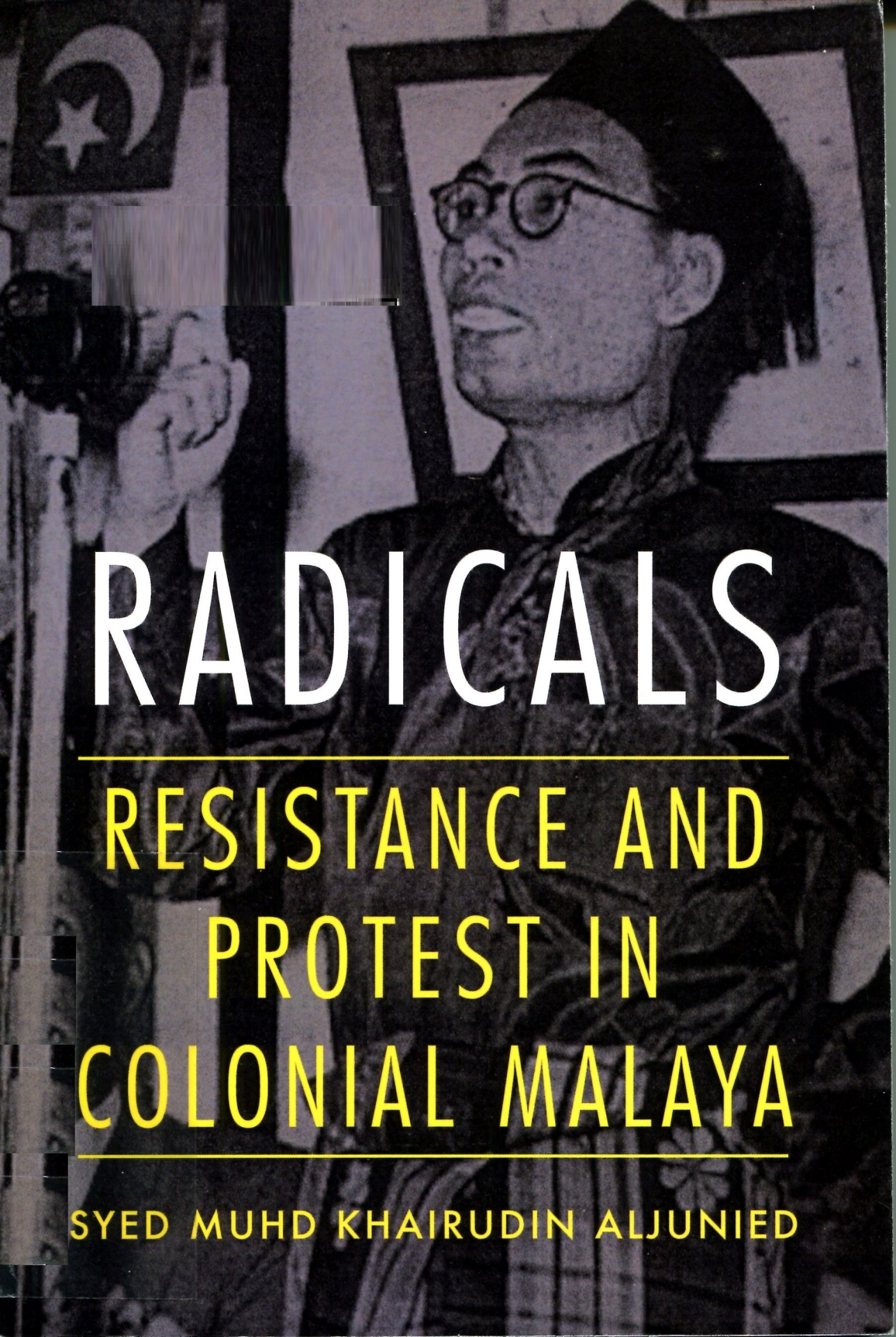

RADICALS

RESISTANCE AND PROTEST IN COLONIAL MALAYA

SYED MUHD KHAIRUDIN ALJUNIED

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NIU PRESS / *DeKalb*

Northern Illinois University Press, DeKalb 60115

Printed in the United States of America
25 24 23 22 21 20 19 18 17 16 2 3 4 5 6
978-0-87580-492-7 (paper)
978-1-60909-182-8 (ebook)

Book design by Shaun Allshouse
Cover design by Yuni Dorr

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
Aljunied, Syed Muhd. Khairudin, 1976- author
Radicals : resistance and protest in colonial Malaya / Syed Muhd Khairudin Aljunied.
pages cm
Includes bibliographical references.
ISBN 978-0-87580-492-7 (pbk. : alk. paper) — ISBN 978-1-60909-182-8 (ebook)
1. Anti-imperialist movements—Malaysia. I. Title.
DS596.6.A45 2015
959.5'104—dc23
2015001762

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Acknowledgments

This book would not have been completed without the help of family members, friends, colleagues, teachers, critics, skeptics, café owners, archivists, and librarians. Its birth can be traced to a somewhat inauspicious event: the oral defense of my doctoral dissertation some years ago. I had jotted down some of the most difficult would-be questions from the examiners. The preparation took me days and cost me sleep, perhaps too much for a thesis that went a little beyond three hundred pages and took me two years to write. I expected the first query to be the most complex one. And yet, the question that was posed to me was something so elementary, and yet so consequential, that it would occupy my mind in the years to come. "You have passed. Now tell us about the book that you will be writing the moment you leave this room." I had to think of something smart enough to avoid sounding silly. The idea that came to my mind at that moment was totally spontaneous, though it reflected my long-standing fascination with marginalized groups in society: "The Malay Radicals."

So the first word of thanks must go to Timothy Harper, who urged me to set out on that fortuitous pathway in search of the stories of the defeated and the little people in Southeast Asian pasts who sought to change their destiny by engaging in popular politics and social activism. Tim, Raj Brown, and William Clarence-Smith have all been very supportive of my work ever since I joined academe. Two mentors and close friends, Timothy Barnard and Maurizio Peleggi, gave me useful advice on questions relating to the writing of alternative histories and kept me on track in striking a just balance between theory and empiricism. Jim Collins gave me much-needed impetus to write a book proposal and not just let scraps of paper and notes pile up on my table.

I have also incurred numerous debts to friends scattered across a few continents, who have shaped this book in their own ways. Azharuddin Mohd Dali at Universiti Malaya shared some useful documents relating to

British policies and convened a seminar for me to share my initial thoughts. Wan Zawawi, at the University of Brunei, gave me valuable insights about how to frame my study to include perspectives from anthropology at a time when the book project was totally vague and unstructured. Amrita Malhi and Khoo Gaik Cheng invited me to deliver a keynote address on "Colonial Imprisonment" at the Australian National University. The substance of that talk became part of this book. Joseph Camilleri, the kindest person I have known in my life, appointed me as Honorary Fellow at La Trobe University, Melbourne. While based temporarily in that beautiful city, I met esteemed academics such as Sven Schottmann, Maila Stivens, and Joel Kahn who questioned me about my presumptions regarding Southeast Asian resistance movements and politics. The families of Encik Hasim and Sophiandy Sopali made my time in Melbourne very memorable.

Jean-Louis Margolin at the University of Provence arranged for a workshop on colonial penology, which crystallized some of my ideas when I was going in circles and confusing directions. Torsten Tschacher made possible a trip to the University of Heidelberg, where I discussed the role of public spaces in the diffusion of radical ideas. Johan Lindquist, Joshua Barker, and Erik Harms put together a wonderful workshop at Yale University on "Figures of Modernity in Southeast Asia," a meeting of minds that permitted me to speak to some specialists about my interests in radicalism and anticolonialism. And, of course, I am grateful to Karen Barkey for accepting me into the Institute for Religion, Culture, and Public Life at Columbia University, as a Fulbright Visiting Professor during the last stages of revisions.

Colleagues, friends, and reviewers helped in many ways. It would take too many pages to list them all, but I would like to give my heartfelt thanks to Jan van der Putten and Maznah Mohamad for sparing much of their energies to provide comments on different chapters of the book. Kamaludeen Nasir was a sharp interlocutor and a sounding board for the book, always willing to offer different perspectives, frustratingly unsettling my own assumptions and pointing out some relevant works. Erik Holmberg read the entire text in its raw form and offered many valuable comments for improvement. His attentiveness to details and breadth of knowledge never fail to impress me. Nick Sim, Nur Faatihah, and Oummar Nor Amman were excellent research assistants. Loh Kah Seng commented on and polished some chapters, while constantly reminding me to always be true to being a real historian and not try to be something else. Ermin Sinanovic, Faizal Yahya, Mark Lim, and Derek Heng kept my spirits alive even during their busiest moments, urging me just to get my work done. Eunice Lau and Rashad Green allowed me to sublet their beautiful apartments in uptown Manhattan, where many of the loose ends of this book were tied up.

The staff at NIU Press gave me excellent guidance that saw the manuscript to completion based on the excellent suggestions made by the two anonymous reviewers. And, of course, I am deeply grateful to the Department of Malay Studies of the National University of Singapore for providing me with so much space and time to travel to several archives and libraries, and to attend workshops and conferences, when I was running the last lap toward the completion of this book.

Parts of this book have appeared elsewhere in significantly different versions as articles in *Postcolonial Studies*, *Journal of Social History*, and the *Journal of Historical Sociology*. I wish to thank the publishers of these journals for allowing me to reprint them here. I wish to also thank the Malaysian National Archives for permission to reproduce the photos in this book.

It would have been impossible for me to finish this book without the patience and understanding of my family. Parents, in-laws, brothers, and sisters were always there when I needed them most. My six children, Inshirah, Fatihah, Yusuf, Muhammad, Yasin, and Furqan endured the periodic absence of their father during my trips overseas and when I was thinking hard about words and more words. Above all, Marlina has been supportive of me since we got married many years ago, remaining by my side, listening to my endless talk about history, enduring my late-night writing habits and oftentimes illogical ramblings about dead people and weird folks. This book is for her.

Abbreviations

AFPFL	Anti-Fascist People's Freedom League
API	Angkatan Pemuda Insaf
ASAS 50	Angkatan Sasterawan 50
AWAS	Angkatan Wanita Sedar
BATAS	Barisan Tani SeMalaya
BKM	Barisan Kebangsaan Melayu
FMS	Federated Malay States
GERAM	Gerakan Angkatan Muda
HM	Hizbul Muslimin
IMP	Independence of Malaya Party
KMM	Kesatuan Melayu Muda
KMS	Kesatuan Melayu Singapura
KRIS	Kesatuan Rakyat Indonesia Merdeka
LEPIR	Lembaga Pendidikan Rakyat
MAS	Malay Administrative Service
MATA	Majlis Agama Tertinggi Se-Malaya
MCA	Malayan Chinese Association
MCP	Malayan Communist Party
MEC	Malay Education Council
MIC	Malayan Indian Congress
MMA	Malayan Military Administration
MPAJA	Malayan Peoples' Anti-Japanese Army
MPM	Majlis Pelajaran Melayu
MWWA	Malay Women's Welfare Association
PAS	Parti Islam Se-Malaysia
PERAM	Pemuda Radikal Melayu
PERPEMAS	Pusat Perekonomian Melayu Se-Malaya
PETA	Pembela Tanahair
PKI	Partai Komunis Indonesia

PKM	Parti Komunis Malaya
PKMM	Persatuan Kebangsaan Melayu Malaya
PMFTU	Pan-Malayan Federation of Trade Unions
PMIP	Pan-Malayan Islamic Party
PMS	Persatuan Melayu Selangor
PNI	Partai Nasional Indonesia
PRM	Parti Rakyat Malaya
PUTERA	Pusat Tenaga Rakyat
PUTERA-AMCJA	Pusat Tenaga Rakyat-All-Malaya Council of Joint Action
SITC	Sultan Idris Training College
SS	Straits Settlements
UMNO	United Malays National Organization
UMS	Unfederated Malay States

Glossary

adat	custom
Alam Melayu	Malay World
bangsa	race
bangsawan	Malay opera
cita-cita perjuangan	spirit and the ambitions of struggle
hajjis	Muslims who have gone on the pilgrimage to Mecca
hartal	voluntary closing of schools and places of business
Jawi Peranakan	locally born Muslims from mixed marriages
kafir	infidels
kampung	village
kebangsaan	nationalism
kerajaan	kingship
kesatuan	unity
kesedaran	consciousness
Melayu Raya	a union of Singapore, Malaya, and Indonesia
merdeka	freedom
nama	status
negeri	state
orang asli	indigenous peoples
orang-orang besar	noble men
penghulu	village head
penglipur lara	storytellers
rakyat	commoners
sandiwara	dramas
suratkhabar	newspapers
syariah	Islamic ethical code
Tanah Melayu	Malay Land
tanah pusaka	ancestral relic
ulamas	religious scholars
ummah	worldwide Muslim community
warisan	legacy

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Note on Terminology

This book uses the term *Malaya* because this was Malaysia's name prior to the establishment of the Malaysian Federation in 1963. I use the spellings "Johore" and "Malacca" (instead of "Johor" and "Melaka") as they were used in the time period covered in this study.

