



Scorpion On the Ceiling: A Scottish Colonial Family in South East Asia

Roddy Martine

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Charles Martine arrived in Singapore in 1922 to work for the Borneo Company, one of the great UK-financed merchant venture companies of South East Asia. It was a golden era, with Singapore becoming one of the most successful multi-racial co-operatives that have ever been known. Later on, Charles and his wife Pat were stationed in Penang, where their two daughters were born. In 1939, the family moved to Sarawak, ruled over by Vyner Brooke - the third and last of the legendary White Rajahs. When the American Fleet was attacked in Pearl Harbor, Charles and their eldest daughter were trapped in Singapore. In Sarawak, Pat and their infant youngest daughter escaped from the advancing Japanese on foot through 140 miles of one of the world's most dangerous jungles. Reunited on Java, Pat and the children sailed to Australia. Charles returned to Singapore where, following the island's fall, he was interned in the notorious Changi Gaol. As Communications Officer for Changi D-Block, Charles survived the brutal Japanese purge of the notorious Double Tenth. Through family letters and diaries, contemporary accounts, and interviews, the author pays tribute to the extraordinary courage of his parents and their compatriots - European and Asian - who were caught up in tumultuous events far beyond their control. In doing so, he provides us with a remarkable insight into a vanished way of life.

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