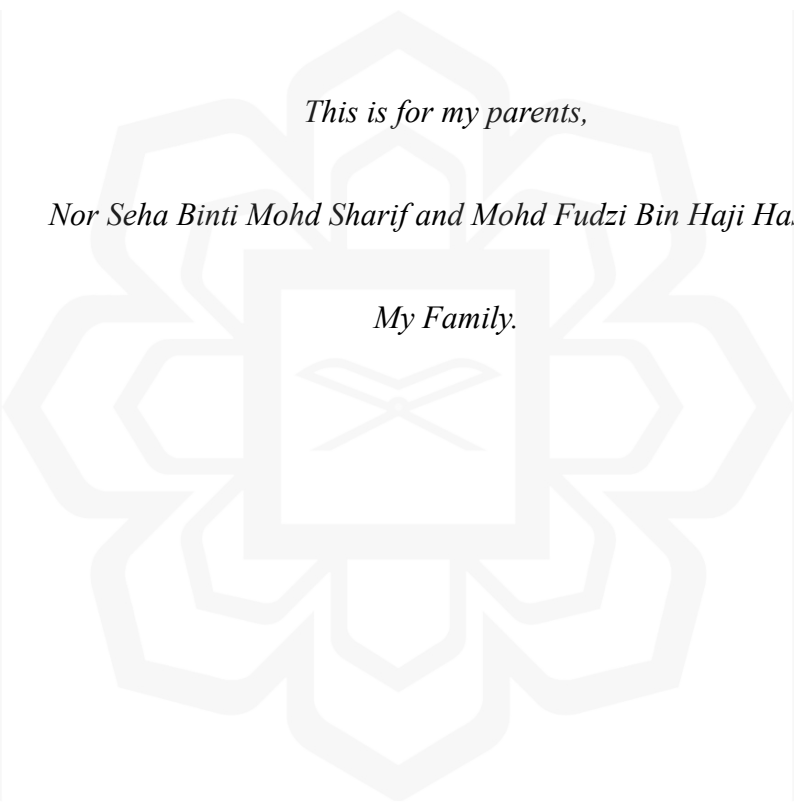
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*This is for my parents,*

*Nor Seha Binti Mohd Sharif and Mohd Fudzi Bin Haji Hasan,*

*My Family.*

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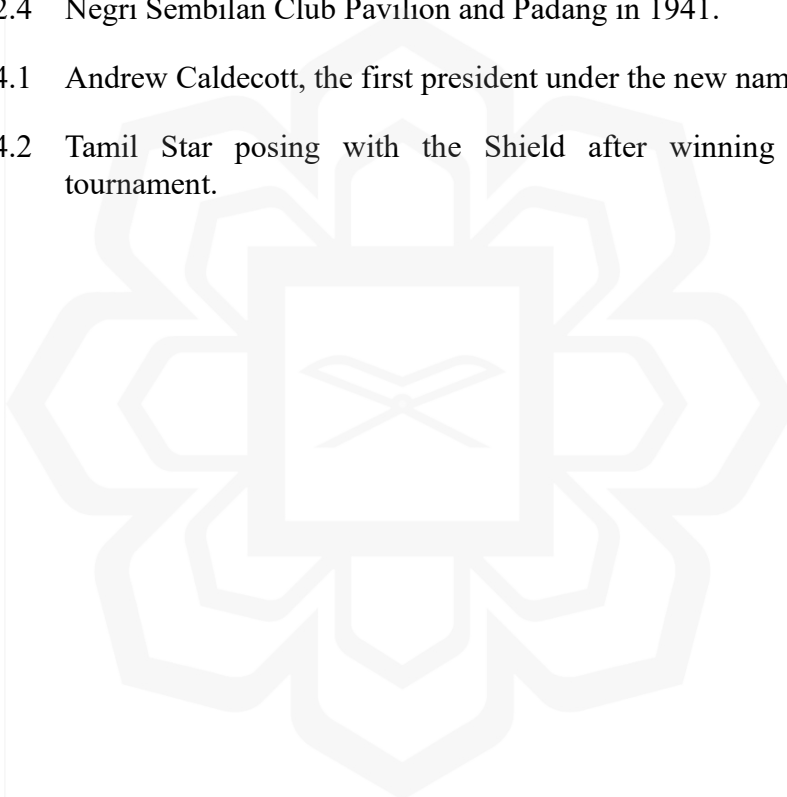
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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CRC	Chinese Recreation Club
FA	Football Association
FAM	Football Association of Malaya
FC	Football Club
IMSU	Ipoh Malay Sporting Union
IRC	Indian Recreation Club
KIA	Kinta Indian Association
MCFC	Malacca Chinese Football Club
MCRC	Malacca Chinese Recreation Club
MFA	Malayan Football Association
NSCRC	Negeri Sembilan Chinese Recreation Club
NSFA	Negeri Sembilan Football Association
NSIA	Negeri Sembilan Indian Association
PBC	Persidangan Belia Club
PCC	Penang Cricket Club
PCFA	Penang Chinese Football Association
PCRC	Penang Chinese Recreation Club
PFL	Penang Football League
PRC	Penang Recreation Club
SAFL	Selangor Association Football League
SSC	Sultan Suleiman Club
SUCA	Seremban United Chinese Association
TACC	Teluk Anson Chinese Club
TIA	Taiping Indian Association
TPCA	Tamilian Physical Culture Association
UCFT	United Chinese Football Team
YMCA	Young Men's Christian Association

# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Tanah Melayu, or Malaya, located in Southeast Asia, is basically known as the Malay Peninsula. Geographically, it is a small land mass that runs from the north to the south, and at its end is the southernmost point of the Asian mainland. Throughout history, the Malay Peninsula has been an important port of call for explorers and traders from all over the world. Its days started appearing in historical records when the Malay Peninsula was once under the dominance of the Malacca Sultanate between the 13<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>1</sup> The Malacca Sultanate controlled the Malay Peninsula and marked a major shift of institutional power in this area. Apart from the Malacca Sultanate, there are many other Malay kingdoms, such as the Perak Sultanate and Selangor Sultanate, in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, before the arrival of the British in 1786 on Penang Island.

British colonialism began in the 19<sup>th</sup> century after the native sultans in Malaya reluctantly acknowledged the British intervention in the government for the next 170 years, and changed the political and economic landscape in the region. As the protectorate of Britain, Malaya enjoyed some rights from the British as the nine kings were able to retain their status as the sovereigns of the states with the British officers (Resident) becoming their advisors and interfering with the governance of the lands.<sup>2</sup> The influence of the British Empire towards Malaya was greatly significant compared to other Western powers such as the Portuguese in the 16<sup>th</sup> century and the interference of the Dutch in northern Malaya and Malacca during the 17-18<sup>th</sup> century.

The Malayan peninsula during the British colonial era was separated into three administrations. Penang, Malacca, and Singapore were known as the Straits

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<sup>1</sup> Anthony Reid, *Imperial Alchemy: Nationalism and Political Identity in Southeast Asia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 95.

<sup>2</sup> H. Yamada, *The Origins of British Colonialization of Malaya with Special Reference to Its Tin* (Tokyo: Institute of Developing Economies, 1971), 232.

Settlements. These areas were directly ruled by the British as a colony. Next were the protected states, which comprised the Federated Malay States and the Unfederated Malay States. The Federated Malay States (FMS) were known as the federation of four Malay states: Perak, Selangor, Negri Sembilan, and Pahang. This federation was established by the British colonial administration in 1895 and remained until 1946. The last one was the Unfederated Malay States (UMS), consisting of Kelantan, Terengganu, Perlis, Kedah, and Johor. These states enjoyed greater autonomy compared to the FMS states.

The arrival of the British in Malaya had left a significant impact on the local people. In terms of politics, the British controlled and reduced the political power of sultans and threatened the traditional political system in Malaya. For the economy, the British intervention in the local economy left a great impact with the arrival of Chinese and Indian labour to Malaya, especially for the tin mining and rubber plantation.<sup>3</sup> Beyond their role in politics and the economy, the British left a lasting mark on the local society. However, we must take note that the influence of the British in Malaya was not merely political in nature, as it can also be seen in the social-cultural sphere.

In terms of social-cultural changes, the British had introduced Western education and sports culture to the local nobles in Malaya and made a huge contribution towards the development of the local society. As Ali Hamdan notes, British education produced a considerable number of Malay alumni from Cambridge University who went on to professional careers as doctors and engineers.<sup>4</sup> At the same time, sports became increasingly popular in Malaya as the European population grew, serving as amusement for colonial officials. Sir Frank Swettenham wrote, “Wherever the Englishman goes, he carries his sports, and Malaya has been no exception to the rule, but rather the contrary.”<sup>5</sup> Sports were a need for the British officers as they needed a leisure activity, which later set an early stage for the development of modern sports in

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<sup>3</sup> Mohd Rizal bin Mohd Yaakop, “The British Legacy on the Development of Politics in Malaya,” *Tawarikh: International Journal for Historical Studies* 2(1), 2010: 43.

<sup>4</sup> Mohd, Ali Hamdan. “*The British Colonial Legacy: Sport and Politics in Multi-Ethnic Malaysia from 1800 to 2000.*” PhD diss., University of Warwick, 2002, 93.

<sup>5</sup> Frank Swettenham, *British Malaya: An Account of the Origin and Progress of British Influence* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1906), 266.

Malaya. Football, cricket, tennis, billiard, and hockey were among the sports introduced by the British.<sup>6</sup>

Of all the sports introduced by the British, football perhaps was the most socio-culturally important. However, more than just a sport, football could also be used as a tool to spread the British influence on the local community, as the locals consensually adopt it into their lifestyle. This view is supported by Roser (2016) in his article, *Sport: A Tool of Colonial Control for the British Empire*. He argued that sports enabled the British to change the background of their natives with the inspiring meaning of ‘civilisation’ and character growth. Sports were also a plan to build a great image of the British Empire for the world. The role of sport in the British colonies was a complicated, yet valuable instrument for British imperialists.<sup>7</sup> Moreover, the introduction of British lifestyle and sports in the nineteenth century was a way of ensuring British dominance over the natives.<sup>8</sup>

The study of the cultural influence of football during the British colonial administration is something new in Malaysia, even though it is the most popular sport among Malaysians. The introduction of football has also brought a new era to the local scene, especially among the elites and nobles. When football became accepted in the colonies, these colonies would later become culturally obligated to the British lifestyle. Moreover, the British have always been viewed as the keepers of the law of sports for the Empire, especially football, and that made the British appear as the fair and neutral judges of the sports.

Football, originally from the United Kingdom and is well-known as *bola sepak* in Malaysia, is unquestionably the world’s most popular sport.<sup>9</sup> While *sepak takraw* may be considered a local sports heritage, any objective observer would name football as the national sport of most of the countries in Europe, Latin America and Africa, as

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<sup>6</sup> Frank Swettenham, *British Malaya: An Account of the Origin and Progress...*, p. 266.

<sup>7</sup> Isobel Roser, “Sport: A Tool of Colonial Control for the British Empire,” *The Butler Scholarly Journal*, 30 April 2016. Retrieved from <http://butlerscholarlyjournal.com/2016/04/30/sport-a-tool-of-colonial-control-for-the-british-empire/> on 24 April 2023

<sup>8</sup> Roger Hutchinson, *Empire Games: The British Invention of Twentieth Century Sport* (Edinburgh: Mainstream Publishing, 1996), 95.

<sup>9</sup> John Bale, *Sports Geography* (Oxford: Taylor & Francis, 2002), 43.

well as in much of Asia. Football in this region is one of the cultural influences brought by the British during the colonial era. Local people, especially the elites and royal family, slowly accepted football as their hobby. For example, the founding father of Malaysia, Tunku Abdul Rahman, was a football enthusiast.<sup>10</sup> The endorsement from the British administration of football attracted many people to play this game. Towards the end of the 19th century, football was one of the central pillars of most sports clubs in Malaya.

The evidence on the early institution of football clubs in Malaya is still lacking to this day and local academics are trying to look for more data on their existence and features. Up to this development, we could turn to the local history archives to expand this topic, especially those related to the lifestyle of the local people during the British colonial administration. The formation of recreational and sports clubs was common during this era, which could be related to the establishment of football clubs. The local people, especially those who live in the Straits Settlement, were familiar with the British lifestyle and sports. In fact, during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Mohammedan Football of Penang travelled to southern Malaya to play against their counterpart, Singapore, for an inter-settlement match.<sup>11</sup> This could be a suggestion that the locals had given a lot of attention to football.

The reason why this research focuses on the period of the 1880s until the 1950s is that this period is well-known as the main era of British Malaya administration. It could become a hot spot era of football activities during this period. As the British slowly put their claws on this land, the development of British culture and lifestyle slowly adapted by the local society as the main things to improve their life. The attention given by the British officers to the local people, especially the Malays, the owners of the Malayan land, could be seen as a tool of dominance and control over the hearts of the local people by introducing them to a Western lifestyle and making them part of the British lifestyle.

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<sup>10</sup> Mohamed Noorani, "Tunku the Avid Football Fan," *The Star*, 22 October 2016. Retrieved from <https://www.thestar.com.my/opinion/letters/2016/10/22/tunku-the-avid-football-fan/> on 20 April 2023.

<sup>11</sup> S. N. Khoo, *Tamil Muslims in the Penang Port, 1900–1940* (paper presented at the Indian Ocean Conference, Penang, 2011), 6.

During this period, there were many local football organisations were established and the oldest local football organisation in this region is Singapore Football Association that established on 29 August 1892 only 29 years after the establishment of the Football Association in England.<sup>12</sup> After the establishment of football association in Straits Settlement such Penang in 1921 and Malacca in 1924, many Malayan states gradually establish the main body to govern football in their perspective area. For instance, the Selangor Football Association was established in 1926. Kedah people established their football association in 1924, while Perak and Negri Sembilan followed in 1926.<sup>13</sup> Most of the Federated Malay States in the western coastal area had already established their football association.

Despite its popularity in Malaya, football perhaps had received less attention from the local academic view than its international prominence might suggest, compared to the view on cultural studies. This paper reviews the existing literature in the field of football in historical studies with a specific emphasis on the impact of football on the locals.

This study is essential to the history of sports, particularly the history of football in Malaya, but also social history in general, because it helps in understanding the relationship between local people and football during the British colonial rule and how the sport spread in the local community in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. This study will also explore the arrival of football in Malaya and how the locals accepted football as part of their lifestyle.

## 1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

This study focuses on the cultural impact of football on the local people in Malaya, and based on the early observation, several main issues or problems were identified in

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<sup>12</sup> Ng Huiwen, "Flashback Friday: Singapore Amateur Football Association Founded on Aug 29, 1892," *The Straits Times*, 2014. Retrieved from <https://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/flashback-friday-singapore-amateur-football-association-founded-on-aug-29-1892> on 26 April 2022.

<sup>13</sup> Peng Han, Lim, and Mohd Salleh Aman, "The HMS Malaya Cup Football League, 1921–1941: Towards the Institutionalization of Football in British Malaya," *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 35, no. 13–14 (2018): 3. Retrieved from DOI: 10.1080/09523367.2018.1495194.

rationalising the study. The problems faced are generally gaps found from previous studies, which were both uncommon and interesting about the history of football in the early British rule in Malaya. The lack of studies in this field led this research to highlight in our documentation of history in Malaya, and will have a great impact on the academic field, especially from a socio-cultural perspective.

The first issue is that we want to know how far the history of football in Malaya is presented in our history, and its significant impact on the local society. In the past articles produced by Peng Han Lim and Mohd Salleh Aman, no further details on documentation or annotation of the subject were provided. This is proof that this study needs to be further researched and highlighted in our history. The problem lies in the effort of identifying the establishment of the local football team, which is either lost or forgotten by many; although some people are aware of this issue in society, they remain dependent on basic knowledge on the internet. Within the library research, the origin of football in Malaya is not enough without the efforts of identifying, firstly, the contexts such as the history of the origin, secondly, the local adaptation to the British influence in their life, and thirdly, the reaction of local people towards football.

Secondly, the subsequent identification of the origin of football in Malaya is where we will obtain information relating to the scene of local football. The books and archives from the National Archives were written by the British officers during the era of British colonialism. Some old books and archival materials may contain significant information behind the establishment of the local Malaya football teams, which, to this day, remain as an incomplete explanation of the origin of football in Malaya. This makes getting a conclusive and comprehensive picture of when the British or local people started playing football during this era a challenging prospect. In this development, a few past studies have tried to identify and sort the legacy of local football activities in Malaya as proof in our history, and their possible diffusion throughout the British administration region in Malaya may be understood. The study of these archival materials and old books within Malaya may add to our general knowledge by linking them to previous studies around the region, as well as for prospective and potential future studies.

Thirdly, we would like to know the historical context of what made football during this era become an acceptable thing for local society, as there must be stories related to or recorded about them contemporarily or after they had played this activity. It must be a possibility that local society could not totally agree and accept football as part of their life. The introduction of football in Malaya could look like a negative response, just like the arrival of the British in this region. There could be an idea that the development of the football culture and tradition in Malaya is related to the development of football in Britain during the late 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Going even further in history, the local society in this region was not aware of the development of football in Malaya. We may find the information on the introduction of football by the British to the locals maybe for leisure activities, and not as a professional sport, just like nowadays. The knowledge from the past literature will give us more insight into the football activities that occurred during this era and left a significant impact on the local people. The past football activities during this period could be seen as an establishment of the connection between the European community, especially the British, mingled with the local society.

In general, explaining the local football in the history of Malaysia is important for the sake of preserving and maintaining premier historical evidence of local society activities during the British colonialism of Malaya, which in turn would greatly benefit academia and the study of the socio-cultural establishment of Malaysia.

### **1.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

Several questions have been identified to answer and solve relevant problems arising from this research, and they serve as a sort of guidance or focus on what should be discussed under the general subject and the specific subtopics found within. They are:

1. When and how did football start in Malaya?
2. How did the locals react to football and adapt it into their lives?

3. How far did football change the way Malaysians socialise with the British and among themselves?

#### **1.4 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

The objectives of this study are to answer the questions arising from identified problems. This study will be able:

1. To trace the origin of football in Malaya.
2. To identify and analyse how the locals reacted to football and adapted it into their lives.
3. To discuss the impact of football on social relations in British Malaya.

#### **1.5 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

During the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, many parts of Asia, including Malaya, were dominated by various imperial powers. The influence of the British in Malaya left an invaluable heritage on the Malayan society. Apart from the changes of administration and economy, the British put forward upon their colonies a social and cultural legacy left behind in the local society. From the establishment of recreational clubs to the tea party, the British influence enforced their lifestyle on the locals and became proof of an assimilation of British culture into the local people. For instance, football emerged as a major activity in social development in Malaya. On the other hand, football has managed to maintain its influence in the Malayan region and has become a tool for the British to gain the attention of local people.

Therefore, this research is significant for several reasons. First, it aims to document and analyse the relationship between football and the local community during this era. With such documentation, the research will help to understand how football have endeavoured to establish and maintain itself as a popular sport during the era of

British rule among the native people and its effect on the society members, especially the nobles.

Next, this study is vital because, in the end, its findings will also serve as a useful tool for academic recommendations on the history of cultural impact by the British towards the local community and can be used as a reference in future research about the British influence on the Malayan people. Also, it would be a contribution to reorganising the social and cultural legacy in Malaya.

Lastly, the literature on the relations between the history of football and Malayan society is uncommon. This is a notable absence in academic writing, especially in Malaysia, given that Malaysian researchers frequently published only the connections of any associations with politics and economics throughout the course of Malaysian history, especially during the British colonial administration. It is expected that this study will play an important role in filling both the current literature and information gap by providing a pivotal fact of reference for other researchers in the future.

## **1.6 LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **1.6.1 Introduction**

A literature review serves to situate the present study within existing scholarship, to identify what has been established, and to highlight gaps that remain. Research on the history of football in Malaya is still limited compared to studies on sports in other British colonies. Existing scholarship tends to examine the broader transmission of British sports culture or the social dynamics of colonial society, while only a few works address the early development of football in Malaya. This study reviews these contributions to clarify what has been done and what aspects remain underexplored.

The secondary sources for this thesis include academic books, and journal articles, on sports during the colonial period, particularly from the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Although these works provide valuable context for understanding the spread of British sports, they are insufficient for constructing a comprehensive

history of football in Malaya. Most sources were obtained from Klang Valley libraries, including the International Islamic University of Malaysia and the National Museum, as well as from online repositories and personal collections. Key scholars whose works inform this study include Peng Han Lim, Mohd Salleh Aman, and Harold Perkin.

Several themes emerge from the available literature, especially the relationship between sports and the British Empire, the social interactions shaped through colonial sporting activities, and the role of football within local communities. Despite these contributions, significant gaps remain, particularly in explaining how Malaysians first encountered football, how the game diffused across different communities, and how it was adapted into local social life. By addressing these gaps, this study aims to provide a more complete socio historical understanding of football's early development in Malaya.

### **1.6.2 The Relationship between Sports and the British Empire**

The transmission of British cultural practices, including sports, has long been recognised as a significant component of imperial influence. Numerous studies have examined how sports served as tools of cultural expansion, social order, and identity formation within British colonies. The broader scholarship on the relationship between sports and empire includes works on South America, Africa, and Asia, illustrating how British officers, merchants, and settlers introduced games such as football and rugby to local populations. For example, British merchants in Buenos Aires, Argentina, established the Sir Thomas Lipton's Trophy (Copa Lipton) in 1905, reflecting the global reach of British sporting traditions.<sup>14</sup>

Within the Malayan context, however, scholarly attention is more limited and fragmented. While some studies note the role of British administrators and European communities in introducing sports, few provide a systematic analysis of how these

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<sup>14</sup> Harold Perkin, "Teaching the Nations How to Play: Sport and Society in the British Empire and Commonwealth," *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 6, no. 2 (1989): 149. Retrieved from DOI: 10.1080/09523368908713685

activities diffused among local communities before the formalisation of competitions such as the HMS Malaya Cup.

Most existing works offer broad overviews of colonial sports culture but provide little detailed discussion of Malaya's early football practices. This lack of in-depth historical research leaves significant gaps in understanding the initial stages of football's diffusion, the interaction between Europeans and locals, and the cultural adaptation of the sport in Malaya. Building on these historical dynamics, the next section examines how sports, particularly football, shaped social relations and everyday interactions within local communities during the colonial period.

### **1.6.3 The Social Relation of Sports**

Several scholars have examined the social dimensions of sports in colonial Malaya, yet significant gaps remain in the historical record. Peng Han Lim and Mohd Salleh Aman (2018) provide a foundational study by documenting the HMS Malaya Cup and highlighting interactions between Europeans and local communities through football. They also note early events such as the 1849 New Year's Day match.<sup>15</sup> In 1896, the Challenge Cup was introduced during the administration of Acting Resident J.P. Rodgers, allowing indigenous and migrant teams from across Selangor to participate.<sup>16</sup> Yet, they offer only limited insight into how ordinary people participated in football during this period.

Building on these early competitions, European recreational clubs emerged as formal spaces where football and other sports were practiced, shaping the social and cultural landscape of colonial Malaya. Peng observed that European recreational clubs in Malaya were mainly established for playing cricket and football among themselves.<sup>17</sup> These clubs, such as the Ipoh Club in 1892, provided spaces for football, cricket, hockey, and tennis, and helped introduce British lifestyle and culture to local elites,

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<sup>15</sup> Lim and Aman, "The HMS Malaya Cup," 4.

<sup>16</sup> "Local Sport: The Rodger Football Challenge Cup," *Selangor Journal* 4, no. 20 (June 1896): 341.

<sup>17</sup> Peng Han, Lim, "The Diffusion and Transmission of Cricket among Europeans, Indigenous and Migrant Communities in the British Straits Settlements and Malay States during the Late Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century, 1786–1899," *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 30, no. 3 (2013): 214–20.

including Malay sultans and aristocrats.<sup>18</sup> They also preceded the development of local community clubs, such as those by the Chinese community. While these studies show the role of European clubs in shaping sports culture, they offer limited insight into how ordinary Malays, Chinese, and Indians engaged with football and other sports, or how these activities spread into wider local society.

While these clubs primarily catered to Europeans and local elites, other sources provide insight into how sports were experienced more broadly among the colonial population. J. M. Gullick provides detailed accounts of British officers' sporting and recreational practices, including gymkhana clubs in Kinta, Perak, and tennis played by Hugh Clifford in Pekan while on duty in Pahang.<sup>19</sup> Khoo Kay Kim (2009) highlighted football's role in Malaya by the 1930s, noting its social function and the rise of local clubs after British introduction of the game.<sup>20</sup> However, these studies offer limited insight into how ordinary Malays, Chinese, and Indians engaged with football or adapted it into their daily social life. These insights into organised clubs and elite participation provide a backdrop for understanding how football became embedded in wider local society, as discussed in the next section.

#### **1.6.4 The Role of Football in Society**

Football during the early British colonial era in Malaya diffused slowly into local society, and scholarly attention to this process remains limited. European recreational clubs played a significant role in introducing football alongside other Western sports such as cricket and hockey. For example, Peng and Salleh (2018) mentioned that the Chinese elites had their own esplanades for playing football, particularly for their children.<sup>21</sup> Next, the establishment of Darul Adab Club in 1893, exemplifies local engagement, producing the *Risalat peraturan bola sepak yang dinamai Inggeris*

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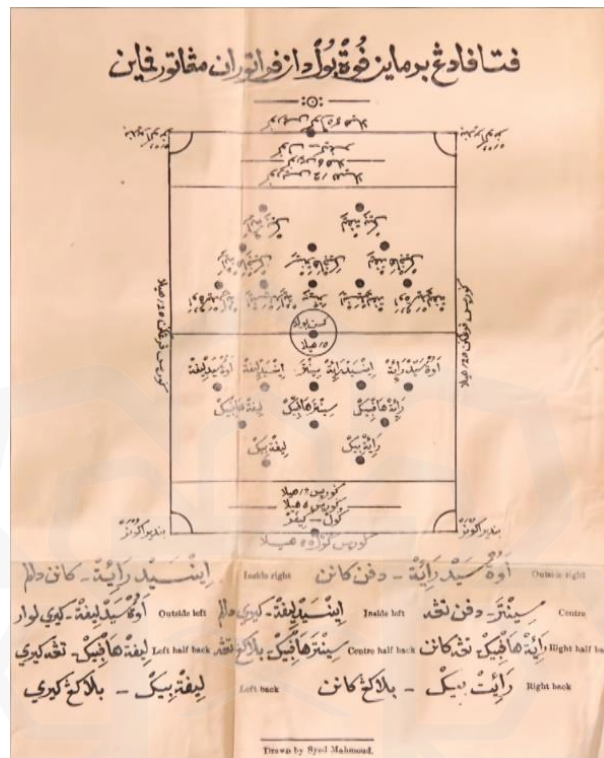
<sup>18</sup> Peng Han, Lim, "The Introduction and Institutionalization of Western Sport in Colonial and Postcolonial Malaya, 1786–1965," in *The Routledge Handbook of Sport in Asia*, ed. Fan Hong and Lu Zhou Xiang (London: Routledge, 2020), 169–79.

<sup>19</sup> J. M. Gullick, "Europeans in the Malay States," in *The British in Malaya* (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1979), 56.

<sup>20</sup> Rizal Hashim, "Bola Sepak Bentuk Sejarah Sosial," *EPLx Kosmo!*, October 24, 2009, 31..

<sup>21</sup> Lim and Aman, "The HMS Malaya Cup," 6.

*Football* in Jawi script in 1895, complete with diagrams of player positions drawn by Syed Muhammad Ali.<sup>22</sup> These examples show that football spread beyond European circles, but research rarely examines how local communities played and adapted the game.