RADICALS

Introduction

Radicals as History

› THE NIGHT OF 21 June 2010 was an unusual and memorable one for many Malaysians. For many hours, a large crowd of onlookers had gathered in the darkness to watch bulldozers demolish a 300-meter wall of Kuala Lumpur's century-old Pudu Prison. The wall was adorned with what was reportedly the world's longest mural, which had been painted by former inmates of the prison. The onlookers' attempts to salvage pieces of the rubble as souvenirs bore testimony to the symbolic importance of one of the oldest colonial buildings in Malaysia's capital city. In fact, in the weeks leading up to the day of demolition, battle lines were drawn between developers and conservationists advocating diametrically opposed views of the value of the prison. Real estate speculators and urban planners argued that the removal of the complex was necessary to make way for commercial buildings and hotels, as well as to solve traffic problems in the area. All of these efforts are part of Kuala Lumpur's ongoing project to transform itself into a financial hub and a model world city that will grow out of its own past.[1]

These arguments for the complete removal of the prison from the city landscape were met with objections, primarily from former radicals who were once political prisoners and from heritage activists who contended that Pudu Prison was one of Malaysia's historical landmarks. Granted, the prison confined and hanged criminals and drug offenders; but to pull down a building that was closely associated with the country's independence movement would erase the physical reminder of some of the most important people and events of Malaysia's heritage and nationhood.[2] The eventual destruction of Pudu Prison after weeks of protests indicates that Malaysia is a nation that has yet to come to terms with its colonial inheritance. Moreover, the controversy surrounding the prison's destruction reveals the divisions in

public opinion in Malaysia today between those who wish to commemorate and celebrate the "radicals" versus those who might prefer that they be forgotten.

Not all radicals were makers of history, just as those who made history were not all radicals. In the pages that follow, I aim to tell the story of a group of radical Malay men and women in colonial Malaya who once formed part of the inmate population of Pudu Prison. These Malay radicals were people from ordinary social backgrounds who chose to oppose foreign rule of their homeland, knowing full well that by embarking on this path of resistance, they risked imprisonment or death. Their ranks included teachers, journalists, intellectuals, housewives, peasants, preachers, and youths. They formed, led, and contributed to the founding of political parties, grassroots organizations, unions, newspapers, periodicals, and schools that spread their ideas nationwide in the aftermath of the Great Depression, when colonialism was at its height and evident in all areas of life in their country. But when their efforts to uproot foreign dominance faltered in the face of

FIGURE 1 Aerial view of Pudu Prison, Kuala Lumpur, prior to its complete demolition, 20 December 2011

the sanctions the state imposed upon them, some of these radicals chose to take up arms, while others engaged in aggressive protests to uphold their rights. Some died fighting to regain their nation's liberty. Hundreds were incarcerated and lived to resist colonialism until their country attained its independence in August 1957. All of these Malay radicals were devoted to becoming free men and to claiming their right to be treated as equals in a world riddled with prejudice and contradictions.

This book takes a different path from previous influential treatments of the Malay radicals.[3] It seeks to rescue the Malay radicals from the shadows of nationalist scholarship, ethnic and regional parochialisms, the moral orthodoxies of our time, and intellectual reification, by presenting them as neither heroes nor villains, but as productive people in history.[4] That is to say, the Malay radicals were essentially a creative, constructive, and avant-garde constituent of Malayan life. They were men and women who responded to the blatant injustices of colonial rule and chose to stand up to it. In speaking truth to power and mobilizing their fellow men in the cause of oppositional politics and forms of disobedience, they helped lay bare the devices of colonialism. Their most enduring contributions rest with the creation of unexplored spaces and methods of resistance and the development of new vocabularies of liberation and freedom.

I do not seek to offer another straightforward collective biography of the Malay radicals. Such narratives have already been written with varying degrees of detail and accuracy. My objective is to bring to light the less charted and unanalyzed terrain of the "experience" of becoming and being radical—the radical experience, so to speak. Here, I am indebted to the work of Paul Cohen on the Boxer Rebellion in China. Cohen differentiates the "experienced past" from the "historically constructed past," which consists primarily of a series of events that explains the logic behind human actions. In his words,

> the past as actually lived, in short, consists of a continuum of different kinds of experience, at one end of which are experiences that, in terms of a given set of variables, are central, key, memorable, defining, and at the other end, experiences, often highly repetitive, that are of a more auxiliary or supportive sort. Another property of the lived past, one that profoundly colors all experience, is that it is outcome-blind.[5]

Any scholar who seeks to comprehend experiences as they were lived, according to Cohen, must be sensitive to the biographical consciousness, ideas, and motivations of the historical actors, to contingencies that were

never realized, to emotions and anxieties, and to the limitations brought about by the realities of culture, society, and geography. The focus is on providing a rich and thick description of feelings and thoughts, motives and practices, adaptations and responses across space and time; and to tease out commonalities among them, rather than to narrate, in a precise manner, events and incidents. This, according to Cohen, is the task of an "ethnographic historian."[6]

While agreeing with many aspects of Cohen's delineation and interpretation of the experienced past, I find the drawing of a clear binary between that past and the one that is historically constructed to be problematic. Alternatively, it is my contention that the combination of the experienced and the historical, and the diachronic as well as the synchronic, can shed better light on the relationship between actors and contexts. To further this argument, I maintain that the radicals and their experiences in colonial Malaya can be understood in a more nuanced way by interrogating them alongside evolving local and global circumstances and by analyzing them through the lenses of a set of overarching and interconnected mobilizing concepts that were internalized, lived, and utilized in the course of their activism. I use the term *mobilizing concepts* to refer to a set of ideas, visions, and notions that the radicals used to reason and justify their advent, as thinking tools for them to make sense of the structures of domination inherent within their time and place, and as sources of motivation to induce them to surmount various challenges and problems that stood in their way. Mobilizing concepts, in that sense, are weapons and armor that the radicals employed to organize, strategize, protect, and consolidate themselves when menaced with the tentacles of the colonial state as they embarked upon the agonizing path toward independence.

The mobilizing concepts that I am concerned with are *warisan* (heritage), *cita-cita perjuangan* (spirit and the ambitions of struggle), *kesedaran* (consciousness), *kesatuan* (unity), *kebangsaan* (nationalism), *Melayu Raya* (a union of Singapore, Malaya, and Indonesia), and *merdeka* (freedom). These mobilizing concepts were born out of the confluence of the personal, social, structural, and ideational factors that shaped the Malay radicals. These processes included the onset of colonial rule, the memories of past struggles of local heroes, the alienation wrought by capitalism, the exposure to modern education and foreign migrants, and the influence of Islamic revivalism, third-world nationalism, and socialism. Other factors included the awareness of the excesses of traditional norms, the suffering that resulted from punitive actions by the colonial authorities, and rejection by the society at large for having radical visions and dreams. An ensemble rather than

separate entities, these factors provided the social, political, and intellectual contexts that gave birth and meaning to these mobilizing concepts.

These mobilizing concepts pervade the writings and discourses of the radicals. They were manifested in the form of programs and activities, and were communicated to the masses from the birth of the Malay radicalist movement up to the eve of Malaysian independence and beyond. By analyzing the radical experience chronologically through the lenses of these mobilizing concepts and scrutinizing the ways in which these frames of reference were utilized and implemented, one may well break down the dichotomies of personal/political, local/global, colonized/colonizer, and religious/secular.[7] In doing so, one can uncover new pathways and insights into the ways in which radical activists appropriated ideas and practices that came from both within and without their own societies.

One mobilizing concept that helps us to interrogate these dichotomies further is warisan, which means heritage. Warisan includes the objects, events, and ideas that have been handed down from generation to generation. The object that Malay radicals sought to recover was Melayu Raya—a union of Singapore, Malaysia, and Indonesia. This was an "imaginative geography" that inflected the colonialists' representations of space and territory in the Malay world.[8]

The Malay radicals saw the era of the precolonial Malay kingdoms as the golden age of Malay civilization. Like the memories of great wars and upheavals that become part and parcel of a community's heritage, warisan includes events that were remembered through oral tradition and folklore. This notion of the warisan emphasizes the failed wars against foreign rulers exemplified in the battles fought by Dato' Bahaman, Dol Said, and To' Janggut, whose struggles were traced all the way back to prominent rulers of the Islamic world.

Yet while memories of these events evoked a sense of loss and defeat among the radicals, they also had the opposite effect of inspiring them to think through their perceptions of the past and to propound new ideas about the role of Islam and the relevance of new ideologies, of breaking the barrier between the religious and the secular. It is here that the mobilizing concept of cita-cita perjuangan (spirit and the ambitions of struggle) was an important core of the radical experience. As the vanguard of the dispossessed *rakyat* (commoners), the radicals saw themselves as representing the aspirations and concerns of the common folk. They were aware, however, that there was no turning back to the precolonial past. In charting their visions and aspirations for their nation's future, the Malay radicals formulated the ideas of the kebangsaan (nationalism). Kebangsaan is a galvanizing

identity that would aid in the resistance against the ills of colonialism and capitalism. Recognizing the limitations of the concept of *bangsa* (race), the Malay radicals fused the idea of Malay nationhood with Islam and socialism. The creative welding of socialist ideals with folk mythologies, while drawing from Islamic traditions and Western currents of thought, testifies to the fact that the Malay radicals were deeply aware of a variety of streams of thought beyond their own local context, redacting and presenting these ideas in ways that made them applicable for their own projects of resistance and mobilization.[9]

It follows, then, that the story of the radicals is also a story of contacts, interactions, and exchanges between the cultures of the colonized and the colonizers, rather than just a case of mutual antagonism between one another. Indeed, it was the coming of colonialism that brought about kesedaran (consciousness) among the Malay radicals. The sense that society was being stifled by the machinations of colonialism and its collaborators was critical to the radicalist experience. This was, ironically, a by-product of the colonial situation. But what were the factors that contributed to this consciousness? All of the radicals maintained that there was no single route to this. At the level of the family, the fact of being raised in a certain social context, whether rebellious or ultraloyalist, could spark an awareness of the contradictions of colonial rule. Meanwhile, the influence of reading and deep learning offered another route to political consciousness. The rise of literacy and the availability of books and newspapers during the colonial era fomented the realization of injustice, and this feeling of resentment was made more real through sojourns and travel in other areas of Malaya and beyond. Kesedaran was also a consequence of larger processes, such as urbanization and migration. The changes in the landscape, the arrival of foreign immigrants such as the Chinese and Indians, and the three years of Japanese rule during the war did much to inform the radicals (and the Malays in general) with the sense that they were about to be consigned to the margins of society and history.[10]

Kesatuan (unity), the idea that no people could achieve true independence unless they organized themselves to agitate as a unified nation, constitutes a third important mobilizing concept in shaping and explaining the radical experience. Unity is achieved less through ideological coherence or through adherence to a fixed dogma than through rallies, uniformed groups, organizations, trade union activism, and other coalitions. In this perspective, kesatuan was a process that encouraged respect for differing views and methodologies toward the achievement of complete independence, which testifies to the existence of a cosmopolitan outlook among

the ranks of the Malay radicals.[11] Kesatuan is, however, not a perfect ideal but a reality filled with challenges and contradictions. Dissensions and divisions abounded despite claims of solidarity and attempts to unite disparate groups and personalities with varying temperaments. Betrayal and fallings-out between comrades in the ranks were commonplace. Differences in values, conflicting approaches, and defections often undermined the efforts to foster a spirit of unity in the ranks.

