National Archives of Singapore

Index Guide to Sources on the History of Leprosy in Malaya and Singapore

SS Straits Settlements

MR Medical Report

SMOHAR Singapore Ministry of Health Annual Reports

SSAR Straits Settlements Annual Reports

SSADR Straits Settlements Annual Departmental Reports

FMS Federated Malay States

NB. "Do": information reported in previous years. Typically only new information is entered.

Straits Settlements Annual Departmental Reports (SSADR) 1855-1903

Source	General Report	Leper Settlement (Singapore)	Pulau Jerejak Settlement (Penang)	Settlement (Malacca)
MR, SSADR 1			,	
MR, SSADR	No information.			
1855-60				
MR, SSADR 1861 Annual report on leprosy in the SS by the Medical Department of the British government		Small shed erected at the back of Tan Tock Seng Hospital (for paupers) for incurable leprosy cases. Average number about 10. Information on settlements found under sections on		
MR, SSADR 1862		"Jails and hospitals".		Asylum on Pulau Sirimboom. No bad cases.

MR, SSADR 1863			Chinese and native residents of Penang, encouraged by success at Sirimboom, have donated more than \$20,000 for construction of settlement at PJ. Construction begins.	Large part of island brought under cultivation by the patients.
MR, SSADR 1864			at 1 0. Constitution begins.	
MR, SSADR				
1865 MR, SSADR				
1866 MR, SSADR				
1867 MR, SSADR				
1868 MR, SSADR				
1869 MR, SSADR				
1870				
MR, SSADR 1871				
MR, SSADR 1872				
MR, SSADR 1873				
1873 MR, SSADR 1874	Number of inmates and treatment used. Leper settlements known as asylums. Poor lepers housed in leper's asylum. Objection of inmates to treatment, presumably because of personal reasons — they feared that if they recovered, they would lose the commiseration of the public.	Number of inmates. 3 miles from town, at Serangoon Road. Formerly a gaol. Reasonably comfortable quarters. Inmates look upon the premises as a gaol, and try to abscond whenever they can.	Number of inmates. Asylum isolated on an island to prevent the escape of inmates. Reasonably comfortable.	Number of inmates. Inmates object to treatment, for fear of having to earn their living upon being cured. Inmates consequently mutinous. Settlement useful only for isolation, not treatment.

	T	T	T	,
MR, SSADR 1875				
MR, SSADR				
1876				
MR, SSADR 1877				
MR, SSADR				
1878				
MR, SSADR 1879				
MR, SSADR				
1880				
MR, SSADR 1881				
MR, SSADR				
MR, SSADR				
1883				
MR, SSADR 1884	Chief settlement at PJ, with smaller ones in Singapore and Malacca, from where patients are transferred to PJ.		High death rate, due to prevalence of malaria and other diseases among inmates.	
			Death rate has fallen due to clearing of jungle and purifying of water supply.	
MR, SSADR 1885				
MR, SSADR 1886		Statistics on inmates. Number taken away by relatives and those to be transferred to PJ.	Number of inmates. Treatment. Sanitary conditions fair and mortality has fallen. A number of inmates died from beri beri. Usual causes of death: ill nourishment, stricken with	
			other diseases (e.g. syphilis), opium addiction.	
			Behaviour of inmates good. Police guard dispensed with in Sept.	
			System of fishing stake (blat) failed. Settlement obtaining fresh fish from fishermen on the island.	
MR, SSADR 1887		Statistics on inmates.	Number of inmates. Treatment.	
			Construction of new facilities and planting of blue gum trees to engage inmates in a livelihood.	