Picture 1.1 The main page of *Risalat Peraturan Bola Sepak Yang Dinamai Inggeris Football*.<sup>23</sup>

Building on previous discussions of football’s diffusion into local society, Sir Robert Hamilton Bruce Lockhart’s *Return to Malaya* (1936) offers valuable insight into early local participation. He recounts how Malay players joined his football team in Titi, Seremban, and even travelled to Jelebu to compete against British officer teams such as Sir Andrew Caldecott’s.<sup>24</sup> These examples indicate that football was embraced by local communities beyond elite or European circles. Despite this, academic research remains

<sup>22</sup> A. Gallop, “Early Malay Printing: An Introduction to the British Library Collections,” *Journal of the Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 63, no. 1 (258) (1990): 109.

<sup>23</sup> Mazelan Anuar [National Library Singapore], *Inilah Risalat Peraturan Bola Sepak Yang Dinamai Oleh Inggeris Football*, YouTube video. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zCsanZYbRG0> on 3 May 2022.

<sup>24</sup> R. H. B. Lockhart, *Return to Malaya* (London: Putnam, 1936), 89.

limited, often emphasizing European clubs and organised competitions, leaving the social experiences and grassroots engagement of ordinary Malays and other ethnic groups largely unexplored.

## 1.7 METHODOLOGY

This research will be conducted through qualitative data collection and analysis based on perspectives drawn from history and sociology, and will also derive insights from fields such as ethnology, language, and the laws of sports. The usual method and context for analysis of sources for football in Malaya is based on the approaches of several previous studies. Peng Han Lim and Mohd Salleh Aman's work influences this study and will be used as the model of analysis on the subject. Their work has significantly enlightened the researcher on the origin of football in Malaya in terms of gender and race. This work will make a reconstruction of the origin of football in Malaya with a special focus on how Malaysians adapted football into their life.

In terms of primary sources, this research will be based on various types of documents and materials from the period of study. They are in the form of magazines, newspapers, photos, personal letters, government documents, and diaries. The National Archives may also help by supplying the findings with some evidence related to the establishment of recreational teams within the government's official records.

Analyses based on old newspapers such as Singapore Free Press, Mercantile Advertiser, and The Straits Times (Singapore) can enrich the materials and evidence for this research. Relevant information can also be found in the diaries of some British officers, such as Sir Frank Swettenham, which would also be a great addition to the information for this project. Some old books, such as *Return to Malaya* by Sir Robert Bruce Hamilton Lockhart, that are related to football can be analysed to know how the local people played football and put this sport as a major influence on their lives.

The books from J. M. Gullick will also add some valuable materials and sources for this work. His work totally illustrates how the social life of the British officials, who

mingled with the locals in Malaya, is astounding and rich in materials needed for this plan. His work eventually provides an insight into the connection between British officers and the local people through football and how that built a legacy for the future football competitions in Malaya. The valuable information from J. M. Gullick will be a foundation for the building of the history of football in Malaya for future reference.

Apart from J.M. Gullick, the academic journal from Johor History Journal also became a secondary source for this research. A history of Johor football during the British rule in Johor was written by Syed Abdul Rahman Ali. His blog sheds light on the relationships amongst the locals, particularly the Malays who were playing football at the time. This aids in putting the spotlight on Malays' sports participation and an inquiry into how people feel about British sports.

The book, *Sixty Years of Soccer by Tamils (1904-1964) and Nationals in Malaysia*, has further information on the impact of soccer on race, particularly for Indians in Malaya. A. R. Singam, a former Asian Honorary Secretary for the Football Association of Malaysia, wrote this book. His writings made several remarks on the Tamilian influence on the growth of football in Malaya, particularly in Kuala Lumpur and Selangor. In the end, his writing offers light on the relationship between Tamilians and the teams playing football at the time. In the end, his contributions might be seen as fundamental to the growth of Tamil football in British Malaya.

## **1.8 SCOPE OF THE STUDY**

This study was conducted from November 2022 and covered the subject of the colonial administration of the British in Malaya, dating between the late 19th and early 20th centuries CE, based on chronological and paper analysis.

The study locations identified are all within the country of Malaysia and will be concentrated within the Klang Valley, which comprises a total area of 2,843 km<sup>2</sup>. However, references for the contexts of this study include other parts of the Malay Peninsula and British influence, such as Argentina and India, where reasonable studies

on the concentrated part of the British influence in the regions can be found in abundance.

The identified sites are: Dataran Merdeka, Stadium Merdeka, Kelab Sultan Sulaiman, and Dataran Seremban. These sites are notable places for football events in the Klang Valley during the British colonial era. All these sites are probably helpful for the nature and understanding of the study due to their impact on society during that era. This study is very significant for understanding how football played a great role in the social relationships with the local people. Though the British administration had ruled in Malaya since 1824, it was not until 1921 that the formation of the HMS Malaya Cup 1921, the first-ever inaugural cup of an inter-state football tournament, was held. Therefore, this period is significant due to the influence of the British, and football seemed to be actively involved in the Malayan society as the colony states from the 1880s.

## **1.9 OUTLINE OF THE STUDY**

Chapter allocation and sorting in this thesis are based on several models provided by major previous studies as guides. Consideration must be taken into account that those models are mostly written and sorted for the requirement of doctoral theses, where extra chapters normally became additional extension to their preceding MA theses chapters, or in other cases, came in the form of theses. Five (5) chapters are allocated here, which are:

Chapter One, which is the introduction, contains the study's technical background, objectives, significance, justification, literature review, scope of study, research questions, and methods of data collection.

Chapter Two discusses the origin of football in Malaya, where the foundation and significance of British culture and football are understood in the context of the early development of the British lifestyle in Malaya.

Chapter Three, which is on the role of football within society in Malaya, discusses chronologically the presence of local people who adapt and their reaction to football and other historical activities in relation to the data presented.

Chapter Four explains how football helped local people build their reputation and connect with others in society during the time of British Malaya.

Chapter Five, which is the conclusion, outlines the previous chapters that have already been answered and completes the problems of the study. This is followed by the path of the study in potential writings, extension of annotation, as well as disputes and risks, including preservation and conservation projects.



## CHAPTER TWO

### THE ORIGIN OF FOOTBALL IN MALAYA

#### 2.1 THE ARRIVAL OF FOOTBALL IN MALAYA

The arrival of the British in Malaya in 1786 had changed the local people's lives in terms of social activity. Despite the British focusing their power in terms of politics and exploiting the local resources, such as tin mining and rubber plantation, they also introduced their cultural activity to the local people, such as sports and the British lifestyle. The British have the most extensive impact on the development of sports in Malaya and thus on the elite sports. The introduction of British sports such as football, cricket and rugby became known very instantly among the local community.<sup>1</sup> These sports introduced by the European-majority member clubs in Malaya were part of the growth of recreational activity in the colonial society.

Under the British administration, the sports activity soon led to certain aspects of the culture of the Malayan society. Sports activities such as cricket, football and rugby were widely played at the public areas such as Selangor Club Padang, Negri Sembilan Padang in Seremban, Malacca with Malacca Club Padang, and Taiping served as a home for the Perak Club. These places also offer valuable insight for researchers exploring how football began in Malaya, highlighting the role of colonial-era spaces and the social environments surrounding them in shaping the sport's early development.

Before discussing the growth of football in Malaya, cricket was the earliest sport to take place in this region. According to Little (2009), cricket becomes predominantly enduring as solid evidence of the centrality of sport within the British colonial programme.<sup>2</sup> As we can consider that cricket was a popular sport activity among society during this era, and later contributed to the development of football in Malaya. This topic could be traced back to the beginning of the development of football in Malaya.

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<sup>1</sup> R. Winstedt, *The Malays: A Cultural History*, 5th ed. (Singapore: Graham Brash, 1989), 221.

<sup>2</sup> Charles Little, "South-East Asia," in *The Routledge Companion to Sports History*, 1st ed. (London: Routledge, 2009), 589.

However, the problem in this topic is related to the extensive historical study on the development of sports in Malaya. Little (2009) had mentioned that the transmission of sport in Malaya under the British administration during the nineteenth century is not as much studied compared to Singapore.<sup>3</sup> This topic could help gather more information for future research.

The origins of football in this region can be traced back to the late 19th century during the early period of British presence in Malaya. The game was introduced as part of festive sporting activities and was often played informally during public celebrations such as New Year's Day events in colonial towns like Singapore. According to Gullick (1994), it was a football game, and it was played for 'about half an hour', as part of various sporting events held during the annual New Year's Day festivals held in Singapore.<sup>4</sup>

At a broader level, sports held a significant place in British colonial ideology. According to Brownfoot, a common idea of the British in the tropical area was that routine training was compulsory for sustaining physical condition and morale, as well as private and public management.<sup>5</sup> It means the British viewed sports activity as an important aspect for maintaining their power and status as a colonial power during this period.

Sports, therefore, were seen as vital to upholding imperial authority. Most British officers were trained within the British educational system, where participation in energetic sports was closely tied to the Victorian ideals of manliness, responsibility, and the preservation of 'white prestige.'<sup>6</sup> Hence, the training provided by the British educational system is considered as an influence towards the development of sports in Malaya, especially football. By following discipline and good management, the British officers can show their regime in sports activities.

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<sup>3</sup> Little, "South-East Asia," 593

<sup>4</sup> J. M. Gullick, *Old Kuala Lumpur* (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1994), 41.

<sup>5</sup> J. N. Brownfoot, "'Healthy Bodies, Healthy Minds': Sport and Society in Colonial Malaya," *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 19, no. 2-3 (2010): 131.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 130.

This context helps explain why, in the early years, football in Malaya was largely limited to British officials and military personnel. It was regarded as a suitable form of recreation that aligned with these broader imperial values. For example, in 1890, a football match was played between the 58th Regiment and the Penang Cricket Club under the rules of association football. They played a total of six matches, with the Detachment winning five of them.<sup>7</sup> Hence, the British officials played a significant role during the introduction of football to the locals.

## **2.2 THE ROLE OF THE EUROPEAN SOCIAL CLUB**

The rise of sports as a form of leisure among the British in Malaya gained momentum following the establishment of European social clubs, which played a central role in promoting organised sporting activities such as football. Initially, sports were conducted collectively before evolving into more structured clubs based on British models. These clubs, which combined both recreational and social functions, became key spaces for European residents to interact and engage in sports within their communities. From the late 1860s onward, modern sports were introduced through clubs like the Penang Cricket Club, the Selangor Club, and the Lake Club in Kuala Lumpur, and the Perak Club and Ipoh Club in Perak. In Seremban, British officials established the Sungei Ujong Club and Negri Sembilan Club, while Malacca had the Malacca Club. These institutions helped embed sports, especially football, into the social life of colonial towns. The following discussion will explore the role of these clubs in the development of football in Malaya, divided into two sub-sections based on British administrative regions: the Straits Settlements and the Federated Malay States.

### **2.2.1 The European Social Clubs in the Straits Settlements**

The Straits Settlements, established in 1826 and later made a Crown colony in 1867, consisted of Penang, Singapore, Malacca, and Dinding in Perak. Penang and Malacca, having come under British control in 1786, 1819, 1824, and 1874, respectively, were

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<sup>7</sup> “Penang News (Pinang Gazette, 21st January),”. *Straits Times Weekly Issue*, 28 January 1890, 12.

among the earliest regions in Malaya to experience British influence. However, Dinding territory alongside Pangkor Island later returned to the Sultanate of Perak in 1935 during the reign of Sultan Alang Iskandar.<sup>8</sup> This influence led to the formation of recreational clubs that promoted both indoor and outdoor sports, reflecting the growing colonial leisure culture. While Singapore's role in introducing British sports is well recorded, this discussion focuses on Penang and Malacca due to the relatively limited documentation of football's early development in these areas. By highlighting these less-studied settlements, this section offers insight into how football began to emerge in more peripheral colonial settings.

To begin with, the establishment of Penang Cricket Club (PCC) marked a significant era for the beginning of Western sports in Malaya.<sup>9</sup> At first, cricket was played by the PCC. The earliest recorded cricket match played by the club was in 1866 against the crew of H. M. S. Rattler and Artillery.<sup>10</sup> Cricket became a turning point for the introduction of Western sports in Malaya. The Penang Cricket Club was exclusively meant for the European community. Later, even when football became popular, cricket remained the core sport of this club. This club has developed to cater to the sporting and social needs of the European community.

The earliest PCC's football match was against the 58<sup>th</sup> Regiment. The match was taking place on 19<sup>th</sup> June 1889. The game ended in a goalless draw, with neither team scoring.<sup>11</sup> Both teams competed against each other on multiple occasions throughout 1889.<sup>12</sup> The club managed to secure victory only once in five meetings, while the 58<sup>th</sup> Regiment also achieved one win during the same period. The remaining matches concluded in draws, indicating a closely contested rivalry. Here is the table detailing the results of these matches.

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<sup>8</sup> "Early Development of Lumut Promised," *Pinang Gazette and Straits Chronicle*, 13 May 1935, 6

<sup>9</sup> "Penang News," *Straits Times Weekly*, 8 December 1883, 12.

<sup>10</sup> "Penang," *The Singapore Free Press and Mercantile Advertiser (1835-1869)*, 14 June 1866, 3

<sup>11</sup> "Football," *Pinang Gazette and Straits Chronicle*, 21 June 1889, 5

<sup>12</sup> "Football," *Pinang Gazette and Straits Chronicle*, 16 July 1889, 6;

"Football," *Pinang Gazette and Straits Chronicle*, 15 November 1889, 6;

"Football," *Pinang Gazette and Straits Chronicle*, 19 November 1889, 5;

"Football," *Pinang Gazette and Straits Chronicle*, 6 December 1889, 5

Table 2.1 The List of Matches between PCC and 58<sup>th</sup> Regiment in 1889.

#	Date	Home team	Away team	Score
1	19 <sup>th</sup> June 1889	PCC	58 <sup>th</sup> Regiment	0-0
2	13 <sup>th</sup> July 1889	PCC	58 <sup>th</sup> Regiment	0-2
3	11 <sup>th</sup> November 1889	PCC	58 <sup>th</sup> Regiment	0-0
4	15 <sup>th</sup> November 1889	PCC	58 <sup>th</sup> Regiment	1-0
5	3 <sup>rd</sup> December 1889	PCC	58 <sup>th</sup> Regiment	0-0

Sources: *Pinang Gazette and Straits Chronicle*, "Football," 21 June 1889, 5; 16 July 1889, 6; 15 November 1889, 6; 19 November 1889, 5; 6 December 1889, 5.

The club also utilised the Esplanade for its activities, as its clubhouse was near the field. The Esplanade served as a venue for both football and cricket matches and was widely recognised as a strategic area for the British administration in Penang. The club played its football match in Esplanade against the 58<sup>th</sup> Regiment in 1899. Later, in 1909, PCC constructed a pavilion at the Esplanade, further solidifying its role as a central hub for sporting events during the colonial period.<sup>13</sup>

In Malacca, the founding of the Malacca Club in 1888 illustrated the growing importance of social institutions under British colonial influence. The club was founded after the member of Malacca cricket members were jealous with the formation of Selangor Club and Sungei Ujong Club when they travelled there to play cricket match.<sup>14</sup> Since then, the Malacca newspaper, *The Malacca Weekly Chronicle and Mercantile Advertiser* become as the main advocate to the establishment of club by updating the progress of the early stage of the club since January 1888. Finally, the club was established at the Resident Councillor's Office on 23<sup>rd</sup> January 1888 after the amalgamation of the Cricket and Lawn Tennis Club.<sup>15</sup> The club later became a symbol of the European community in Malacca.

<sup>13</sup> "Penang Cricket Club," *The Straits Echo (Mail Edition)*, 30 July 1909, 830

<sup>14</sup> "Saturday, January 14<sup>th</sup>, 1883," *The Malacca Weekly Chronicle and Mercantile Advertiser*, 14 January 1888, 2

<sup>15</sup> "From The Kampongs," *The Malacca Weekly Chronicle and Mercantile Advertiser*, 28 January 1888, 2

The club occupied a small building in Fort Terrace as its first headquarters in 1888.<sup>16</sup> The club later moved to the building situated near Banda Hilir Road in the middle of Malacca city. The club house was built in 1911 after the project for the enlargement of *Padang*. The new club house will see as a brand-new house that the veranda and balcony will facing the sea.<sup>17</sup> The new building finally receive the guests on 16<sup>th</sup> November 1912 when Mr. Littleton Edward Pipe Wolferstan formally declared the opening of the new club house.<sup>18</sup> The Malacca Club is two stories tall and has a green pitch at the back of the club house. Since the area will eventually be known as Malacca Club Padang, the green pitch and the club cannot be separated.

The magnificent grass field known as the Malacca Club Padang at the renowned Malacca Club will always be associated with the numerous sporting events that were played there. The members of the Malacca Club will entertain any outdoor activity on that field, as it serves the purpose for sports and leisure activities. Just like other European clubs in Malaya, the club used *Padang* for sports activities such as cricket, football, rugby, and lawn tennis. For instance, the Malacca Club football team played against the Muslim Football Association at Malacca Club Padang.<sup>19</sup> Hence. The sports activity flourished on this ground.

The development of football in Penang and Malacca was closely linked to the rise of European social clubs like the Penang Cricket Club and the Malacca Club. These clubs not only introduced Western sports but also provided venues such as the Esplanade and Malacca Club Padang for football and other games. Their early matches, facilities, and community involvement laid the foundation for organised sports in the region. Through these clubs, colonial leisure culture took root, and football gradually became part of local sporting life. The role of these institutions highlights how football began to grow in less-documented areas like Penang and Malacca, shaping early sports history in British Malaya.

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<sup>16</sup> "Groundsman 50 Years in Malacca," *The Straits Budget*, 8 December 1938, 8

<sup>17</sup> "Malacca Notes," *The Straits Budget*, 9 March 1911, 12

<sup>18</sup> "Notes From Malacca," How the New Club House Was Opened," *The Straits Budget*, 21 November 1912, 9

<sup>19</sup> "Malacca Football," *The Straits Times*, 1 August 1931,13

### 2.2.2 The European Social Clubs in the Federated Malay States

Following the earlier establishment of the Straits Settlements, British administrative influence extended inland, culminating in the formation of the Federated Malay States (FMS) in 1896. This federation comprised Perak, Selangor, Negri Sembilan, and Pahang, each brought under British residential administration during the late 19th century. Pahang was officially part of the FMS; documentation regarding the development of sports and recreational culture in the state remains scarce. As such, this study focuses primarily on Perak, Selangor, and Negri Sembilan, where British influence on leisure activities, particularly football, is better recorded.

To begin with, the Perak Club was established in Taiping in 1881 and served as the main social institution for European officials in the state during the colonial period. It quickly became a central hub for community life in Taiping, reflecting the broader colonial practice of creating exclusive spaces for social and recreational activities. Lieutenant Colonel Robert Sandilands Frowd Walker, a key British administrator, played a major role in the formation and early development of the club.<sup>20</sup> Sir Hugh Low, the fourth Resident of Perak, served as the club's patron, further emphasising the club's strong connection to colonial leadership.<sup>21</sup> While originally functioning as a social club, the Perak Club later evolved into an active sporting institution.

According to Hubback (1908), the Perak Club featured a Cricket and Recreation Club that marked the beginning of organised sports within the Federated Malay States.<sup>22</sup> The club is credited with initiating some of the earliest inter-state sports matches in British Malaya, including football games with visiting teams such as Penang Cricket Club in 1890 and Selangor Club in 1896.<sup>23</sup> These matches highlighted Perak Club's pioneering role in early competitive sports in Malaya.

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<sup>20</sup> T. R. Hubback, "Sport," in *Twentieth Century Impressions of British Malaya: Its History, People, Commerce, Industries and Resources*, 584 (London: Lloyd's Greater Britain Publishing Company, 1908).

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>23</sup> Lim and Salleh (2018), p. 1346.

The Esplanade in Taiping, commissioned in 1890, became the main ground for the Perak Club's sporting activities. Conveniently located near government offices, it was also used by the Perak Armed Police for drills and parades.<sup>24</sup> Colonel Walker, who led the police force, was himself an avid sportsman and served as the club's goalkeeper. Under his leadership, the Perak Club defeated the Selangor Club in a football match at the Esplanade in 1896.<sup>25</sup> In 1915, the club also hosted a football match between teams from North and South Perak, which ended in a one-all draw.<sup>26</sup> These matches demonstrated the club's role in fostering local football activity and promoting the sport throughout the state.



Picture 2.1 Lieutenant R.S.F. Walker (middle) and the Perak Armed Police in Taiping, 1890.<sup>27</sup>

The foundation of the Selangor Club in 1884 represented one of the earliest organised efforts to promote British recreational life in colonial Selangor.<sup>28</sup> Located in Kuala Lumpur, which had become the administrative heart of Selangor and later the

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<sup>24</sup> 'Padang Esplanade,' *Taiping*, Retrieved from <https://www.taiping.my/places/taiping/attractions/padang-esplanade/> on 31<sup>st</sup> May 2023

<sup>25</sup> "Football," *The Singapore Free Press and Mercantile Advertiser (Weekly)*, 2 June 1896, 346

<sup>26</sup> "Football At Taiping," *Pinang Gazette and Straits Chronicle*, 11 February 1915, 7

<sup>27</sup> Khoo, S. N. and Abdur Razzaq Lubis. "*The Making of Kinta: Secret Societies & Crime.*" In *Kinta Valley: Pioneering Malaysia's Modern Development*, 27. Penang: The Phoenix Press, 2005.

<sup>28</sup> "The Opening of the 'Selangor Club'," *Straits Times Weekly Issue*, 18 October 1884, 6

Federated Malay States, the club served as a gathering place for high-ranking colonial officers. Its founding members included key colonial figures such as John Pickersgill Rodger, the first president and Resident of Selangor, Captain Harry Charles Syers, the Commissioner of Police, and K. Thamboosamy Pillai, a Tamilian elite businessman.<sup>29</sup> Other prominent founders were Alfred Reid Venning, the State Treasurer and first Honorary Secretary and Henry Franklin Bellamy, a civil engineer who later assumed the secretary role.<sup>30</sup> Their involvement reflects the importance placed on the club as both a social and administrative centre for British elites.

The club's primary purpose was to host social meetings and promote sports activities such as cricket, tennis, chess, and billiards.<sup>31</sup> Cricket stood at the core of its early sporting identity, reflecting the sport's central role in British colonial culture. The Selangor Club Padang is located directly in front of its main building along Jalan Raja. The field later gained recognition as the Selangor Club Padang and was widely regarded as a key sporting venue in Kuala Lumpur. Gullick described it as the "main centre of European communal activity," and it also became a well-known landmark between government buildings and the club itself.<sup>32</sup>

Football also played an essential role in the club's sporting life. Despite cricket's popularity, Selangor Club demonstrated strong support for football from the outset. A football subcommittee was formed within the club, and in 1895, a silver cup was donated by Acting Resident of Selangor, John Pickersgill Rodger to promote a football challenge competition.<sup>33</sup> The ground hosted its first recorded football match that same year between the Kuala Lumpur Fire Brigade and a visiting Klang team.<sup>34</sup> The club later joined the Selangor Association Football League in 1906, using the padang as its home ground.<sup>35</sup> This development marked the pitch as the birthplace of formal football competition in Selangor.

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<sup>29</sup> "The Opening of the 'Selangor Club'," *Straits Times Weekly Issue*, 18 October 1884, 6

"The Selangor Club," *The Straits Budget*, 13 January 1910, 9

<sup>30</sup> "The Selangor Club," *The Straits Budget*, 13 January 1910, 9

<sup>31</sup> "The Opening of the "Selangor Club," *Straits Times Weekly Issue*, 18 October 1884, 6

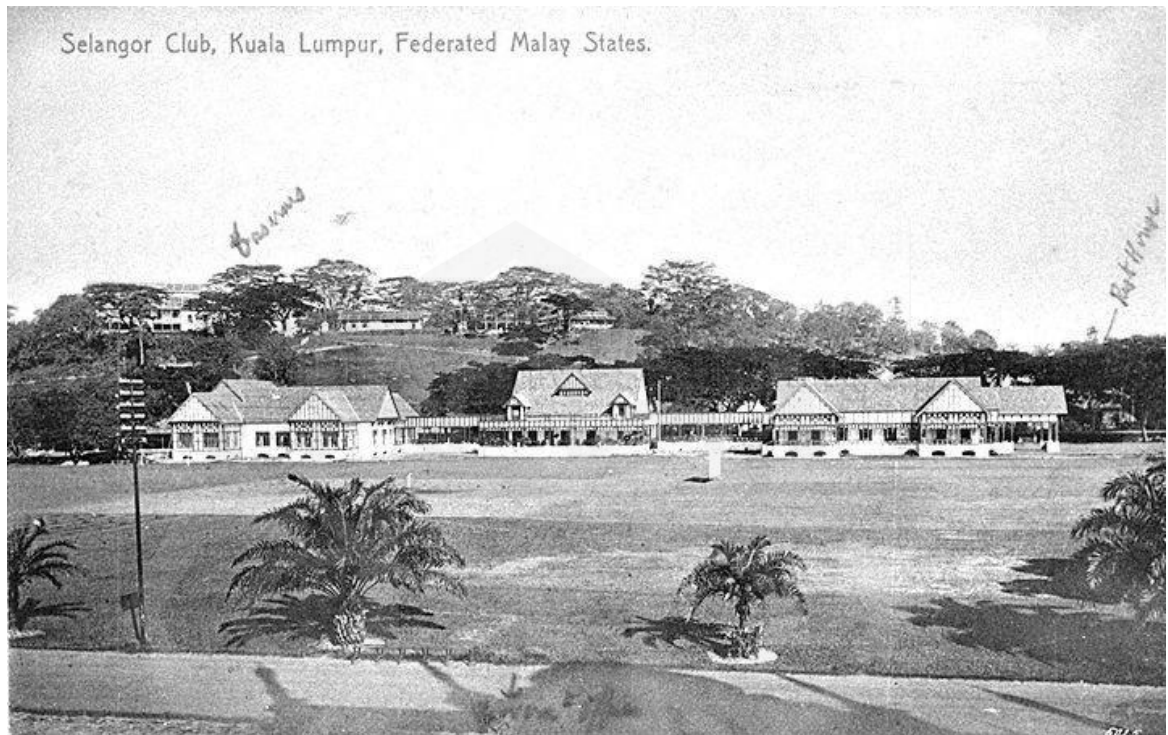
<sup>32</sup> J. M. Gullick, *Old Kuala Lumpur* (Selangor, Malaysia: Penerbit Fajar Bakti Sdn. Bhd., 1998), 50.

<sup>33</sup> "Selangor News," *The Straits Budget*, 19 November 1895, 13

<sup>34</sup> "Selangor," *The Singapore Free Press and Mercantile Advertiser (Weekly)*, 7 May 1895, 281

<sup>35</sup> "Selangor Association Football League," *Straits Echo (Mail Edition)*, 17 September 1909, 1054

Overall, the Selangor Club was central to the promotion of British sports in colonial Malaya. Its location, leadership, and sporting culture made it a key influence in introducing structured sporting practices, particularly cricket and football, that later spread across local communities.