The last and no less important mobilizing concept, which is central to the organizing premise of this book, is merdeka (freedom). To be a Malay radical was to be acutely committed to the dissemination of the liberationist message and to the endurance of the hardships that were tied to the realization of that ultimate goal. The radicals introduced the idea of merdeka through the media of novels, newspapers, cell groups, and stage plays called *bangsawan*.[12] The spirit of struggle was not without peril. For many radicals, merdeka (freedom) entailed having to undergo bouts of hunger and starvation. If that experience was not challenging enough, the ordeals of arrests, interrogations, court trials, and hiding in the jungles added to the pains and penalties of choosing the radical path and delivering the message of merdeka. Ideally, no radical would yield if he or she had fully internalized the idea of freedom. More often than not, for those radicals who chose to give up the struggle, the paths out of radicalism emerged less from the policies of a foreign power than from the promises of wealth, status, and alternative merdeka manufactured and offered by the colonial-sponsored and aristocratic Malay elites.

It is clear that studying the radicals through the lenses of these mobilizing concepts compels the historian to consider the interconnections, relationships, contacts, and tensions that occurred at the individual, collective, ideational, political, economic, social, local, regional, and global levels in a given time and place. If one adopts such a wide angle of vision, more can be learned about how the elites and subaltern members of anticolonial movements were affected by the shifting contours of family life and society and the imposition of colonial systems of governance, and how the ideas they promoted influenced the societal and colonial institutions they sought to transform. Indeed, it is only when these mobilizing concepts and evolving contexts are juxtaposed, recognized as entwined, and placed within a given time, that one can understand the experiences of the radicals in colonial Malaya or elsewhere in their entirety and in the most comprehensive way possible. The radicals in Malaya afford such a perspective, much like other anticolonial movements in Southeast Asia. The personal, social, structural, and intellectual contexts in which these individuals and movements operated

and the mobilizing concepts that governed their experiences compelled them to keep themselves attuned to regional and global developments, while simultaneously demonstrating a high degree of dynamism and commitment in their engagement with a whole array of problems and challenges.

We are now poised to ask: just who were the radicals in colonial Malaya, and what are the sources that can make them visible to the eye of the historian? One could perhaps start by listing a set of names and organizations that feature strongly in the imperial archive. Proceeding in this manner, which is so common among imperial historians, would mean that only those groups that entered the colonial imagination would be given pride of place in the story of Malay radicals, and it would also imply that all individuals and groups that populated the sociopolitical landscape of the country or promoted independence from colonial rule will be given due consideration. Little wonder then that much of the literature on radicals is trapped in the bureaucratic discourse and institutional concerns of the colonial states. In this literature, radicals are rendered largely as members of the literate class who were opposed to colonialism and the rule of white men.[13]

A way around this is to give primacy to the claims made by the Malay radicals themselves and to map out the coordinates of groups and personalities from within. The scores of memoirs written by and about prominent radicals point to the viability of this approach. Hitherto, local historians have cast doubts over the usefulness of these memoirs. This jaundiced approach to Malay sources in favor of the imperial archive has done much to perpetuate the colonial-era official marginalization of certain radicals. As Reynaldo Ileto has observed, the reliance of scholars upon colonial sources precludes any discussion of the workings of the popular indigenous mind and of the meanings that local actors gave to their actions, localities, and communities.[14] This does not imply that indigenous sources are necessarily to be given pride of place above and beyond the documents that were produced by the colonial state. Instead, what is needed is a synthesis of perspectives mined from both ends of the domination spectrum, and a reading both along and against the grain of archival and indigenous sources in order to arrive at a more comprehensive panorama of the radical experience.[15]

Memoirs fulfill a dual function of primary sources in the study of the radical experience, while they also provide us with critical reflections of, and critiques upon, that experience based on hindsight. These sources provide many valuable insights on events and happenings and the figures who participated in formal groupings and cliques, as well as other equally important (though not always well-known) aficionados and ideologues who chose to remain unaffiliated yet maintained close links with those functioning in

formal and underground bodies. A case in point is that of Idris Hakim, a clerk working at the Kuala Lumpur Technical School, who acted as an active disseminator of political messages delivered by members of the Kesatuan Melayu Muda (KMM). Although not a member of the KMM, this willing accomplice was moved by KMM's call for equal treatment of the Malays and for political liberation from the yoke of colonialism.[16] This book uses these memoirs to retrieve the stories of forgotten radicals like Idris and the members of the poorly documented radical women's movement, the Angkatan Wanita Sedar (AWAS). Together, they helped to expand the mass appeal of the Malay radicalist movement. The study of popular resistance and mobilization in colonial Malaya could be broadened and enriched by including the history of radical Malay women.

These memoirs also provide us with reflections on the larger power configurations and changes that shaped the radical experience and the mistakes that they may have committed and wished to make known to their readers. In looking back at their journeys and struggles against the colonial rulers, almost all the radicals under study display a strong sense of uncertainty, since they realized in hindsight that their own ideas and actions in particular contexts were sometimes inappropriate and naïve, as well as unknowingly determined by an array of social, political, and other structures. This element of the memoirs is fascinating, since it reveals much about the thinking of the radicals above and beyond their contexts. The bringing together of these reflections along with the small stories of unknown radicals, interlaced with the larger narratives of decolonization and power politics, can aid in our understanding of the radical experience.

This book therefore deals with the Malay radicals who identified themselves with the local Malay society and sought to address the anxieties and concerns of that community through several movements, parties, and organizations, namely the Kesatuan Melayu Muda (KMM), Pembela Tanahair (PETA), the Kesatuan Rakyat Indonesia Merdeka (KRIS), the Persatuan Kebangsaan Melayu Malaya (PKMM), the Angkatan Pemuda Insaf (API), the Majlis Agama Tertinggi Malaya (MATA), the Pusat Tenaga Rakyat (PUTERA), the Hizbul Muslimin (HM), the Angkatan Wanita Sedar (AWAS), the Barisan Tani SeMalaya (BATAS), the Pemuda Radikal Melayu (PERAM), the Gerakan Angkatan Muda (GERAM), the Parti Komunis Malaya (PKM), the Parti Rakyat Malaya (PRM), the Pan-Malayan Islamic Party (PMIP), and the Parti Islam Semalaya (PAS), and the Angkatan Sasterawan 50 (ASAS 50).[17] As a complex group of people who populated the Malay Peninsula (including Singapore), the Malay radicals played major roles in political, educational, social, and cultural institutions directed toward ending foreign rule. They

subscribed to certain values and norms that went against the grain of the prevailing vision promoted by the colonial state and its Malay collaborators.

At this juncture, it would be enticing to categorize these radicals as members of a class, since the notions of class are undeniably implicated in the shaping of the radical experience. However, the totality of that experience and the composition of the actors who saw themselves as sharing a common experience do not imply that class position was a major issue. In fact, the radicals emerged from different class positions and occupational backgrounds. It might be more useful to view the radicals as members of a sociopolitical group who belonged to different strata of society while opposing colonial and feudal injustices. It is also pertinent to state here that the term *radical* used in this book was self-ascribed. The radicals were also known as the "Malay Left"—a term that emphasizes they were antiestablishment and opposed to all forms of exploitation of the masses.[18]

In the remaining seven chapters of this book, I will proceed in a chronological fashion that traces the origins and growth of the Malay radicalist movement as reflected in the mobilizing concepts of warisan, cita-cita perjuangan, kesedaran, kesatuan, kebangsaan, Melayu Raya, and merdeka. I begin by telling the story of a genealogy of failed struggles and rebellions in the late nineteenth century, and the coming of modernity and modernist Islamic ideas to colonial Malaya, which provided the incendiary memories and justifications for the birth of the Malay radicalist movement in the years to come. In chapter 2, I analyze the establishment of a pioneering radical organization, the Kesatuan Melayu Malaya (KMM), outlining the composition of its membership, the basis of its ideology, and the many activities that the leaders undertook to recruit new members. KMM's activism was, however, cut short by the Japanese occupation (chapter 3). This was a time of manifold challenges, which demanded that the Malay radicals compromise their ideals to sustain their movement. While engaging in underground and subversive activities of various sorts, many Malay radicals collaborated with the Japanese imperial machinery until the end of the occupation in 1945.

Although brief in time and curtailed by the imposition of martial law by the British in 1948, in chapters 4 and 5 I cover in detail the opening of many spaces and possibilities for the expansion of the radical cause in the immediate postwar period. This was an age of popular radical journalism, activism by Muslim and women activists, and their experimentation with new ideas about freedom and liberty. In chapter 6, I explore the struggles of the Malay radicals in prison. Imprisonment was an important transformational experience for the Malay radicals, which led them to consider new forms of collective action and adaptations so as to keep their spirits alive in preparation

for fresh engagements in politics upon their release. The end of the book deals with the unsuccessful attempts by Malay radicals to regain their influence in the public domain. The declaration of independence in August 1957 was a turning point in terms of what it meant to be radical in a newly independent Malaya. While it is known that the Malay radicalist movement and its contributions to the shaping of Malaya were soon overshadowed by the United Malays National Organization (UMNO)'s hegemonic prominence in Malaysian society and in the official version of history, I discuss how residues of the radical legacy linger on, even today.

Readers of the following chapters will encounter a rich and thick description of the radicals' feelings and thoughts, motives and practices, adaptations and responses. They are invited to consider a few deceptively simple questions: what factors brought about the emergence of the Malay radicals? How were their activities organized and sustained? What were the kinds of people they accepted as fellow radicals? Where did their activities take place? What challenges did the radicals face, and how did they overcome them? What were the varied experiences that informed their ideas? Where did their ideas come from? Did they seek to reformulate and localize these ideas? In answering these and other related questions, I hope this book will deepen our understanding of the multitude of conditions and circumstances that permitted the Malay radicals to come into being and subsequently maintain a strong presence for more than four decades beginning with their movement's naissance in the 1920s.

As Robert Young has perceptively observed, anticolonial movements and subaltern resistances were often faced with the likelihood of premature closure or collapse due largely to the lack of mass support and the limited resources at their disposal.[19] The same could be said for a variety of radicalist and other grassroots movements in Malaya that were known to have had brief life spans; some managed to survive for only a few months of activism and public engagement.[20] The story of the Malay radicals is instructive because their struggles, the relatively long duration of their movement's existence, and their innovative attempts at vindicating and maintaining their relevance with mobilizing concepts of their own, all challenge us to explore new horizons in comprehending anticolonial resistance in other parts of Southeast Asia. Radicals as history can inform us about the fundamental roles such groups in society have played in the making of an independent nation. Radicals as history can enable us to recover the "small voices of history" that articulated revolutionary ideas and visions, the ones that were shunned and unaccepted in their day and age but have become the framework for thought and action in our time.[21]

Chapter One

Of Martyrs, Memories, and Modernities

> Even as children, we were exposed to heart-wrenching stories of early Malay struggles against the British colonialists. The pathetic living conditions of Malays around my home stirred me to ask: Why do Malays have to live in deprivation while their motherland is literally overflowing with natural resources? As the Malay saying goes, How come chickens in a rice store are starving, and ducks dying of thirst in the water? What does the future hold for these gentle, refined and cultured Malays?[1]
>
> While at English school, I read about the adventures of Sherwood Forest's Robin Hood, Little John, Friar Tuck, and Maid Marian, who championed the rights of the poor against a wrathful, heartless and unscrupulous lord. . . . French Revolution stories recounted French peasant uprisings against avaricious aristocrats who levied taxes at their whims and fancy. Consequently, the guillotine, which once separated peasants' heads from their bodies, was later used on the nobility. . . . From listening to and reading these local and international stories, as an easily influenced Malay youth, I was deeply inspired to liberate the homeland that Allah had generously bestowed on my race.[2]

These lines—written by a prominent Malay radical—provide windows through which some of the circumstances that planted the seeds of radicalism in Malaya can be recognized. At the core of Mustapha Hussain's reminiscences of why he was moved to fight for the liberation of his people were the stories of failed struggles against colonial rule, stories that were handed down from one generation to another. In a society where word of mouth was the predominant way of disseminating information, any abortive attempts to uproot a European power by force would enter the ears of each and every man and woman. The power of such stories was made even more potent

by the poverty and wretched living conditions that the Malays endured. Stripped of their rights to land and denied the resources that were theirs to begin with, Malays found solace in remembering how their fathers and their fathers' fathers had fought and died to live as free men.