		Apparently there is some success in getting them involved in a livelihood. Also provided them with greens in their diet.	
		Incidence of malaria reduced.	
		Mortality improved although still high. Noted the poor constitution of many inmates, e.g. opium addicts and syphilis sufferers.	
		Conduct and discipline of the lepers very good.	
MR, SSADR	 Do.	Do.	
1888	30.	Construction of new facilities.	
		Marked improvement in mortality – claimed cannot be lower owing to the destitute conditions of some of the inmates.	
		Good work of inmates in gardening.	
		Good water supply and fresh fish supplied for diet.	
		"Disturbance" took place in the year but peace restored thereafter.	
MR, SSADR 1889	 Do.	Do.	Lepers cheerful and well-
		Improvement works.	behaved.
		Slight increase in death rate, attributed to advanced stage of admissions and old age of some inmates.	
		Anticipate increase in admissions due to increased vigilance and greater awareness for the isolation of lepers, which require more accommodation.	
		Treatment not able to cure the disease but could	

	1	1	T	<u> </u>
			prolong life and reduce	
			suffering.	
MD 00455	N. I.			
MR, SSADR	Need for resident	22 lepers escaped;	Do.	
1890	Medical Officer at	only a small number		
	PJ due to its growing size.	captured.	Large number of	
	growing size.		admissions (double the	
		Suggestions to improve security and	previous year) and consequently higher death	
		increase number of	rate.	
		watchmen.		
			Many of the deaths of	
			those transferred from	
			other places, showing the	
			conditions of these lepers.	
			Death caused by other	
			illnesses but malaria rare.	
			Disgraceful conduct of	
			former Superintendent.	
MR, SSADR		Do.	Do.	
1891				
		Female ward	New wards completed and	
		insufficient – plans to	improvement works.	
		build additional one.		
			Large number of inmates,	
			many of them old and in	
			advanced stage of disease, leading to high mortality	
			rate (34%).	
			1416 (6170).	
			Conduct of lepers good.	
			But only a few maintain	
			interest in their vegetable	
			gardens.	
			Drought in the year, difficult	
			time for inmates.	
MD 00:33				
MR, SSADR		Do.	Do.	
1892				
			Improvement works.	
			Only 2 suicides among the 122 deaths.	
			122 084115.	
			Troatment not augescaful	
			Treatment not successful.	
MD 00155				
MR, SSADR		Do.	Do.	
1893				

MR, SSADR 1894	 Do. Some female inmates attempted to escape from the hospital. Suggestions made to fence the hospital.	Enlargement of service reservoir. Riot in April. Ringleaders imprisoned. Call for permanent presence of Police. Do. Disturbance – five inmates charged for disorderly conduct. Four sentenced to imprisonment. Some overcrowding, with	
		increase of inmates from Singapore.	
MR, SSADR 1895	 Do. Good conduct, few absconders.	Do. PJ opened in 1881; increase in inmates since (111 to 487). Improvement works. No success in repatriating those fit for travel. Some inmates appeared to have come from Java and Sumatra. Discipline of inmates improved.	
MR, SSADR 1896	 Do. Conduct of lepers good.	Do. Conduct of inmates good. Outbreak of cholera – 2 inmates died. Particular treatment apparently ineffective or refused by inmates (threatened to leave).	
MR, SSADR 1897	 Do.	Do. Staff affected by fever and had to move quarters to better site.	

MR, SSADR 1898	 Do.	Managed to recover less than half of those who absconded. Sikh guard placed over the prisoners. About 40% of inmates could do a little work, 14% full work, 25% half-day's work, and 20% could do no work. Those who could work occupied with gardening, poultry etc. Inmates generally peaceful but there were fights and quarrels (1 man died), some due to <i>kongsi</i> disturbances. Conflicts attributed to idleness so occupation again recommended. Do. Malaria a problem for staff and guards.	
MR, SSADR 1899	 Do.	Do. Malaria remains a problem. Some ill staff sent to hospital in Penang. 33 lepers absconded. Escapees are prosecuted but this had not deterred escapes. Means: inmates charter boats owned by Malay inhabitants on the island to cross the 1 mile of water to the mainland.	
MR, SSADR 1900	 Do. Old wards burned down. Attap wards used as temporary accommodation.	Do. Government bought up the holdings of the Malay inhabitants, making escape difficult. Most of the inmates who tried to escape returned	No proper leper asylum here but an old ward has been used as one. Considered almost unfit for occupation. Patients admitted into