Picture 2.2 The Selangor Club and Padang, about 1910s.<sup>36</sup>

The next prominent club was known as the Lake Club. The club, established on 16 August 1890, was one of the most prominent European clubs in Kuala Lumpur during the colonial era. Its founding meeting was attended by twenty-eight individuals, and the club took its name from its location near the scenic lake area, later known as the Sydney Lake Garden.<sup>37</sup> The site was celebrated for its lush botanical surroundings, often referred to as the ‘Eden of Selangor.’<sup>38</sup> Unlike the more centrally located Selangor Club,

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<sup>36</sup> Kheng Chye, Lim. ‘*Selangor Club in Kuala Lumpur, Federated Malay States*, photograph, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore. Retrieved from <https://www.nas.gov.sg/archivesonline/photographs/record-details/34186a45-1162-11e3-83d5-0050568939ad> on 22 June 2023.

<sup>37</sup> D.J.M. Tate, *The Lake Club 1890–1990* (Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1990), 2–3.

<sup>38</sup> “Correspondent, ‘The Lake Club’,” *Straits Times*, February 27, 1896, 2.

the Lake Club's setting within a public garden offered a more tranquil and refined environment. This natural beauty became closely associated with the club's identity and distinguished it from other colonial institutions in Kuala Lumpur.

Membership at the Lake Club was exclusive and highly restricted. It was reserved almost entirely for British elites, particularly colonial officials and military personnel.<sup>39</sup> According to Lim and Salleh (2018), the club's membership was comprised of "orang puteh" (white men), with a strict policy excluding non-Europeans.<sup>40</sup> This exclusivity was, in part, a reaction to the Selangor Club's decision to admit a small number of wealthy and influential Asians.<sup>41</sup> The first president of the Lake Club was G. W. Welman, secretary of the Selangor Government, followed by Alfred Reid Venning, a founding member of the Selangor Club, who assumed the presidency in 1897.<sup>42</sup> Their leadership underscored the close ties between British governance and the formation of elite recreational spaces in the colony.

While the Lake Club lacked its own green field or padang, it still provided a variety of indoor and outdoor recreational activities. Indoor games such as billiards were common, while outdoor sports like cricket, football, rifle shooting, and especially golf were enjoyed using nearby facilities. The club maintained a golf course around the Lake Garden and frequently collaborated with the Selangor Club for events.<sup>43</sup> According to Lim and Salleh (2018), football matches between the Lake Club and Selangor Club began as early as 1895, with records showing a Lake Club victory in September of that year.<sup>44</sup> Since the Lake Club lacked its own football field, matches were typically played at the Selangor Club Padang. Despite this limitation, the Lake Club played an important

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<sup>39</sup> Tate, *The Lake Club 1890–1990*, 2-3.

<sup>40</sup> Lim, P. H. & Mohd Salleh Aman. (2018). 'The Diffusion and Transmission of Football in the Straits Settlements and Malay States, 1874–1899: Early Inter-Settlement Games and Inter-State Competition Among European Clubs and Teams.' *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 35, no.13-14 (2018): 1342. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.1080/09523367.2019.1587411> on 23 June 2023.

<sup>41</sup> - "Malayanisation of the Lake Club-the last white haven," *Malaysiakini Website*, 13 July 2016, Retrieved from <https://www.malaysiakini.com/news/348352> on 25 June 2023.

<sup>42</sup> "Royal Lake Club - Past President," *Royal Lake Club Website*, Retrieved from <https://www.royallakeclub.org.my/past-presidents> on 25 June 2023.

<sup>43</sup> "The Lake Club," *The Straits Budget*, 3 March 1896, 6

<sup>44</sup> Lim and Salleh, "The Diffusion and Transmission of Football," 1349.

role in the spread of Western sports in Malaya and remained a key part of British colonial social life in Kuala Lumpur.

The Lake Club played a notable role in shaping colonial sporting culture despite its limited facilities. Its exclusive membership, strategic location, and engagement in early football activities with clubs like the Selangor Club reflect its influence on British recreational life. The club's presence reinforced the social divide while contributing to the early development of organised sports in Kuala Lumpur.



Picture 2.3 Public Garden Kuala Lumpur in 1903.<sup>45</sup>

Negri Sembilan, the southernmost of the Federated Malay States, also witnessed the growth of football through its early European social clubs. Among the most prominent was the Sungei Ujong Club, founded in 1887 as a hunt club.<sup>46</sup> William Francis Bourne Paul, the second Resident of Sungei Ujong, served as the club's first

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<sup>45</sup> Henry Colway Belfield, *Handbook of the Federated Malay States* (London: Edward Stanford, 1902), 80.

<sup>46</sup> Sungei Ujong Club Celebrates Jubilee with Ball," *The Straits Times*, 24 October 1937, 21.

president, while Leonard Braddon held the post of honorary secretary.<sup>47</sup> Though initially focused on leisure and social gatherings, the club gradually introduced sports activities, including football. The club fielded a team that played matches against other European clubs like Selangor Club in 1933.<sup>48</sup> While it did not initially participate in formal competitions, the Sungei Ujong Club joined the Negri Sembilan Football Association League in 1939.<sup>49</sup>

The second major club, known as the Negri Sembilan Club, evolved from the Sungei Ujong Cricket Club, founded in 1892.<sup>50</sup> Initially focused on cricket, the club later merged with the Reading Room and was reorganised in 1899 as the Negri Sembilan Recreation Club.<sup>51</sup> It officially adopted the name Negri Sembilan Club on 21 August 1909, reflecting its transformation into the state's central sports organisation. The club was officially opened by Ernest Woodford Birch, the British Resident of Negri Sembilan, on Queen's Day in 1899.<sup>52</sup> Cricket and football were both played at the club. Birch and Theodore Rathbone Hubback were among the prominent figures who took part in early matches, including a football game in February 1899 between the club and Klang Recreation Club.<sup>53</sup> These events signalled a growing interest in organised sports among colonial administrators and club members in Seremban.

The club's activities were centred around the Negri Sembilan Padang, a green field located near its pavilion, which had been constructed in 1897 during Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee celebration.<sup>54</sup> This padang became a focal point for sporting events in the state. The club maintained a well-structured administrative system, with captains appointed for each sports division. At the 1937 annual general meeting, for instance, the Resident of Negri Sembilan, Gordon Lupton Ham, was elected president,

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<sup>47</sup> Singh Sarban, "A King's Home, the People's Club," *The Star*, 31 August 2016, Star 2, 4; "Sporting," *Pinang Gazette and Straits Chronicle*, 24 November 1892, 3

<sup>48</sup> "Sungei Ujong," *The Straits Times*, 8 May 1933, 14

<sup>49</sup> "Sungei Ujong Club Annual Report," *The Straits Times*, 22 August 1939, 19

<sup>50</sup> "Sungei Ujong Club Celebrates Jubilee with Ball," *The Straits Times*, 24 October 1937, 21

<sup>51</sup> "Sungei Ujong," *The Singapore Free Press and Mercantile Advertiser (Weekly)*, 17 May 1892, 314

<sup>52</sup> "Local And General," *Pinang Gazette and Straits Chronicle*, 17 June 1899, 2

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>54</sup> "Negri Club Has Nearly 100 Members," *The Straits Times*, 6 March 1938, 25

and A.K. Retnam was named football captain.<sup>55</sup> This level of organisation reflected the club's key role in the formalisation of sports in Negri Sembilan.

These developments highlight how European social clubs in Negri Sembilan played a foundational role in shaping early organised sports, particularly football, within the state. Through structured administration, active participation of colonial officials, and dedicated sporting grounds, such clubs laid the groundwork for the sport's formal growth and contributed to the broader sporting culture in British Malaya.



Picture 2.4 Negri Sembilan Club Pavilion and Padang in 1941.<sup>56</sup>

### 2.3 THE EMERGENCE OF FOOTBALL ORGANISATIONS

Association football emerged as a prominent sporting event in late 19th-century British Malaya, largely influenced by the establishment of European social clubs introduced by colonial officials. This development sparked local interest in football, yet despite its

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<sup>55</sup> "Secretary In 1913, President 1937," *Pinang Gazette and Straits Chronicle*, 8 March 1937, 4

<sup>56</sup> Australian War Memorial. *Seremban, Malaya. 1941-03. Members of the 2/19th Battalion march through the town to the parade ground led by Lieutenant Colonel Duncan Maxwell, MC, Commanding Officer...*, Trove - National Library of Australia. Retrieved from <https://trove.nla.gov.au/work/229256937> on 27 September 2023.

growing popularity, no formal football associations existed across the Malayan states at that time. In contrast, England had already established The Football Association (FA) in 1863, formed by eleven clubs and schools in London to standardise the rules of the game, with subsequent county associations created to govern football activities regionally.<sup>57</sup> Given Malaya's status under British administration, the idea of forming football associations began to take shape during this period. The European social clubs in Malaya were instrumental in this process, as many state football associations were founded within their premises. Notable clubs such as the Penang Cricket Club, Selangor Club, Ipoh Club, Malacca Club, and Negri Sembilan Club actively participated in organizing football, paving the way for the establishment of the earliest structured football associations in the region.

### **2.3.1 The Emergence of Football Organisations in the Straits Settlements**

The Straits Settlements were the earliest region in British Malaya to witness the formation of formal football organisations. Among them, Penang and Malacca stood out as key centres where football began to take shape in a more structured and organised way. The development of organisations in these regions reflected the growing enthusiasm for the sport and the increasing role of community groups in shaping its early progress.

To begin with, the Penang Football League (PFL) was formed in the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA).<sup>58</sup> The league officially was formed in September 1905.<sup>59</sup> There were seven clubs present during this official meeting such as YMCA of Penang, Penang Cricket Club, Anglo-Chinese School, Chinese Recreation Club, St. Xavier's Institution, Penang Free School and Penang Recreation Club.<sup>60</sup> These clubs also agreed to form the football league unanimously under the suggestion of Mr. William Ewart Mann, the schoolmaster of Penang Free School. The football league

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<sup>57</sup> The Football Association, "History," *The FA*. Retrieved from <http://www.thefa.com/about-football-association/history> on 27 September 2023.

<sup>58</sup> "Penang Football League," *Pinang Gazette and Straits Chronicle*, 8 September 1905, 4

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*

committee was also formed during this meeting. The very first leader of the Penang Football League Committee was Mr. T. H. Jamieson.<sup>61</sup> The 1905 formation of the Penang Football League marked a key moment in organising local football, bringing clubs together and starting structured competition in colonial Penang.

For Malacca, the Malacca Club played a pivotal role in the establishment of the state football organisation by affiliating with the Malacca Football Association upon its formation in 1924.<sup>62</sup> Prior to the establishment of a formal football body, the Malacca Club generously allowed various football activities to be held at its grounds, with the Malacca Club Padang symbolising the golden era of sports, particularly football and hockey, in the region. The Malacca Football Association was officially formed on 4 July 1924 at the Resident Councillor's Office, with Hon. Mr. William Langham-Carter serving as its inaugural president.<sup>63</sup> The Malacca Football Association's primary functions included organising and regulating football competitions, controlling matches and player conduct and ensuring the smooth operation of local tournaments such as the football league, which it had successfully managed.<sup>64</sup> This development marked a significant advancement in the formal structuring of football activities in Malacca.

In conclusion, the early formation of football bodies in Penang and Malacca marked a key step in developing structured football in British Malaya. The PFL in 1905 and the Malacca Football Association in 1924 reflected strong local support and organisation. These efforts promoted competitive play and community pride, setting a model that shaped the growth of football across other regions in the years that followed.

### **2.3.2 The Emergence of Football Organisations in The Federated Malay States**

The formation of football organisations also took place in the Federated Malay States, where Selangor, Perak, and Negri Sembilan each established their own bodies to oversee football activities. This development reflected the rising enthusiasm for the

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<sup>61</sup> "Penang Football League," *Pinang Gazette and Straits Chronicle*, 8 September 1905, 4

<sup>62</sup> "Malacca Notes, Football Association to be Formed," *Malaya Tribune*, 5 July 1924, 6

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>64</sup> "Malacca Notes, Football Association to be Formed," *Malaya Tribune*, 5 July 1924, 6

sport and the expanding role of local communities in shaping its early growth and structure.

In Selangor, the Selangor Club became a witness to the formation of the Selangor Association Football League (SAFL). It is possible to think of the league as the entity in charge of properly putting Selangor's football league tournament together. On 16<sup>th</sup> June 1906, the SAFL was established in Selangor Club.<sup>65</sup> The chairman of SAFL was Mr. Reginald George Watson.<sup>66</sup> At this meeting, there were a lot of club representatives from Selangor, including from Klang Recreation Club, Selangor Club, the Recreation Club, YMCA, Victoria Institution, and St. John's Institution.<sup>67</sup> The formation of SAFL at the Selangor Club marked a significant milestone in the formal organisation of football in Selangor. Although the SAFL's primary responsibility was to oversee the Selangor football league tournament, it can be regarded as the first official football organisation in the region. This development represents an important chapter in the history of football administration in Selangor.

The relationship of the football body with the European clubs can be seen in the development of football in Perak. Perak Football Association was formed in Ipoh on 15 March 1926 after representatives of all football clubs in Perak were affiliated to this association.<sup>68</sup> Ipoh and Taiping can be considered as the cradle of Perak football since the British affairs took place in these towns. Ipoh Club became an important place for the Perak Football Association to conduct its affairs. For instance, in 1934, the association held an annual general meeting in the Secretary's Office, Ipoh Club.<sup>69</sup> Hence, Ipoh Club played a significant role in the development of Perak's football during this period.

In Negri Sembilan, there was no proper football association for the Negri Sembilan people until 1926. The Negri Sembilan Football Association (NSFA) was established on 7 May 1926 at Negri Sembilan Club, Seremban.<sup>70</sup> The very first president

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<sup>65</sup> "Selangor Football League," *Pinang Gazette and Straits Chronicle*, 21 June 1906, 3

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>68</sup> "Association For Perak," *The Straits Times*, 15 March 1926, 10

<sup>69</sup> "Perak F. A. Annual Meeting," *The Singapore Free Press and Mercantile Advertiser (1884-1942)*, 21 December 1934, 15

<sup>70</sup> "NS Association," *The Straits Times*, 7 May 1926, 10

of Negri Sembilan Football Association was Mr. Ernest Charteris Holford Wolff, the British Resident for Negri Sembilan. During the early years of the establishment of NSFA, the Negri Sembilan Club played a significant role in the development of football in Negri Sembilan. Most of the prominent members of NSFA were among the Negri Sembilan Club members. To illustrate, Dr. B. A. Taylor was a footballer for Negri Sembilan Club and became the president of NSFA in 1940.<sup>71</sup> As a result, Negri Sembilan Club might be seen as the backbone for the growth of Negri Sembilan football.

In conclusion, the formation of football organisations in Selangor, Perak, and Negri Sembilan reflected the growing structure of the sport in the Federated Malay States. Supported by European clubs such as Selangor Club, Ipoh Club, and Negri Sembilan Club, these associations played a key role in organising football activities and promoting the game at the state level during the early 20th century.

## 2.4 CONCLUSION

The introduction of British culture in colonial Malaya played a central role in the spread of sports, especially football and cricket. European social clubs such as the Penang Cricket Club, Selangor Club, Lake Club, Ipoh Club, Sungei Ujong Club, and others served not only as elite gathering places but also as hubs for organised sports. Leaders like Colonel Walker, founder of the Perak Club, and Resident Ernest Woodford Birch of Negri Sembilan actively promoted sports, embodying both administrative leadership and personal involvement in games. These clubs often owned fields or padang that became important venues for matches and community events, such as the Esplanade in Taiping and the Padang in Seremban and Kuala Lumpur. As football gained popularity, European clubs helped establish early football organisations like the Penang Football League (1905) and the Selangor Association Football League (1906), followed by official associations in Malacca, Perak, and Negri Sembilan. Their efforts laid the groundwork for the sport's growth and its eventual adoption by local communities.

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<sup>71</sup> "Negri Soccer," *The Straits Times*, 18 February 1940, 1

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **THE LOCAL PEOPLE'S REACTION TO FOOTBALL IN BRITISH MALAYA**

#### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

The introduction of football in British Malaya, particularly through European recreational clubs, played a crucial role in the sport's growth across the region. Clubs such as the Penang Cricket Club, Selangor Club, Perak Club, Sungei Ujong Recreation Club, Negri Sembilan Club, and Malacca Club were central to promoting football, creating spaces for players and fans to come together, and organising early competitions. While initially dominated by Europeans, these clubs gradually attracted interest from the local people of Malaya, including Malays, Chinese, and Indians. Over time, football became deeply rooted in local communities, serving as both a unifying activity and a platform for social interaction across ethnic lines. For some, the sport represented a chance to build connections and foster unity among different groups. The growing enthusiasm for football among locals led to the formation of state football leagues, local clubs, and ethnic-based teams, reflecting the sport's increasing significance in Malayan society. This chapter will explore the development of football within urban areas and its impact on local communities, examining how the sport influenced social dynamics and became a key part of Malaya's cultural identity.

#### **3.2 THE GROWTH OF FOOTBALL IN THE MAJOR CITIES**

The growth of football in the major cities of Malaya, such as Georgetown, Ipoh, Taiping, Kuala Lumpur, Seremban, and Malacca, reflects the urban development and social dynamics of the early 20th century. European recreational clubs played a key role in introducing and promoting the sport, offering organised areas for matches and competitions. As interest grew, these cities became vital centres for football, with local teams forming and leagues emerging to meet the rising excitement. Grounds like the Esplanade in Penang and the Selangor Club *padang* in Kuala Lumpur became lively

gathering spots where people came together to play and watch the game. These venues attracted spectators and created a sense of community among the city's diverse populations. The rise of football in these cities not only laid the foundation for the establishment of state football associations but also highlighted the sport's ability to bridge social and ethnic divides, which will be examined in the next section.

### **3.2.1 The Rising Engagement of Locals in Football**

The early football scene in Malaya attracted significant interest from the local population, drawing Malays, Chinese, and Indians into the sport. Initially introduced by European recreation clubs, football quickly became a prominent social activity in city regions. Matches played by European teams on local grounds sparked curiosity and enthusiasm among the locals, leading to increased participation. According to Belfield, the locals displayed a particular enthusiasm for both football and hockey.<sup>1</sup> Many gathered to watch these matches, gradually developing a passion for the game. Over time, football evolved into more than just a colonial pastime; it became a shared sporting culture that bridged different communities. The growing involvement of locals marked the beginning of their active role in the sport, not only as spectators but also as players eager to compete and organise their own teams. This rising engagement in football reflected broader social interactions and the gradual integration of the sport into the fabric of local communities. The following section will further examine how this participation shaped the early development of football in Malaya.

### **3.2.2 Multiracial Football Culture in the Straits Settlements**

The emergence of multicultural football culture in the Straits Settlements can be traced back to the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Penang and Malacca in particular saw the emergence of a multiracial football culture, where Malay, Chinese, and European players shared the field in friendly matches. These early encounters were not merely

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<sup>1</sup> Belfield, Henry Conway. *Handbook of the Federated Malay States*. United Kingdom: Stanford, 1906, 78.

games but reflections of a society undergoing social change. Through football, young people from different communities found common ground and shared moments of pride. While simple in structure, these encounters offered a glimpse into how sport could foster understanding and connection. This section will examine two significant examples from Penang and Malacca to explore how football served as an early tool of social integration during British rule.

In Penang, one of the earliest recorded multicultural football matches was held on 13 April 1899 at the Esplanade.<sup>2</sup> The match featured Penang Free School, represented by Chinese players, and the Government School, composed of Malay students. Played in two 30-minute halves, the match revealed the growing popularity of football among schoolboys from different racial backgrounds. The Government School team emerged victorious with a 4–0 win, scoring consistently throughout the game.<sup>3</sup> This match reflects the early development of multicultural football in Penang during the colonial period.

In Malacca, a similarly inclusive football culture took shape in the early 20th century. A notable example was the 1908 match between the Banda Kaba team, made up of Malay players and a European team led by the principal of the Malay Training College, Mr. H. T. Clark.<sup>4</sup> When the European side lacked players, three Malay footballers joined their team, showing a practical openness to racial cooperation in sport.<sup>5</sup> The match drew strong local support for the Banda Kaba team, who secured a 1–0 victory.<sup>6</sup> More than a sporting result, the match reflected growing local pride and the role of football as a unifying activity in a socially divided colonial setting.

This discussion shows that these early matches in Penang and Malacca show how football quietly shaped a sense of shared experience in the colonial Straits Settlements. While simple in form, the games brought together players and spectators from different racial backgrounds at a time when social divisions were deeply rooted. Football offered a rare space where cooperation and respect could grow through shared effort on the field. Victories mattered, but so did the act of playing together. These

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<sup>2</sup> “Football in Penang,” *Pinang Gazette and Straits Chronicle*, 15 April 1899, 2

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> “Association Football,” *The Straits Budget*, 23 April 1908, 20

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

encounters, though limited, marked the beginning of a sporting culture that encouraged mutual recognition. In the wider setting of colonial rule, football served as a gentle yet meaningful bridge between communities, hinting at the possibilities of unity through everyday activities.

### **3.2.3 Multiracial Football Culture in the Federated Malay States**

The emergence of multicultural football culture in the Federated Malay States began in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, with Selangor, Perak, and Negri Sembilan playing central roles. In these states, football matches brought together Malay, Chinese, Indian, and European players in community competitions. These encounters were more than games. They reflected small but meaningful shifts in a divided society. In towns and growing urban centres, football became a space where different communities could meet, compete, and cheer side by side. The presence of multiracial teams and mixed spectators showed how the sport helped bridge social boundaries. Though modest in form, these early matches revealed football's potential to promote unity, pride, and shared identity in colonial Malaya.

To begin with, the multiracial football culture in Selangor began in the late 19th century. One of the earliest recorded matches was a friendly organised by European clubs, such as the Kajang Recreation Club. On 4 May 1895, the Kajang Recreation Club played against the Klang Recreation Club in Klang, reflecting the early role of football in colonial recreational life.<sup>7</sup> Both clubs featured mixed teams of Europeans and locals, including Malays, Chinese, Tamils, and Sinhalese. The Klang team fielded seven European players, while the Kajang Recreation Club had five.<sup>8</sup> This match serves as early evidence of multicultural participation in football in Selangor. Kajang Recreation Club won the game by defeating Klang with a score of two goals to none.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> "Association Football in Selangor," *The Singapore Free Press and Mercantile Advertiser (Weekly)*, 14 May 1895, 9.

<sup>8</sup> "Association Football in Selangor," *The Singapore Free Press and Mercantile Advertiser (Weekly)*, 14 May 1895, 9.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

In Perak, the earliest recorded multiracial football culture took place in 1907. According to match report in *The Straits Echo (Mail Edition)*, Teluk Anson Malay and Chinese played a friendly football match against Penang's YMCA footballers.<sup>10</sup> The Malay spectators enthusiastically enjoyed the football match between the two teams.<sup>11</sup> This match highlighted the motivation of local communities to participate in competitive sports together, reinforcing football's role in bridging social divisions. The Teluk Anson football team itself reflected this multiracial engagement, comprising Malays, Chinese, and Europeans. Players like Che Mat and Teong Aik represented the Malay and Chinese communities, respectively, highlighting the diverse composition of the team.

The early presence of multiracial football culture in Negri Sembilan is illustrated through the experiences of British officer Robert Hamilton Bruce Lockhart, as recorded in his memoir *Return to Malaya*. In 1911, while overseeing a rubber estate in Pantai, Seremban, Lockhart played football with local figures including the Undang of Sungei Ujong.<sup>12</sup> He also formed a Malay football team that regularly played friendly matches against a side led by young British officer Andrew Caldecott.<sup>13</sup> These games, often held in Jelebu, required long journeys by bullock cart and bicycle, reflecting the players' strong commitment. The Malay players, who played barefoot, showed great enthusiasm and skill, calling out spirited phrases like "Lekas-lah" and "Jangan takut" during matches.<sup>14</sup> Lockhart's experiences reveal how football fostered friendly ties and mutual respect between British officers and local Malays, highlighting the sport's unifying role in the early social fabric of colonial Negri Sembilan.

This analysis demonstrates that early football matches in Selangor, Perak, and Negri Sembilan played a quiet yet meaningful role in shaping shared experiences among different communities in the Federated Malay States. Although small in scale, these games brought together players from diverse racial backgrounds during a time when colonial society remained socially divided. Football created a rare space for cooperation

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<sup>10</sup> "Y. M. C. A. vs, Teluk Anson," *The Straits Echo (Mail Edition)*, 15 November 1907, 1098

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> "Bruce Lockhart In Search of His Youth," *The Straits Times*, 27 December 1936, 15

<sup>13</sup> "Sir Andrew Caldecott's New Post," *The Straits Times*, 19 January 1937, 11

<sup>14</sup> R.H. Bruce Lockhart, "Chapter Three," in *Return to Malaya*. (New York: G. P. Putnam Press, 1936), p. 89.

and mutual respect, built through collective effort on the field. While match results were important, the deeper value was found in the act of participating together. Whether in urban clubs or rural estates, these encounters reflected early forms of social connection. Within a colonial environment structured by racial and administrative hierarchy, football emerged as a subtle but powerful means of fostering unity. These early matches reveal how sport could promote a sense of belonging and shared identity among different groups in British Malaya.

### **3.3 THE RISE OF RACE-BASED FOOTBALL CLUBS**

In British Malaya, the growth of football was strongly influenced by the rise of ethnic-based football teams. These teams were typically organised around the local communities, such as the Malays, Chinese, and Indians, who formed their own clubs to compete in regional tournaments. These clubs played an essential role in the development of football, offering players an opportunity to showcase their skills and promote a sense of identity and pride within their respective racial groups. The establishment of local football clubs during this period played a key role in the growth of football in Malaya. This topic will be explored in three sub-topics: football clubs based on different races, such as Malay, Chinese, and Indian clubs. These sub-topics will provide a thorough understanding of how football developed within these communities, fostering growth in the sport and shaping its competitive landscape.

#### **3.3.1 Malay Football Clubs**

Malay football clubs played an important role in the early development of football across British Malaya. These clubs were established in major towns and cities, providing a platform for Malays to engage in the sport and showcase their talent. Often formed by local communities or supported by influential leaders, these clubs contributed to fostering a sense of unity and pride among Malays. They also participated in local tournaments and friendly matches, which further popularised football within their communities. Through their efforts, Malay clubs became a significant part of the

football scene, laying the foundation for the sport's growth. Despite limited resources, these clubs played a vital role in shaping early football leagues and tournaments. This topic will explore the formation, activities, and contributions of these Malay football clubs to the development of football in Malaya.

### ***3.3.1.1 Malay Football Clubs in the Straits Settlements***

The emergence of Malay football clubs in Malacca and Penang during the early 20th century reflected the growing interest of local communities in organised sports. In both regions, the Malay community formed teams that provided opportunities for recreation, social connection, and healthy competition. These early clubs helped build a stronger sense of unity and pride through football, a sport that was becoming increasingly popular under colonial influence. Matches attracted local spectators and became part of everyday public life, showing how football served as more than just a pastime. The growth of these clubs marked an important step in the development of football culture among Malays in colonial urban centres. This section will explore the establishment of Malay football clubs across these states.

The emergence of the Malay football club in Malacca can be traced back to 1908, when a team from Kampung Banda Kaba played against a European side at the Malay College ground. As previously mentioned in sub-chapter 3.2.2, the match ended in a 1-0 victory for the Malay players and reflected the growing enthusiasm for football among the local community. This team later became known as Banda Kaba Football Club. However, their next recorded match on 10 July 1910, a friendly against the Middlesex Regiment, ended in a heavy 10-0 defeat.<sup>15</sup> The result showed the challenges faced by local teams when competing against well-trained colonial opponents. In 1913, they joined the Yeow Kim Swee Football Shield, a tournament that offered structured matches for local clubs.<sup>16</sup> Their determination paid off in 1914 when they secured their first major title by defeating Banda Hilir Malay 2-0 in the final.<sup>17</sup> The success of both teams proved that Malay football clubs could achieve meaningful victories. Banda

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<sup>15</sup> "Notes From Malacca," *The Straits Times*, 12 July 1910, 7

<sup>16</sup> "Malacca Football Shield Competition," *Weekly Sun*, 20 September 1913, 4

<sup>17</sup> "Malacca News," *Malaya Tribune*, 4 July 1914, 12

Kaba's persistence highlighted how football became a powerful avenue for pride and social connection in colonial Malacca.