For Mustapha, these stories and the depravity that natives of the land had to endure would not have instilled in them a strong sense of commitment to stand against injustice if not for the impact of formal education and exposure to other sources of information and news from their hometowns and the wider Muslim world. Colonialism, ironically, made this possible through the introduction of schools and publishing houses, newspapers, novels and periodicals, new modes of transportation, and the intense spread of venture capitalism. The key to understanding the birth of Malay radicalism, from Mustapha's vantage point, is to appreciate that they were recipients of these various streams of historical processes, just as they were inheritors of the memories of the negative outcomes of major transformations.[3] The day-to-day sufferings of Malays made such pasts and memories more intense and retentive, and powerful enough to push a select group of Malays—the radicals—toward the road of defiance. A journey into the history of the Malay radicals must begin with a narrative of a crucial facet of these memories, the warisan, which came in the form of the stories of failed struggles and fallen martyrs against colonial rule, and the encounters of succeeding generations of Malays with colonial and other alternative modernities.

Of Failed Struggles and Fallen Martyrs

"Truly, I will not depart in the smallest degree from the old arrangement [to kill Birch]."[4] These were the words that were uttered by a Malay chief at a meeting held on a boat along the Perak River in 1874. At the center of the movement to deal with the growing haughtiness of the British Resident, James W. Birch, was the disgruntled Malay king, Abdullah. More than twenty months had passed since the signing of the Pangkor Treaty on 20 January 1874. The move made by the sultan to place Perak under British protection gave rise to some paradoxical outcomes. What was once a Malay state riddled by conflict and violence between Malay chiefs and contenders for the throne had, at long last, found its belated peace. But this turned out to be only a fleeting phase.

The coming of the British into Perak had set in motion disruptions in the indigenous political and social systems of the Malay *negeri* (state). The king, who was at the apex of the state, was now a mere puppet who had to abide

by the orders of the British Resident. Under his patronage were Malay chiefs or *orang-orang besar* (noble men), weakened and frustrated by the declining power of the Sultanate. The British had meddled deeply into local affairs when they annexed Perak, so much so that even the rakyat were impacted by their presence.[5] New statutes were put in place, and the local customs of slavery and bondage were put to question. Commoners employed by the Europeans were no longer beholden to local chiefs. With the usurpation of the right to collect taxes came resentment, hostility, and murderous hate among the ranks of the privileged class, who decided to take matters into their own hands. The man assigned to assassinate Birch was none other than Maharaja Lela, a feudal chief whose position was greatly affected by the salient changes taking place.

Poison was first introduced into Birch's food, followed by the holding of a séance that had no effect, much to the chagrin of the perpetrators. Birch was not only far too fortunate, he had employed Malay shamans to protect him, which plainly shows that colonialism was a collaborative enterprise between the colonizer and the colonized.[6] Birch was indeed not unaware of such plots, for rumors and information from native agents had already reached his ears several weeks before his murder. He remarked with much confidence, "I will take good care. What is the use of being frightened by every report; if one Birch is killed, ten Mr Birches will take his place."[7]

Such arrogance flamed by personal hubris led to disaster. On the morning of 2 November 1875, some sixty men waited at Pasir Salak for Birch's men to post new proclamations on revenues to be paid to the British. The Malay messenger responsible for putting up the proclamations was the first to be stabbed so severely that his bowels extruded from his body. Birch had retreated to the bathhouse while waiting for his hired hands to finish their tasks. This made him vulnerable to his killers. His unclothed body was pierced with a spear and then, as he was trying to flee to his boat and groaning in pain, his assassins cut him in the head followed by repeated stabs until his body sank into the river.[8] At the end of the scuffle, six men were already dead and many others injured.

"This is the beginning!" Maharaja Lela assuredly exclaimed at the scene of the incident. These words struck a chord in the hearts of the warriors around him, but they all knew they had roused dangerous forces that would soon overcome them. The plan to rid Perak of the foreign invaders was truncated soon enough in the face of reprisals by British soldiers brought in merely a few weeks later from the Straits Settlements, Hong Kong, and as far away as India. After fleeing Perak and evading capture for many months by hiding in the jungles and villages in various Malay states, Maharaja Lela and

his accomplices surrendered toward the end of 1876 upon the encouragement of their benefactor, Abu Bakar, who had earlier sheltered them from the British and who later became sultan of Johore. Found guilty of murder and conspiracy to overthrow the colonial authority and causing harm to the locals, Maharaja Lela, Ngah Jabar, and Pandak Endut were publicly hanged. Malay villagers were called upon by the British to witness the fatal consequences of treason. Sultan Abdullah, along with his Laksamana, Menteri, and Syahbandar, were found guilty of complicity in the murder. Unlike Maharaja Lela and his accomplices, they were not executed; instead, they were sentenced to exile in the Seychelles for their expioits. Raja Ismail, the other contender to the Perak throne, was banished to Johore. Far from where Maharaja Lela would have ever imagined, the events that unfolded laid bare the foundations of a complete takeover of Perak and of Malaya as a whole.

If there is any truth to the old maxim that actions speak louder than words, then the failed campaign by this star-crossed rebel to free Perak from foreign domination spoke louder than the intrigues that surrounded Malay politics at that time. News about the failed rebellion spread by word of mouth, from the village where Maharaja Lela's body was laid to rest to the surrounding Malay settlements and polities. What came to be remembered by the common folk was not the Maharaja Lela who was bent upon protecting his wealth and authority by manipulating British and royal politics for his own ends. Rather, it was the valor and courage that he displayed in defense of his land and of the *kerajaan* (kingship) that remained in the minds of the ordinary Malays, then as now. The execution of Maharaja Lela, in that sense, served less as a deterrent than as a source of inspiration for the many generations to come. Little did the British ever foresee that the suppression of Maharaja Lela and his followers would usher in the beginnings of a "protest cycle" in other Malay states that ran for many decades, all of which drew stimulus from the failed yet courageous actions of Malay warriors from Perak.[9]

The construction of Maharaja Lela as a local hero and a martyr to the cause of the people, and the circulation of stories about his unflinching courage in the face of overwhelming odds, which became part of the vocabulary of the Malay radicals in the later years, was an upshot of the "information order" and the forms of social communication in Malay society in the late nineteenth century.[10] Malays in Perak, like the inhabitants of many other Malay states, were fond of telling stories and tales about the intrigues of the Malay royalty and the adventures of the rakyat. There existed professional storytellers (*penglipur lara*) who made a living out of presenting narratives,

sometimes in poetic rhymes accompanied by music and dance. These stories were usually told without a script and were based largely on the tellers' readings of Malay classics and their experiences gained from life in the villages and the kerajaan to which they belonged. Up to the 1890s, such storytellers were much sought after, as they provided sources of information that were not readily available in the days prior to the introduction of newspapers and formal education. So well known and celebrated were these storytellers, a foreign observer wrote that they were "minstrels (wandering) among Malay villages as Homer did among the Greek cities."[11]

Stories about the crushing of anti-British forces in Perak traveled to faraway lands, in part due to the constant migration of Malays across and beyond the Peninsula. Large populations were always on the move, and *kampungs* (villages) were established from time to time as families entered a new kerajaan of their liking. It is thus not surprising that in Perak there were places known as Kampung Trengganu and Kampung Selangor and, in Selangor, there was Kampung Kedah. At the tip of the state of Johore, a Kampung Patani appeared that was settled by migrants from southern Siam. Named after places that existed in many parts of the Malay Peninsula, these villages were evidence of the fact that mobility was the rule of the day. They were also revealing of the movement of stories from one locality to another; stories of British encroachment into Malay lands, and Malay resistance to the imposition of colonial rule.[12]

These stories were translated into actions only a few months after the death of Maharaja Lela, when two successive revolts against the British broke out in Selangor and Negeri Sembilan, both located a few hundred miles from Pasir Salak. In Ulu Langat, Selangor, a Sumatran-born headman named Sutan Puasa led a local Malay resistance that nearly overwhelmed the British. The rebels built stockades and were armed with cannons and small arms. The British sought help from a Chinese Kapitan, Yap Ah Loy, whose men fought alongside the police to outflank Sutan Puasa's rebels at Kajang. Captured and tortured for weeks, Sutan was imprisoned for nine months and then released in time to witness another uprising in Sungei Ujung at Negeri Sembilan.[13]

This time, the British-backed Datuk Kelana came into conflict with Yam Tuan Antah. Much like Maharaja Lela, Yam Tuan Antah was exasperated with the British Resident's callous disregard for Malay royalty and the customary method of leadership succession. Things came to a head when Yam Tuan Antah sent his men to stop all attempts by the British to determine the rightful leader of Sungei Ujung district. Why, in Yam Tuan Antah's view, should the white man be the arbitrator of Malay succession disputes?

Fighting broke out between British forces and Yam Tuah Antah's followers. As expected, the Malay chief had to flee to Johore after a disastrous defeat. Although Yam Tuah Antah was reinstated and negotiations with the British were opened thereafter, his power had been diminished to the control of only a small village district and not of Negeri Sembilan as a whole, of which he claimed to be the legitimate sovereign.[14]

One distinguishing feature of these rebellions and those that would soon follow is that they were all sparked and led by members of the Malay elite class. James Allen has designated such episodes of sporadic violence as "initial resistance" that were "exclusively the work of leaders—chiefs etc.—making a last ditch stand against the loss of their privileges to the colonial state. They are instrumental in recruiting the masses who follow and obey them through customary obedience or because they are misled and know no better."[15] Allen's characterization of these rebellions is instructive but requires some corrections. While it is true that the roots of these anticolonial rebellions and protests could be traced to the loss of privileges that the Malay chiefs enjoyed prior to the coming of British Residents, the deeper underlying reason for their sense of grievance could be traced to the progressive dilution of their social status. Such status did not always involve material benefits, since social status could also be in the form of social prowess manifested in the reverence and respect shown to them by Malays of lower ranks in society. The ability to admonish, punish, and forgive as and when deemed necessary, which also formed part of the Malay chiefs' long-standing social prowess, was rendered trivial and was abolished upon the introduction of British laws and institutions. This severe loss angered the Malay chiefs to the point of belligerence.

By the same token, to argue that the masses were plainly misled by these prophets of rebellion is to mistakenly posit that they were oblivious to the consequences of their actions or that they were guided solely by irrational impulses, instincts, and emotions.[16] The realities of the situation at hand were more complex than this. The men who resisted by force of arms shared the aspirations and frustrations felt by their leaders toward colonial rule. Belonging largely to the peasant population, they too lost their traditional rights to land as a result of the new arrangements put in place by the British. Hence, while these men may have been, in some isolated instances, forced to obey the orders of their chiefs because of the negative effects of insubordination or because they feared being cast as cowards in the eyes of their community, they too believed that restoring the old order would enable them to obtain a share of the benefits if the tide of victory should flow in their direction. In other words, the Malay rebels, like the Malay radicals who followed

their lead several decades later, were rational beings. Having thought carefully about the possible consequences of their actions and calculated the risks involved, Malay rebels and radicals alike engaged in resistance against the colonial regime in the hope of moral and material returns.

Such conscious calculations made by the Malay rebels were most vividly exhibited in the case of the Pahang rising from 1891 to 1895. The British removal of the right of Malay chiefs to impose taxes, coupled with the ceding of their authority, infuriated personalities such as Dato Bahaman, who was in control of the Semantan district in the state of Pahang. Heated correspondence between Bahaman, Sultan Ahmad of Pahang, and the Resident, W. E. Maxwell, made the situation graver than before. Bahaman insisted that his district should rightfully be placed under the sovereignty of the king of Selangor and that all his rights to authority should be restored. The sultan discounted such claims as vagaries in the mind of an insolent and recalcitrant Malay chief and sided with the British to save his own skin. Following a skirmish between a group of policemen and Bahaman's bodyguards, what began as a war of words involving Bahaman, the sultan, and the British developed into a mass revolt.[17] Bahaman received the support of the Sakai aborigines who volunteered in earnest to fight alongside the chief so as to reclaim their forest habitat, which had been ravaged by logging companies brought in by the British.

