

CHAPTER 2

PROFILE OF MBKS

2.1 History of MBKS

Kuching City is set on the banks of the Sarawak River, some twenty-four miles inland from the South China Sea. Kuching City is the capital of the state of Sarawak. Historical record shown that Kuching was then a simple settlement comprising between 600 and 800 residents, with houses of nipah thatch and built on stilt in the year 1839.(MBKS pamphlet,1996).

The first Rajah, *Rajah James Brooke* first sailed up the Sarawak River as a young British Sailor on 15 August 1839. He bought over Sarawak from Sultan of Borneo, piece by piece at a time starting from Kuching. He was the one who introduced administrative order to the state. However, it was his successor, the second Rajah *Charles Brooke* who strengthened the Administration and left a more tangible and visible marks on the capital. The evidences can be seen from some of the magnificent buildings which still stand in the City today like the Astana; the official residence of the Head of State; the General Post Office building; Fort Margherita and the Sarawak Museum as we can see in appendix C. (MBKS pamphlet,1996).

The once tiny village, Kuching that captured the heart and imagination of the visiting British Sailor has blossomed into one of the South East Asia's cleanest, progressive, vibrant and beautiful cities.

According to Mr. Shariman, the City of Kuching is administratively divided into Kuching South, which is administered by *Council of the City of Kuching South (MBKS)*, and Kuching North, administered by the *Commission of Kuching City North (Dewan Bandaraya Kuching Utara)* that under the control of Chief Minister Department, Sarawak.

During the days of the Brooke Administration, the Public Work Department performed some semblances of the functions of the council. In 1921, during the period of the Third Rajah, Sir Charles, the Kuching Sanitary and Municipal Advisory Board was formed. The board was later became the Municipal Authority for Kuching on 1st January 1934, following the new legislation. That marked the beginning of what would in due course the local authority for Kuching known as the Kuching Municipal Council. (MBKS pamphlet, 1996).

Based on the report in the MBKS pamphlet (1996), Sarawak became one of colony of Great British in 1946. One year later in 1947, it was found that it was essential to introduce a modified form of committee system. This is because as the work of the Board had grown to such extent that it was impracticable for the Municipal Board to deal with all the various problems in a single monthly meeting.

In 1949, His Excellency the Governor convert the Municipal Board into a local government entity, financially self-supporting and managing its own affairs, subjected to such safeguards as might be deemed advisable. This action resulted the Municipal became autonomous on 1st January 1953. This was the first time a local authority was formed in Sarawak.