The formation of Malay football clubs in Penang during the early 20th century marked an important step in the development of local football culture. Muthibol Ahzan Football Club, founded in 1912, was the first Malay club in Penang created solely for football and later celebrated its 53rd anniversary in 1965.<sup>18</sup> However, their first recorded match was held on 21 November 1911, resulting in a 4–0 loss to Crescent Star Sports Club at the Esplanade, yet the large crowd in attendance reflected growing public interest.<sup>19</sup> The club joined the Mohammedan Football Association in 1911 and went on to win the MFA Cup in 1923 by defeating their rivals, Darul Aihсан.<sup>20</sup> They later captured the Penang Football League title in 1935 with an unbeaten record.<sup>21</sup> For the next club known as Darul Aihсан Football Club, established in 1922, joined the Mohammedan Football Association in 1923 and quickly made its mark.<sup>22</sup> Their earliest recorded match was a 5–0 victory over the Malay Volunteer Club on 7 April 1923.<sup>23</sup> Although they lost to Muthibol Ahzan in the 1923 final, they triumphed in the Penang Football League in 1926 and 1927.<sup>24</sup> The achievements of these two clubs highlighted the growing enthusiasm for football among Penang Malays and their determination to participate in organised competitions during the colonial period.

The growth of Malay football clubs in Malacca and Penang during the early 20th century marked a meaningful step in the development of local sporting culture. In Malacca, Banda Kaba Football Club's early victory against a European side and later success in the Yeow Kim Swee Football Shield reflected the community's determination to compete despite challenges. In Penang, Muthibol Ahzan and Darul Aihсан Football Clubs played central roles in strengthening Malay involvement in organised

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<sup>18</sup> "Kenduri rayakan ulang tahun," *Berita Harian*, 31 March 1965, 10

Samat, Talib "Peranan Persatuan Penulis Negeri Pulau Pinang (2PNP) dalam Kebangkitan Pulau Pinang sebagai Pusat Perkembangan Kesusasteraan," in *Pulau Pinang: Pusat Perkembangan Kesusasteraan Dahulu dan Sekarang* (Penang, Malaysia: Penerbit USM, 2003), 32.

<sup>19</sup> "Malays And Football," *Pinang Gazette and Straits Chronicle*, 29 November 1911, 4

<sup>20</sup> "Mohammedan Football Association," *Straits Echo*, 18 September 1911, 6;

"F.A. Cup Final," *Pinang Gazette and Straits Chronicle*, 10 September 1923, 4

<sup>21</sup> "Penang Football Association" *Pinang Gazette and Straits Chronicle*, 16 March 1936, 7

<sup>22</sup> "Darul Aihсан mengadakan sidang agong," *Berita Harian*, 8 August 1961, 8;

"M. F. A.," *Pinang Gazette and Straits Chronicle*, 20 March 1923, 2

<sup>23</sup> "Coming Events," *Pinang Gazette and Straits Chronicle*, 6 April 1923, 6

<sup>24</sup> "Football," *Pinang Gazette and Straits Chronicle*, 6 July 1927, 6

competitions, with league titles and local cup finals showing their growing presence. These clubs gave Malay players and supporters a greater voice in football, fostering local pride and unity. Together, they laid the foundation for a lasting football tradition rooted in community identity and participation.

### ***3.3.1.2 Malay Football Clubs in The Federated Malay States***

The emergence of Malay football clubs in the Federated Malay States began in the early 20th century, with Selangor, Perak, and Negri Sembilan taking the lead. These clubs were often formed through community effort, school networks, or support from local leaders. In many cases, Malay youth came together to create teams that reflected pride in their identity and a desire to participate in a growing public sport. Matches were usually held on local fields and attracted enthusiastic crowds from surrounding areas. The formation of these clubs not only encouraged local talent but also gave the Malay community a stronger presence in the early sporting life of colonial Malaya. This section examines how Malay football clubs were formed in each of these states.

The Malays in Selangor demonstrated their interest in football in the early 20th century by forming the Sultan Suleiman Club (SSC), which played a key role in promoting the sport, especially in Kuala Lumpur. The formation of SSC in 1905 marked a significant milestone in the early days of the Malay club in Selangor.<sup>25</sup> The club's formation marked a significant milestone for the Malay community, offering both a recreational outlet and a way to strengthen cultural identity and unity. In 1907, SSC's proposal to join the SAFL was accepted, allowing them to participate in one of the earliest organised leagues in the region.<sup>26</sup> Their first major success came in 1910 when they were declared winners following Klang Club's withdrawal, which voided all matches against them.<sup>27</sup> Although the win came under unusual circumstances, it was still seen as a proud moment for the Malay community in Selangor. SSC's presence in

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<sup>25</sup> "Malay Club Celebrates 50th Year," *Singapore Standard*, 12 December 1955, 3

<sup>26</sup> "S. A. F. L.," *Eastern Daily Mail and Straits Morning Advertiser*, 23 March 1907, 4

<sup>27</sup> "League Football," *Pinang Gazette and Straits Chronicle*, 23 December 1910, 5

SAFL also highlighted their efforts to gain recognition and helped set the foundation for future Malay participation in Selangor's football scene.

The Lower Perak Malay Club and the Ipoh Malay Sporting Union (IMSU) were among the most influential Malay football clubs in colonial Perak. Both clubs played a vital role in encouraging Malay participation in football and promoting the sport within their communities. The Lower Perak Malay Club was formed in Teluk Anson.<sup>28</sup> The club actively competed in the Lower Perak Football League and achieved notable success in 1929 by winning five out of six matches to become league champions.<sup>29</sup> This victory brought pride to the local Malay community and helped raise enthusiasm for football in Teluk Anson. Meanwhile, IMSU also contributed to the growth of football by representing Malay interests in the state's football scene. In 1932, the club competed in the Lim Seng Fook Cup in Taiping, facing the Perak Chinese Recreation Club.<sup>30</sup> Although IMSU eventually dissolved in 1936 due to financial difficulties, its presence marked an important step for Malay clubs in Perak.<sup>31</sup> Together, these clubs helped shape Perak's early football culture and strengthened local identity through sport.

The early development of Malay football clubs in Negri Sembilan saw the emergence of two key teams: the Persidangan Belia Club (PBC) and the Royal Malay Regiment. Both played an important role in establishing Malay participation in organised football. PBC was founded on 29 August 1918 by Sheikh Ahmad bin Sheikh Mustapha, a respected Malay leader in Seremban.<sup>32</sup> The club formed a football team to compete in the Hose Cup in 1922, where they narrowly lost to Nilai Club by two goals to one at NS Club Padang.<sup>33</sup> Their commitment to football grew and by 1927 they joined the Negri Sembilan Football League. A decade later, in 1936, PBC claimed their first league title, marking a proud moment for Malay football in the state.<sup>34</sup> For the next club, the Royal Malay Regiment, established on 1 March 1933 in Port Dickson, formed a

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<sup>28</sup> "Lower Perak Malay Honoured," *Pinang Gazette and Straits Chronicle*, 7 November 1935, 20

<sup>29</sup> "Lower Perak Football League," *Pinang Gazette and Straits Chronicle*, 30 September 1929, 12

<sup>30</sup> "Perak Football Cup Competition 1932," *Pinang Gazette and Straits Chronicle*, 4 July 1932, 7

<sup>31</sup> "Ipoh Malay Sporting Union," *Pinang Gazette and Straits Chronicle*, 29 February 1936, 4

<sup>32</sup> "The Persidangan Belia Club," 29 October 1918, in *Formation of a Club for Young Malays in Seremban*, Secretary's Office, Negri Sembilan, 1957/0445019W.

<sup>33</sup> The "Hose" Cup. *Malaya Tribune*, 1 May 1922, 8

<sup>34</sup> Malays Win Negri League Shield. *The Straits Times*, 21 July 1936, 14

football team made up of Malay army personnel.<sup>35</sup> They played their first recorded match against King George V School in August 1933.<sup>36</sup> Entering the NS Football League in 1934, they won the championship in 1935 and captured the Hose Cup in 1937 by defeating PBC.<sup>37</sup> These clubs marked key milestones in the early growth of Malay football in Negri Sembilan.

The growth of Malay football clubs in the Federated Malay States during the early 20th century marked a turning point in local sporting life. In Selangor, the formation of the Sultan Suleiman Club gave Malay players a voice in organised football. In Perak, clubs like the Lower Perak Malay Club and IMSU fostered local pride through league success and state-level competition. Meanwhile, in Negri Sembilan, PBC and the Royal Malay Regiment helped anchor football in both civilian and military circles. Together, these clubs strengthened Malay participation in sport and created spaces where identity, unity and community could grow through football.

The emergence of Malay football clubs in British Malaya during the early 20th century was a significant step in the development of organised sports and the expression of Malay identity. Despite facing challenges in a colonial society that often overlooked their contributions, these clubs became vital spaces for unity, pride, and community engagement. From the northern Malay clubs in Penang to the southern Malay clubs in Malacca, the football scene in British Malaya showcased the growing interest and involvement of Malays in the sport. Through football, the Malay community asserted its presence and began to lay the foundation for greater participation in national-level football. Their legacy remains a crucial part of the social and cultural history of British Malaya.

### 3.3.2 Chinese Football Clubs

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<sup>35</sup> Dol Ramli, "History of the Malay Regiment, 1933–1942," *Journal of the Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 38, no. 1 (July 1965): 205.

<sup>36</sup> "Seremban Football," *The Straits Times*, 21 August 1933, 14

<sup>37</sup> "Negri Sembilan F.A.S Good Financial Year," *The Singapore Free Press and Mercantile Advertiser (1884-1942)*, 31 January 1936, 15;

"Soccer Season Closes in The Negri," *The Straits Times*, 22 August 1937, 27

Chinese football clubs played a crucial role in the early development of football across British Malaya. These clubs emerged in key towns and cities, providing a platform for the Chinese community to engage in the sport while strengthening social ties. Many clubs were formed by local associations, fostering unity and pride among the Chinese. The rise of these clubs was closely linked to the broader social and economic presence of the Chinese in Malaya. The Chinese workers primarily found employment in rubber plantations, tin mining, and commerce.<sup>38</sup> Over time, they established tight-knit communities with social organisations and recreational clubs, including football teams. These clubs were more than just entertainment; they reinforced communal identity and offered a sense of belonging during British rule. By shaping local football culture and competition, Chinese clubs left a lasting impact on Malaya's sporting landscape, contributing significantly to the game's growth and organisation.

### ***3.3.2.1 Chinese Football Clubs in the Straits Settlements***

The rise of Chinese football clubs in Malacca and Penang during the early 20th century reflected the community's growing involvement in organised sports. In both towns, Chinese groups came together to form teams that offered a platform for recreation, friendship, and competitive spirit. These clubs helped nurture a sense of belonging and pride through football, which was steadily gaining popularity during the colonial era. Matches often drew curious and supportive crowds, becoming part of the social rhythm of urban life. This steady development signalled a deeper connection between sport and community, marking a meaningful stage in the growth of football culture among Chinese communities in the Straits Settlements.

To begin with, the Chinese community in Penang established Penang Chinese Recreation Club (Penang CRC) on 2nd December 1892 with Victoria Green as their main location.<sup>39</sup> The club played a central role in the development of football during the

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<sup>38</sup> Kaur, Amarjit. "Labour Brokers in Migration: Understanding Historical and Contemporary Transnational Migration Regimes in Malaya/Malaysia." *International Review of Social History* 57, no. S20 (2012): 22-52. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0020859012000478> on 1 June 2025.

<sup>39</sup> "Societies In Penang," *Pinang Gazette and Straits Chronicle*, 3 May 1910, 4; "Penang Chinese Athletics," *Pinang Gazette and Straits Chronicle*, 11 November 1933, 16

colonial period. Its earliest recorded match was held in 1893, when Penang CRC defeated Mr. Joo Chin's team 1-0.<sup>40</sup> In 1905, the club became one of the founding members of the Penang Football League and by 1908, Victoria Green was hosting official league matches.<sup>41</sup> The PFL committee even acknowledged Penang CRC for offering the use of their ground, highlighting their importance to the football community.<sup>42</sup> In 1909, Penang CRC won its first league title, a significant achievement that reflected the team's growing strength.<sup>43</sup> Its legacy highlights the determination and contribution of the Chinese community in shaping local football under colonial influence.

In Malacca, the Chinese community established two football clubs, the Malacca Chinese Football Club (MCFC) and the Malacca Chinese Recreation Club (MCRC). MCFC, founded in 1913, was the earliest recorded Chinese football club in the region and played a key role in encouraging participation among local Chinese players.<sup>44</sup> Their first documented match took place on Boxing Day in 1914 against the Kuala Lumpur Chinese Minstrels, which they lost 2-0.<sup>45</sup> In 1921, MCFC joined the inaugural Yeow Kim Swee Shield competition but suffered a heavy 8-1 defeat to the Malay team, Banda Kaba.<sup>46</sup> Despite the result, the club's involvement marked an important step for Chinese representation in local competitions. A new chapter began on 29 April 1939 with the formation of MCRC, which merged three Chinese associations, including MCFC.<sup>47</sup> After World War II, MCRC became active in the Malacca Football League and made a strong impression in 1946 by defeating the Eurasian team 5-0 and later securing the league title with a 5-1 victory over the Malacca Malays.<sup>48</sup> These achievements highlighted the unity and determination of the Chinese community in Malacca. Both

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<sup>40</sup> "Local and General," *Pinang Gazette and Straits Chronicle*, 5 July 1893, 2

<sup>41</sup> "Local Football," *Pinang Gazette and Straits Chronicle*, 1 November 1905, 5;

"Penang Football League," *Pinang Gazette and Straits Chronicle*, 3 November 1908, 5

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>43</sup> "Penang Football League," *Pinang Gazette and Straits Chronicle*, 7 December 1909, 2

<sup>44</sup> "Malacca News," *Malaya Tribune*, 23 February 1916, 3

<sup>45</sup> "Notes in General," *The Straits Times*, 28 December 1914, 8

<sup>46</sup> "Malacca Football League," *The Straits Times*, 31 March 1921, 7

<sup>47</sup> "Malacca Chinese Recreation Club," *The Straits Times*, 30 April 1939, 31

<sup>48</sup> "Soccer," *The Straits Chronicle*, 21 February 1946, 2;

"Final Round of Malacca League Football," *The Straits Chronicle*, 13 March 1946, 2

MCFC and MCRC provided platforms for participation, fostering pride and a lasting influence on the local football landscape.

The emergence of Chinese football clubs in Malacca and Penang during the early 20th century reflected the community's strong commitment to sport and social unity. In Penang, Penang CRC played a pioneering role, laying the foundation for organised football and contributing facilities like Victoria Green. In Malacca, the MCFC transformed to become MCRC, providing valuable platforms for Chinese players to engage in competitive football. These clubs not only nurtured talent but also strengthened community ties through participation and achievement. Their presence in local leagues and tournaments underscored the Chinese community's growing influence in shaping the region's football culture during the colonial period.

### ***3.3.2.2 Chinese Football Clubs in the Federated Malay States***

The rise of Chinese football clubs in the Federated Malay States began in the early 20th century, particularly in regions such as Selangor, Perak, and Negri Sembilan. These clubs often took shape through the collective efforts of local associations, schools, and social circles. Many Chinese youths came together to form teams that reflected their growing interest in sport and community engagement. Matches were typically played on public fields and drew supportive crowds from nearby neighbourhoods. The establishment of these clubs not only promoted Chinese participation in organised football but also provided a meaningful space for identity and pride during the colonial era. This section explores how Chinese football clubs developed across these three states.

The development of Chinese football culture in Perak was notably shaped by the emergence of two influential clubs: Teluk Anson Chinese Club (TACC) and Perak Chinese Recreation Club (Perak CRC). TACC was founded in 1905 in Teluk Anson and celebrated its 46th anniversary in 1951, reflecting its sustained presence in both social and sporting activities.<sup>49</sup> The club became a prominent force in the Lower Perak

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<sup>49</sup> "Anniversary," *The Straits Times*, 30 October 1951, 5

Football League, clinching the championship titles in 1922, 1923 and 1925.<sup>50</sup> These victories underscored the club's competitive strength and the growing role of Chinese clubs in shaping the local football scene. Meanwhile, Perak CRC, established in 1913, quickly gained recognition as a key sporting institution within the Chinese community in Ipoh.<sup>51</sup> In the same year, the club recorded a 2–0 victory against the Penang Chinese Athletic Club at the Birch Club ground.<sup>52</sup> By 1917, Perak CRC entered the Ipoh Football League and immediately secured the league title, further asserting its dominance.<sup>53</sup> That same year, they defeated the Combined League XI 3-1 in a friendly, affirming their reputation.<sup>54</sup> Together, the achievements of TACC and Perak CRC reflected how Chinese communities in Perak embraced football to express pride, foster unity and contribute meaningfully to colonial Malaya's emerging sports culture.

The early development of Chinese football clubs in Selangor was marked by the formation of the United Chinese Football Team (UCFT) and the Selangor Chinese Recreation Club (SCRC), both of which played central roles in promoting the sport among the Chinese community in Kuala Lumpur. The UCFT, led by a dedicated committee, brought together players with many from the Kuala Lumpur Chinese Minstrels and they made a strong debut in the SAFL in 1913.<sup>55</sup> They quickly rose to prominence, winning the league title in 1914, again in 1916 and once more in 1917 with two matches remaining.<sup>56</sup> This early success reflected not only their talent but also the increasing enthusiasm for football within the community. For the next Chinese club is SCRC, formed in 1917, became active in 1920 and filled a gap by providing structured recreational opportunities for Chinese youth.<sup>57</sup> After merging with the Kuala Lumpur Chinese Minstrels, the club strengthened and entered the SAFL the same year, going on to dominate the league by winning ten titles between 1920 and 1932.<sup>58</sup> These

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<sup>50</sup> "Untitled," *The Straits Times*, 21 September 1923, 8;

"Teluk Anson Chinese Football Team," *Malayan Saturday Post*, 28 February 1925, 10.

<sup>51</sup> "The G.C.V.O. Fund and the Perak Chinese Recreation Club," *Straits Echo*, 28 October 1913, 8.

<sup>52</sup> "Tin Quotation," *Straits Echo*, 5 August 1913, 7.

<sup>53</sup> "Ipoh Notes," *Pinang Gazette and Straits Chronicle*, 1 October 1917, 7

<sup>54</sup> "Our Day" Football at Ipoh. *Pinang Gazette and Straits Chronicle*, 20 October 1917, 2

<sup>55</sup> "Chinese Footballers," *Malaya Tribune*, 1 December 1914, 6;

"Selangor Football League," *Weekly Sun*, 14 June 1913, 4.

<sup>56</sup> "United Chinese Football Club," 3 December 1914, 6;

"Football," *Pinang Gazette and Straits Chronicle*, 26 December 1916, 7;

"Sporting," *Malaya Tribune*, 20 August 1917, 5.

<sup>57</sup> "Advance Of Chinese Sport in Selangor," *The Straits Times*, 19 May 1935, 14

<sup>58</sup> "Selangor Football League," *The Straits Budget*, 27 September 1928, 28;

achievements highlighted both clubs' pivotal roles in shaping football culture in Selangor. Their successes contributed to a growing sense of unity, pride, and visibility for the Chinese community in colonial Selangor's sporting scene.

In Negri Sembilan, the Chinese community contributed meaningfully to the development of football through the establishment of the Seremban United Chinese Association (SUCA). Established in 1916, SUCA was the earliest recorded Chinese club in the state and was later renamed the Negri Sembilan Chinese Recreation Club (NSCRC) in 1932 to reflect its expanding focus on both social and sporting activities.<sup>59</sup> The club became a central platform for the Chinese community in Seremban, using football to foster unity and participation. NSCRC quickly rose to prominence in local football, achieving notable success in regional competitions. In 1940, the club accomplished a remarkable feat by winning the Taylor Cup, NSFA League, and Hose Cup in the same year, underscoring their strength and growing influence in the state's football scene.<sup>60</sup> These achievements were not only sporting milestones but also symbols of the community's determination and collective identity. Their legacy shows that early football clubs served not only as teams but also as community institutions that played a key role in shaping the social life of colonial-era Negri Sembilan.

The rise of Chinese football clubs in British Malaya during the early 20th century marked an important chapter in the region's sporting and social development. In Selangor, clubs like the UCFT and Selangor CRC led the way through their success in the SAFL, fostering pride and unity in Kuala Lumpur. In Perak, TACC and Perak CRC became key platforms for community involvement, with their league victories reflecting growing local engagement. Meanwhile, in Negri Sembilan, the formation of SUCA, later known as NSCRC, highlighted how football became a space for connection and cultural identity. Together, these clubs helped strengthen the Chinese presence in colonial Malaya's sporting landscape.

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"Selangor C.R.C. Report," *The Straits Times*, 17 April 1932, 13;

<sup>59</sup> "Cup Final Holds Special Interest for NSCRC." *The Star*. 16 September 2006. Retrieved from <https://www.thestar.com.my/sport/other-sport/2006/09/16/cup-final-holds-special-interest-for-nsarc> on 29 July 2024

"The Negri Chinese Recreation Club Formed," *The Straits Times*, 8 May 1932, 13

<sup>60</sup> "Chinese Win Hose Cup Final," *The Straits Times*, 17 August 1940, 15

### **3.3.3 Indian Football Clubs**

Football has always been a popular sport among the Indian community in colonial Malaya. As the sport gained momentum in the early 20th century, Indian workers saw sports as an opportunity not just for recreation but also as a means of building their social identity. They formed their own sports clubs, which became symbols of pride and representation for their community. These clubs allowed them to participate in inter-community competitions and showcased their sporting talents, often gaining respect from other races. Beyond the field, these football gatherings encouraged unity among Indian workers. Most Indian workers in Malaya were primarily employed in sectors such as railway construction, plantation work, and various other infrastructure projects.<sup>61</sup> Football thus became both a cultural expression and a source of solidarity for the Indian community. This discussion will examine the establishment, roles, and impact of Indian football clubs on the growth of football in Malaya.

#### ***3.3.3.1 Indian Football Clubs in the Straits Settlements***

The emergence of Indian football clubs in Malacca and Penang during the early 20th century reflected the community's increasing participation in organised sports. In both towns, Indian communities formed teams that provided a space for recreation, social connection, and friendly competition. These early clubs fostered a strong sense of identity and belonging through football, a sport that was gaining popularity during the colonial period. Matches often attracted local spectators and became part of everyday social life in urban areas. This gradual development illustrated how sport served as a valuable avenue for community engagement, marking an important phase in the evolution of football culture among Indian communities in the Straits Settlements.

The Indian community in Penang made early progresses in organised football with the establishment of the Indian Mohammedan Football Club in 1906, composed

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<sup>61</sup> Sivagami Arokiam and Sivachandralingam Sundara Raja, "Path Dependent Development of Indian Plantation Labourers in Malaysia: Unfolding the Historical Events in Understanding Their Socioeconomic Problems," *Institutions and Economies* 11, no. 4 (2019): 83.

mainly of Indian-Muslims from Georgetown.<sup>62</sup> Their first recorded match took place on 3 January 1906 at the Esplanade against the Penang Recreation Club (PRC), which ended in a 2–0 defeat.<sup>63</sup> Although their application to join the PFL that same year was rejected due to fixture concerns, the club remained active by arranging matches with teams such as the Malay States Guides and Butterworth at the Polo Ground.<sup>64</sup> In 1909, the Penang Indian Recreation Club (Penang IRC) was founded, becoming one of the earliest Indian sports clubs in Malaya.<sup>65</sup> The club promoted sports as a form of community identity and engagement. Their earliest documented match was on 25 October 1913 against the Young National Union.<sup>66</sup> In 1915, Penang IRC played a friendly football match against the Kinta Indian Association. The latter emerged victorious, winning the football game by three goals to one.<sup>67</sup> Both clubs helped promote football among Penang’s Indian community during the colonial era, showing strong passion and leaving a lasting mark on the local football scene.

The Indian community in Malacca made a notable contribution to the local sports scene with the establishment of the Indian Sporting Club on 27 October 1928.<sup>68</sup> Sparked by a community-led appeal headed by A. Thomas Ponniah in August that year, the club aimed to create a space for social welfare and recreational activities.<sup>69</sup> It was renamed the Malacca Indian Club in 1929 and later became the Malacca Indian Association in 1937, marking the community’s growing engagement in colonial society.<sup>70</sup> The club was particularly active in football and hockey, playing an important role in promoting organised sports. It was among the early participants in the inter-state Bardhan Cup football competition in 1940 and joined the Malacca Football League in 1946.<sup>71</sup> The formation and evolution of the Malacca Indian Association signified more

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<sup>62</sup> “League Football,” *Pinang Gazette and Straits Chronicle*, 2 January 1906, 4

<sup>63</sup> “Football,” *Pinang Gazette and Straits Chronicle*, 13 January 1906, 4

<sup>64</sup> “Penang Football League,” *Pinang Gazette and Straits Chronicle*, 12 January 1906, 4;

“The Week,” *Pinang Gazette and Straits Chronicle*, 19 April 1906, 4;

“League Football,” *Pinang Gazette and Straits Chronicle*, 20 June 1906, 4.

<sup>65</sup> “Societies In Penang,” *Pinang Gazette and Straits Chronicle*, 3 May 1910, 4

<sup>66</sup> “Somaliland Camel Corps,” *Straits Echo*, 24 October 1913, 7

<sup>67</sup> “The Mails,” *Pinang Gazette and Straits Chronicle*, 4 August 1915, 4

<sup>68</sup> “New Indian Club. *Malacca Guardian*, 29 October 1928, 11

<sup>69</sup> “An Appeal to Indians in the Settlement of Malacca,” *Malacca Guardian*, 27 August 1928, 8

<sup>70</sup> “Indian Club,” *Malacca Guardian*, 7 January 1929, 7.

“Malacca Indian Assn,” *The Straits Times*, 25 September 1937, 10

<sup>71</sup> “Trophy For Indian Associations,” *The Straits Times*, 14 April 1940, 17.

Football League. Sports Fixture,” *The Straits Chronicle*, 28 January 1946, 2

than just club activity and represented a growing sense of identity and belonging within the Indian community. Their football involvement highlighted how sport served not only as recreation but also as a unifying force. The club's legacy lies in its role in shaping the sporting and social fabric of Malacca during the colonial era.

The emergence of Indian football clubs in Penang and Malacca during the early 20th century highlighted the community's growing interest in sport and social cohesion. In Penang, clubs such as the Indian Mohammedan Football Club and Penang IRC laid early foundations for football participation, fostering engagement and identity through organised matches. Meanwhile, in Malacca, the Indian Sporting Club, later known as the Malacca Indian Association, became a prominent platform for community unity and sporting involvement. These clubs not only promoted football but also reflected the Indian community's determination to create spaces for social connection and cultural expression. Their efforts played a key role in shaping the early football culture in the Straits Settlements during the colonial period.