For some time, it seemed that the revolt was unfolding in Bahaman's favor. He received the backing of other prominent Malay chiefs, namely Mat Kilau, Panglima Muda Jempol, Tok Gajah, and Tok Raja, all of whom commanded a strong following among the Malays. These chiefs were also disgruntled by the political reforms introduced by the British, which deprived them of their main sources of revenue. They began their anticolonial campaign by murdering several European officers, as well as Chinese and Indian businessmen. After several months of violence, as well as negotiations with Sultan Ahmad, the rebels finally retreated to the borders of Kelantan and Trengganu. Again, stories and rumors circulated about the likelihood of a major rebellion spreading throughout the Peninsula, and these rumors soon reached the ears of the rebels themselves, who were told that "the government has furnished the Kelantan people with rifles to kill us."[18] The rebellion also took another turn in that religious idioms and symbols were used as a unifying force to overthrow the British. The British reacted swiftly and with brutality. With the aid of local informants and Malay chiefs hostile to the dissidents, the colonial regime marshaled the support of the Siamese king to smoke the rebels out of their hideouts in Siam's tributary states, Kelantan and Trengganu. No prisoners were taken and no mercy was shown to rebels who surrendered.

By late 1895 most of the rebels had been killed. Some months later, Perak, Selangor, Negeri Sembilan, and Pahang were placed under one central administration, called the Federated Malay States (FMS). The FMS was modeled upon the Straits Settlements that consisted of Singapore, Malacca, and Penang, which had been under British control since the early 1820s. The rebellions and unrest that took place were one of the fundamental reasons why the Malay sultans agreed upon the idea of a federation. And, in doing so, the sultans had surrendered almost all of their powers to the British except for those pertaining to Muslim religious rites and practices. Under the command of the new Resident-General, the FMS was set on a path toward colonial modernity that came in the form of extensive social, demographic, spatial, economic, and political changes in the years to come. Foreign immigrants were brought into Malaya in large numbers to provide labor for the tin mines, rubber plantations, and other industries of Malaya, adding wealth to the coffers of the sultans and the colonial rulers. Lands were sold off to private proprietors or cleared to give way to a network of roads, railway tracks, telecommunication systems, and new villages to house Indian laborers, Chinese migrants, and British officers. Malays too shifted from living off the land through subsistence farming to working as salaried employees. In the realm of politics, the Malay chiefs and *penghulus* rapidly lost their previously held importance, and in their place were white administrators who took on the title *tuan*.[19]

Even with all of these transformations coming in the way of the Malays in the FMS, the uprisings launched by Maharaja Lela, Bahaman, and Mat Kilau were never forgotten. They became part of a "living tradition," the tradition of resistance against foreign rule by any means necessary.[20] Indeed, the memories of these failed ventures form what could be termed the "historical imagination of the colonized." This was a manner of making sense of the past that placed particular emphasis on the dialectics of repression and resistance. In such imaginative constructions, the colonial situation was discerned and represented in Manichean terms, a temporality that was marked by an unending contest between light and dark, good and evil. The colonizer was the evil exploiter, stripping people of their rights and liberty to live and be equal to the European. The colonizer was violent and brutal and had the means at his disposal to crush any force acting against his will to power.

However, this historical imagination has another side, one that demonstrates an embedded glimmer of hope. The fact that the rebellions could actually take place demonstrated to the colonized the possibility of achieving freedom from the shackles of colonial rule, a possibility that was looming on the horizon. To remember and retell the stories of failed rebellions was to

remind the succeeding generations that chivalry was not enough to regain their homeland and their freedom. What was needed was a new stratagem to defeat the colonizer on his own turf. That stratagem was never articulated or devised in real terms in the immediate future. It remained in the realm of memory and historical imagination until the growth of nationalist organizations in Malaya in the 1920s.

Meanwhile, the British had their eyes set upon the northern states of Kelantan and Trengganu to complete the annexation of the entire Peninsula. The process of expanding colonial rule was by no means straightforward. Xenophobia and unhappiness over the paramount position of Europeans and other foreign immigrants in the FMS developed and took the form of rumors about the impending collapse of the Malay Sultanates. One colonial officer, for example, noted in 1910 that Europeans had to walk warily in Trengganu because a rebellion like the one that broke out in Pahang a few years earlier was a looming possibility.[21] This did little to stop the British from spreading their wings across the Siamese-controlled territories in northern Malaya. In 1902 and 1909 the Anglo-Siamese agreements were signed, which allowed the British to appoint advisors in Perlis, Kedah, Trengganu, and Kelantan whose powers would be similar to those of the Residents. In Johore, Sultan Ibrahim's political maneuvers to keep his state free from British intervention gave way to the declaration of the Malay state as a British protectorate in 1914.[22]

Resentment against British rule was also running high in Kedah, Trengganu, and Kelantan, as the British advisors muscled in new policies and erected colonial bureaucracies to replace native ones. These grievances were not entirely due to European intervention in these Malay states. They grew out of a long history of revolts against punitive expeditions sent by the Siamese authorities to regain control of northern Malaya following resistance against the imposition of taxes by a non-Malay/Muslim sovereign. It is for this reason that, while some members of the Malay royalty welcomed the British to keep their traditional foes—the Siamese—at bay, Malay peasants, villagers, and landlords saw the new arrangement as a case of "coming out of the crocodile's mouth and into the dragon's jaws" (*ibarat keluar dari mulut buaya dan masuk ke dalam mulut naga*). Adding to the magnified fear of losing lands and yields was the force of news about the battles between Muslims and non-Muslims as exhibited by the struggle between the dying Ottoman Caliphate and the Allies led by Britain during the First World War. The Singapore Mutiny in 1915 that saw the crushing of an uprising of Muslim Sepoys strengthened the mistaken notion among many Malays that the British were losing the war and that the time was ripe for militant confrontation against the unbelievers.[23]

The man most affected by these seismic changes in the local and global spheres was the sixty-year-old Haji Mat Hassan, also known as To' Janggut in view of his distinctive long white beard. A member of the aristocratic class in Kelantan, he was exasperated by the taxes imposed by the British. His feelings were shared by Arab *sayyids* and *hajjis* (Muslims who have gone on the pilgrimage to Mecca), such as Engku Besar, Penghulu Adam, Haji Said, and Enche Sahak. The lack of commitment on the part of the sultans in asserting their rightful authority and the disruption of their traditional way of life caused by the establishment of the district office and its functionaries heightened the chiefs' hatred toward the ruling polity. The anti-British views held by these influential men grew even stronger as the First World War entered its most bloody stage.[24] As members of a rich and formidable faction within Kelantanese society who maintained their close connections with the Turkish and Arab leaders, these sayyids and hajjis saw that providing the necessary aid for To' Janggut to launch his rebellion would be instrumental in regaining the lost pride and possessions of the Muslims, just as they hoped that such actions would eventually ward off Western encroachment into their homeland.

The Malay chiefs began their campaign by spreading propaganda messages that the British were oppressing the common people by imposing heavy taxes. Through word of mouth and weekly discussions in mosques, To' Janggut and his clique managed to gather around two thousand men to support their attempts to launch a tax boycott at a district known as Pasir Puteh. The climax of the drama took place on 29 April 1915, when a group of brazen Malay policemen confronted To' Janggut with the intent of placing the rebel under arrest. To' Janggut's instantaneous reaction to such a show of disrespect was to thrust a *kris* (a dagger with wavy blades) into a Malay policeman's chest, which petrified three other constables standing nearby. The Malay policeman's body was then mutilated and thrown into a river. The uprising had started. Scores of villages began to rally around To' Janggut and Engku Besar as they headed to a local prison to attack the district officer. Foreign-owned shops were rampaged, government properties were looted, and the rebels also killed a few people who they knew were backers of the colonial state.[25]

The British reacted by sending two infantry companies and dozens of Malay policemen to quell the rebellion. To' Janggut and some ringleaders were shot to death in May 1915. Like Maharaja Lela, the Malay rebel's body was displayed for public viewing. Several days later, the decomposed remains were hung upside down and later were buried at Pasir Pekan, Kota Bharu. When other leaders who attempted to flee to Trengganu and

Siam were finally tracked down, they were either killed or sentenced to ten years' imprisonment.[26]

It took more than a decade before Malays launched another violent revolt against the British, this time in Trengganu. As the Malay states became increasingly connected to the capitalist economy and as the administration of villages and towns became more aligned with the colonial model of bureaucracy at the expense of the local forms of administration and governance, the life of the Malay peasant deteriorated. A rapid increase in population as a result of the coming of Chinese and Indian migrant laborers caused a severe shortage of rice in Trengganu, which resulted in the migration of ten thousand people to the neighboring states of Kelantan and Pattani. Peasants were reduced to tenants on their own land as policies regarding landowning were changed in favor of the ruling classes and, of course, the British.

Prior to the revolt in Trengganu, religious functionaries such as Tukku Sayyid Paluh had advised the sultan against receiving advice and support from the British, but to no avail. The *ulamas* (religious scholars) very quickly saw the futility of advising the king and took the radical move of not participating in any governmental bodies where the British were present. This resulted in the creation of a secessionist movement led by Sayyid Sagap and Haji Abdul Rahman Limbong. Both were respected ulamas and businessmen capable of rallying thousands of Malays to action. Several protests were made by villagers against the policies put in place by the British regarding land ownership and taxes, which eventually led to the arrests of dozens of peasants. Haji Abdul Rahman grew in popularity when he bailed out most of those placed under custody. By this time, the sultan had intervened, hoping that the religious leaders would cooperate with him and the British. But the reverse happened. The ulamas continued to rail against the coming of the infidels (*kafir*) into their country, who, they claimed, had taken away lands from the common people and interfered in matters of *syariah* (Islamic ethical code), which was seen as sacrosanct.[27] Tensions ran even higher when the demands of the peasants for rights to plant paddy were met with a lukewarm response by state officials, who insisted that the peasants must go through a process of obtaining passes before being allowed to plant.

Seeing these passes as part of the *peraturan kafir* (regulations of the disbelievers) and impatient with the indecisiveness of the sultan and the hardheartedness of the British colonial administrators in managing local grievances, the peasant and religious leaders moved to action on 19 May 1928, when two hundred men armed with machetes, kris, and guns gathered at Kuala Berang, to be joined later by another four hundred rebels. Together, they captured the District Office and police stations. Two days later, a group

spearheaded by Lebai Deraman, another well-respected pugilist and Malay chief, began attacking a group of policemen at Padang Kachong. Believing that their chanting of supplications could ensure some form of invulnerability, the group marched straight into a line of gunfire. Seven men, including the Malay chief, were shot dead. Upon seeing their dead leader, the rebels immediately fled to a nearby forest, which signaled a turn for the worse. Sayyid Sagap and Abdul Rahman Limbong were arrested and interrogated. Acutely mindful of the larger implications of condemning the two leaders to death, the British banished Abdul Rahman to Mecca. Sayyid Sagap, in turn, was released because he had played only an indirect role in the armed revolt. The revolt that cost the British close to nine thousand pounds in all was the last armed rebellion against the colonial state prior to the outbreak of the Second World War.[28]

The implications of these strings of rebellions were wider than what the partakers had expected. Inquiries made into the Trengganu revolts revealed that the rebels had received inspiration from overseas, from organizations such as Sarekat Islam, which was founded in Java in 1905.[29] Although the British had been wary of the influence of Pan-Islamism upon the Malays since the early nineteenth century, they did not anticipate the outbreak of armed rebellions inspired by ideas emanating from Mecca or other centers of the Muslim world. Malays, as colonial administrators believed, were prone to violence, but they were never known to be disloyal to the king or any form of political authority. However, these rebellions showed that there were exceptions to the prevailing rule, and that isolated incidents could have ripple effects of their own.[30]

To address this and other problems to come, the British introduced reforms to alleviate the suffering of the peasants and the Malay working class. The collection of taxes and rents was staggered to avoid placing too heavy a burden upon the disgruntled peasants. Employment on the rubber estates and in lower-ranking positions in government departments was opened to a select group of Malays. Communication channels between the village chiefs, the general populace, and the district offices were widened to allow for more feedback on pressing matters regarding the ownership of land and disputes over payment of wages. Nonetheless, the peasants were worse off than they had been prior to the coming of colonialism.[31]

Multiple Modernities and a New Public Sphere

Concomitant with the crushing of these rebellions and the extension of British power was the development of modernity and a new colonial public

sphere in Malaya. Modernity, which gave rise to print capitalism, expanded this public sphere in ways that the locals had never experienced before. Newspapers, journals, and periodicals of different persuasions and tendencies flourished in Malaya, thanks to the introduction of new printing methods by the Christian missionaries in the early 1820s. The founding of new solidarities and the augmentation of transnational links with China, India, and the wider Muslim world made possible all sorts of other publications that sought to rival those produced by the British and the Christian missionaries. In the five decades that followed the hanging of Maharaja Lela, more than one hundred Malay newspapers and journals were published.[32] Some survived for more than a decade, while many others did not live beyond three or four months of publication.