		after a while. This is seen to be the usual outcome. Asylum placed under the Quarantine Ordinance to deter escape.	hospital do not usually sign Ordinance V of 1897 (allowing themselves to be restrained). They have to be treated as ordinary patients, resulting in unsatisfactory mixing with other patients.
MR, SSADR 1901	 Do.	Do. Escapes continue despite settlement declared as part of Quarantine Station. However had escaped using self-made rafts. Treatment merely to relieve symptoms. Some paid employment done, e.g. filling swamp and other work.	Part of Criminal prison converted to leper hospital but not used.
MR, SSADR 1902	 Do. New permanent wards completed.	Do. Number of deaths lowest since 1893. Admissions also falling in last few years. Improvement works.	Lepers transferred to Singapore. Females held at Durian Daun hospital.
MR, SSADR 1903	 Do.	Do. Minor improvement works.	Do.

Course	Canaval Banari	Sungei Buloh Leper	Pulau Jerejak Settlement	Jelutong Female Settlement
Source	General Report	Settlement (Singapore)	(Penang)	(Penang)
MR, SSADR		Statistics on inmates.	Statistics on inmates.	Statistics on
1904		Sanitary condition good but female ward overcrowded. Discharged males released to their relatives.	46 absconders. Minor works at the settlement.	inmates.
MR, SSADR		Do.	Do.	Do.
1905		None of the absconders re-arrested.	Causes of death. Suicide cases.	
MR, SSADR			Do.	Do.
1906			Completed works.	
MR, SSADR 1907			Do.	Do.
			Commencement of new works.	
			Admissions of opium smokers.	Works completed.
MR, SSADR 1908		Do.	Do.	Do.
1300		Treatment of cases of tubercular leprosy.	Every Chinese inmate claimed to be an opium user upon admissions, except for a small group which acquired the habit afterwards. Opium seen as a necessary solace for the inmates.	Admissions of opium smokers.
MR, SSADR 1909		Do.	Do. Oldest and youngest inmates. Inmates by nationality and occupation. Largest number of inmates on record. Changes in administrative personnel.	Do.

	T		Able-bodied inmates	<u> </u>
			encouraged to take up economic activities.	
			Gifts from towkays to the inmates.	
MR, SSADR 1910	Amendment of Leprosy Law. Police could arrest leper not segregated without warrant.	Do. Treatments used:	Do. Administrative changes.	Do.
	Health Office could enter any dwelling and arrest any unsegregated leper.	ineffective and resisted by inmates.	Change in pattern of admissions: 1909 and 1910, equal numbers came from Perak and the SS.	
MR, SSADR 1911		Statistics on inmates by admissions, deaths, abscondments.	Statistics on inmates by admissions, deaths, abscondments, discharges, nationality & occupation	Statistics on inmates by admissions, deaths, abscondments.
MR, SSADR 1912		Do.	Do.	Do.
			New Year gifts to inmates.	
			Some resistance encountered from inmates on treatment with benzoyl chloride, especially internal treatment.	
MR, SSADR		Do.	Do.	Do.
1913			Treatment with Benzoyl Chloride discontinued.	
MR, SSADR		Do.	Do.	Do.
1914				
		Treatment used.	Treatment with hypodermic injections rejected by inmates.	

MR, SSADR	 Do.	Do.	Do.
1915		Treatment with Chaulmoogra Oil considered satisfactory but many inmates still resistant to its injections.	Some improvement noticed in the use of Chaulmoogra Oil.
MR, SSADR	 Do.	Do.	Do.
1916		Health of staff fair except for a few cases of malaria among coolies.	
		Treatment with injections halted due to objections from inmates.	
		However trials resumed when inmates were explained the benefits and more have been willing to endure the injections.	
		Some improvement noted.	
		Some inmates also took Chaulmoogra Oil orally with some benefit.	
		Improvements to buildings and drainage.	
MR, SSADR	 Do.	Do.	Do.
1917		Treatment with a new drug by injection experimented.	
		A few cases of malaria among attendants noted.	
		2 cases of robberies occurred.	
MR, SSADR	 Do.	Do.	Do.
1918		Outbreak of influenza at the camp, no deaths.	
		Shortage of water in first 3 months – camp	