### ***3.3.3.2 Indian Football Clubs in the Federated Malay States***

The emergence of Indian football clubs in the Federated Malay States during the early 20th century marked a significant phase in the sporting activities of the Indian community, particularly in areas such as Selangor, Perak, and Negri Sembilan. These clubs were commonly formed through the joint efforts of local societies, educational institutions, and community networks. Indian youths increasingly participated in forming football teams as a means of fostering recreation and reinforcing communal bonds. Matches were often held on accessible public grounds and regularly drew supportive spectators from surrounding areas. The growth of these clubs not only encouraged Indian involvement in structured football but also provided a valuable platform for expressing identity and unity during the colonial period. This section examines their development across the three states.

The development of Indian football culture in Perak was shaped by the early efforts of associations such as the Taiping Indian Association (TIA) and the Kinta Indian

Association (KIA). The TIA was founded on 2 April 1906 at the Methodist Episcopal Church, was among the earliest Indian organisations in the state.<sup>72</sup> Its establishment, guided by Reverend W. Raju Naidu, aimed to uplift the social standing of Indians in Malaya through community engagement.<sup>73</sup> In 1914, TIA's football team entered the Taiping Football League, marking an important step in representing the Indian community in local sport.<sup>74</sup> Meanwhile, the KIA was formed around 1910, emerged as another key player in Perak's Indian sporting life. Celebrating its 18th anniversary in 1928, KIA demonstrated its stability and ongoing influence.<sup>75</sup> In 1915, the club hosted a match against the Brewster Club of Batu Gajah at the Ipoh Club and joined the Ipoh Football League in 1917 and Kinta Football League in 1921.<sup>76</sup> That same year, KIA and TIA also played against each other in Taiping, reflecting a growing competitive spirit.<sup>77</sup> Together, TIA and KIA played pivotal roles in promoting football within the Indian community, using sport as a platform for visibility, unity and cultural expression in colonial Perak.

The development of Indian football culture in Selangor was notably shaped by two key organisations: Tamil Union and the Tamilian Physical Culture Association (TPCA). Tamil Union, founded in 1909 in Kuala Lumpur, emerged as one of the earliest Indian sports clubs in Malaya, promoting cricket and football while fostering identity and unity among Tamil youths.<sup>78</sup> The club established the Tamil Union Association Soccer League in 1910, with the Valupillai Shield awarded to the winner, and Tamil Star emerging as the inaugural champion.<sup>79</sup> Tamil Union joined the SAFL in 1911 and quickly gained popularity, attracting large crowds. As noted by Singam (1964), the team comprised Tamil, Ceylonese, and Indian players, reflecting a spirit of inclusion and cultural representation.<sup>80</sup> Another significant club was the TPCA, which was formally

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<sup>72</sup> "Taiping Indian Association. *Pinang Gazette and Straits Chronicle*, 5 April 1906, 3

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>74</sup> "Taiping Topics," *Pinang Gazette and Straits Chronicle*, 17 November 1914, 4

<sup>75</sup> "Kinta Indians," *Malaya Tribune*, 27 December 1928, 9

<sup>76</sup> "Football At Ipoh," *Malaya Tribune*, 13 May 1915, 9;

"Ipoh Notes," *Pinang Gazette and Straits Chronicle*, 1 October 1917, 7;

"Kinta Football League," *Pinang Gazette and Straits Chronicle*, 22 March 1921, 7

<sup>77</sup> "Rubber Estates of Krian," *Pinang Gazette and Straits Chronicle*, 20 May 1915, 7

<sup>78</sup> A. R. Singam, "History of Tamil Union of Selangor," in *Sixty Years of Soccer by Tamils (1904–1964) and Nationals in Malaysia* (Kuala Lumpur: N. Thamothersam Pillay and Sons Ltd., 1964), 1.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.

established on 1 March 1914 at Vivekananda Ashrama, located in the Brickfields, Kuala Lumpur.<sup>81</sup> Their first recorded football match took place during the 1921 Christmas holiday against Tamil Union from Seremban.<sup>82</sup> TPCA joined the SAFL the same year and remained active until 1924.<sup>83</sup> In 1925, the two clubs merged under the name TPCA, creating a united front for Tamil sports in Kuala Lumpur.<sup>84</sup> Singam stressed that the merger was not the result of rivalry but a shared commitment to community progress.<sup>85</sup> Together, Tamil Union and TPCA helped shape the early football landscape in Selangor, using sport as a platform for unity, representation, and community identity during colonial Malaya.

The Indian community in Negri Sembilan made a notable contribution to local society with the formation of the Negri Sembilan Indian Association (NSIA) in 1919, recognised as the earliest Indian organisation in the state.<sup>86</sup> The NSIA became a central body for promoting unity and offering opportunities for social, cultural, and sporting engagement. Its establishment reflected the Indian community's efforts to organise themselves and play an active role in colonial society. Football held a meaningful place within the NSIA's activities. During its third anniversary celebration in 1922, the association elected S. B. Ponniah as its football captain, underlining the sport's significance to the club.<sup>87</sup> The NSIA made its competitive debut in the Hose Cup tournament in 1928, and a decade later, in 1938, it achieved a major milestone by defeating the Negri Sembilan Medical Club 2-1 to win the same competition.<sup>88</sup> These efforts revealed the association's structured approach and dedication to sports development. More than just matches, football provided the NSIA with a way to strengthen internal unity and gain wider recognition in the colony's social fabric. Their participation and success in local tournaments demonstrated how football served as both

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<sup>81</sup> "Kelab Sukan TPCA – Our History," *Kelab Sukan TPCA*, 2016, Retrieved from <http://www.kelabsukantpca.com/v3/aboutus/index.php?id=3> on 26 December 2024.

<sup>82</sup> "Tamils at Sport," *Malaya Tribune*, 23 December 1921, 6

<sup>83</sup> Singam, "History of Tamil Union of Selangor," 11.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>86</sup> "Indian Association N.S.," *Malaya Tribune*, 29 September 1922, 8

<sup>87</sup> "Indian Association N.S.," *Malaya Tribune*, 29 September 1922, 8

<sup>88</sup> "Seremban Football," *The Singapore Free Press and Mercantile Advertiser (1884-1942)* 25 July 1928, 20;

"Indians Win Hose Cup," *The Straits Budget*, 18 August 1938, 30

a symbol of identity and a vehicle for the Indian community's visibility and pride in Negri Sembilan during the colonial period.

The emergence of Indian football clubs in the Federated Malay States during the early 20th century marked a defining moment in the sporting and social life of the Indian community. In Selangor, Tamil Union and TPCA stood out as pioneering clubs, using football to promote identity. In Perak, TIA and KIA led early efforts in competitive football, fostering pride through their league involvement and community events. Meanwhile, the NSIA in Negri Sembilan demonstrated strong leadership by actively participating in tournaments like the Hose Cup. Together, these associations used football to strengthen communal ties, assert their presence, and contribute meaningfully to the development of local sports in colonial Malaya.

### **3.4 FOOTBALL COMPETITION BASED ON STATES**

Football in British Malaya developed through various competitive structures, with state-level leagues playing a crucial role in organising and promoting the sport. These leagues, managed by their respective state associations, provided a formal platform for teams to compete, while state cup tournaments further fuelled local rivalries and excitement for football. Alongside these competitions, race-based football associations also emerged, each establishing its own tournaments that reflected the diverse communities involved in the development of football. Major sporting events helped foster these associations, linking football to broader cultural and social activities. The establishment of a central football organisation later unified these efforts, ensuring better coordination of major tournaments and strengthening the sport's governance. This development not only enhanced the structure of football in Malaya but also laid the foundation for greater collaboration between states and communities. These sub-topics will provide a thorough understanding of how football evolved through state and race-based competitions, shaping its growth during the colonial period.

### **3.4.1 State Level Competitions**

State-level football competitions played a crucial role in shaping the growth of football across British Malaya. Organised by local associations, these leagues and cup tournaments provided structured platforms for competition and community engagement. In the Straits Settlements, Penang served as the host of two major football tournaments that played a central role in shaping the local football scene. In Malacca, three key tournaments emerged as important platforms for promoting football at the community level. Within the Federated Malay States, Selangor witnessed the establishment of two prominent competitions that significantly contributed to the sport's rising popularity. Similarly, Perak introduced two state-level tournaments that enhanced local participation and competitiveness. Negri Sembilan also developed two major tournaments, reflecting the broader pattern of football's growth across the region during the colonial period. These competitions not only provided opportunities for local talent to emerge but also reflected football's increasing influence in the region. This section will examine the formation, activities, and contributions of these leagues, highlighting their role in building the foundation for football culture in early Malaya.

#### ***3.4.1.1 Football Competitions in the Straits Settlements***

Football competitions in the Straits Settlements played a key role in shaping the local football scene. This section looks at how football developed in the Straits Settlements, focusing on the dedication of different communities in the competitive matches. The introduction of leagues and cup tournaments showed the growing interest in the sport. Penang hosted two major tournaments, including the Penang Football League and the Penang Cup, which attracted strong local participation. In Malacca, the St Francis Association League, the Yeow Kim Swee Shield, and the Malacca Peranakan Association Cup served as key events that promoted the sport at the community level.

The Penang Football League (PFL), established on 7 September 1905, was the earliest structured football competition in British Malaya and played a vital role in

developing the sport in Penang.<sup>89</sup> Organised in a round robin format, the league allowed teams to compete regularly, fostering local enthusiasm and introducing football as a central part of sporting life. The Dewar Shield, donated by Sir Thomas Dewar in 1907, became the league's main trophy.<sup>90</sup> In its inaugural 1905–1906 season, seven teams participated: PCC, YMCA, Anglo Chinese School, Penang CRC, St Xavier's Institution, Penang Free School, and Penang Recreation Club.<sup>91</sup> Two additional teams, the Post and Telegraph Department and the Northern League, later joined, though the former eventually withdrew.<sup>92</sup> YMCA won the title unbeaten with ten wins and four draws, highlighting their early dominance.<sup>93</sup> This league laid the foundation for organised football in Penang, with strong competition and rising local participation shaping the early football scene. The table below shows the final standings of the 1905–1906 Penang Football League, highlighting YMCA's unbeaten run in the league's first season.

Table 3.1 1905-1906 PFL's Final Table

Rank	Teams	Match	Won	Draw	Lost	Goal For	Goal Against	Points
1	YMCA	14	10	4	0	20	3	24
2	PCC	14	11	1	2	27	7	23
3	Penang CRC	14	7	5	2	16	5	19
4	Northern League	14	3	7	4	9	10	13
5	St. Xavier's Institution	14	3	6	5	10	11	12
6	Anglo-Chinese School	14	2	6	6	4	16	10
7	Penang Free School	14	2	3	9	9	21	7
8	Penang Recreation Club	14	0	4	10	0	22	4

Sources: "League Football." *Pinang Gazette and Straits Chronicle*, 26 October 1906, 4

<sup>89</sup> "The Proposed Football League," *Pinang Gazette and Straits Chronicle*, 4 September 1905, 5.

<sup>90</sup> "Penang Football League. *Pinang Gazette and Straits Chronicle*, 1 October 1907, 5

<sup>91</sup> "Penang Football League. *Pinang Gazette and Straits Chronicle*, 8 September 1905, 4

<sup>92</sup> "Penang Football League. *Pinang Gazette and Straits Chronicle*, 26 June 1906, 4

<sup>93</sup> "League Football. *Pinang Gazette and Straits Chronicle*, 26 October 1906, 4

The PFL continued actively until 1913, paused in 1914, and resumed in 1915. From 1906 to 1915, nine champions were recorded. The YMCA won the inaugural title in 1906, followed by Government Services in 1907 and Penang Butterflies in 1908.<sup>94</sup> Penang CRC made history in 1909 as the first non-European club to win the Dewar Shield.<sup>95</sup> Butterworth Recreation Club triumphed in 1910, with Penang CRC reclaiming the title in 1911 and 1913.<sup>96</sup> The Penang Cricket Club were champions in 1912 and after a one-year break, Penang CRC won again in 1915.<sup>97</sup> These early years demonstrated the growing prominence of local clubs and the competitive nature of football in colonial Penang.

The league paused from 1916 to 1923 but returned in 1924 under the name Penang Soccer League. This revival reflected the changing social fabric of Penang, as the tournament featured five teams each representing one of the colony’s major ethnic communities: Albion (European), Casuals (Eurasian), Nomads (Chinese), Wanderers (Malay), and Rovers (Indian).<sup>98</sup> The 1924 season marked a new era of football as a platform for communal representation and unity. The Wanderers, representing the Malay community, won the league after a close 1-0 victory over Rovers in the final match.<sup>99</sup> This season was significant not only for its sporting outcome but for highlighting the inclusive nature of football in Penang. The teams’ performances, drawn from different racial groups, illustrated how the sport fostered a sense of shared identity and competition during the colonial period. The table below shows the final standings of the 1924 Penang Soccer League.

Table 3.2 1924 Penang Soccer League Final Table

Rank	Teams	Match	Won	Draw	Lost	Goals For	Goals Against	Points
1	Wanderers	8	5	0	3	10	10	10
2	Albion	8	4	1	3	14	6	9

<sup>94</sup> “Penang Football League,” *Pinang Gazette and Straits Chronicle*, 6 November 1907, 5.

“Penang Football League,” *Pinang Gazette and Straits Chronicle*, 3 November 1908, 5

<sup>95</sup> “Penang Football League,” *Pinang Gazette and Straits Chronicle*, 7 December 1909, 2

<sup>96</sup> “League Football,” *Pinang Gazette and Straits Chronicle*, 30 November 1910, 4

<sup>97</sup> “Penang Football League,” *Pinang Gazette and Straits Chronicle*, 27 November 1912, 2

<sup>98</sup> “Penang Soccer League,” *Pinang Gazette and Straits Chronicle*, 21 January 1924, 4

<sup>99</sup> “Penang Soccer League,” *Pinang Gazette and Straits Chronicle*, 14 May 1924, 4

3	Nomads	8	3	2	3	6	4	8
4	Casuals	8	2	3	3	9	10	7
5	Rovers	8	2	2	4	4	10	6

Sources: *Pinang Gazette and Straits Chronicle*, “Penang Soccer League,” 9 May 1924. Data modified by Muhammad Fitrie bin Mohd Fudzi to reflect Wanderers’ victory in the final league match against Rovers.

From 1925 to 1950, the Penang football scene saw increasing competition and a diverse range of champions. The Municipality team won in 1925, followed by Darul Aihsan’s domination in 1926, 1927, and 1930.<sup>100</sup> Penang CRC reasserted its influence by winning in 1928 and later securing four consecutive titles from 1931 to 1934. Other notable champions included Penang Cricket Club in the 1929/1930 seasons, Muthibol Ahzan in 1935, Old Xavierians’ Association in 1936 and 1937, Province Wellesley FA in 1938, and Penang Chinese Football Association (PCFA) in 1939, while Penang CRC won again in 1940, followed by Penang Fortress FA in 1941.<sup>101</sup> The league paused during the Second World War from 1942 to 1945. After the war, PCFA emerged strongly, winning three straight titles from 1946 to 1948.<sup>102</sup> The Penang Ramblers claimed the title in 1950.<sup>103</sup> Although the league faced interruptions and evolving team dynamics, it consistently nurtured local talent and encouraged wide community participation. The PFL’s progression from a European-dominated competition to a multicultural platform reveals football’s central role in shaping Penang’s social and sporting identity in the first half of the twentieth century.

The table below outlines the winners of the PFL from 1906 to 1950. It highlights the dominance of teams like Penang CRC, PCFA, and Darul Aihsan across different

<sup>100</sup> “Penang Football League,” *The Straits Echo (Mail Edition)*, 3 June 1925, 576.

“Penang Cricket Club,” *The Straits Echo (Mail Edition)*, 25 October 1926, 1170.

“Penang Soccer League,” *Pinang Gazette and Straits Chronicle*, 29 April 1927, 6.

<sup>101</sup> “Penang Football,” *The Straits Times*, 31 March 1930, 13;

“D.A.F.C. Wins P.F.A. Cup,” *Pinang Gazette and Straits Chronicle*, 21 October 1935, 8;

“Penang Football Association’s Annual Report,” *Pinang Gazette and Straits Chronicle*, 19 March 1938, 14;

“13 Players Suspended During 1939 Season,” *Pinang Gazette and Straits Chronicle*, 23 January 1940, 11;

“C.R.C. Eliminated from P.F.A. Cup,” *Pinang Gazette and Straits Chronicle*, 7 September 1940, 11;

“Rest Beat League Champions,” *Pinang Gazette and Straits Chronicle*, 1 August 1941, 11.

<sup>102</sup> “Penang Had Good Soccer Season,” *The Straits Times*, 8 September 1946, 10;

“Penang Cup Soccer Upset,” *The Straits Times*, 10 July 1947, 1;

“Holiday Soccer in Singapore,” *The Straits Times*, 21 December 1948, 12.

<sup>103</sup> “Penang Ramblers Win League,” *The Straits Times*, 20 October 1950, 12

periods. The league faced interruptions, especially between 1916 and 1923, and during the Second World War. Despite these gaps, the PFL played an important role in fostering competitive football in Penang and reflects the evolving structure and community involvement in early football history in the region.

Table 3.3 The list of PFL Winners (1906-1950)

<b>Year</b>	<b>Winner</b>
1906	YMCA
1907	Government Services
1908	Penang Butterflies
1909	Penang CRC
1910	Butterworth Recreation Club
1911	Penang CRC
1912	PCC
1913	Penang CRC
1914	Not held
1915	Penang CRC
1916-1923	Not held
1924	Wanderers (Malay)
1925	Municipality
1926	Darul Aihsan
1926	Darul Aihsan
1927	Darul Aihsan
1928	Penang CRC
1929-1930	PCC
1930	Darul Aihsan
1931	Penang CRC
1932	Penang CRC
1933	Penang CRC
1934	Penang CRC
1935	Penang CRC
1936	Old Xavierians' Association
1937	Old Xavierians' Association

Year	Winner
1938	Province Wellesley FA
1939	PCFA
1940	Penang CRC
1941	Penang Fortress FA
1942-1945	No football activity during the Second World War
1946	PCFA
1947	PCFA
1948	PCFA
1949	Unknown
1950	Penang Ramblers

Sources: Refer to footnotes 93-103.

For knock-out competition in Penang, the Penang President's Cup, first introduced in 1907, was the earliest knock-out football competition in British Malaya. Organised by the PFL, the tournament was officially endorsed during the league's annual meeting that year.<sup>104</sup> It was decided that the first matches would be played at the Esplanade, a central venue for sports in colonial Penang. Five clubs took part in the inaugural edition: PCC, YMCA, Penang CRC, Crescent FC, and Penang Wanderers.<sup>105</sup> Notably, Penang Recreation Club and Butterworth Recreation Club did not participate.<sup>106</sup> The final between PCC and Crescent FC ended in a 1–1 draw, leading to a replay match, in which PCC won 5–0 to become the first champions.<sup>107</sup>

The tournament was not held in 1908 but resumed in 1909, with YMCA securing the title.<sup>108</sup> From 1910 to 1914, the Penang President's Cup saw increased competition, particularly from Penang CRC, which won three consecutive titles.<sup>109</sup> PCC continued to perform well, capturing the cup again in 1913 and 1914.<sup>110</sup> However, the tournament then went into a long hiatus after 1914, possibly due to the disruptions caused by World War I and changes in local sporting priorities. It was not until 1931 that the competition

<sup>104</sup> "Penang Football League. The Cup Ties," *Pinang Gazette and Straits Chronicle*, 6 December 1907, 4

<sup>105</sup> "Penang Football League. The Cup Ties," *Pinang Gazette...*, 4

<sup>106</sup> Penang Football League. The Cup Ties," *Pinang Gazette...*, 4

<sup>107</sup> "Football," *Pinang Gazette and Straits Chronicle*, 10 January 1908, 4

<sup>108</sup> "Penang Football Ties," *Pinang Gazette and Straits Chronicle*, 7 January 1909, 4

<sup>109</sup> "P.C.C. vs C.R.C. Match," *The Straits Echo (Mail Edition)*, 16 July 1914, 1030

<sup>110</sup> "Cup Tie Final," *The Straits Echo (Mail Edition)*, 18 June 1914, 883

was revived under a new name, the Penang Cup, administered by the newly formed Penang Football Association.<sup>111</sup> The trophy for this revived competition was donated by an anonymous sponsor, signalling renewed interest in organised football.<sup>112</sup>

The 1930s saw Penang CRC continue its dominance, winning several titles and reinforcing its status as one of the island’s top clubs. However, the decade also brought greater diversity to the winner’s list. Clubs such as Penang Recreation Club, Darul Aihsan FC, the Old Xavierians’ Association, and Crescent FC each secured victory.<sup>113</sup> By the late 1930s and early 1940s, new challengers like the Penang Chinese Football Association, Marines Department Sports Club, and Penang Indian Recreation Club had risen to prominence, showing the growing competitiveness and inclusiveness of the local football scene.<sup>114</sup> The Penang Cup not only provided structure for regular matches but also fostered a lasting football culture on the island, making it a central fixture in Penang’s sporting history.

Table 3.4 Winners and Finalists of the Penang Cup (1907-1941)

Year	Winner team	Finalist team
1907-08	PCC	Crescent FC
1909	YMCA	Penang CRC
1910	Penang CRC	Police
1911	Penang CRC	PCC
1912	Penang CRC	Government Services
1913	PCC	Crescent FC
1914	PCC	Old Farquhar’s Club

<sup>111</sup> “Penang Football Association,” *Pinang Gazette and Straits Chronicle*, 13 August 1931, 7

<sup>112</sup> “Penang Football Association,” *Pinang Gazette and Straits Chronicle*, 14 September 1931, 4

<sup>113</sup> “Penang Cricket Club Wins Cup Final,” *Pinang Gazette and Straits Chronicle*, 10 September 1931,

10; “Chinese Win 1932 Cup Competition,” *Pinang Gazette and Straits Chronicle*, 11 October 1933, 5;

“C.R.C. Win Cup Final,” *Pinang Gazette and Straits Chronicle*, 6 November 1933, 3;

“P.R.C. Wins P.F.A. Cup,” *Pinang Gazette and Straits Chronicle*, 8 October 1934, 4;

“D.A.F.C. Wins P.F.A. Cup,” *Pinang Gazette and Straits Chronicle*, 21 October 1935, 8;

“Penang Cup Final,” *Morning Tribune*, 20 October 1938, 23

<sup>114</sup> “Penang Chinese Win Cup Final Soccer,” *The Straits Times*, 18 November 1939, 15;

“Marines Swamped by C.R.C. In First Division,” *Pinang Gazette and Straits Chronicle*, 6 March 1941, 11;

“Lucky Goal Wins for Indians F.A. Cup,” *Pinang Gazette and Straits Chronicle*, 19 September 1941, 9

1915-1930	Not held.	
1931	PCC	Darul Aihsan
1932	Penang CRC	St. Xavierians' Recreation Club
1933	Penang CRC	St. Xavierians' Recreation Club
1934	Penang Recreation Club	Darul Aihsan
1935	Darul Aihsan	Muthibol Ahzan
1936	Crescent FC	Penang CRC
1937	Old Xavierians'	Penang Sports Club
1938	Old Xavierians'	PCFA
1939	PCFA	Penang Indian
1940	Marines Department	Penang Indian
1941	Penang Indian	Police Sports Club
1942-1945	No football activity during the Second World War.	

*Sources: Refer to footnotes 97-114.*

The development of football in Penang was deeply shaped by two key competitions: the Penang Football League and the Penang Cup. Together, they not only introduced structure and excitement to the game but also fostered a strong sense of local identity through sport. What began as an activity among European clubs gradually opened to local communities, development talent, and expanding participation. Despite periods of disruption, these competitions remained central to Penang's sporting life, offering regular fixtures and spirited rivalries that helped football take root in the island's culture. Their enduring influence makes them essential to any serious study of early Malayan football.

In the case of Malacca, the early progression of football was shaped by local initiative, most notably through the formation of the St. Francis Association League (SFA League), which stands as one of the earliest structured football competitions in the region.<sup>115</sup> Formed in 1920 under the leadership of Mr. P. George Mathias Pamadasa, the St. Francis Association aimed to provide a structured platform for football clubs to compete regularly.<sup>116</sup> This initiative was a pioneering effort in Malacca, demonstrating

<sup>115</sup> "Football," *Malaya Tribune*, 17 September 1920, 5

<sup>116</sup> "St. Francis Association," *The Straits Times*, 6 September 1920, 11

how local associations took the lead in fostering organised sports during the colonial period.

What made the SFA League particularly distinctive was its team naming system. Instead of using club names, teams were identified by letters A to E.<sup>117</sup> Five teams participated in the inaugural tournament, though the specific winner was not clearly recorded. In 1922, Team E emerged as the league champion, with Team C finishing as runners-up.<sup>118</sup> However, the tournament soon faced difficulties and was eventually abandoned. In 1923, efforts were made to revive the league, but it was not until 1928 that the tournament resumed.<sup>119</sup> This time, the teams were renamed using letters W, X, Y, and Z. Unfortunately, no clear records were found regarding the champion of the 1928 edition. The gaps in tournament continuity and documentation reflected the broader challenges faced by early sports organisers in maintaining consistent football activities.

Around the same period, another key initiative emerged to further support football development in Malacca. The introduction of the Yeow Kim Swee Football Shield in December 1920 marked another important step in the development of football in Malacca.<sup>120</sup> Organised under the guidance of the Malacca Football League Committee, the tournament aimed to promote the sport and support the growth of local talent.<sup>121</sup> Named after its donor, the shield provided a structured league and knock-out competition.<sup>122</sup> Four teams took part in the inaugural edition: Vinolia Club, Mohammedan Recreation Club, Banda Kaba Football Club, and Malacca Chinese Football Club.<sup>123</sup> Vinolia Club emerged victorious, defeating Banda Kaba by two goals to one in the final.<sup>124</sup>

Although the competition started with promise, it soon faced interruptions and was not held for several years. In 1928, the Yeow Kim Swee Shield was revived, and

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<sup>117</sup> Ibid.

<sup>118</sup> "St. Francis' Association Items," *Malaya Tribune*, 24 August 1922, 8

<sup>119</sup> "St Francis' Association," *Malaya Tribune*, 16 March 1923, 3

<sup>120</sup> "Malacca Football League," *The Straits Budget*, 24 December 1920, 8

<sup>121</sup> Ibid.

<sup>122</sup> "Football," *Malaya Tribune*, 18 September 1920, 5

<sup>123</sup> "Malacca Football League," *The Straits Times*, 2 March 1921, 10

<sup>124</sup> "Sport," *Malaya Tribune*, 26 April 1921, 6

Banda Kaba made a strong return by winning the title after defeating the United Chinese Association 4-0.<sup>125</sup> The early 1930s saw the rise of other clubs, including the Malacca Recreation Association, which won consecutive titles in 1929 and 1930.<sup>126</sup> These results reflected the growing interest in football and the widening participation across different community-based clubs in the region.