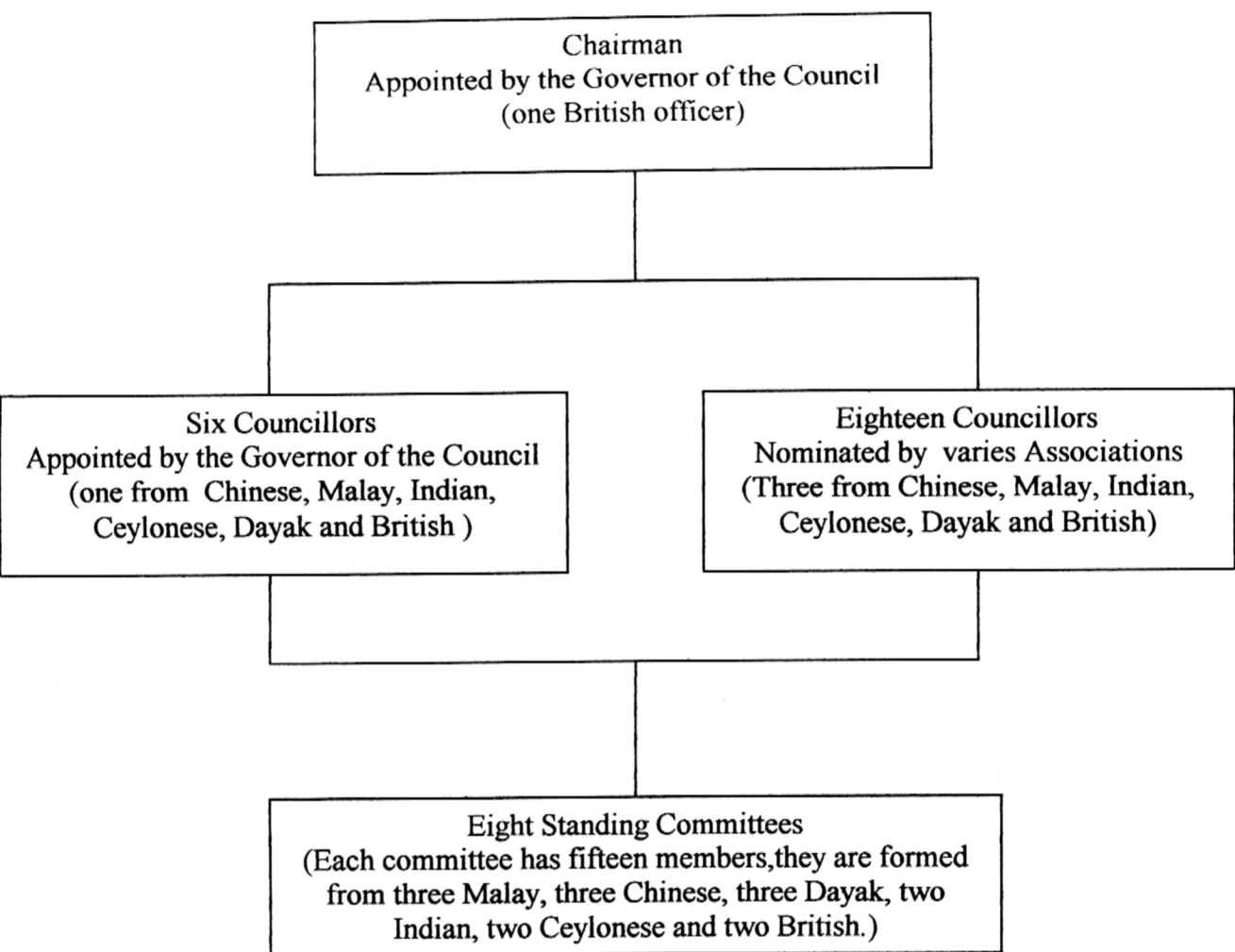


Figure one: The Chart showing distribution representatives from various races.

As shown in figure one, the Kuching Municipal Council at that time was formed on a purely racial basis of twenty-four representatives of the public. His Excellency appointed a British Officer as Chairman the Governor in Council. He also appointed six other Councillors of various nationalities who represented different interest in the lives of local community. The various associations who looked after the interests of the Chinese, Malay, Indian, Ceylonese, Dayak and British Communities nominated the other eighteen Councillors. That nomination had to be approved by His Excellency, the Governor of the Council.

In 4th November 1956, Councillors were elected by first free election. A total of 58 persons offered themselves as candidates for the nine wards and 27 seats on the new council. The newly elected Council took office on 1 December 1956. The President and Vice President of Council were elected from among the Councillors and held office for a period of one year, with eligibility for re-election. Free election was lasted for several years. The Councillors later were selected by appointment by the State Government on two years term basis beginning 15th October 1981 until today. The Council now consists of an appointed Mayor, a Deputy Mayor and twenty-four other Councillors from various political parties of the State Government. (MBKS pamphlet, 1996).

2.2 The MBKS Administration

One of the guiding principles behind the setting up of local government system is to meet the efficiency objective of administration. It is argued that the machinery of government become decentralised, some aspects of its functions may be more efficiently implemented. Bureaucratic becomes smaller and red tapes are reduced. The Malaysian experience has demonstrated the fact that mere effort to bring the decision making process to the lowest level does not suffice to meet the efficiency objectives. Efficiency in resource allocation and utilisation is very much depends on the quality of the decision making process which had taken place.