			had to depend on well water.	
MR, SSADR 1919		Do.	Do.	Do.
MR, SSADR 1920		Do.	Do. Treatment (slow improvement). General health of inmates fair. Reservoir at the camp still flooding.	Do.
MR, SSADR 1921			Do. Difficulty in getting patients to take treatment by injection. Case of murder: suspect transferred to Perak for fear of him being harmed by others. Repairs and improvement works.	
MR, SSADR 1922	Importance of fresh air, exercise, good food and cleanliness emphasised.	Treatments used. Injections apparently caused little pain but had other effects (giddiness, vomiting etc). Several cases discussed. General condition of inmates good. Activities of inmates. Female inmates housed temporarily at Kandang Kerbau hospital.	Treatments used. Several cases discussed.	
MR, SSADR 1923	Systematic treatment continued but rapid results hoped for believed to be unlikely to be realised.		General health good. Involvement of inmates in occupation. Cases discussed.	Statistics on inmates.

	Special report on			
	treatment: new			
	drug (by injection) used apparently			
	usually painless.			
	Statistics on			
	response to			
	treatment.			
	Reactions:			
	intramuscular			
	injections caused only slight fever			
	afterwards but			
	intravenous ones caused nausea,			
	coughing and			
	vomiting.			
	Discussion of			
	several cases.			
MR, SSADR	Number of	Treatments.	Inmates by nationality,	Statistics on
1924	inmates and their condition.		occupation.	inmates.
	Treatments used.		Facilities and water	
	Overcrowding in	Number of inmates who	supply. Completion of extensions of	
	the last four years	came up for voluntary treatment increased,	accommodation on east	
	had adverse effect on health of	resulting in	coast of island.	
	inmates.	overcrowding. Effective treatment consequently	Problems in the year:	
		difficult.	riot in connection with	
	New women's guarters would be		the distribution of chandu.	
	ready in 1926 at		Chandu.	
	Trafalgar.	Cases discussed.	Clan fight between	
			Cantonese and Teochews, with 1	
			Cantonese killed.	
MR, SSADR		Do. Apparently little	Various treatments	Do. Treatments
1925		objection against a new	used. Several cases	used and minor
		form of treatment.	discussed.	works carried out.
		Reported improvement	Concurrent diseases	
		in male camp, due to	such as malaria and	
		larger numbers transferred to PJ (new	syphilis also treated.	Case of Eurasian
		accommodation) and	Inmates encouraged to	girl discussed at length.
		better treatment.	exercise and participate in economic activities.	-
		No such improvement	in economic activities.	
			1	1
		in female camp.	Inmates encouraged	
		In female camp. Male inmates	Inmates encouraged also to accept treatment, and majority	

		Physical exercise stopped after a while due to reluctance of inmates. Ball games introduced subsequently.	were under treatment during the year.	
MR, SSADR 1926	Lepers found in "hiding".	Do. Treatments used. Generally effective and tolerated. Accommodation improved with building of 60 new huts at PJ. Inmates beginning to appreciate that better treatment is possible at the more spacious PJ. Female lepers moved from crowded quarters at KK to new compound at Trafalgar. Most inmates under voluntary treatment.	Do. Several cases discussed. Health of inmates good. Steady decrease in death rate reported. Majority of cases advanced. Information on antimalaria works, water supply and accommodation.	Do. Treatments used.
MR, SSADR 1927		Do. Treatments used. Females transferred to Trafalgar have had most beneficial effects.	Do. Treatments used and how it is almost painless. Lowering of the death rate. Daily baths considered beneficial and necessary.	Do.
MR, SSADR 1928		Do. Treatments used. Other intercurrent diseases are treated first before leprosy is treated.	Do. Treatments used. Importance of food, exercise and cleanliness. Constipation (a common condition of leprosy) treated. Improvements to accommodation, e.g.	Do. Setting up of poultry yard helped reduce flies. Chicken pox outbreak.

