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From Market To Market

By David Koh and Joe Choo

Properties from a feng shui perspective: Part 93

A long time ago when Kuala Lumpur was still a small town, there used to be a wholesale wet market at the third mile of Jalan Ipoh. This was a long stretch along the river, somewhere near the location of the Perkim building/Jalan Rahmat. Back then, this was considered the outskirts of town.

Wholesale wet markets have their advantages and disadvantages. The locals want such markets to be conveniently nearby to get access to fresh produce at cheap prices.

Yet, they do not want them situated too near because wet markets are wet, noisy and smelly. They also attract traffic jams and indiscriminate drivers who would park anywhere they like and obstruct others. Thus as Kuala Lumpur grew, the Ipoh Road Market was considered too close for comfort and the authorities decided to relocate the market in the 1960s. (We still have a Chow Kit market – behind Jalan Tuanku Abdul Rahman and Jalan Raja Muda.) (For Google map reference, please log on to <http://maps.google.co.uk/> and search for “Kuala Lumpur”.)



In terms of landform, the Selayang Wholesale Market sits in a valley and on former tin mining land.

There could be another reason for this. Wet market operators and stall owners used to employ young school dropouts. These youngsters usually stayed in rented hostels nearby and they also hung out with gangs. Gang fights

used to break out often in this area, with rival gangs from Ipoh Road, the nearby Chow Kit road or anywhere else for that matter.

SELAYANG

Relocating the market would be a good way to increase the value of the neighbourhood in more ways than one. Thus in 1969, the authorities moved the market to as far out of town as they could: Selayang. The origin of the name Selayang is unclear but it would appear to be based on the Malay word, *layang*, which is to fly. It could be named after strong winds, or the presence of birds. It is interesting, though, that kite-flying is quite a popular pastime here at the Metropolitan Park located off the Middle Ring Road II. On a good day, there would be hundreds of kites soaring in the sky, prompting many motorists to slow down at the wondrous sight. Not surprisingly, minor bumper-to-bumper accidents do occur occasionally. This park and many of the present developments in Selayang are on former mining land. Tin mining and rubber plantations were the main activities in the early days.

The new market was located off the Ipoh trunk road. It was a very convenient gathering point for lorries carrying fresh farm produce from the north, such as Cameron Highlands. The drivers did not have to drive into

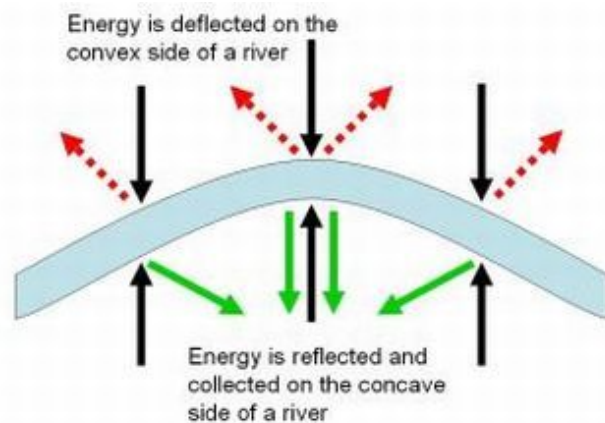
the city: they could just stop by the roadside and start unloading their cargo.

WHOLESALE

It was not unusual for this quiet road to be jam-packed from 1am to 5am every morning. The Selayang market's popularity helped it grow to become a main wholesale market. Sundry shop owners and smaller market operators flocked here to get their supplies. The determined bargain hunter could also make a beeline there, provided they were willing to get up early.

When you are on to a good thing, you will find competition pretty quickly. Tan Sri Syed Kechik, a Kedah-born lawyer and businessman, came into the picture and through his company, Pasar Borong Development Sdn Bhd, set up a new Selayang wholesale market a few kilometres away in Bandar Utara Selayang.

The idea was a good one: it was further away from the trunk road and would alleviate congestion; it was closer to town but not too close; and by surrounding the market with four-storey shop-offices, it provided a better looking facade.



However, the idea did not find enough support from the wholesalers operating in the market. Apparently, the roads were too narrow and

difficult for large lorries to move. Thus, many stayed put and the Selayang Wholesale Market remains to this day.

To avoid confusion, the newer market was renamed Kuala Lumpur Wholesale Market. That is how and why there are two wholesale markets competing with each other in the same area!

SYED KECHIK

Tan Sri Syed Kechik Syed Mohamad gained prominence in the late 1960s and mid-1970s. As a youth, he put himself through an education in the US and read law in England. When he returned, he quickly developed relationships with many politicians. At the request of Tunku Abdul Rahman, he went to Sabah to serve as an aide to Tun Mustapha Datu Harun, the state's third chief minister. He quickly rose in influence and was even considered by some as Sabah's "shadow chief minister". He was responsible for setting up the Sabah Foundation. As an astute businessman, he also rose to become one of Sabah's richest men.