The prospect of premature closure or, in many instances, financial difficulties, did not at all discourage Malays and other Muslims from starting yet another newspaper or an annual digest just a few months after the demise of a previous publication. This was an era when every literate son of a peasant felt that he had something to say and that it was his duty to share what he knew with his fellow men. Whether it was about the impending collapse of the Ottoman Empire and the making of a new Turkey, or the rise of Japan as a new imperial power, or gossip within the local community, each of these topics was told in ways that would put facts and figures largely in the background. The meanings and implications of these events were, however, explained in highly stylized and allegorical terms, making these publications a mesmerizing read. Mark Emmanuel was not wrong to suggest that newspapers in the 1930s functioned as pulpits for self-appointed "preachers" of reform and reconstruction. Newspapers were essentially "viewspapers."[33] The same could be said, albeit with some qualifications, about newspapers that were published in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, inspired as the editors, contributors, and shareholders were by English, Arab, and Tamil language newspapers that were already in circulation.

The first Malay newspaper was the *Jawi Peranakan (Muslims of mixed ancestry)*, which began publication in Singapore in 1876. It was soon followed by two other lesser-known dailies, *Najmul-Fajr* (Stars of Dawn), *Peredaran Al-Shamsu Wal Qamar* (the Rotation of the Sun and the Moon) and, a decade later, weeklies entitled *Sekola Melayu* (Malay School), *Sri Perak*, *Tanjung Penageri* (the State of Penang), *Pimpinan Warta* (the Leading News), and *Jajahan Melayu* (Malay Province). By 1904 a few other publications filled the growing market for newspapers, namely *Lengkongan Bulan* (the Orbit of the Moon), *Bintang Timur* (the Eastern Star), *Cahaya Pulau Pinang* (the Light of Penang), *Taman Pengetahuan* (the Garden of Knowledge), and

Khazanah Ilmu (the Treasury of Knowledge). Although these early publications attracted some attention among the more literate Malays, they did not have the traction among the masses that their progenitors wanted. Nor did the newspapers stir any protracted debates over the state of the country or its people at a time when colonialism was at its zenith. The newspapers, however, had had their fair share of readership from the vernacular schools, stifled as they were by the lack of reading materials. The schools were encouraged by the colonial authorities to use newspapers as teaching resources.[34] It was only upon the founding of *Al-Imam* (The Leader) magazine in 1905 that Malay journalism found its resonance among the masses.

Influenced by the Salafiyya movement in Cairo and by the *Al-Manar* magazine published by Mohammed 'Abduh and Rashid Rida, the editors of *Al-Imam* (Sayyid Shaikh Al-Hadi and Sheikh Tahir Jalaluddin, among others) saw the magazine as a means by which Malay society could be cleansed of the superstitions and intellectual backwardness that had stifled independent thinking. *Al-Imam* was to be a platform to "remind the forgetful, to arouse the slumber, to guide those that have been led astray and to give voice to the wise."[35] Had the magazine enjoyed a longer lifespan, it might have played a wider and crucial role in promoting the penchant for progress among the Malays while infusing the true Islamic spirit into the hearts and minds of the Muslims in the drive toward developing an exemplary community in a colonial setting. Because of *Al-Imam*'s transnational and regional approach to the spread of the Islamic *da'wah* (call), copies were distributed in Jakarta, Semarang, Sumatra, Surabaya, and other parts of the Dutch East Indies. These publications formed what Michael Laffan has termed the "traditional Jawi textual network." Together, they facilitated the growth of Islamic nationhood in the Malay world, a style of thought that emphasized Muslim loyalty to the homeland while stressing the need to maintain transnational links, affiliations, and responsibility toward Muslims globally.[36]

Al-Imam died a premature death on 25 December 1908, merely three years after its founding. But it left in its wake a legacy of critique and reflexivity. In challenging the long-established religious norms, moral axioms, and age-old traditions in society, the proponents of *Al Imam* stirred productive debates that were unheard of in the history of the Malays in the Peninsula. Dubbed the Kaum Tua and Kaum Muda conflict, the polemics between the defenders of tradition (Kaum Tua) and the promoters of modernity (Kaum Muda) revolved around issues of *bid'ah* (religious innovations), the adoption of modern education, the reform of Islamic schools, and Muslim attitudes toward the colonial economy and financial institutions, such as banks. The

Kaum Tua secured their ground in mainland Malaya, while the Kaum Muda faction, stigmatized and vilified, could only find support in the Straits Settlements where the Malay royalty did not have a sway over the lives of the common people. The beginning and untimely end of the *Al-Imam* and the Kaum Tua–Kaum Muda debates opened new spaces for other creative publications and the founding of institutions designed to keep the spirit of reform alive by other means.

Almost single-handedly and much to his own peril, Al-Hadi established the Jelutong Press in Penang, which exposed Malay readers more intimately to reformist literature from Iran and Egypt. To promote female emancipation, he translated and published Amin Bey's *Tahrir al-Mar'a* (The Freedom of Women) and wrote a novel, *Hikayat Faridah Hanum* (The Story of Faridah Hanum), which is now lauded as the first Malay novel. His own *Agama Islam dan Akal* (The Islamic Religion and Reason), the controversial monthly *Al-Ikhwan* (The Brotherhood), and *Saudara* (Brotherhood) magazine expounded many of the themes that pervaded *Al-Imam*.[37]

Al-Hadi and the Kaum Muda clique were not alone in their venture to promote an Islamic public sphere through publications. In 1907 Eunos bin Abdullah, the son of a Minangkabau merchant from Sumatra who received his education in the illustrious Raffles Institution in Singapore, started a Malay edition of the long-running English-language newspaper, the *Singapore Free Press*. He called it *Utusan Melayu* (Malay Courier) and used the newspaper as a tool to "broaden the knowledge of the Malays concerning issues and ongoing developments that are unfolding in the world."[38] This newspaper did more than just convey news and provide moral lessons through events that transpired in and outside of the Malay world. Like the *Al-Imam*, *Utusan Melayu* purveyed a new language of reform that sought to blunt the power of kerajaan and the loyalties it had given rise to for many generations to make way for a novel form of identification and rubric for Malay unity, the bangsa (race). Malay intellectuals and writers conceptualized the term *bangsa* in a manner that was different from how it was understood in Europe. European thinkers in the early twentieth century defined "race" as groups that could be differentiated by way of biological heredity and characteristics.[39] Alternatively, the term *bangsa* referred to groups that shared common territorial, linguistical and cultural bases. To qualify as a member of the bangsa Melayu, one had to be descended from the original inhabitants of the *Alam Melayu* (Malay World). One can also qualify as part of the Malay bangsa by adopting the Malay customs and language. Furthermore, to ensure the realization of the bangsa Melayu, Malay intellectuals and writers called for the shedding of the kerajaan identity. This expansive use of the word *bangsa*

was a product of a selective appropriation of European thought to fit with local ideas of ethnicity. Although Malay intellectuals and writers accepted the notion that Malays constitute a "race", they were generally against the idea that Malays can be differentiated in terms of biology as in the case of the Europeans. Bangsa, from this perspective, was therefore an open rather than a closed category, an inclusive rather than an exclusive form of identification, fluid and ever changing, and a concept that enabled the acceptance of others in as long as they were willing to identify themselves as Malays.[40]

The *Utusan Melayu* also urged Malays to move away from the long-standing emphasis on gaining status (*nama*). Alternatively, *Utusan Melayu* enjoined its readers to look at how unifying traits found in language, customs, and belongingness could empower the Malays as a race. Although the circulation of Malay newspapers and magazines never went beyond six hundred, these reading materials were read aloud in coffee shops and other public places, giving them a captive audience, which the editors wanted. Zainal Abidin bin Ahmad, who lived through this period, said that newspapers such as the *Utusan Melayu* were

> always available at every Malay bookshop and some of them at the various Malay clubs, and read even by the motor car drivers, [so much so that] one notices that the peasant folks of the kampungs are also taking keen interest in what is said in the "*suratkhabar* (newspapers)" about other parts of Malaya and the world. Often, on an evening, one sees at the wayside Chinese shop some lettered man, perhaps an old "guru" of the local school, or perhaps the local *penghulu* (village head), reading one or other of these papers, and a little crowd of elderly people less literate than he eagerly listening, questioning and commenting around him. Thus they learnt about what is happening in the rest of the world, thereby making themselves ever less and less the proverbial "frog under the coconut shell."[41]

Another factor that aided in the growth of the new public sphere in colonial Malaya was the outpouring of a repertoire of Muslim printing presses. Hundreds of editions and reprints of *syair* (poems), *kitab* (books), and *hikayat* (tales) were published by these presses by 1920. The focal point for most of the presses was Kampung Glam in Singapore. Members of the Javanese community dominated the book publishing and bookselling business, with the Jawi Peranakans playing a small role in attracting Muslims in the archipelago to stop by Singapore and purchase books of varying topics within the vicinity of the Sultan Mosque. During the heydays of Muslim publishing from the 1900s to the 1920s, books published in Singapore and Malaya were stocked

in Mecca, Istanbul, Russia, Egypt, and Bombay. Books from India were also exported by publishers and sold in various states in Malaya and Singapore.

Put differently, what was taking place at this time was a circulation of ideas back and forth among the three worlds of Islam—the Malay world, South Asia, and the Arab world. With the improvement of the technology of printing in the late 1920s, the movement of ideas and ideals became even more intense, even as Muslim publishing presses reached the nadir of their careers.[42] One strand of ideas that took center stage, partly due to the persuasive influence of these newspapers and magazines, was the need to develop the capacity of Asians so as to be on par with that of the Western nations. Impressed by the Turkish revolution that swept across the heart of the Ottoman Empire from 1908 onward, a group of young Malays in Malaya began to buy portraits of Kemal Ataturk and declared that they were keen to emulate the path of radical reform typified by the Young Turks.[43]

As a result of the emergence and invention of a new language of politics, a vibrant newspaper and printing culture was slowly developing. Malays experimented with words such as *siasat* (Arabic for politics) as well as *politik,* and some began to refer to politics as a new *adat* (custom). The coming of this new language of politics had other implications. It led to the coming of newfangled ideological divisions within the Malay community, divisions that have persisted to the present day. Promoters of the bangsa ideal opposed defenders of the kerajaan ideology. Members of the syariah-minded group, in turn, saw the *ummah* (worldwide Muslim community) as identities far superior to that of allegiance to a given king or race. These three groups consisted of men (rarely women) from different strata of society. The kerajaan group hailed from the landed (feudal) faction of the Malay community, with strong support from the traditional ulamas and the merchant classes. The bangsa and ummah proponents, on the other hand, were able to attract members of the literate class who, although not necessarily isolated from the royal courts, saw the need to champion the cause of the peasantry and the rakyat to create a just and equitable society free from feudal oppression.[44] These two groups soon formed an alliance and established movements and organizations that came to be known as the "Malay Left" or "Malay Radicals," who were critical of the kerajaan and the colonial rulers.