The 1930s marked the rise of the MCFA, which won the shield in 1931, 1932, 1933, and again in 1934.<sup>127</sup> Their emergence reflected the increasing organisation of Chinese football clubs in the region. However, from 1935 onwards, the tournament experienced periods of irregularity, with several years when the tournament was not held. By 1942, the outbreak of the Second World War brought all football activities to a complete halt. Despite these interruptions, the Yeow Kim Swee Football Shield contributed significantly to early football development in Malacca, promoting structured competition and inter-club rivalry across ethnic lines

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<sup>125</sup> “Yeow Kim Swee Shield Final,” *Malaya Tribune*, 2 October 1928, 10

<sup>126</sup> “Malacca Cup-Tie,” *Malaya Tribune*, 2 October 1930, 10;

<sup>127</sup> “Malacca News,” *The Singapore Free Press and Mercantile Advertiser (1884-1942)*, 11 November 1931, 7; “A Malayan Sporting Diary,” *The Straits Times*, 14 May 1933, 15; “Falling-Off in Gate Receipts Causes Malacca M. F. A.'S Loss Of \$247 On Year,” *The Singapore Free Press and Mercantile Advertiser (1884-1942)*, 15 February 1935, 16

Table 3.5 The list of Yeow Kim Swee Shield Winners (1921-1941)

Year	Winner
1921	Banda Kaba
1922-1927	Not held
1928	Banda Kaba
1929	Malacca Recreation Association
1930	Malacca Recreation Association
1931	Malacca CFA
1932	Malacca Club
1933	Malacca CFA I
1934	Malacca CFA
1935-1941	Not held

*Sources: Refer to footnotes 124-127.*

The early growth of football in Malacca was guided by local leadership and community-driven efforts. Competitions such as the St. Francis Association League and the Yeow Kim Swee Football Shield provided a platform for teams to play regularly and develop local talent. Although both tournaments faced challenges, they helped build interest in the game and fostered healthy rivalries among clubs. These events also reflected the broader role of sport in bringing communities together. Their continued influence highlights how football became part of Malacca's social life, making them essential to any meaningful study of early football development in British Malaya.

#### ***3.4.1.2 Football Competitions in the Federated Malay States***

Football competitions in the Federated Malay States played a key role in shaping the local football scene. This section looks at how football developed in Selangor, Perak, and Negri Sembilan, focusing on the dedication of different communities in competitive matches. The introduction of leagues and cup tournaments reflected the growing interest in the sport. In Selangor, two major competitions were the Selangor Association Football League (SAFL) and the Selangor Football Association Cup. In Perak, the

Lower Perak Football League and the Lim Seng Fook Cup served as important events. In Negri Sembilan, the Hose Cup and the Negri Sembilan Football Association League helped promote football at the community level and encouraged wider participation.

Building on the growing football culture in the Federated Malay States, Selangor made a major contribution through the establishment of the SAFL on 16 June 1906.<sup>1</sup> As the second-oldest structured football competition in Malaya after the Penang Football League, the SAFL introduced a league format in which all teams played against one another, offering consistent and organised competition. The tournament's trophy was named the Watson Shield, in honour of Mr Reginald George Watson, who served as the league's chairman.<sup>2</sup> In its inaugural season, seven teams participated: Selangor Club, YMCA, Klang, the Recreation Club, Victoria Institution, St John Institution, and Chinese Star.<sup>3</sup> Selangor Club emerged as the first champions, completing the season unbeaten with five victories and one draw, finishing at the top of the final standings.<sup>4</sup>

Table 3.6 1906 SAFL's Final Table

Rank	Teams	Match	Won	Draw	Lost	Goals For	Goals Against	Points
1	Selangor Club	6	5	1	0	19	3	11
2	Recreation Club	6	3	2	1	17	4	8
3	Klang	6	3	2	1	7	4	8
4	Victoria Institution	6	3	1	2	2	4	7
5	YMCA	6	0	0	3	7	4	6
6	Chinese Star	6	0	1	5	1	12	1
7	St. John Institution	6	0	1	5	1	14	1

Sources: Selangor Football League," *Pinang Gazette and Straits Chronicle*, 10 October 1906, 3

<sup>1</sup> "Selangor Football League," *Pinang Gazette and Straits Chronicle*, 21 June 1906, 3

<sup>2</sup> "Club Deserved Their Cup Final Win Against Police Depot," *The Singapore Free Press and Mercantile Advertiser (1884-1942)*, 13 September 1938, 12;

"Football," *The Straits Echo (Mail Edition)*, 22 June 1906, 524

<sup>3</sup> "Selangor Football League," *Pinang Gazette and Straits Chronicle*, 10 October 1906, 3

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

The SAFL continued to shape local football until 1915, when the competition was temporarily halted. Between 1906 and 1914, several teams shared success. Selangor Club won the inaugural title in 1906 and again in 1908.<sup>5</sup> The Recreation Club followed closely, claiming championships in 1907 and 1909.<sup>6</sup> The Malay team of SSC left their mark by winning in 1910 and 1913.<sup>7</sup> Other champions during this early period included the Casuals in 1911, Klang in 1912 and UCFT in 1914.<sup>8</sup> These early seasons reflected the expanding football scene in Kuala Lumpur and Selangor.

The league resumed in 1916 with the United Chinese emerging as champions and defending their title again in 1917.<sup>9</sup> However, the competition was interrupted in 1918 and 1919.<sup>10</sup> It returned in 1920 under the new banner of SCRC, the successor to UCFT.<sup>11</sup> SCRC established sustained dominance, securing six league titles between 1920 and 1928, followed by four consecutive championships from 1929 to 1932, and another in 1934.<sup>12</sup> TPCA interrupted SCRC's dominance with titles in 1933 and 1937, while Selangor Rangers and Police Depot won in 1935, 1938 and 1940.<sup>13</sup> SCRC reclaimed the league in 1936, 1939 and 1941.<sup>14</sup> TPCA secured the 1947 and 1948 titles, before SCRC reclaimed dominance with consecutive wins in 1949 and 1950.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> "Association Football," *The Straits Times*, 28 July 1908, 8

<sup>6</sup> "Selangor Association Football League," *The Straits Echo (Mail Edition)*, 17 September 1909, 1054

<sup>7</sup> "League Football," *Pinang Gazette and Straits Chronicle*, 23 December 1910, 5

<sup>8</sup> "United Chinese Football Club," *Malaya Tribune*, 3 December 1914, 6

<sup>9</sup> "Sporting," *Malaya Tribune*, 20 August 1917, 5

<sup>10</sup> "Selangor F. A. First Annual Report," *The Singapore Free Press and Mercantile Advertiser (1884-1942)*, 23 January 1937, 15

<sup>11</sup> "Selangor Football League," *The Straits Budget*, 27 September 1928, 26;

"Sport of The Week," *Malayan Saturday Post*, 7 November 1925, 16

<sup>12</sup> "Selangor Football League," *The Straits Budget*, 27 September 1928, 26;

"Selangor Chinese," *The Straits Budget*, 26 July 1934, 29

<sup>13</sup> "Selangor Cup," *The Straits Times*, 2 October 1933, 15;

"Selangor Rangers, the Selangor Football League champions, who defeated The Rest 3-0 on Saturday," *Malaya Tribune*, 23 October 1935, 7;

"T.P.C.A. Win Cup Final," *The Straits Times*, 19 September 1937, 24;

"Selangor Club Wins League," *The Straits Budget*, 15 September 1938, 32;

"Police Depot Win Selangor League," *The Straits Times*, 23 August 1940, 15

<sup>14</sup> "Local Football," *Malaya Tribune*, 23 December 1936, 16;

"Sansom Cup Game," *The Straits Times*, 29 October 1939, 19;

"T.P.C.A. Retain Cup," *Morning Tribune*, 11 November 1941, 9

<sup>15</sup> "T.P.C.A. Qualify for Cup Final," *The Straits Times*, 16 December 1947, 12;

"T.P.C.A. Win," *The Straits Times*, 14 November 1948, 10;

"Selangor Chinese Win League," *The Straits Times*, 27 July 1949, 12;

"Tamilians Win F.A.S. Cup Final 1-0," *The Straits Times*, 6 November 1950, 12

The table below provides a chronological overview of the winners of the SAFL from 1906 to 1950. It highlights the dominance of several key teams across different eras, particularly the Selangor Club, Recreation Club, SSC, and later SCRC and TPCA. Notable gaps in the competition occurred during wartime and other interruptions. This record helps trace the development and competitive trends within the league, offering insight into the historical progression of organised football in Selangor.

Table 3.7 The list of SAFL Winners (1906-1950)

<b>Year</b>	<b>Winner</b>
1906	Selangor Club
1907	Recreation Club
1908	Selangor Club
1909	Recreation Club
1910	SSC
1911	Casuals
1912	Klang Club
1913	SSC
1914	UCFT
1915	Not held.
1916	UCFT
1917	UCFT
1918-1919	Not held.
1920	SCRC
1921	Not held.
1922	United Banks
1923	SCRC
1924	SCRC
1925	SCRC
1926	SCRC
1927	SCRC
1928	SCRC
1929	SCRC
1930	SCRC
1931	SCRC
1932	SCRC
1933	TPCA

Year	Winner
1934	SCRC
1935	Selangor Rangers
1936	SCRC
1937	TPCA
1938	Police Depot
1939	SCRC
1940	Police Depot
1941	SCRC
1942-1945	No football activity during the Second World War
1946	Not held.
1947	TPCA
1948	TPCA
1949	SCRC
1950	SCRC

Sources: Refer to footnotes 128-142.

As league football gained firm ground in Selangor through the SAFL, attention soon turned to expanding competitive opportunities beyond round-robin formats. This led to the introduction of the Selangor Football Association Cup in 1925, established as the state's main knockout tournament under the management of the newly formed Selangor Football Association (SFA).<sup>16</sup> The inaugural final, held on 29 October that year, saw SSC edge out SCRC 3-2, marking a new milestone in the evolution of football in the state and adding variety and prestige to Selangor's growing football calendar.<sup>17</sup>

From 1925 to 1941, the competition was held annually until it was interrupted by the Second World War. During this period, SCRC and Kuala Rovers emerged as the most successful teams. SCRC secured titles from 1926 to 1929, sharing the 1929 title with Rangers.<sup>18</sup> Kuala Rovers fielded both A and B teams, with the A team winning from 1930 to 1933 including a shared 1932 title with SCRC, and notably defeating their B team 4-0 in the 1931 final, before adding another victory in 1935.<sup>19</sup> TPCA also

<sup>16</sup> "Football In Selangor," *The Straits Echo (Mail Edition)*, 17 June 1925, 618

<sup>17</sup> "Football," *The Straits Times*, 30 October 1925, Page 10

<sup>18</sup> "Selangor Football League," *The Straits Echo (Mail Edition)*, 27 September 1926, 1064; Singam, "Soccer," 14;

"Selangor Football Association," *Pinang Gazette and Straits Chronicle*, 23 October 1928, 11.

<sup>19</sup> "Selangor Cup," *The Straits Budget*, 16 October 1930, 30;

"Selangor Football Cup Final," *The Straits Echo (Mail Edition)*, 18 November 1931, 939;

established its presence by winning the cup in 1934, 1937, 1940 and 1941.<sup>20</sup> SCRC, Selangor Club and Police Depot won the Selangor FA Cup in 1936, 1938 and 1939, respectively.<sup>21</sup> After the Second World War, TPCA dominated the Selangor FA Cup, winning three titles between 1947 and 1950, while SCRC secured the 1949 title by defeating TPCA.<sup>22</sup>

Table 3.8 Winners and Finalists of the Selangor FA Cup (1925-1950)

Year	Winner team	Finalist team
1925	SSC	SCRC
1926	SCRC	Rompers
1927	SCRC	TPCA
1928	SCRC	Selangor Malays
1929	SCRC	Rangers (joint winner)
1930	Kuala Rovers A	TPCA
1931	Kuala Rovers A	Kuala Rovers B
1932	Kuala Rovers A	SCRC (joint winner)
1933	Kuala Rovers A	Selangor Malays
1934	TPCA	SCRC
1935	Kuala Rovers A	TPCA
1936	SCRC	TPCA
1937	TPCA	Police Depot
1938	Selangor Club	Police Depot
1939	Police Depot	TPCA

“Selangor Cup Final,” *Malaya Tribune*, 21 November 1932, 10;

“Selangor Football Cup Final,” *Pinang Gazette and Straits Chronicle*, 9 October 1933, 6;

“Kuala Rovers' "A" who won the Selangor Football Association Cup Final against Selangor T.P.C.A. last Saturday,” *Malaya Tribune*, 25 September 1935, 20

<sup>20</sup> “Tamils Win The' Selangor Cup,” *The Straits Times*, 9 September 1934, 15

“Tamils Win the Selangor Cup,” *The Straits Times*, 20 September 1937, 15;

“Selangor F. A. Cup,” *The Straits Times*, 29 September 1940, 19;

“T.P.C.A. Retain Cup,” *Morning Tribune*, 11 November 1941, 9.

<sup>21</sup> “Untitled,” *The Straits Times*, 14 September 1936, 16;

“Selangor Club Wins League,” *The Straits Budget*, 15 September 1938, 32;

“Selangor Cup Final,” *Morning Tribune*, 12 September 1939, 15

<sup>22</sup> “Selangor F.A. Cup Final,” *Malaya Tribune*, 23 December 1947, 8;

“T.P.C.A. Win,” *The Straits Times*, 14 November 1948, 10;

“S'gor CRC Win K.O. Soccer Final,” *The Straits Times*, 31 October 1949, 8;

“TPCA Win Sel. F.A. Cup Final,” *Singapore Standard*, 6 November 1950, 8

1940	TPCA	SCRC
1941	TPCA	SCRC
1942-1945	No football activity during the Second World War.	
1946	Not held.	
1947	TPCA	YMCA
1948	TPCA	SCRC
1949	SCRC	TPCA
1950	TPCA	SCRC

*Sources: Refer to footnotes 144-149.*

Together, the SAFL and Selangor FA Cup played a central role in shaping the football landscape of Selangor. These competitions provided structure, encouraged club development, and fostered local rivalries that strengthened community interest. The rise of teams like SCRC, Kuala Rovers, and TPCA reflected the sport's growing appeal across different groups. Despite interruptions, both tournaments left a legacy and helped establish football as a key part of Selangor's sporting identity during this period.

Building on similar developments elsewhere in the Federated Malay States, Perak also saw the rise of organised football at the regional level. One of the most notable initiatives was the formation of the Lower Perak Football League in 1921, supported by Raja Muda of Perak, Raja Abdul Aziz.<sup>23</sup> As patron, he contributed the league's trophy and medals, helping to establish a formal competition structure for teams across the Lower Perak region.<sup>24</sup> In its inaugural season, five teams competed: Lower Perak Ex-Services Association, Dew Recreation Club, Malay Volunteer Infantry, Anglo-Chinese School, and the Customs Department. The Ex-Services Association won the first title, followed by the Customs Department later that same year.<sup>25</sup>

A turning point came in 1922 when the Teluk Anson Chinese Football Team became the first community-based club to win the league. Their victories in 1922, 1923, and 1925 signalled the growing influence of Chinese clubs in regional football,

<sup>23</sup> "Lower Perak Football League," *Pinang Gazette and Straits Chronicle*, 7 October 1929, 14

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>25</sup> "Social and Professional," *Pinang Gazette and Straits Chronicle*, 12 January 1921, 6; "Lower Perak Football League," 7 October 1929, 14

challenging the early dominance of institutional teams.<sup>26</sup> However, the league faced several disruptions, with no recorded competitions in 1924 and from 1926 to 1928. The 1929 resumption saw Teluk Anson Malays win, reflecting rising Malay involvement.<sup>27</sup> They won again in 1933, reflecting the league’s multiracial character and its role in encouraging diverse community involvement.<sup>28</sup>

Table 3.9 The list of Lower Perak Football League Winners (1921-1933)

Year	Winner
1921 – 1 <sup>st</sup>	Lower Perak Ex-Services Association
1921 – 2 <sup>nd</sup>	Lower Perak Customs
1922 – 1 <sup>st</sup>	Lower Perak Ex-Services Association
1922 – 2 <sup>nd</sup>	Teluk Anson Chinese Football Team
1923	Teluk Anson Chinese Football Team
1924	Not held.
1925	Teluk Anson Chinese Football Team
1926-1928	Not held.
1929	Teluk Anson Malays
1930-1932	Not held.
1933	Teluk Anson Malays

Sources: Refer to footnotes 150-155.

For knock-out tournament, the establishment of the Lim Seng Fook Cup by Perak Football Association in 1930 marked a major step forward for knockout football across the wider state.<sup>29</sup> The tournament was open to all clubs affiliated with the association.<sup>30</sup> The cup was named after its donor, Mr. Lim Seng Fook.<sup>31</sup> Its introduction signalled Perak’s commitment to nurturing the sport through both regular leagues play and high-stakes tournament matches. Ipoh Club became the first champions, defeating

<sup>26</sup> “Teluk Anson Chinese Football Team,” *Malayan Saturday Post*, 28 February 1925, 10

<sup>27</sup> “Lower Perak Football League,” *Pinang Gazette and Straits Chronicle*, 7 October 1929, 14

<sup>28</sup> “Miss Riboet’s Xi,” *The Straits Times*, 26 October 1933, 15

<sup>29</sup> “Knock-Out Soccer Competition in Perak,” *The Singapore Free Press and Mercantile Advertiser (1884-1942)*, 23 July 1930, 20

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>31</sup> “Lim Seng Fook Cup,” *The Straits Times*, 23 September 1930, 15

the Indians by three goals to nil in the final.<sup>32</sup> The following year, Perak CRC secured the title after a 3-0 win over the Taiping Malays, while Ipoh Club reclaimed the cup in 1932 by defeating Chinese Sporting Club 5-1.<sup>33</sup> In 1933, Perak Customs made their mark by winning the title with a narrow 1–0 victory over the Railways.<sup>34</sup>

The competition grew steadily and drew ten teams in 1934.<sup>35</sup> That year, the Old Edwardians of Taiping emerged as champions by defeating the defending holders, Perak Customs, 3-1.<sup>36</sup> Perak Customs responded by winning back the cup in 1935.<sup>37</sup> A new contender, the Kinta Indians, rose to prominence by claiming titles in 1936 and again in 1939, breaking the streak of earlier winners.<sup>38</sup> The Ipoh Chinese Corinthians then dominated the late 1930s, capturing the title in 1937 and 1938.<sup>39</sup> They completed a remarkable hat trick by winning again in 1940.<sup>40</sup>

Table 3.10 The list of Lim Swee Fook Cup Winners (1930-1940)

Year	Winner
1930	Ipoh Club
1931	Perak CRC
1932	Ipoh Club
1933	Perak Customs
1934	Old Edwardians
1935	Perak Customs
1936	Kinta Indians
1937	Ipoh Chinese Corinthians
1938	Ipoh Chinese Corinthians

<sup>32</sup> “Lim Seng Fook Cup,” *The Straits Times*, 23 September 1930, 15

<sup>33</sup> “Perak Football,” *The Straits Times*, 1 September 1931, 13;

“Perak Football,” *Pinang Gazette and Straits Chronicle*, 25 July 1932, 7

<sup>34</sup> “Perak Soccer,” *Malaya Tribune*, 25 September 1933, 7

<sup>35</sup> “Perak F. A. Annual Meeting,” *The Singapore Free Press and Mercantile Advertiser (1884-1942)*, 21 December 1934, 15

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>37</sup> “Sports Jottings from Ipoh,” *Sunday Tribune (Singapore)*, 22 September 1935, 16

<sup>38</sup> “Perak Cup Final,” *The Straits Times*, 24 September 1936, 5;

“Perak Sport,” *The Straits Times*, 17 September 1939, 19

<sup>39</sup> “Football Takes Place of Hockey in Ipoh,” *The Straits Times*, 18 February 1939, 2

<sup>40</sup> “Lim Seng Fook Cup Soccer,” *Pinang Gazette and Straits Chronicle*, 9 August 1941, 12

1939	Kinta Indians
1940	Ipoh Chinese Corinthians

*Sources: Refer to footnotes 159-167.*

The Lower Perak Football League and the Lim Seng Fook Cup played instrumental roles in the early development of football in colonial Perak. Both competitions reflected the sport's transition from institution-led participation to broader community engagement, drawing in Malay, Chinese, and Indian teams. These tournaments provided structured platforms for intercommunal competition, fostering unity and sporting excellence. Their influence extended beyond local significance, contributing meaningfully to the formation of a more inclusive football culture in pre-independence Malaya.

Building on similar developments in other states, Negri Sembilan also saw early efforts to organise structured football competitions with the formation of the Seremban Football League in 1914. Seven teams took part in the inaugural season: Chayar Maamur Club, Ampangan Malays, the Casuals, Crimson Cross A and B, Temiang Malays, and Port Dickson.<sup>41</sup> These teams represented a mix of local clubs and community-based sides, reflecting the region's growing interest in football. The first match saw the Casuals dominate Ampangan Malays with a 20–3 victory, while Chayar Maamur Club defeated Crimson Cross B by three goals to nil.<sup>42</sup>

Although most matches were held in Seremban, one notable fixture took place in Port Dickson, where Crimson Cross A travelled by motor bus to play against the Port Dickson side, resulting in a goalless draw.<sup>43</sup> Despite the enthusiasm and competitive spirit shown by these early teams, the league did not continue for long. There are no surviving records of a final winner, and the competition was eventually abandoned. Nevertheless, the 1914 Seremban Football League laid an important foundation for the

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<sup>41</sup> "Negri Sembilan News," *Malaya Tribune*, 25 May 1914, 15

<sup>42</sup> "Negri Sembilan News," *Malaya Tribune*, 25 May 1914, 15;

"Negri Sembilan News," *Malaya Tribune*, 9 June 1914, 5

<sup>43</sup> "Negri Sembilan News," *Malaya Tribune*, 4 July 1914, 5

future of football in Negri Sembilan, encouraging early participation and helping to build a culture of organised sport in the colonial era.

Building on early football momentum, the 1922 Hose Cup introduced structured knockout competition in Seremban.<sup>44</sup> This tournament marked a renewed effort to formalise competitive football in Negri Sembilan after the short-lived Seremban Football League. The Hose Cup was named after Mr. Edward Shaw Hose, who had been appointed as the British Resident of Negri Sembilan on 4 November 1921.<sup>45</sup> His support, along with the organisational efforts of Mr. Arthur Benjamin Jordan, the Protector of Chinese in the state, helped establish the competition as a major local sporting event.<sup>46</sup> The inaugural tournament was joined by eight teams: St. Paul's Athletes Association (SPAA) A, SPAA B, Tampin XI, Nilai Club, PBC, Port Dickson, Tamil Union, and Jelebu. SPAA A emerged as the first champions, defeating Tampin XI by four goals to one.<sup>47</sup>

From 1922 to 1925, SPAA's dominance went unchallenged.<sup>48</sup> In 1926, Gemas-Seremban Railways Institute won the cup.<sup>49</sup> By 1927, the NS Club began its era of success, winning the Hose Cup consecutively from 1927 to 1929 and continuing their supremacy until 1931.<sup>50</sup> As football gained traction in the state, other clubs also began to find success. Teams such as NSCRC, NS Police, NS Tamil Union, NSIA, the Royal Malay Regiment, and Port Dickson Recreation Club eventually lifted the cup, signalling a diversification in competition.<sup>51</sup> The outbreak of the Second World War brought football activity to a halt from 1942 until 1949. When the Hose Cup resumed in 1950, NS Police secured a win over NSCRC, marking a new postwar chapter in the

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<sup>44</sup> "Negri Football Now in Full Swing," *The Straits Times*, 29 March 1936, 27; Soccer In the Negri. *The Straits Times*, 9 February 1935, 14.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> Soccer In the Negri. *The Straits Times*, 9 February 1935, 14.

<sup>47</sup> "Hose Cup Final," *The Straits Budget*, 7 July 1922, 17;

<sup>48</sup> "Hose Cup Final," *The Singapore Free Press and Mercantile Advertiser (Weekly)*, 10 September 1924, 13;

"Seremban News," *Pinang Gazette and Straits Chronicle*, 23 June 1925, 6;

"St. Paul's Athletic Association, Winners of The "Cup Competition" in Negri Sembilan for 1925," *Malayan Saturday Post*, 17 October 1925, 9

"Soccer Season Closes in the Negri," *The Straits Times*, 22 August 1937, 27

<sup>49</sup> "Soccer in the Negri," *The Straits Times*, 9 February 1935, 14

<sup>50</sup> "Seremban Football," *The Straits Times*, 18 August 1931, 13

<sup>51</sup> "Hose Cup Tourney Ends Negri's Soccer Season," *Sunday Standard*, 16 September 1951, 15

tournament's history.<sup>52</sup> The table below details the winners and finalists of the Hose Cup from 1922 to 1950. It reflects the strong presence of teams such as SPAA and NS Club, NSCRC across various years.

Table 3.11 Winners and Finalists of the Hose Cup (1922-1950)

<b>Year</b>	<b>Winner team</b>	<b>Finalist team</b>
1922	SPAA A	Tampin XI
1923	SPAA	Tampin XI (joint winner)
1924	SPAA	Tampin XI
1925	SPAA	Rantau Europeans
1926	Gemas Railways Institute	SUCA
1927	NS Club	NS Eurasian
1928	NS Club	SUCA
1929	NS Club	SUCA
1930	NS Club	Temiang Rovers
1931	NS Club	SUCA
1932	St. Paul's Old Boy Association	NSCRC
1933	NS Tamil Union	Seremban Hired Motor Union
1934	NSCRC	NS Tamil Union
1935	NS Club	Port Dickson Recreation Club
1936	NS Police	Seremban Rangers
1937	The Royal Malay Regiment	PBC
1938	NSIA	NS Medical Club
1939	NSCRC	Kuala Pilah XI
1940	NSCRC	NS Police
1941	Port Dickson Recreation Club	NS Police
1942-1945	No football activity during the Second World War	
1946-1949	Not held.	
1950	NS Police	NSCRC

*Sources: Refer to footnotes 174-179.*

The growing popularity of the Hose Cup laid the foundation for structured football in Negri Sembilan. In 1926, the newly formed NSFA assumed control of the

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

tournament and introduced the NSFA Football League in 1927, with the NSFA Shield as its official trophy.<sup>53</sup> NS Club won the inaugural season and retained the title in 1928.<sup>54</sup> From 1929 to 1933, NSCRC emerged as the dominant team, marking the rise of institutionalised football under NSFA's leadership.<sup>55</sup>

A significant shift occurred in 1934 when Seremban Casuals interrupted NSCRC's winning streak. This period also witnessed the emergence of Malay football clubs as strong contenders. The Royal Malay Regiment captured the title in 1935, followed by PBC, who achieved consecutive victories in 1936 and 1937.<sup>56</sup> However, NSCRC swiftly reclaimed their dominance, securing three straight league titles from 1938 to 1940.<sup>57</sup> NS Police secured the league title in 1941, marking a brief interruption to NSCRC's dominance.<sup>58</sup> The outbreak of the Second World War brought football activities to a halt, but the competition resumed in 1946. NSCRC returned to the top form and proceeded to win five consecutive titles until 1950.<sup>59</sup>

The 1939 season marked a high point in the league's pre-war history, featuring nine teams including NSCRC, NS Police, PBC, the Royal Malay Regiment, Kuala Pilah District Football XI, Sungei Ujong Club, Malay Gurus, NSIA, and Seremban Rangers.<sup>60</sup> This expansion beyond Seremban reflected the league's increasing appeal across the state. By 1950, NSCRC had amassed 13 league titles, highlighting both their dominance and the NSFA League's growing role in strengthening football culture and fostering intercommunal engagement throughout Negri Sembilan.<sup>61</sup> The table below presents the winners of the NSFA League from 1927 to 1950. This historical list provides insight

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<sup>53</sup> "N.S. Hose Cup," *The Straits Times*, 21 April 1931, 13

<sup>54</sup> "Negri Sembilan Football Association Trophy," *The Straits Budget*, 17 November 1927, 1;

"Sports & Pastimes," *Malaya Tribune*, 27 September 1928, 10

<sup>55</sup> "Sports & Pastimes: N.S. SEASON CLOSES," *Malaya Tribune*, 27 November 1929, 10;

"Malays Win Negri League Shield," *The Straits Budget*, 30 July 1936, 30

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid*;

"Negri Sports Notes," *The Straits Times*, 26 July 1936, 23;

"Soccer Season Closes in the Negri," *The Straits Times*, 22 August 1937, 27

<sup>57</sup> "Negri Sembilan Sports Notes," *The Straits Times*, 1 October 1939, 18

"Chinese Win Hose Cup Final," *The Straits Times*, 17 August 1940, 15

<sup>58</sup> "Negri Soccer," *The Straits Times*, 10 August 1941, 17

<sup>59</sup> "NS Chinese League Champs for Fifth Year," *Singapore Standard*, 30 July 1950, 12

<sup>60</sup> "Negri Soccer League," *The Straits Times*, 17 June 1939, 19

<sup>61</sup> "NS Chinese League Champs for Fifth Year," *Singapore Standard*, 30 July 1950, 12

into the competitive dynamics of league football in Negri Sembilan during the colonial period, reflecting its growth and institutional stability.