			hottor vontilation and	<u> </u>
			better ventilation and lighting.	
			Number of deaths lowest on record – from 30% in 1921 to 11%.	
			Practically every inmate has received treatment.	
			Warning from experience not to press larger doses in treatment.	
MD CCADD	Death of Dr AH	Transferent wood often	Statistics – number of	Construction of
MR, SSADR 1929 SSAR 1929	Wheatley, Superintendent of Pulau Jerejak	Treatment used, often with encouraging results.	inmates; status & condition; deaths.	new premises.
33AN 1929	settlement. Nearly all lepers		Administration & police (Sikhs).	Treatment as for males. Often
	under voluntary treatment. Steady decrease in death		Construction of new premises & facilities (e.g. water supply),	effective.
	rate.		transfer of inmates.	
	Effective treatment with Hydnocarpus and		Rainfall, water drainage & anti-malaria works.	Inmates' involvement in agriculture, e.g. poultry & flower
	Alepol.		Death rate lowest on record.	garden.
			Treatment effective given how most cases were not detected early.	
			Leper school and inmates' involvement in agriculture, e.g. vegetable & fruit-	
			growing & piggery.	
MR, SSADR	Nearly all lepers	Treatment used. Trial of	Do.	Treatments used.
1930	under voluntary treatment.	new drugs.	Visit by Governor of	
SSAR 1930	Decrease in death rate.	General diet given to inmates, who show good morale.	SS, and other SS officials.	
	Effective treatment with Hydnocarpus and Alepol.	Economic activities of inmates.	Other economic activities of lepers, e.g. coolies, barbers etc.	
	Establishment of new settlement for male lepers at Trafalgar.			

MR, SSADR 1931	Issue of opium to smokers at Pulau	Do.	Do.	Do.
SSAR 1931	Jerejak halted. Heavy addicts removed to leper settlement at Kuala Lumpur, FMS, which also eased overcrowding at Jerejak and facilitated the classification and segregation of cases.	Diet generous and varied, and inmates encouraged to take part in sports and exercise, e.g. badminton and football. Beneficial to condition at times.	Preparation of wards for educated Straits-born Chinese. Most inmates receiving opium transferred to KL, with the remaining number's opium rations stopped in April. No complaint from the latter. With transfer of addicts, discipline at the settlement has improved – inmates take a more lively interest in life and turn out regularly for treatment. Absconders usually either go to one of the FMS settlements or leave the country for good. Able-bodied men doing work paid an allowance by the Government.	Treatments had no marked success, due to advanced stage of disease for most. But condition's advance halted. Some resistance to injections – skin treatment used instead.
MR, SSADR 1932 SSAR 1932	Leper settlement in Singapore accommodated both males and females but men usually transferred quickly to Jerejak. Discussion of treatments used, and economic activities & employment of the inmates encouraged by authorities. Opening of Chinese school for boys (there is also an English school) and formation of several dramatic troupes.	Treatments: drugs, purgation, diet, rest.	Do. Repatriation of some discharged Chinese and Indian inmates. Others allowed to remain in Malaya but had to report periodically to government dispensaries for at least two years. Importance of antimalarial works – most arrivals found to suffer from malaria. Settlement almost malaria-free. Educated inmates played in the musical band or were employed as teachers, dressers etc.	Do. Treatments apparently provided relief as most inmates voluntarily submitted themselves to injections. Space in settlement limited. Recreation. Little time for sports: most inmates busy with work.

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MR, SSADR 1933 SSAR 1933	Transfer of 101 cases from Sungei Buloh leper settlement, FMS, to relieve overcrowding.	Inmates encouraged to lead regular life in terms of meals, rest & exercise. Facilities provided for games & sports. Settlement often visited by missionaries. All boys & girls attend school daily.	Transfer & discharge of inmates. History of the various camps. Establishment of camp for boys under 18. Separation of more educated and better class Chinese, some together with Eurasians. More early and moderate cases sent to the settlement. Difficulty of treatment: disease not well understood and efficacy of treatments still controversial. Belief in leprosy as a self-healing illness. Efforts made to increase resistance to disease by improving living conditions and environment. Treatments used (detailed). Several shops on settlement managed by inmates. Five theatrical troupes. Wheatley Club — promotes sports. Almost all educated inmates are members. 2 schools — English and Chinese. Chinese inmates learn Chinese first before progressing to English school, i.e. bilingual education. Morale and discipline excellent among staff and inmates. Many inmates accept non compulsory treatments.	Do. Treatment with dyes unsuccessful and halted. Inmates generally happy and contented.