This in turn depends on the manpower and the expertise available at the local level. This is what is lacking in most of the local authority. (Hashim and Yahya,1984).

The MBKS is a corporation established under the Kuching Municipal Ordinance responsible for managing the affairs of Kuching City South. Like all other local authorities in Malaysia, it is essentially an authority providing public services within its area of jurisdiction.

According to the MBKS pamphlet,1996, the mode by which the MBKS manages its business is through its committee system. There are all together eight standing committees as below: -

1. Standing Committee for Building Control
2. Standing Committee for Traffic and infrastructure Development
3. Standing Committee for Environment and Public Health
4. Standing Committee for Markets and Petty Traders
5. Standing Committee for General Purposes and Services
6. Standing Committee for Finance and Establishment
7. Standing Committee for Licences
8. Tenders Board

These Standing Committees except the Tender Board normally meet once a month to deal with matters under their respective terms of reference. The committees are the *"first stage policy makers"*.

They sit to discuss matters requiring policy decisions (including planning and matters involving departure from prevailing policies). The Administration must prepare matters properly to guide it towards proper decision-making. The committees make recommendation report to *full council*. The full council meeting has to be held at least once a month and it is usually held at the end of the month. The full council is the *"Upper House of the Legislative"* to endorse and

formalise decisions. The frequency of the meeting of the standing committees and full council depends on availability to matters to be discussed and under the discretion of Chief Executive Officer of MBKS. (MBKS pamphlet, 1996).

There are also sub-committees like Establishment Sub-Committee, Markets and Petty Traders sub-committee, Cleanliness and Beautification Sub-committee, Hawkers Resettlement Sub-committee.

The MBKS pamphlet(1996) show that the *City Secretary* is the *Chief Executive Officer* of the MBKS. Its various divisions, namely the Administration, the City Treasury, Public Work Division, the Public Health Division, the Rating and Valuation Division, Building and Landscaping Division, the Parking Control Division and the Enforcement Division undertake the functions of the organisation. Each of the Division is headed by a chief officer who has control over his division's votes of expenditure, as approved in the annual estimate of MBKS.

2.3 The Functions of the MBKS

Mr. Shariman during the interview explained that the duties and functions of the MBKS are laid down under the Kuching Municipal Ordinance, the Public Health Ordinance, the Food Act 1983, the Road Traffic Ordinance, Building Ordinance 1996 and the relevant by-laws and regulations made under them. In brief, the basic functions of MBKS are as follows:

- (1) Rating and valuation over properties within its area. It collects Local City revenue through the City Treasury for providing the various services.
- (2) As the high way authority within its area responsible for traffic regulation, for establishing and maintaining traffic signs, traffic lights signal and provision and control of parking spaces.

- (3) Construction and maintenance of streets, roads and drains and provision for street lighting.
- (4) Establishing and maintenance of Public parks, gardens, playgrounds and sports field.
- (5) City cleansing including Solid Waste Management, conservancy, sewerage and other public sanitary facilities, example public conveniences.
- (6) Environment sanitation, food sanitation in public premises, markets hawker's stalls and meat inspection at slaughterhouses.
- (7) Establishment and maintenance of public markets and hawker centres as well as the issue of licences therefor.
- (8) Licensing authority for the Kuching City area for business such as food shops, food factories, markets and hawkers, storage and sale of petrol and petroleum products, public entertainment, barbers, hotels and lodging houses, laundries as well as licensing of bicycles/tricycles/handcarts, dogs, stock-keeping, slaughtering of pigs and cattle.
- (9) Provision and maintenance of public swimming pool.
- (10) Establishment and maintenance of low –cost housing estates.
- (11) Approving authority for construction of buildings and roads within its area of jurisdiction.
- (12) Control over advertisements and public entertainment.
- (13) Naming and renaming of roads and streets as well as the numbering of houses subject to the approval of the Governor in Council.
- (14) Requiring any author of public nuisance to abate the same by serving on such persons specific orders or notices to do so and to institute legal proceedings against such person in the event of their default in complying with any such orders or notices.