Table 3.12 The list of NSFA League Winners (1927-1950)

<b>Year</b>	<b>Winner</b>
1927	NS Club
1928	NS Club
1929	SUCA A
1930	SUCA
1931	SUCA
1932	NSCRC
1933	Seremban Casuals
1934	NSCRC
1935	Malay Regiment A
1936	PBC
1937	PBC
1938	NSCRC
1939	NSCRC
1940	NSCRC
1941	NS Police
1942-1945	No football activity during the Second World War
1946	NSCRC
1947	NSCRC
1948	NSCRC
1949	NSCRC
1950	NSCRC

*Sources: Refer to footnotes 181-188.*

The early football competitions in Negri Sembilan, from the Seremban Football League to the rise of the Hose Cup and the NSFA League, reflect the state's growing enthusiasm for the sport and its ability to bring diverse communities together. These tournaments not only nurtured local talent but also shaped a strong football identity across the region. Despite disruptions, the consistent participation of clubs like NSCRC,

NS Club, and PBC signified football's deepening roots in society during the colonial and pre-independence era.

### **3.5 CONCLUSION**

The growth of football in British Malaya from the late 19th to the 20th century reflects the emergence of a shared sporting culture shaped by the colonial structures. Across the Straits Settlements and the Federated Malay States, football transitioned from an elite recreational activity into an inclusive and widely practised sport. The formation of leagues and knockout competitions provided consistent platforms for engagement, drawing in Malays, Chinese, Indians, and Europeans. Although many clubs were organised along ethnic lines, these competitions fostered regular interaction, mutual recognition, and common pride. Football became a unique platform where people of different races could interact and compete under the same competition. State associations played a pivotal role in sustaining football's popularity, and despite wartime disruptions, the sport's revival after 1945 confirmed its cultural spirit and social importance. Football had become a key component of collective life in Malaya, helping to forge early interethnic connections and laying the foundation for a national sporting identity that endures into the present.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **THE IMPACT OF FOOTBALL ON SOCIAL RELATIONS IN BRITISH MALAYA**

#### **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

As football grew in Malaya, it became an integral part of local life. Many people joined football clubs and competed in state tournaments, making the sport a common and popular activity. Football soon became a key feature of public celebrations, such as royal coronations, where matches were organised as part of the festivities. Different ethnic communities held their own football games during these events. Malay teams often played during coronations in their states, while Chinese and Indian teams competed during official guest visits in their places. The sport's rapid growth led to the establishment of the HMS Malaya Cup in 1921, the first official inter-state football tournament, which fostered a sense of pride and identity across the region. In 1926, the Malayan Football Association was created to oversee the sport on a central level, later becoming the Football Association of Malaya. This chapter examines how football shaped social relations and became a vital part of Malaya's cultural life. It also considers the responses of local leaders in encouraging the sport's growth.

##### **4.1.1 Football in Public Events**

Football quickly emerged as a prominent feature of public life in early twentieth-century Malaya, especially in growing urban centres such as Kuala Lumpur. It was not limited to club matches or formal tournaments but was also included in major state events. This integration helped broaden the appeal of the sport, making it a shared activity for people from different ethnic backgrounds. Public football matches became common during important celebrations, transforming open fields into lively venues filled with both players and spectators. These gatherings encouraged greater public interest and helped spread the sport beyond elite European circles. Football thus became both a competitive

sport and a form of social gathering, contributing to early community interaction in urban areas.

A notable example of this trend was the football match held during the second Conference of Rulers, known as the Durbar, in Kuala Lumpur in 1903. Organised as part of the official entertainment, the match took place on 21 July at the Selangor Club padang.<sup>1</sup> It featured a team of past and present students of Victoria Institution playing against the Selangor Club team. Victoria Institution won the match with a score of three goals to two.<sup>2</sup> According to reports from *The Straits Times*, the event drew a crowd of around four thousand people, including Malays and Chinese.<sup>3</sup> This showed the sport's wide appeal and how it could attract a mixed audience beyond just European spectators. The event highlighted how football had already begun to take root within local society as a unifying social experience.

The inclusion of football in such an important state event reflects the sport's growing social value in colonial Malaya. Football's inclusion in the 1903 Durbar went beyond mere entertainment, showing its growing significance in both public gatherings and formal state occasions. That a football match was scheduled during a royal conference suggests that colonial authorities saw the sport as a useful tool for community building and modern identity. By bringing together people of different races and backgrounds in a shared setting, football helped lay the foundation for a more connected society. It was becoming a cultural space where differences could be set aside in favour of common enjoyment.

#### **4.1.2 Football in Malay, Chinese, and Indian Public Events**

Football in Malaya was not only played for recreation but also became an important feature of official ceremonies and community celebrations across various racial groups. During the coronation of Malay rulers in states such as Negri Sembilan, Perak, and Selangor, football matches were included as part of the festivities, showing the sport's growing importance among the Malays. Chinese communities also held football games

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<sup>1</sup> "Special Telegrams," *Pinang Gazette and Straits Chronicle*, 23 July 1903, 5

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> "The Conference," *The Straits Times*, 27 July 1903, 5

during official guest visits by using the sport to showcase unity and local pride. Likewise, Indian football matches were organised and often aligned with visits from colonial or community leaders. These events reveal how football became a common cultural activity and was embraced by all major communities, while still reflecting each group's distinct identity. As football grew in popularity through these public events, it contributed to a shared sporting experience and a deeper cultural connection to the game. The following section will further examine how these race-based public matches reflected social structures and communal participation in early Malayan football.

#### ***4.1.2.1 Malay Football in Public Events***

The growing enthusiasm of the Malays for football was evident in their active participation during public events, where the sport became a central attraction, drawing diverse crowds. Matches involving Malay teams were often included in significant occasions such as royal coronations and official visits, highlighting football's rising social and cultural relevance.

Royal coronations have long stood at the heart of Malay monarchy traditions, symbolising the formal ascension of a new ruler. During the British colonial period, these events began to reflect evolving social dynamics with the inclusion of modern elements, notably football matches, into the official programme. Though primarily ceremonial, these shifts signalled football's growing popularity and its emerging role in public life. The earliest recorded instance occurred on 6 May 1898 during the coronation of Tuanku Muhammad as Yamtuan Besar of Negri Sembilan, when a football match took place between a mixed team of Europeans and Malays against the Police.<sup>4</sup> This integration of sport into royal festivities highlighted its rising cultural significance. The trend continued in 1934 during the installation of Tuanku Abdul Rahman, where

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<sup>4</sup> E. W. Birch, "The Election and Installation of Tungku Muhammad, C.M.G. Bin Tungku Antah, as the Yang Di Per Tuan Besar, Negri Sembilan," *Journal of the Straits Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 46 (1906): 17.

contemporary features such as the presence of the British Resident, military honours, official speeches, and a football match were incorporated into the traditional ceremony.<sup>5</sup>

A similar instance of football's ceremonial inclusion occurred in 1923 during the twenty fifth anniversary of the coronation of Sultan Alaedin Suleiman Shah of Selangor.<sup>6</sup> Held in Klang, the celebration marked a significant milestone in the Sultan's reign and included a football match at the Klang padang as part of the official programme.<sup>7</sup> This event reflected the growing recognition of football as a meaningful component of public and royal celebrations in early twentieth century Malaya. A parallel pattern emerged in Perak in 1939 during the coronation of Sultan Abdul Aziz, where football was again integrated into the formal proceedings.<sup>8</sup> The organising committee arranged a fancy dress football match, demonstrating a blend of traditional ceremony with modern recreational culture.<sup>9</sup> Furthermore, after the installation of the Raja Perempuan of Perak, a football match between two Malay schools was staged at the town *padang* in Kuala Kangsar.<sup>10</sup> These examples illustrate how football had become a regular and accepted element of royal events, reinforcing its expanding social and cultural relevance in colonial Malaya.

Football was not only featured during royal coronations but had also become a regular fixture in the celebrations of royal birthdays in British Malaya. These birthdays were significant annual occasions, marked by public ceremonies and widespread participation. As part of the festivities, football matches were often scheduled, with the final match played in front of the royal family and colonial elites. This inclusion of football reflected its growing social importance and its role in ceremonial life, serving both as entertainment and to bring together diverse communities in honour of the monarchy.

In Selangor, football gained ceremonial importance during the reign of Sultan Alaedin Suleiman Shah. A key example occurred on 1 October 1911, when a match was

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<sup>5</sup> "Yang Di Pertuan Besar Formally Installed," *Pinang Gazette and Straits Chronicle*, 25 April 1934, 1

<sup>6</sup> "Random Notes," *The Straits Echo (Mail Edition)*, 18 December 1923, 1476

<sup>7</sup> "Sultan of Selangor. Jubilee Celebrations at Klang," *The Straits Budget*, 21 December 1923, 15

<sup>8</sup> "Coming Perak Coronation Celebrations," *Pinang Gazette and Straits Chronicle*, 23 December 1938, 7

<sup>9</sup> "Coronation Next Month," *Pinang Gazette and Straits Chronicle*, 13 February 1939, 9

<sup>10</sup> "Sultan Of Perak's Consort," *Pinang Gazette and Straits Chronicle*, 28 February 1939, 8

held in Klang to celebrate the Sultan's birthday.<sup>11</sup> The game featured a local Klang team against visitors from Singapore. It drew a large crowd of Europeans and Malays dressed in vibrant attire, highlighting football's appeal across communities. Although Klang lost five nil, the match demonstrated how football had become a central part of royal and public celebrations.<sup>12</sup> In Perak, during Sultan Iskandar Shah's birthday in 1931, a match between the Malayan Volunteer Infantry teams of North and South Perak was held.<sup>13</sup> The Sultan donated the challenge cup and personally presented the trophy to the winning North Perak side, featuring football's respected ceremonial role.<sup>14</sup>

In Negri Sembilan, football was integrated into royal birthdays during the reign of Tuanku Muhammad.<sup>15</sup> In 1931, a match between Malay schools was organised in Seri Menanti, where Rantau defeated Kuala Pilah three-nil. Tuanku Muhammad presented the shield and medals to the winners, highlighting football's place in state ceremonies.<sup>16</sup> This tradition continued under his son, Tuanku Abdul Rahman, from 1934 onward. In 1935, Kuala Pilah Malay School won the final of the Yamtuan's Shield after defeating Nyatoh Malay School by two goals to nil.<sup>17</sup> The following year, Nyatoh overcame Rembau Malay School by four goals to three.<sup>18</sup> These events show how football became a recurring and celebrated part of royal birthday festivities, reflecting its growing integration into the ceremonial and communal life of colonial Malaya.

The inclusion of football in royal ceremonies during colonial Malaya reflects its rising cultural and social significance. These events, once rooted solely in tradition, began to embrace modern elements, with football serving as a shared space for celebration and unity. By drawing diverse communities together, football became more than a sport. It evolved into a symbol of public identity and collective participation within Malay ceremonial and social life.

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<sup>11</sup> "Sporting News," *Pinang Gazette and Straits Chronicle*, 2 October 1911, 4

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> "The Sultan of Perak," *The Straits Times*, 13 May 1931, 5

<sup>14</sup> "The Sultan of Perak," *The Straits Times*, 13 May 1931, 5

<sup>15</sup> "Ruler's Birthday," *The Straits Times*, 27 April 1931, 18

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> "Negri Celebrates Ruler's Birthday," *The Straits Times*, 26 August 1935, 13

<sup>18</sup> "The Yam Tuan's Birthday," *The Straits Times*, 26 August 1936, 12

#### ***4.1.2.2 Chinese Football in Public Events***

The Chinese community in colonial Malaya maintained strong ties with mainland China, often welcoming visiting delegations with public celebrations. Football became a central feature of these events, reflecting both solidarity and cultural pride. Matches involving Chinese teams attracted large crowds and symbolised unity through sport. These occasions highlighted football's role in expressing shared identity and strengthening communal bonds across borders. This section examines how football featured in such visits, revealing its importance in the social and cultural life of the Chinese in early 20<sup>th</sup>-century Malaya.

The 1929 visit of Fudan University from Shanghai to Malaya exemplified the close cultural and social ties between the Chinese diaspora and mainland China. As part of their tour, the university delegation engaged in various sporting events, including football and basketball, which were organised by local Chinese associations. These matches served as significant platforms for fostering community spirit and expressing shared identity. In Seremban, the expectation surrounding a football match between Fudan University and the SUCA demonstrated the strong public interest in such events.<sup>19</sup> Although the initial cancellation of Fudan's visit disappointed many, the Selangor Chinese Recreation Club's decision to forgo their own scheduled match allowed Seremban to host the event instead.<sup>20</sup> This act of solidarity among Chinese associations reflected a deep sense of communal unity and mutual respect.

The football match between Fudan University and SUCA became a landmark sporting event in the history of Negri Sembilan. It marked the first time a foreign team toured the state, attracting a large crowd in Seremban.<sup>21</sup> The presence of Tuanku Muhammad, the Yamtuan of Negri Sembilan, and his entourage further elevated the occasion, indicating the growing prestige of football within local society. SUCA triumphed with a 5-2 victory, and the event concluded with a formal dinner hosted in

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<sup>19</sup> "Football," *Malacca Guardian*, 22 April 1929, 8

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>21</sup> "Football," *Malacca Guardian*, 22 April 1929, 8.

honour of the visiting team.<sup>22</sup> This match reflected sporting excellence and strengthened cultural ties between Chinese in Malaya and China, showing football's diplomatic role.

In 1949, a similar spirit of international meeting was evident when a football team from India, previously known as the All-India Football Team and featuring players from the 1948 Olympic Games, toured Malaya.<sup>23</sup> Referred to as the Indian Tourist team by the Straits Times, they played against the PCFA on 22 November.<sup>24</sup> The match, held at Victoria Green, attracted 10,000 spectators and was widely regarded as one of the most exciting contests seen in Penang at the time.<sup>25</sup> PCFA won with a solitary goal in a tightly contested match.<sup>26</sup> The enthusiastic crowd response highlighted football's ability to unite communities and promote cross-cultural respect, cementing its role in the broader public life of colonial Malaya.

These high-profile matches demonstrate how football served not only as entertainment but also as a meaningful platform for community solidarity. Whether welcoming visitors from China or India, football created a shared space for public celebration and identity expression. Its ability to draw large, diverse audiences and command royal and official attention reflected its growing prestige. In colonial Malaya, football became a respected medium for fostering cross-cultural ties and strengthening communal relationships across borders.

#### ***4.1.2.3 Indian Football in Public Events***

In colonial Malaya, football served as both recreation and cultural expression for the Indian community, especially during public events such as visits from India and Deepavali celebrations. Organised by Indian associations, these matches fostered communal ties and cultural pride, while demonstrating football's role in connecting

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> "Tourists Fight Hard to Win 2-1," *The Straits Times*, 31 October 1949, 8

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

local Indian communities and maintaining links with the Indian mainland during the early 20th century under British colonial rule.

Building on football's role in public events, a notable instance occurred in 1949, when a visiting football team from India, previously associated with the 1948 Olympic Games, played in Malaya. The team played several matches during their tour, including a major fixture against the TPCA, Selangor's leading Indian football team and winners of the 1948 Selangor First Division League.<sup>27</sup> Held on 13 November 1949 at the Princes Road ground in Kuala Lumpur, the match was described by *The Straits Times* as "one of the best exhibitions of soccer" in the city, although the visiting Indian team won convincingly 4-0.<sup>28</sup> This event demonstrated the importance of football in promoting sporting excellence, strengthening ties with the Indian mainland and bringing together different sectors of the Indian community.

Following the Kuala Lumpur fixture, the Indian tourist team concluded their Malayan tour with a farewell match in Penang on 8 December 1949.<sup>29</sup> The game, held at Victoria Green before 3,000 spectators, featured the visitors against a Malayan Indian selection.<sup>30</sup> Organised in aid of the University of Malaya Endowment Fund, the match reflected how football served not only as a tool of international exchange but also as a means of contributing to local causes.<sup>31</sup> The Indian team won 2-1, highlighting football's role in public engagement, cultural pride, and cross-border connection in colonial Malaya.<sup>32</sup>

Football also became an important part of Deepavali celebrations in Malaya. These matches brought Indian communities together in a festive setting, combining tradition with modern leisure. One memorable event was the "Football in Fancy Dress" match in Penang on 30 October 1940, held at the Old Xavierians' Association Ground.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> "Indian Tourists in Dazzling Display," *The Straits Times*, 14 November 1949, 8

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>29</sup> Tourists Win 2-1 In Farewell Game. *The Straits Times*, 9 December 1949, 12

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>33</sup> "Fancy Dress Soccer in Aid of Patriotic Fund," *Pinang Gazette and Straits Chronicle*, 28 October 1940,

The match, aimed at raising funds for the Indo-Ceylonese Malaya Patriotic Fund, blended entertainment and social responsibility.<sup>34</sup> Such activities reflected how football was used by the Indian community to express cultural identity, strengthen unity, and contribute to broader social goals. Through matches, festivals, and touring teams, football became a key part of Indian public life in colonial Malaya.

The Indian community's engagement with football in colonial Malaya reveals how the sport served as more than just recreation. Through organising matches during public celebrations, hosting visiting teams, and supporting charitable causes, football reflected the community's efforts to balance tradition with modernity. It also highlighted their participation in shaping a shared public culture under colonial rule, where sport supported broader social and cultural aspirations.

In colonial Malaya, football emerged as a powerful cultural medium that transcended its recreational roots. Its inclusion in royal ceremonies, public celebrations, and international visits demonstrated its significance. As Malay, Chinese, and Indian groups embraced the sport, football became a space for expressing identity, unity, and modernity within a colonial context. Its widespread appeal and symbolic presence illustrate how sport contributed to the making of a shared public culture in early twentieth-century Malaya.

#### **4.2 FROM RECREATION TO REGULATION: THE INSTITUTIONAL EMERGENCE OF FOOTBALL IN MALAYA**

As football became an integral part of public life in colonial Malaya, moving beyond recreation into ceremonial and communal spaces, the demand for more organised competition grew. This led to the establishment of the HMS Malaya Cup in 1921, the first official inter-state football tournament in the region. It brought together teams from across diverse states, symbolising regional pride and an emerging football identity. In 1926, the creation of the Malayan Football Association (MFA) at the Selangor Club

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<sup>34</sup> "Fancy Dress Soccer in Aid of Patriotic Fund," *Pinang Gazette and Straits Chronicle*, 28 October 1940, 11

marked a further step toward central coordination, with representatives from Selangor, Perak, Negri Sembilan, Malacca, and Singapore. Kuala Lumpur was chosen as the headquarters, and by 1933, the body was renamed the Football Association of Malaya (FAM). The following section will further examine how inter-state competition and central organisation helped shape the structure and direction of football in early Malaya.

#### **4.2.1 Malaya's First Inter-State Tournament**

The rising popularity of football in colonial Malaya was reflected in the formation of formal football associations and structured competitions. A key milestone was the introduction of the HMS Malaya Cup in 1921, the first official inter-state football tournament in the region. This event brought together teams from various states, encouraging both rivalry and unity. The tournament became a platform for promoting organised football while fostering regional pride and a shared sporting identity. Its establishment highlighted football's role in uniting communities and shaping social life in early Malaya.

The establishment of the HMS Malaya Cup in 1921 marked a turning point in the development of organised football in colonial Malaya. As the first official inter-state football tournament, it introduced a structured format that brought together teams from different regions under a single competition. Named after the British Royal Navy battleship HMS Malaya, the tournament carried symbolic meaning, linking the promotion of sport with the colonial presence in the region. The competition included teams from Selangor, Perak, Negri Sembilan, Malacca, and Singapore, representing a broad geographical spread and reflecting the growing popularity of football across the peninsula. The shift from informal matches to organised inter-state competition indicated the sport's increasing social and cultural relevance.

The arrival of HMS Malaya in January 1921 was a significant moment in colonial public life. The ship visited major ports including Port Swettenham, Singapore, Malacca, Port Dickson, Lumut, and Penang, where its crew took part in friendly games

of football, rugby, hockey, sailing, and golf against local teams.<sup>35</sup> These events encouraged goodwill between the naval personnel and local communities. As part of this goodwill gesture, Captain Henry T. Buller offered two trophies to be contested annually in football and rugby.<sup>36</sup> This initiative was welcomed and quickly formed a Malaya Cup committee to oversee the administration of the new competition.<sup>37</sup> It was decided that the tournament would be divided into northern and southern sections, allowing regional teams to compete more effectively.<sup>38</sup>

In the northern section, Penang, Perak, and Selangor took part. Penang assembled its squad through its local football committee, while Perak's team was selected by the Perak Club in Taiping.<sup>39</sup> Selangor also formed a dedicated selection committee, led by captain Mr. J. Huggins.<sup>40</sup> The southern section featured teams from Negri Sembilan, Malacca, and Singapore, each of which formed selection committees to assemble their best players.<sup>41</sup> These preparations showed a new level of organisation and commitment to football in colonial Malaya. The tournament fostered rivalry, state pride, and a shared football culture under colonial rule.

The inaugural HMS Malaya Cup tournament in 1921 marked a significant development in organised football in colonial Malaya. Selangor secured their place in the final by winning both of their matches in the northern section, defeating Penang 5-1 and Perak 2-1.<sup>42</sup> The third match between Penang and Perak was abandoned after Penang failed to field a team.<sup>43</sup> In the southern section, Singapore advanced to the final by beating Negri Sembilan 4-0 and Malacca 2-0, while Negri Sembilan claimed a 5-3

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<sup>35</sup> "H.M.S. Malaya," *Pinang Gazette and Straits Chronicle*, 22 November 1912, 8;

"The Malaya's Visit," *The Singapore Free Press and Mercantile Advertiser (1884-1942)*, 10 January 1921, 12

<sup>36</sup> "H.M.S. 'Malaya' Cups," *The Singapore Free Press and Mercantile Advertiser (Weekly)*, 22 December 1921, 388

<sup>37</sup> "A Malayan Sporting Diary," *The Straits Times*, 7 August 1932, 15

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>39</sup> "H.M.S. Malaya Cup," *Pinang Gazette and Straits Chronicle*, 26 July 1921, 5;

"H.M.S. Malaya Football Cup," *The Straits Times*, 22 August 1921, 10

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>41</sup> "Sport," *Malaya Tribune*, 6 July 1921, 5; "Football," *The Straits Times*, 9 September 1921, 10; "Football," *Malaya Tribune*, 24 August 1921, 6

<sup>42</sup> "Football," *Malaya Tribune*, 22 August 1921, 6;

"H.M.S. Malaya Cup," *The Straits Times*, 30 August 1921, 10

<sup>43</sup> "Football," *The Singapore Free Press and Mercantile Advertiser (1884-1942)*, 5 September 1921, 12

win over Malacca.<sup>44</sup> The final, held on 1 October 1921 at the Selangor Club Padang in Kuala Lumpur, featured Selangor and Singapore in a decisive match to determine the first champion of the prestigious tournament.<sup>45</sup> Singapore emerged victorious with a 2-1 win.<sup>46</sup> This historic match not only launched the legacy of the HMS Malaya Cup but also marked the beginning of a long football rivalry between Singapore and Selangor. Below is the table for the inaugural HMS Malaya Cup tournament held in 1921.

Table 4.1 1921 HMS Malaya Cup (Northern Section) Table.

Rank	Teams	Match	Won	Draw	Lost	Goal For	Goal Against	Points
1	Selangor	2	2	0	0	7	2	4
2	Perak	1	0	0	1	1	2	0
3	Penang	1	0	0	1	1	5	0

Sources: "Football," *Malaya Tribune*, 22 August 1921, 6; "H.M.S. Malaya Cup," *The Straits Times*, 30 August 1921, 10.

Table 4.2 1921 HMS Malaya Cup (Southern Section) Table.

Rank	Teams	Match	Won	Draw	Lost	Goal For	Goal Against	Points
1	Singapore	2	2	0	0	6	0	4
2	Negri Sembilan	2	1	0	1	5	7	2
3	Malacca	2	0	0	2	3	7	0

Sources: "Sport," *Malaya Tribune*, 12 September 1921, 5; "H. M. S. Malaya Cup," *The Singapore Free Press and Mercantile Advertiser (1884-1942)*, 26 September 1921, 12; "Sport," *Malaya Tribune*, 19 September 1921, 4.

The success of the inaugural HMS Malaya Cup final in 1921 reflected the growing public enthusiasm for football in colonial Malaya. The match between

<sup>44</sup> "Sport," *Malaya Tribune*, 12 September 1921, 5;

"H. M. S. Malaya Cup," *The Singapore Free Press and Mercantile Advertiser (1884-1942)*, 26 September 1921, 12;

"Sport," *Malaya Tribune*, 19 September 1921, 4

<sup>45</sup> "Malaya Cup Final," *The Straits Times*, 3 October 1921, 10

<sup>46</sup> "Malaya Cup Final," *The Straits Times*, 3 October 1921, 10

Selangor and Singapore drew a large crowd to the Selangor Club *padang*, a clear sign of football's rising popularity.<sup>47</sup> The strong turnout created a lively atmosphere, with supporters from various communities gathering to witness the historical event. By 3.00 pm, motorcars lined Jalan Raja, and many spectators watched the game from their vehicles.<sup>48</sup> Every available space on the verandas of the nearby Post Office and Secretariat buildings was filled, showing the high level of public engagement.<sup>49</sup> The final was not merely a sporting contest but a social event that brought people together and provided a sense of shared excitement. This marked the beginning of football's transformation into a key part of public and cultural life in Malaya.

The attendance figures for the Malaya Cup finals between 1921 and 1950 reveal a steady increase in public interest in football across colonial Malaya. In the early years, from 1921 to 1925, attendance ranged between 2,000 and 6,000, with matches mainly held in Kuala Lumpur and Singapore.<sup>50</sup> This early phase showed that while the competition was still new, it had already begun to attract attention. By the late 1920s, crowds of 5,000 to 8,000 were common, reflecting football's growing popularity as a public spectacle.<sup>51</sup> The consistent choice of major urban centres as host venues also helped draw larger audiences.