Educating and Politicizing the Rakyat

The signing of the Pangkor Treaty in 1874 triggered a sea change in the political and economic systems of the country while opening up a new arena

in which ideas could be tested. But its impact did not stop there. The agreement made between Residents and Rulers brought about various changes in the educational landscape of Malaya. Staunch in their belief that good colonialism must at the same time carry with it the "civilizing mission," and influenced by the reforms that were taking place in England as a result of the Education Act passed in 1870, the British restructured the traditional educational institutions in Malaya and introduced new ones. Malay vernacular schools were created in Perak, Negeri Sembilan, Pahang, and Selangor. The main purpose of these schools was to ensure the transmission of the Malay culture and values so as to maintain social cohesion and political compliance. Students were taught simple rules of arithmetic, reading, and writing, and knowledge of geography. The Resident of Selangor and, rather fortuitously, the eldest son of the murdered British administrator, Arthur Birch, expressed the initial objectives of Malay schools in quintessentially orientalist terms by saying that the point was to make "the Malay regular and cleaner in his habits" and to instill a sense of discipline that was conspicuously absent in the Malay mind and culture.[45] A fellow Resident, Frank Swettenham, said that British policy toward Malay education was guided by "imperial instinct rather than philanthropy."[46]

Malay schools were thus seen as mediums for social change and for the Malays' recognition of the need for order under the Pax Britannica. One major problem faced by the British was indifference on the part of most Malay parents toward vernacular schools. They regarded these schools as part of a sinister strategy by the colonialists to dilute Quranic instruction and thereby keep their Muslim children away from the religion of Islam. Even those who did not harbor such conspiracy theories were averse to the schools because they required assistance from their children to work in the family fields. The shortage of staff and facilities in these schools and the rampant exploitative practices added another layer to the skepticism that was in the air. Malay teachers were reputed to have assigned pupils to cut firewood, run errands, and sell fruit at late hours to help their teachers supplement the low incomes they received from the colonial government. This was aside from problems of abuse and bullying.

In addition, the villages that experienced the failed rebellions against the British were (perhaps not surprisingly) especially suspicious of the Malay schools. Why, an ordinary Malay would ask, would a foreign power with a record of suppressing Muslim rebellions now change its mind and decide to give education to the people it seeks to dominate? As if reinforcing the widely held suspicions of the common folk, state expenditure on education was ten times less than the expenditure for policing, which predictably

resulted in the creation of inferior educational institutions that lacked basic facilities. As a result, Malay vernacular schools experienced low attendance rates, with no more than forty thousand students enrolled in 1901, and a great number of these students dropped out before finishing four years of formal education.[47]

By 1905 an Etonian-type Malay College was established at Kuala Kangsar for "sons of leading men," and English schools were established for Malay boys who showed distinct abilities in Malay schools. While honorable intentions did, in actuality, guide the establishment of these institutions, the introduction of the Malay College had other negative ramifications. By introducing a dual system, that is, one system designed for the Malay peasantry and another for the Malay nobility, the British had accentuated the divisions that existed within the Malay community. Malays with aristocratic backgrounds were groomed for administrative posts in the civil service, while peasants and sons of men of the lower order would either take on the same menial jobs of their fathers or occupy low-paying administrative and teaching positions. Education thus became a tool of divide and rule, which ensured that the majority of the colonized population had little possible means of upward social mobility and that the existing feudal order was preserved, albeit with minor cosmetic reforms.[48]

Indeed, the British felt that providing too much education—instruction in English in particular—would prove injurious to the grand scheme of colonizing Malaya. The experience in India had informed the British that English and higher education would provide the impetus for the creation of a politically active Malay population. In the words of H. B. Collinge, a state inspector of schools in Perak, "It is the smattering of English and English ideas that is harmful, and which in India causes the country to swarm with half-starved, discontented men, who consider manual labour beneath them, because they know a little English."[49] The British were somewhat oblivious of the fact that it was in the Malay vernacular schools and in Islamic schools in the country that the seeds of nationalist ideas were to take root. This happened during the appointment of more enlightened but no less imperialistic high-ranking education officers, such as R. J. Wilkinson, Richard Winstedt, and O. T. Dussek. Wilkinson's contribution lay in teaching and popularizing romanized Malay in the school curriculum, increasing government expenditure on Malay education, and streamlining the management of students and teachers in schools. With the help of community leaders and through the imposition of a system of fines, parents were made to send their children to schools more regularly.

Winstedt took a more conservative turn by structuring Malay education in a mode that would keep Malays in their place as peasants and fishermen in

a rapidly changing Malaya. Be that as it may, he was also responsible for introducing new textbooks into the curriculum and enhancing the teaching of Malay through grammar books written, in part, by himself. His greatest achievement was the establishment of the Sultan Idris Training College in 1922, more popularly known as the SITC. Unlike the Malay College, the SITC admitted students from all levels of Malay society. The SITC's main preoccupation was "to train all Malay teachers in gardening and elementary agriculture, so that they may introduce scientific methods in the most remote villages."[50] In other words, the college was designed to keep Malays in their traditional roles as tillers of the land and as manual laborers for domestic produce. The best means to achieve this was to produce an army of teachers who would, upon graduation, train a generation of Malays to be committed to fulfilling a practical rather than an intellectual function in the colonized society.

Things turned out differently from what Winstedt expected, much to his own exasperation. Under the leadership of O. T. Dussek, who was appointed as principal of SITC from 1922 to 1936, literary and cultural activities flourished in the college. Dussek strictly emphasized a monolingual (Malay language only) policy in teaching, learning, and communicating to give students a strong awareness of their culture, language, and history. A strict disciplinarian, a micromanager, a closet anticolonialist, and a man in love with the Malays, he took it upon himself to inspire students at the college to strive for success and to think about the future of their community. On many occasions, he would stress to the students that the Malays were lacking in good leadership and that the fate of the race was in the hands of the Malays themselves and no one else.[51]

In 1924 Dussek was again instrumental in transferring the Malay Translation Bureau from Kuala Lumpur to within the SITC. The renowned Malay linguist and thinker Zainal Abidin bin Ahmad (Za'ba) was appointed as the head of the Bureau. A strategist, opportunist, and polymath, Za'ba had cleverly capitalized all the resources he could get to print Malay textbooks and other publications of educational value for the Malay public. So large was the number of books produced in the decade that followed and so wide was their readership that the Bureau received written criticisms from members of the public for not publishing enough books of their liking.[52] However, all was not lost, for it was through the Bureau that revolutionary and reformist literature, written in Egypt, Turkey, and Indonesia, was translated or transliterated. Students of the college read these books widely, and that in itself laid the foundations of political thought and activism among a select group of Malays.

Of course, other factors aided the growth of political awareness in the SITC and not in other Malay colleges and schools established by the British. Teachers

like Abdul Hadi Hassan and Buyong Adil played a big part in introducing the students to new concepts of territoriality, namely the "Malay states (*negeri-negeri Melayu*)," "Malay land (*tanah Melayu*)," and the "Malay world (*alam Melayu*)" through the *Sejarah Alam Melayu* (History of the Malay World) textbooks which they wrote. These richly detailed and comprehensive historical works placed Malaya at the heart of developments in other parts of the region. Malay history was told through a linear narrative covering the primitive, Hindu-Buddhist, Islamic, and colonial periods. This narrative, in effect, reframed the ways in which the students had previously thought about their own history.

At work here was a process of a "fusion of horizons" rather than the "indigenization" or "localization" of colonial knowledge as some commentators would have it.[53] Colonial knowledge and indigenous forms of understanding were critically screened, distilled, and welded by Malay authors to propound novel visions of the Malay pasts. By taking what was useful from the colonialists and incorporating some aspects of local knowledge to narrate past events, personalities, and institutions that existed in the Malay world, writers such as Abdul Hadi Hassan and Buyong Adil provided the students of SITC with fresh ideational frameworks that would later be used by the Malay radicals in their programs and rhetoric.

Though no references were made to the ill effects of British colonialism in any of these textbooks, these writers would highlight the negative aspects of the colonial situation to the students during lessons and explain the consequences of disunity among the Malays. In lessons made known to students as *Berjenis-jenis Pengetahuan* (general knowledge), younger teachers such as Harun Amin would seize the opportunity to relate the lives and struggles of anticolonialists across Asia. Chiang Kai-shek, Sun Yat-sen, Sukarno, and Gandhi were some of the personalities who were introduced and discussed at great length, and the stories of their sacrifices did much to animate the students' interest in civil and violent resistance to colonial rule.[54]

Aside from these teachers, another medium that aided in the spread of nationalist ideas consisted of the reading materials that were smuggled in and made accessible to the students of the college. The *Soeleth Ra'jat Indonesia*, *Semangat Islam*, *Seruan Azhar*, *Bintang Timur*, and *Bintang Hindia* were journals published in Indonesia that helped the students to cultivate a sense of pride in their Muslim and Malay backgrounds. Banned books published in Egypt and the Dutch East Indies also found a secure place on the shelves of the SITC library. These books were objects of discussion of the students living in the boarding houses and were, at times, deliberated upon during classes.[55]

The growth of Malay and English schools in Malaya and Singapore did not, however, signal the end of traditional institutions and forms of learning.

The Quranic schools and the *pondoks*, two educational institutions that had existed in the region since the arrival of Islam there in the fourteenth century, maintained their existence and authority in the Muslim community amid the colonial educational institutions. The Quranic schools started in the homes of teachers, and as the number of students grew, such classes were shifted to a local *surau* (prayer place) and mosques. Students were taught the authorized method (*tajwid*) of reading the Quran and were made to memorize verses for prayers. British administrators and Muslim reformists in the early twentieth century often portrayed such institutions in a negative light, claiming that the rote learning and parrot-like instructional practices that defined the Quranic schools imparted very little knowledge or critical thinking. The reality was far more complex than this. Students in the Quranic schools were taught the importance of seeking knowledge while not forgetting their spiritual and social obligations. These were sites where hearts were touched and thoughts about God and man's place in the world were stirred, even if, as a British education official put it, the Quran was "imperfectly understood."[56] Through the learning of the Quran, the students learned that their community was part of a larger and much wider Muslim world that was unified by a text sent down by the Almighty Allah to Prophet Muhammad.

The Quranic schools served other positive functions as well. Students were exposed to the reading of the Jawi script and were taught the virtues of communitarianism while carrying out the daily tasks of carrying water and firewood as well as harvesting rice in the fields. Unlike students in the Malay schools, who were coerced to do menial labor, the students of Quranic schools tended to volunteer their services out of respect and reverence for their learned teachers.[57] These skills would come in handy in later years as graduates of Quranic schools took on leadership positions in radical groups such as the Angkatan Pemuda Insaf (API) and the Angkatan Wanita Sedar (AWAS). Knowledge of Jawi script was useful, as it enabled these activists to contribute to the writing of opinion pieces and commentaries in Jawi-based newspapers. Rote memorization of Quranic verses helped activists to make public speeches during rallies and marches to rouse the Malay masses. Doing menial labor meant that they were acquainted with the struggles of the peasantry, and their experience in harvesting made it easy for them to work hand in hand with the laboring classes and to encourage them to support the radicalist causes.

Graduates from Quranic schools would continue their studies in another institution called the pondok, meaning "inn" or "lodging place" though the term meant, in that context, a small hut where deep Islamic learning was to be found. Almost all of the teachers in the pondoks had received their

training in Makkah, while some spent long periods of study in Sumatra and Pattani to master particular branches of Islam. They would welcome students of varying ages and backgrounds as long as these students were able to read the Quran and the Jawi script and independently support themselves in the course of their studies. Because the teacher and not the institution per se was at the apex of any student's striving for mastery of particular branches of knowledge, there were no clearly defined curricula. Teachers would assign canonical texts relating to Quranic exegesis, Prophetic traditions (*hadith*), Arabic grammar, Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*), Islamic mysticism and spirituality (*tasawwuf*), and theology (*aqidah*) to students for them to read, memorize, and copy in writing. No certificates or written acknowledgments were given to students upon the completion of their studies, and they were allowed to leave the class as and when they felt that they had gained what they wanted from the teachers.[58]

Among the pondok teachers who were greatly revered for their knowledge during the late nineteenth century were Sheikh Daud bin Abdullah Al-Fatani, Sayyid Abdul Rahman (Tokku Paloh), and Muhammad Yusoff bin Ahmad (Tok Kenali). Tok Kenali deserves some further mention because his fame had spread so far and wide that students from Sumatra, Patani, Brunei, Vietnam, and Cambodia came to Malaya to receive instruction from him. Under his tutelage, these students would later serve as *kathi* (judges for religious affairs), *muftis* (Muslim jurists), and teachers in their respective countries. Tok Kenali was not only a religious teacher; he was also a scholar who wrote a number of books about Islam and short stories that touched on issues pertaining to religion and ethics.[59]

By the early twentieth century, the pondoks had become a popular choice for religious learning among Malays throughout the country. The northern states of Kelantan, Trengganu, and Kedah were the hubs for such institutions, but several dozen others were established across Malaya. In Kedah alone, forty pondoks were reported to be active in the early 1900s. The growing popularity of the pondoks in Kedah led, in fact, to apathy toward secular education and an exodus of youths from other states to Kedah.[60] This phenomenon was symptomatic of the larger Muslim responses to colonial rule in general and to colonial education in particular. The Muslim reform movement that began in the late nineteenth century was taking hold in the minds of many Malays throughout the country. Although many resisted the calls by Muslim reformers to eradicate religious innovations (*bid'ah*) and to embrace aspects of modernity that could empower the Muslim community, they accepted the call for the establishment of alternative educational institutions that would provide a potent challenge to the colonial order. Such a

shift in attitudes toward Islamic education took a new turn with the introduction of the *madrasah* system by two of the local reformers encountered earlier, Sayyid Shaikh Al-Hadi and Sheikh Tahir Jalaluddin.

