

The White Crocodile's Tale: My Memoirs

By J.M.B Hughes

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These are the memoirs of J.M.B. Hughes, a celebrated teacher and headmaster who taught in the schools of Malaya from 1948 to 1963. John Michael Broome Hughes (1917–2011) was born in Oxfordshire, the son of a vicar. He studied at Oxford University and served in the British and Indian Armies in South Africa, Pakistan, Kashmir, India and Burma during World War Two. After the war he accepted an overseas teaching post, and it was in Penang that he met his wife Jean Wright. As a teacher at the Penang Free School and the Malay College Kuala Kangsar in Perak, and then as headmaster at Ismail English School (subsequently Sultan Ismail College) in Kelantan and finally the Penang Free School, he educated a generation of young Malaysians destined to play leading roles in post-independence Malaysia.

“I owe much to the wonderful little island of Penang, and my wanderings all over it were something to cherish. The smells of the fishing villages still linger, mostly of rotting fish and bakau wood burning. I know of nothing better to restore one’s strength and recover one’s will when returning from a very physical trip, pulling oars, and propelling a sampan over the sea than the strong coffee loaded with sugar and thick with tinned milk available from every coffee shop in every fishing village along the Malayan coast.”

J.M.B. ‘Mike’ Hughes