From 1931 to 1939, the Malaya Cup reached a peak in popularity. The 1931 final drew 7,000 spectators in Kuala Lumpur, followed by 14,000 and 15,000 in Singapore in 1936 and 1938, respectively, and 11,851 in Kuala Lumpur for the 1937 final.<sup>52</sup> These years reflected the height of public enthusiasm before the Second World War. Matches continued to attract between 8,000 and 12,000 spectators in the late

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<sup>47</sup> "Malaya Cup Final," 3 October 1921, 10

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> "Malaya Cup Final," Selangor's Brilliant Victory. *The Straits Budget*, 8 September 1922, 14;

"Malaya Cup Final," *The Straits Times*, 27 August 1923, 10;

"The Malaya Cup," *Pinang Gazette and Straits Chronicle*, 25 August 1924, 6;

"Malaya Cup Final," *Pinang Gazette and Straits Chronicle*, 1 September 1925, 7

<sup>51</sup> "Malaya Cup Football," *The Straits Echo (Mail Edition)*, 20 September 1926, 1032;

"Malaya Cup Soccer Final," *The Straits Echo (Mail Edition)*, 29 August 1928, 552

"Singapore Regains Malaya Cup," *The Straits Times*, 22 September 1930, 13

<sup>52</sup> "Perak Win Malaya Cup," *The Singapore Free Press and Mercantile Advertiser (1884-1942)*, 10 August 1931, 12;

"11,851 Saw Singapore Win," *Pinang Gazette and Straits Chronicle*, 13 August 1937, 9;

"Selangor's Great Malaya Cup Victory," *The Straits Times*, 9 August 1936, 25

"Selangor Captures the Malaya Cup," *Sunday Tribune (Singapore)*, 7 August 1938, 22

1930s, showing that football had become deeply embedded in the social and cultural life of the region.<sup>53</sup> High attendances were often driven by the strong rivalry between Singapore and Selangor, whose frequent finals drew large crowds. However, when Singapore faced less prominent teams like Kedah in 1940 and Penang in 1941, attendance declined noticeably.<sup>54</sup> This pattern indicates that public interest was influenced by team popularity and the intensity of competition in the final.

Following the Second World War, football's appeal expanded further, and the Malaya Cup regained its status as a central event in the sporting calendar. The 1948 final between Negri Sembilan and Selangor symbolised this renewed interest. Held at the Seremban Station Padang, the match attracted approximately 7,000 spectators, including the Yamtuan of Negri Sembilan and his entourage.<sup>55</sup> The match ended in a 2-2 draw, requiring a replay. The replay took place at the Victoria Institution field in Kuala Lumpur and drew an even larger crowd, estimated between 10,000 and 12,000 people.<sup>56</sup> The strong attendance at the 1948 finals, followed by 8,000 in 1949 and 5,000 in 1950, reflects football's enduring popularity in post-war Malaya.<sup>57</sup> Despite the disruptions of war, football remained a central cultural event that continued to draw large crowds and foster a shared sense of public engagement.

The pattern of increasing attendance at Malaya Cup finals between 1921 and 1950 underlined football's growing social influence in the region. Although not all matches recorded specific crowd numbers, newspaper accounts often referred to "record crowd" or "big crowd" gatherings.<sup>58</sup> The presence of large crowds across different finals suggests that football had become more than a game; it was a unifying force that attracted fans from various backgrounds. Below is a table presenting the crowd attendance figures for the Malaya Cup final matches spanning the years 1921 to 1950.

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<sup>53</sup> "Magnificent Display by Singapore," *The Straits Times*, 21 August 1939, 19

<sup>54</sup> "Singapore Again Win H.M.S. Malaya Cup," *The Straits Times*, 18 August 1940, 19;

"Singapore Win Cup Final," *The Straits Times*, 18 August 1941, 11

<sup>55</sup> "Cup Final Ends In 2-All Draw," *Sunday Tribune (Singapore)*, 12 September 1948, 12

<sup>56</sup> "Negri Sembilan Win Cup Final 2-1," *The Straits Times*, 3 October 1948, 10

<sup>57</sup> "Did The Rain Help Selangor to Win?" *The Straits Times*, 15 August 1949, 8;

"Need For Modern Stadium In K.L.," *The Straits Times*, 13 August 1950, 19

<sup>58</sup> "Malaya Soccer Cup Final At Kuala Lumpur," *Malayan Saturday Post*, 3 September 1927, 6;

"Malaya Cup Final," *The Singapore Free Press and Mercantile Advertiser (Weekly)*, 4 September 1929,

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An asterisk (\*) denotes matches for which contemporary newspaper reports referred to a "huge crowd" or "big crowd" without specifying exact attendance figures.

Table 4.3 Attendance Figures for Malaya Cup Finals (1921–1950)

Year	Champion	Runner-up	Score	Location	Attendance
1921	Singapore	Selangor	2-1	Kuala Lumpur	200
1922	Selangor	Singapore	3-2	Kuala Lumpur	4,000
1923	Singapore	Selangor	2-1	Kuala Lumpur	10,000
1924	Singapore	Selangor	1-0	Kuala Lumpur	7,000
1925	Singapore	Selangor	2-1	Singapore	6,000
1926	Perak	Singapore	1-0	Kuala Lumpur	5,000+
1927	Selangor	Singapore	8-1	Kuala Lumpur	*
1928	Selangor	Singapore	2-2	Kuala Lumpur	7,000
1929	Singapore	Selangor	2-2	Singapore	*
1930	Singapore	Selangor	3-0	Singapore	9,500
1931	Perak	Singapore	3-1	Kuala Lumpur	7,000
1932	Singapore	Selangor	5-3	Kuala Lumpur	10,000
1933	Singapore	Selangor	8-2	Singapore	11,000
1934	Singapore	Penang	2-1	Kuala Lumpur	*
1935	Selangor	Singapore	2-0	Kuala Lumpur	8,000
1936	Selangor	Singapore	1-0	Singapore	14,000
1937	Singapore	Selangor	2-1	Kuala Lumpur	11,851
1938	Selangor	Singapore	1-0	Singapore	15,000
1939	Singapore	Selangor	3-1	Kuala Lumpur	9,000
1940	Singapore	Kedah	2-0	Kuala Lumpur	5,000
1941	Singapore	Penang	3-1	Kuala Lumpur	5,000+
1942-1945	No football activity during the Second World War				
1946-1947	Not held				
1948 – 1st	Negri Sembilan	Selangor	2-2	Seremban	7,000
1948 – 2nd	Negri Sembilan	Selangor	2-1	Kuala Lumpur	12,000
1949	Selangor	Army/Navy	3-2	Kuala Lumpur	8,000+
1950	Singapore	Penang	2-0	Kuala Lumpur	5,000

Sources: Refer to footnotes 50-58.

This discussion shows that the emergence of organised football in colonial Malaya, beginning with the HMS Malaya Cup in 1921, marked a shift from informal recreation to a more structured form of competition that resonated widely across the peninsula. The tournament brought together the Straits Settlements and Malay States, encouraging healthy rivalry while promoting regional pride and a sense of shared purpose. Over time, the growing number of spectators at final matches reaching into the tens of thousands reflected the deep connection people felt toward the game. In the years after the Second World War, football became more than a sport and became a symbol of unity. These early developments helped shape football as an important part of Malaya's public life, identity, and inter-state relationships.

#### **4.2.2 Steps to Centralised Football Governance**

The formation of a central football authority has often marked a key moment in the growth of national football systems. In England, for example, the creation of the Football Association (FA) in 1863 brought together various football clubs under a single set of rules, helping the game to develop in a more organised and structured way.<sup>59</sup> A similar step was taken in colonial Malaya in September 1926, when representatives from the football associations of Singapore, Selangor, Perak, Negri Sembilan, and Malacca gathered to form the MFA. This was a major step forward in the effort to coordinate and manage football across different regions. The formation of this body marked the beginning of a new chapter in Malayan football. It reflected the growing need to move beyond state-level organisation and work towards a more unified and centralised form of governance.

The Malayan football community had been involved in organised matches since the early 20th century, with competitions such as the Penang Football League and the Selangor Association Football League serving as early examples of structured football tournaments. These leagues played a key role in laying the foundation for a more systematic approach to the sport in the region. Following the successful inauguration of

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<sup>59</sup> The Football Association, "History of the FA," *The FA*, Retrieved from <https://www.thefa.com/about-football-association/who-we-are/history> on 9 February 2025.

the HMS Malaya Cup in 1921, which brought together teams from various states in a competitive setting, there was a growing need for a central body to manage football more effectively across Malaya. This led to the idea of forming a unified football association to oversee the sport's development and administration. With the creation of a central authority, it was hoped that football in Malaya would be governed more smoothly, fairly, and with greater consistency across all participating states.

The formation of the Malayan Football Association (MFA) in 1926 was inspired by the successful model of the Malayan Rugby Football Union, founded a year earlier in 1925.<sup>60</sup> During a meeting in Singapore on 29 August 1926, rugby officials discussed administrative issues and the eligibility of overseas players.<sup>61</sup> The meeting demonstrated how a central sports body could coordinate activities across states such as Singapore, Perak, and Negri Sembilan.<sup>62</sup> Observing this, football representatives agreed that a similar organisation was needed to improve the structure of football in Malaya. On 11 September 1926, delegates from Singapore, Selangor, Perak, Malacca, and Negri Sembilan met at the Selangor Club in Kuala Lumpur.<sup>63</sup> They unanimously agreed to form the MFA, appointing Mr. J.M. Sime from Singapore as the first president.<sup>64</sup> A draft constitution prepared by Mr. W.D. Mavor of the Selangor FA was provisionally adopted and Kuala Lumpur was chosen as the headquarters, and each state would send one representative to the newly established association in January 1927.<sup>65</sup>

The establishment of the MFA marked a turning point in the organisation of football in Malaya. Before this, tournaments like the HMS Malaya Cup were run by independent committees without central organisation.<sup>66</sup> From 1927 onward, the MFA took over the administration of the Cup, managing match schedules, rules, and player transfers between teams.<sup>67</sup> The MFA ensured all states were equally represented and followed a standardised system. This move towards central governance brought

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<sup>60</sup> "The Malaya Cup," *The Straits Times*, 5 September 1925, 10

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>63</sup> "Malayan Football," *The Straits Times*, 13 September 1926, 10

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*

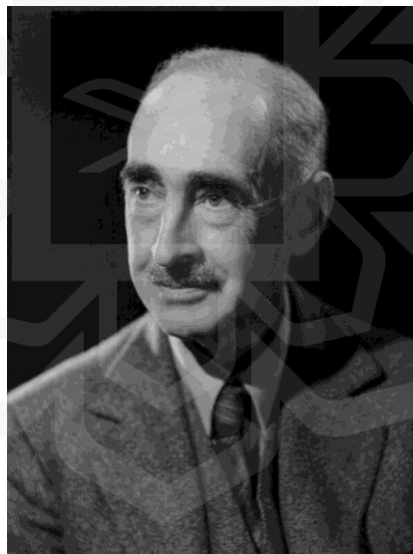
<sup>66</sup> "FAM's Rise to Leading Role in Asia," *The Straits Times*, 7 December 1961, 18

<sup>67</sup> "Sporting News," *The Singapore Free Press and Mercantile Advertiser (1884-1942)*, 21 January 1927, 16;

"Football." *Malaya Tribune*, 24 January 1927, 8

consistency and greater participation across the region. The MFA laid the groundwork for a more organised football environment, promoting fair competition and long-term growth. It also reflected how sports governance in colonial Malaya evolved under British influence and became a key part of the region's social and cultural development.

The name MFA was officially used until 1932. During the association's annual general meeting in 1932, held at the Selangor Club, it was decided that the name would be changed to FAM due to various inconsistencies and confusion caused by the existing title.<sup>68</sup> The decision reflected the association's intent to establish a clearer identity as the central governing body for football in Malaya.<sup>69</sup> Mr. Andrew Caldecott served as the first president under the new name of FAM.<sup>70</sup> The transition marked a step towards a more unified and organised structure. The name change was part of a broader effort to standardise and formalise football governance in Malaya.



Picture 4.1 Andrew Caldecott, the first president under the new name of FAM.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> "Malayan Football Association," *The Singapore Free Press and Mercantile Advertiser (1884-1942)*, 18 January 1932, 16

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>71</sup> National Portrait Gallery. (n.d.). Sir Andrew Caldecott [Photograph by Bassano Ltd, half-plate film negative, 7 October 1947]. In the *National Portrait Gallery collections*. Retrieved from <https://www.npg.org.uk/collections/search/portrait/mw186877/Sir-Andrew-Caldecott> on 10 March 2025.

The formation of the MFA, later renamed the FAM, reflected the influence of British administrative models such as the Football Association in England, introducing formal governance to local sports. This development marked a significant phase in the western shaping of Malayan society through organised sport. Football, under the MFA and FAM, provided a rare platform for unity in a colonial society often divided by race and class. The involvement of colonial officials, such as Andrew Caldecott, who served both as Chief Secretary of the Federated Malay States and President of FAM, demonstrated the sport's dual role in governance and public life.<sup>72</sup> Football thus became both a cultural institution and a tool of colonial social engagement.

In conclusion, the development of football in colonial Malaya from the 1920s to the 1950s reflects its transformation into a structured and unifying public activity. The launch of the HMS Malaya Cup and the formation of the Malayan Football Association marked key steps in organising inter-state competition and standardising the sport. Football brought together diverse communities, promoting unity, identity, and public participation. It became part of royal ceremonies, festive events, and everyday life. With growing support from leaders and local associations, football evolved into a shared cultural platform that connected people across regions, laying the foundation for a national sporting identity in Malaya.

### **4.3 THE ROLES OF LOCAL ELITES IN FOOTBALL GROWTH**

As football gained a stronger place in public life across colonial Malaya, its growth was supported not only by players and fans but also by key figures within society. The involvement of royals, nobles, and business leaders helped lay a stronger foundation for the sport to flourish beyond casual matches. Support came in various forms, such as patronage of local leagues, provision of playing fields, and the donation of trophies to encourage organised competitions. These contributions provided both moral and material backing at a time when football was still developing as a structured activity. Their involvement reflected a broader recognition of football's value in uniting communities and promoting healthy rivalry. The growing presence of these figures in

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<sup>72</sup> "The New Chief Secretary," *The Straits Budget*, 30 July 1931, 5

the football scene also showed how the sport began to carry social meaning, serving as a space where status, leadership, and community spirit could come together. The following section explores these forms of support in more detail.

#### **4.3.1 Royal Patronage in Early Malayan Football**

The growth of football in colonial Malaya was significantly influenced by the involvement of royal figures who played an important role in promoting the sport during its early stages. These royal leaders were not merely spectators but active supporters who contributed to the organisation and prestige of football competitions. By sponsoring local leagues and offering challenge trophies, they helped formalise the structure of football in their respective states. Their involvement lent legitimacy to football, elevating it from an informal activity to one of social and cultural importance. The support of royalty extended beyond urban centres to smaller towns and rural communities, making football more accessible and widely accepted. This connection between royal support and public engagement helped to embed football within both the ceremonial and everyday life of colonial society.

Two key royal figures stand out in this context: Raja Abdul Aziz of Perak and the Yamtuan of Negri Sembilan, Tuanku Muhammad ibni Almarhum Yamtuan Antah. Their enthusiasm for football reflected a broader trend among the Malay elite, who began to see the sport as a platform for encouraging unity, identity, and modern progress. Raja Abdul Aziz played a pioneering role by supporting the Lower Perak Football League in 1921.<sup>73</sup> He donated a cup and medals, helping to launch the tournament, which quickly became a significant regional event.<sup>74</sup> His support laid the groundwork for football's development in the state of Perak. In Negri Sembilan, Tuanku Muhammad's presentation of a football shield and medals during his 1931 birthday celebration further illustrates royal commitment to the sport. The tournament, which involved Malay schools, demonstrated how football was being used to engage the younger generation.<sup>75</sup> The Yamtuan's direct involvement gave symbolic recognition to

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<sup>73</sup> "Lower Perak Football League," *Pinang Gazette and Straits Chronicle*, 7 October 1929, 14

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>75</sup> "Ruler's Birthday," *The Straits Times*, 27 April 1931, 18

football as a respected and meaningful pursuit. Their backing helped to shape football into a structured and celebrated part of community life during the early 20th century.

In conclusion, the involvement of royal figures such as Raja Abdul Aziz of Perak and Tuanku Muhammad of Negri Sembilan played a vital role in shaping the early growth of football in colonial Malaya. Their patronage gave the sport social recognition and helped embed it within community life. By supporting local leagues and school tournaments, these leaders elevated football from a casual pastime to a respected activity tied to honour and identity. The royal backing also highlighted how traditional authority could adapt to new forms of public engagement. Ultimately, this early support laid the foundation for football to develop as a structured and meaningful pursuit within Malayan society during the colonial period.

#### **4.3.2 Nobles and Elites Shaping Football Culture**

The role of nobles and local elites in shaping early football in colonial Malaya was crucial to its development at the community level. While royal support brought visibility and legitimacy, the direct involvement of regional leaders and influential individuals helped provide the essential infrastructure and organisational backing needed to sustain the sport. These elites used their social standing and personal resources to offer football grounds, support emerging clubs, and promote the sport within their communities. Their contributions were both practical and symbolic, as they helped bridge traditional authority with the modern culture of organised sport. This support enabled football to take root not only in urban centres but also in smaller towns and villages, making it more accessible to the public and encouraging wider participation.

To begin with, Tuan Haji Abu Bakar bin Ahmad, better known as Tuan Haji Bachee, exemplified the role of a local businessman for the development of football in Malacca. He worked as a chick maker and government contractor.<sup>76</sup> In 1919, he allowed the Vinolia Club to use his football ground, a gesture that significantly supported local football activity.<sup>77</sup> His contribution showed a clear understanding of football's value as

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<sup>76</sup> "3 Advertisements Column 2," *Eastern Daily Mail and Straits Morning Advertiser*, 25 March 1907, 3

<sup>77</sup> "Malacca Notes. *Malaya Tribune*, 12 July 1919, 5

a community sport and helped strengthen the local presence. In Negri Sembilan, Dato Klana Petra Maamor, the Undang of Sungei Ujong, was particularly significant in shaping the early landscape of the sport in Negri Sembilan. During his reign, football began to take root with the support of both public interest and elite patronage. One clear example was his generous contribution to convert the centre of the Racecourse at Ampangan into a football ground in 1922.<sup>78</sup> This action reflected how local elites, even outside formal administrative roles, could influence the cultural and recreational life of their communities.

In conclusion, the contributions of nobles and local elites were vital in shaping the early landscape of football in colonial Malaya. Their patronage extended beyond symbolic support, offering essential resources such as playing grounds and organisational assistance that enabled the sport to flourish at the grassroots level. Figures like Tuan Haji Bachee and Dato Klana Petra Maamor exemplified how local leadership could bridge tradition with modern recreational life, embedding football within community culture. Their involvement not only legitimised football as a respected activity but also helped foster social unity, making the sport a significant feature of everyday life in colonial society.

#### **4.3.3 Early Football and Support from Businessmen**

In colonial Malaya, the early growth of football was not solely dependent on royal patronage or elite support. Business leaders and philanthropists also played a key role in nurturing the sport, especially through financial contributions and the donation of trophies. These acts of support created incentives for competition and brought formality to local tournaments. Business figures often saw football as more than entertainment. They recognised its ability to promote discipline, unity, and social participation among different communities. Their involvement helped integrate football into the fabric of community life and provided much-needed encouragement at a time when resources for organised sport were limited.

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<sup>78</sup> "Sports And Pastimes," *Malaya Tribune*, 18 November 1922, 7

Within the Indian community, C. A. Vallupillai, a rubber estate owner in Ulu Selangor, made a significant impact through his philanthropic support.<sup>79</sup> In 1910, he donated a football shield to encourage sports among Indian youth.<sup>80</sup> Tamil Star became the first winner of the competition, and the event quickly gained importance.<sup>81</sup> His contributions helped football become part of Indian identity and social cohesion in colonial Malaya. Similarly, among the Chinese community, Alan Loke Wan Wye, son of the famous Loke Yew, also made lasting contributions to football. In 1925, he donated the Alan Loke Challenge Cup for a Chinese inter-state football competition.<sup>82</sup> This sponsorship allowed teams from different states to compete formally, with the Selangor Chinese team winning the inaugural tournament.<sup>83</sup> By sponsoring football events, both businessmen encouraged participation and competition and helped elevate the sport's profile among Chinese Malaysians.



Picture 4.2 Tamil Star posing with the Shield after winning the 1910 tournament.<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> A. R. Singam, "History of Tamil Union of Selangor" *In Sixty Years of Soccer by Tamils (1904-1964) and Nationals in Malaysia*. Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia: N. Thamothearam Pillay and Sons Ltd., 1964, 6.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>82</sup> "The Horticultural Show," *The Straits Times*, 10 July 1925, 10

<sup>83</sup> "The Malayan Exhibition," *Pinang Gazette and Straits Chronicle*, 19 August 1926, 11

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*

In summary, the involvement of business leaders and philanthropists like C. A. Vallupillai and Alan Loke Wan Wye complemented the efforts of royals and local elites. Their support was instrumental in building football's popularity and structure across racial lines. These figures used their influence and resources to promote a spirit of unity, identity, and community engagement through sport. Their actions demonstrated that football's early success in colonial Malaya was a result of combined efforts from multiple sectors of society, making it a truly inclusive and respected part of everyday life.

This discussion shows that football's early development in colonial Malaya was strongly shaped by the active support of royals, nobles, and business leaders who saw its value beyond recreation. Royal patrons like Raja Abdul Aziz of Perak and Tuanku Muhammad of Negri Sembilan gave football public recognition, while nobles such as Dato Klana Petra Maamor and Tuan Haji Bachee provided vital spaces for matches and nurtured local teams. Business figures, including C. A. Vallupillai and Alan Loke Wan Wye, added further structure by sponsoring tournaments within their communities. With support from across the social spectrum, football became a shared activity that connected people through community pride and collective participation. This early momentum laid the foundation for football to evolve into a unifying force and an important aspect of public life in colonial Malaya.

#### **4.4 CONCLUSION**

The development of football in colonial Malaya reflected a broader transformation in the region's social and cultural life. What began as an elite colonial pastime evolved into a shared activity that engaged Malays, Chinese, and Indians alike. Football became embedded in public customs, festive celebrations, and inter-state rivalries, illustrating its ability to transcend ethnic boundaries and foster unity. Royal support further legitimised its role in society, while Chinese and Indian communities used football to express identity and strengthen transnational ties. The establishment of structured tournaments such as the HMS Malaya Cup and governing bodies like the MFA and FAM demonstrated increasing efforts to organise the sport. Football was no longer

limited to informal games but had become a platform for public involvement, regional pride, and cultural expression. By the mid-20th century, football stood as a powerful symbol of social integration and modern identity in Malaya, laying the foundation for a national sporting culture that would continue to evolve beyond the colonial era.



## CHAPTER FIVE

### CONCLUSION

This thesis presents a clearer and more detailed narrative of the socio-cultural history of football in Malaya from the 1880s to the 1950s. It explores how football, introduced by the British, took root among various communities and gradually developed into a popular and structured sport. While colonial officials introduced the game, it was the local population that expanded and sustained it. Schools, government departments, clubs, and associations played key roles in its spread. Over time, football moved from an exclusive colonial pastime to a widely embraced sport that became part of everyday life in many cities and towns.

Football matches were already taking place in places like Kuala Lumpur, Taiping, Penang, Seremban, and Malacca by the 1890s. Before the formation of national tournaments or official state teams, local competitions and clubs had begun to emerge. The establishment of the Penang Football League and the Selangor Football Association in 1905 reflects early efforts to organise the sport. These developments occurred within the colonial setting, but football managed to cross racial and social boundaries. It became more than a leisure activity; it was a way to express collective identity and community belonging.

The introduction of the HMS Malaya Cup in 1921 gave football greater visibility as an inter-state competition, offering a new platform for organised rivalry. However, this tournament did not signify the beginning of football in Malaya, as the game had already been well established in various towns and cities. Instead, the Cup formalised and elevated a football culture that was already active. Throughout the 1920s and 1930s, the sport experienced stronger organisation, with state teams becoming more structured, media coverage increasing, and public interest growing. Football fields became key gathering spaces, reflecting the game's deepening role in urban social life.

From the 1880s to the 1950s, football in Malaya developed with clear signs of discipline and planning. Clubs and associations managed their teams with seriousness,

appointing leaders and setting rules. The sport gained respect and recognition across different groups. Football became woven into the social fabric of colonial Malaya and laid strong foundations for what would become a national sport. This thesis demonstrates that long before independence, football had already become a meaningful and organised part of public life, shaped by the commitment and enthusiasm of ordinary people.

## **5.1 FUTURE STUDY AND ACADEMIA**

Any future study of Malaysian football must go beyond what has been outlined in this thesis. While this study has attempted to trace the early development of football in Malaya from the 1880s to the 1950s, many important aspects still require further attention. The introduction of football by British administrators, its spread through schools and missions, and its growing popularity among local communities all took place within a broader social and political context. These developments must be examined more deeply to understand how football became part of everyday life across towns and cities in Malaya. Areas deserving closer investigation include the formation of early clubs, the role of informal associations before formal leagues, and the social influences that shaped the sport in this period.

As shown in this thesis, football had already taken root in Malaya before the HMS Malaya Cup began in 1921. Matches were played in places like Kuala Lumpur, Taiping, Penang, Seremban, and Malacca from the late 19th century, often involving students, government workers, and other organised groups. While institutions introduced the sport, its local growth was driven by ordinary people who played, organised, and supported matches in their own regions. By the early 20th century, football clubs had emerged in several districts, and the game had become a regular part of public life. The formation of these clubs and state-level associations reflects an already active football culture before national competitions were introduced. However, many of these early teams and tournaments are still poorly documented. Their stories are important for understanding how football became a shared activity and a source of pride for communities across Malaya.

These early clubs often reflected local social structures. Many were based on occupation, region, or community affiliation. Teams played in inter-city and inter-state matches that helped to strengthen social ties and expand football's presence in public life. Some clubs later evolved into state teams or inspired the creation of official football associations. Yet their role remains largely absent from existing academic literature. A more focused study of these teams would help build a clearer picture of how football developed on the ground before formal structures were in place.

Other aspects of this era are also worth exploring in greater depth. Football matches in the early 20th century attracted large crowds, particularly during weekends and public holidays. Studying the composition of these audiences and their ways of supporting teams could reveal how football became part of local culture. Questions about how players balanced work and football, what rewards or recognition they received, and how they were selected remain under-researched. These details may offer insight into how football created opportunities for social mobility. Moreover, issues of race, identity, and access to the sport during the colonial period have yet to be fully explored.

The findings of future research should be shared through academic writing, public talks, and educational forums. Situating football within the wider historical context of colonial Malaya can offer valuable insights into the lives and communities of those who played and supported the sport. Such historical research can deepen our understanding of local heritage and identity. It is essential for academic institutions and cultural organisations to support these efforts to ensure that the early history of football in Malaya is properly studied, preserved, and remembered.

## **5.2 CONSERVATION, PRESERVATION, AND AWARENESS**

Malaysia holds many valuable historical materials related to football, but they are often hard to access. Important documents such as reports, meeting minutes, and physical items are sometimes poorly preserved or disorganised. This lack of care has discouraged researchers from continuing their work. Institutions like the National Archives, National Museum, National Library, FAM, and state football associations must pay closer

attention to this issue. Although these records may seem minor now, they are key to understanding the origins of Malaysian football and could become even more valuable in the future.

Much of our football history remains unclear. Many periods are still under-researched, and existing writings are often too general. As a result, fans support clubs without knowing their actual roots or background. Some academic work has begun, but much remains incomplete. Stronger involvement from FAM, state associations, and educational institutions like schools, colleges, and universities is essential. These groups can help recover lost stories and make sure that this important part of our heritage is preserved and passed on.

Public awareness is also vital. In Malaysia, football is more than a sport; it is part of daily life and sometimes even tied to political expression. Its power to unite people shows how deeply it is rooted in society. Respecting this legacy requires a grassroots effort. Educating the younger generation about the game's history helps build pride and identity. Without such awareness, we risk forgetting this meaningful aspect of our culture. The media also has a role to play by sharing stories that celebrate our football heritage.

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