MR, SSADR	Increasing number	Essentially a collection	Do.	
1934	of inmates seeking	centre for male lepers		
	treatment at	before transfer to PJ.	4 th year in succession:	
SSAR 1934	government		no case of malaria	
20	hospitals, causing		contracted in the	
	overcrowding,		settlement.	
	especially with the	Franklind 9		
	accumulation of	Except for those with		
	advanced cases.	relations and friends in	As in previous years,	
		Singapore.	inmates given freedom	
	E.g. in Jerejak's		of movement within	
	234 cases in 1934,		confines of island.	
	only 36 were in the			
			Treatments considered	
	early stages. Increase in		to be the best presently	
	number of beds at		available. Resistance to	
			disease gauged by build	
	Jerejak.		and appearance of	
			patient.	
	Uniqueness of			
	Malaya's problem:		Face are in a set of	
	most cases were		Economic activities	
	of Chinese		meant to keep inmates	
	immigrants, who		cheerful and occupied.	
	probably brought			
	the disease with		Separation of inmates:	
	them but had not		race & class; children	
	shown symptoms.		from adults; those	
	Efforts made to		improving from	
	screen them and		advanced cases;	
	Indian immigrants		cripples.	
	for signs of leprosy			
	(under the			
	Quarantine &			
	Prevention of			
	Disease		After-care not possible	
	Ordinance).		given the floating	
			immigrant population;	
	lmaidama f		only periodic reporting	
	Incidence of		possible.	
	leprosy in Malaya		1	
	however low.			
	Also Malays little			
	affected (only 29			
	out of 968 inmates			
	at Jerejak).			
	Indians ((122 out			
	of 968) afflicted			
	only with a mild			
	form and respond			
	readily to			
	treatment.			
MR, SSADR	Do.	Do.	Do.	
1935				
			Camp F in progress.	
SSAR 1935			Camp i in progress.	
OUAK 1930			1	
	Churchmen		Water imported from	
	regularly visit the		Penang in dry weather.	
	Singapore			
	settlement and			
	provide			

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	entertainment for its inmates.		Lesser proportion of advanced cases admitted.	
			Increase in inmates interested in artisan work.	
MR, SSADR 1936	Concern about increase in cases, especially moderate and advanced ones.	Inmates with relations and friends allowed to remain at settlement permanently.	Do. Discharged cases banished or repatriated.	
	Belief that most cases were introduced from outside Malaya.		Discipline & morale remain good.	
	NB by researcher. This increase is probably due to return of Chinese & Indian immigrants to Singapore as employment opportunities improve with the end of the Great Depression.			
MR, SSADR 1937	Continued increase in number of lepers. Step up in checks at the ports but several years would lapse before the improvement is noticeable. Old leper settlement at Kuala Lumpur, FMS: numbers diminishing (incurables who are addicted to opium). No new transfers.	Increase in admissions. No. of Malays low but Malay inmates claimed that there are cases in the kampongs (villages) who are unwilling to come to the settlement unless there have a friend or relation here. Public education & propaganda have helped to reduce the horrors associated with the disease for public and patients. Classification of types of leprosy unsatisfactory. Leprosy in Chinese protean and cannot be easily classified.		

		Increase in number of inmates discharged. Conference on leprosy held here in Feb 1937.		
MR, SSADR 1938	Increase in admissions, leading to overcrowding in Singapore camps. Male lepers had to be transferred to PJ to relieve the problem. No remedy for overcrowding among females.	Male and female inmates segregated. Some cases retained here for research at King Edward VII College of Medicine.	Increase in cases given treatment.	
MR, SSADR 1939	Steady increase in admissions, leading to overcrowding, even in hospitals.	Patient-workers involved in running of settlement, given a small allowance. Vegetable growing and other activities: produce bought by government at controlled prices and consumed by inmates themselves.		