Syed Kechik returned to the peninsula in 1976 and pursued his business interests. He became a prominent businessman and also one of the first bumiputra to become a multi-millionaire.

Bandar Utara Selayang where the KL Wholesale Market is located, is also dubbed Little Myanmar as many Myanmar workers congregate here. They run several coffee shops serving Myanmar food; there are stalls along the five-foot ways of Jalan 2/3A that sell "betel chews" made of sireh leaves, gambir, tobacco and chalk. They are mostly operated by women from Myanmar.

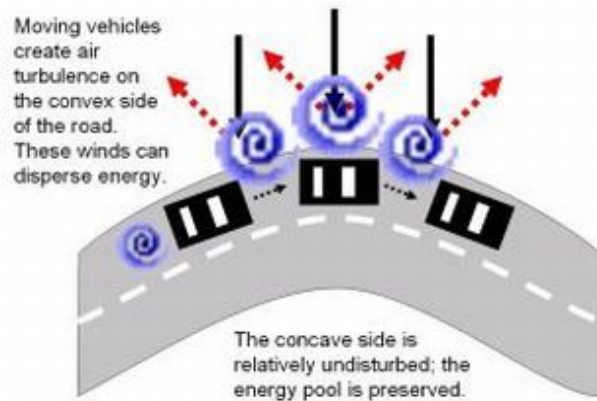
In terms of landform, the Selayang Wholesale Market sits in a valley and on former tin mining land. Its back is toward the Main Range while its front flat faces a disused lake further away across the road.

VALLEYS ATTRACT LIFE

A valley is considered conducive for attracting life – and business. This is because earth's energy has nowhere else to go after travelling down

higher lands. This is why in environology, even in the absence of water, the concept of “between two mountains, there is a river” is well-known.

Energy would collect there much as water would collect at the bottom of a bowl or basin. This could explain the market’s continued operation here. On the downside, we need to remember that energy pools also attract vice – prostitution, gambling, drug abuse, gangsterism and so on.



Having a mountain on one's back is also a good orientation. These factors are probably responsible for the continued existence and operation of the Selayang Wholesale Market.

On the downside, the market is located on the outer elbow of the road. This is not conducive for collecting earth energy. An elbow-shaped road or river tends to deflect and scatter energy.

There are also new flyovers and bridges directly in front of the market, which alters the landform. These are manmade hills and “molehills” which also affect the movement of earth energy. The last downer: the land is built on former mining land. Such soil is loosely packed compared to solid ground, and as such does not conduct very much earth energy in the first place!

RUNDOWN

This could also be why the place is so rundown in appearance, and perhaps many traders there also experience rollercoaster rides in their business, health, harmony and advancement. Those with a good Life

Profile – born on the right day at the right time – are likely to still do well, while those who do not have a good profile may find themselves struggling harder.

Further up the road on the other side of the market is a relatively new block of shop-offices but these are located where Jalan Ipoh bends yet again. The effects of the elbow (and facing the mountains to the north) are very telling. Many shops, including a supermarket, are shuttered; those that are still in business look very deserted.

Pusat Bandar Utara nearby is fortunate enough to be embraced by Jalan Ipoh on one side, and a curved lake on another. Going against it, however, is its location on the “poor” side of Jalan Ipoh. Thus, shop-offices that face the road’s embrace (good) also face the high land of Batu Caves and the Main Range (not so good). They also have their backs to the embracing lake (not so good either).

Those that have their backs to the highland (good) also face the lake (also good), but they turn their backs to the embracing road (not so good). Thus, the benefits of each orientation are offset by downsides. Again, the overriding concern is, the land is made of loose sand left over by yesteryear’s mining activities.

In such a chaotic mix, occupants of homes and operators of businesses here are likely to experience constant ups and downs. Overall, success may be harder to attain and sustain, while difficulties may be harder to overcome.

Many banks have set up branch offices here and from the outside, businesses look like they are doing well. However, only the owners and managers will know the true situation. Furthermore, if one were to drive into the area, to explore Little Myanmar, one would find the slum-like appearance to be a shocking contrast to the frontage.

***This series on feng shui and real estate properties appear courtesy of the Malaysia Institute of Geomancy Sciences (MINGS). You can send in your queries on feng shui and properties via our feedback**

**link at the bottom of the page. David Koh is the founder of MINGS
and has been a feng shui master and teacher for the past 35 years.**




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