Established in 1907 on the island of Singapore, Madrasah Al-Iqbal offered a curriculum that was comparable to that of colonial schools, except that it included selected religious subjects. The pioneers of the madrasah system hoped to prepare their students for the challenges of modernity while ensuring that they were still able to master the religious subjects. Madrasah Al-Iqbal offered recitation of the Quran, composition and essay writing, reading and writing, ethics, worship and rituals, Arabic grammar, Arabic linguistics, geography, history, mathematics, English, and town planning. In terms of pedagogy, the teachers abandoned rote memorization and initiated student activities, such as debates and rhetoric. Examinations were also introduced and students were to be provided with certificates upon graduation. However, much like the ill-fated *Al-Imam* newspaper, Madrasah Al-Iqbal did not receive a positive response from the Muslim public. Financial problems and a shortage of teaching staff led to the closure of the madrasah after only one year.

The closure of Madrasah Al-Iqbal was not the death knell of the madrasah system as a whole. Conversely, some enlightened religious teachers, Muslim philanthropists, and Malay rulers regarded the setting up of institutions that would be alternatives to the pondok as urgent because of the manifold challenges that colonialism posed to Islam and Muslims. In the same year that the Madrasah Al-Iqbal was closed, Sheikh Wan Sulaiman Wan Sidik founded Madrasah Al-Hamidiah in Kedah. Students left the pondok to join these modern institutions. As local newspapers spread news about the madrasah and its benefits, more and more similar institutions were established throughout Malaya. Madrasah Al-Muhammadiah (1915), Madrasah Pasir Mas (1918), Madrasah Pasir Putih (1918), and Madrasah Kampung Kutan (1919) were founded in Kelantan. Several madrasahs were founded in Perak, namely Madrasah Sahhiah (1914), Madrasah Idrisiyyah (1922), and Madrasah Al-Arabiyyah Bukit (Chandan) (1922). In Singapore, a place where the madrasah system initially met with strong resistance, a change occurred in the local mindset toward this type of educational institution. Hence, from 1912 up until the eve of the Great Depression in 1929, two madrasahs, namely Madrasah Alsagoff (1912) and Madrasah Aljunied (1927), were built on *waqf* (endowment) land donated by Arab Hadhrami businessmen. These madrasahs attracted students from across the Malay world.

The establishment of these madrasahs was significant to Malay radicalism, since these were the schools where Malay radicals such as Burhanuddin Al-Helmy and Shamsiah Fakeh were to receive their early education and

where ideas about Islamic reformism, nationalism, and anticolonialism were imbibed and internalized. Among the many schools that allowed such dissemination of ideas to take place was Madrasah Al-Diniah, located at Kampung Lalang, Padang Rengas, Perak. The school began with only sixteen students in 1924, but by the late 1930s the number of students had shot up to around four hundred; the school became so popular that several branches of the same school had to be built in various parts of Perak to accommodate the growing number of students. Madrasah Al-Diniah often allowed members of the Kesatuan Melayu Muda (KMM), a radical collective established in the 1930s, to address the students in this madrasah.

Another madrasah that followed the same course was Madrasah Al-Ihya Sharif (also known as Ma'ahad al-Ehya al-Sharif), established in 1934 at Gunung Semanggul in Northern Perak. The madrasah grew from a pondok, Sekolah Al-Rahmaniah, before it was converted into a full-time madrasah. The teachers of this madrasah were influenced by the reformist magazines and had spent time in the Arab world, where they had witnessed the rise of Islam as a force to be reckoned with; not surprisingly, these teachers embraced the ideas of the Kaum Muda. Ustaz Abu Bakar al-Baqir introduced a modern curriculum that provided a balanced blend of religious and secular subjects. He encouraged the students to become activists in mainstream associations, one of which was the Sahabat Pena (Pen Pals Association). The Sahabat Pena openly stated its aims as promoting literacy and the exchange of ideas among the Malay youth. The organization's underlying objective, however, was to encourage Malays to be more aware and involved in the political affairs and developments in their country. The madrasah students, keen as they were in contributing to the running of the organization and the writing of commentaries, were inducted into the nationalist political culture that was taking shape.[61]

The Sahabat Pena was not the only organization that contributed to the growth of political awareness among the Malays. This fact alone shows there are some glaring gaps in Mustapha Hussain's memories of the circumstances that led him to join the radicalist cause. Perhaps he felt that the organizations that were established prior to the founding of the Kesatuan Melayu Malaya (KMM) had little to contribute to the larger struggle for independence, or maybe he thought that they were never "explicitly political" about their aims. It is now clear that this is only a partial view of the overall situation. Aside from the Sahabat Pena, a long list of clubs and societies came into being to address the social, cultural, educational, and economic challenges facing the Malay community. These organizations brought Malays of varied occupations, backgrounds, and status together within the ambit of formal collectives, and gave them an opportunity to agitate for reforms, even if these were

as insignificant as demanding that the government provide more spaces for soccer tournaments and cultural festivals. In these ways, these organizations indirectly inculcated Malays with the notion that change was possible and that their demands would be met if couched in a manner that was acceptable to the British. This was, in the last analysis, politics by other means.

One notable organization that stood out because of its bold and direct engagement with political affairs was the Kesatuan Melayu Singapura (KMS), established in 1926. The man at the helm of this organization was Eunos bin Abdullah, the founder of Utusan Melayu and the first Malay to be appointed as a member of the Legislative Council in the Straits Settlements. Downright unhappy with the preponderance of Arabs and Jawi Peranakans in Malay activism and bent upon improving the depressed state of the Malays in Singapore in particular and in Malaya as a whole, the leaders of the organization called upon its members and sympathizers to play a more active role in the political and educational affairs of the Malays. It aimed to improve the state of the Malays in the social and economic arenas. The members of KMS consisted of a blend of religious elites, civil servants, and merchants, some of whom had been educated in Malay-medium schools while others had attended English and Arabic-medium schools. Thanks to the diversity of their educational backgrounds and linguistic skills, they were able to attract a lot of attention from the Singaporean public. Among KMS's greatest achievements was the setting up of the Kampung Melayu in Singapore, a 620-acre piece of land that was allocated for Malays to build their houses and live in their own community.[62]

Pioneering as it may have been in the political realm, KMS still maintained a loyalist posture toward the reigning colonial state. This can be attributed to the English-language educational backgrounds that many of the members shared, and their belief that Britain could provide the best form of governance for the Malays. Although KMS members may have surreptitiously cherished the hope of governing the Malay race and their other constituents, they were aware that this was not achievable until and unless the Malays were reformed and uplifted from their dire social and economic state. Such an elitist approach to politics meant that it was difficult for the KMS to enjoy widespread support throughout Malaya. The lack of mass support for the KMS was also due to the apolitical stance that most Malays held at that time. Most Malays were unsure of politics and regarded political activity as "dangerous." This may explain why it took the KMS more than a decade to establish branches outside of Singapore in places such as Malacca and Penang, even though English-educated and more activist-oriented Malays were numerous in these cities.

Despite its limitations, the KMS did manage to leave an indelible impact on the aspiring Malay radicals. The organization revealed to the Malay radicals the embedded weaknesses of taking a right-wing political stance. Although the KMS managed to obtain some concessions from the British for the enhancement of Malay life, this arrangement would only lead to the preservation of the status quo. Yet the radicals saw in the KMS some useful levers that could be brought to bear upon the colonial system.[63] The ability of the KMS to attract some followers among the relatively apolitical Malay masses, and the ability of KMS leaders to make their voices heard, helped the Malay radicals to realize that it was pointless to rely upon an underground and informal movement to achieve their own political aims. To advance the cause of Malay politics, a new organization would have to be formed. The founders of this new organization chose a name that was almost identical to that of the KMS—the Kesatuan Melayu Muda.

The Great (Malay) Depression

If Mustapha Hussain was wrong to assume that Malay organizations that existed before the KMM had few political motives and failed to stir up an interest in politics among the Malays, he was certainly right about the apathetic attitude of his countrymen, an attitude that made them unconscious of the dangers of inaction. Mustapha wondered, "Why do Malays have to live in deprivation while their motherland is literally overflowing with natural resources?"[64] The most compelling answer to Mustapha's query could be found in the exploitative features of the colonial capitalist economy, which were made worse by the onset of the Great Depression. The Great Depression affected all communities in Malaya. European and Chinese tin miners and rubber planters lost their businesses. Indian workers who were brought in to serve as laboring men for the plantations and construction companies were repatriated in large numbers, losing their only source of livelihood. By this time, the Malays had become a minority population in the Straits Settlements and, in the FMS and UMS, the number of Straits-born and foreign-born Chinese inhabitants was almost equal to that of Malays. Urban Malays and rural Malays alike witnessed the taking over of large tracts of land, while traditional businesses that had previously belonged to Malays passed to Chinese owners. Chinese restaurants were even selling Muslim food, and this affected other Malay businesses.[65] The Malay sense of insecurity, alienation, and dispossession was further accentuated by demands made by Malayan Chinese for more political and administrative rights in the country.

These feelings of disenchantment and frustration found their way into the newspapers of the day. An editorial published in the *Saudara* in 1932 noted: "the Depression had in part made the Malays more conscious of their poverty, backwardness, and weakness."[66] Other commentaries and letters sent to newspapers such as *Majlis* highlighted that the global economic crisis sensitized the Malays to their marginal place in the British Empire. A new kesedaran was thus taking shape. Malays began to demarcate differences between themselves and the *bangsa asing* (foreign races) that were depriving the natives of their own land and rights. For example, an editorial in the *Majalah Guru* argued that, "The foreign races indeed have no rights in this country, and their attempts to claim their rights here are regarded by the Malays as an insult to the Malay race as it would diminish our national character."[67] This othering process was fortified by warnings made by local teachers that the Malays would eventually disappear (*pupus*) from the face of the Earth if nothing were done to improve their educational and social status.[68]

However, it would be misleading to argue that *all* Malays suffered from the impact of the Great Depression. Malay civil servants and landowners who were engaged in subsistence farming coped with the fluctuating prices of daily necessities due to their fixed incomes and the crops they cultivated in their own backyards. Malays of foreign parentage, that is, those who came from neighboring lands such as the Dutch East Indies, were mobile and peripatetic. They could shift their trading activities from mainland Malaya to other parts of the region in response to economic conditions. They were quick to go in search of new pastures for profits. Unlike the peasants, who held a strong sense of attachment to the land and were unwilling to migrate even under extreme conditions, these "other Malays" saw Malaya as a temporal site and would move their businesses to other places when they needed to.[69]

For Malays who worked in the rubber and tin mining industries, the situation was radically different. Jobs were lost overnight and many could not find alternative employment as businesses and companies downsized their operations.[70] Ironically, it was the small minority of Malays who were generally left unscathed by the Great Depression who played a big role by writing in newspapers and magazines about the troubles of their friends and relatives. Besides fulfilling a social duty or familial responsibility, these writers saw the task of writing about the Malays' plight as a means to reform the community as a whole and to chart a new future for them. It is against this background of the Depression and the developments that preceded it that one can begin to understand the emergence of the Malay radicals.

Chapter Two

The Awakened Generation

› IN MAY 1937 a group of young Malay men from different states across the Peninsula attended a historic meeting held in a suburb of Kuala Lumpur. The intense session lasted for some hours, with cigarettes and coffee being served in the home of a proponent of Malay radicalism, Hassan Manan. One of the topics discussed was how life was getting worse for the Malays in Malaya. This was not the first prophecy of gloom and doom among members of the Malay community. Ever since the beginning of the Great Depression, talk about how Malays had been left behind in almost all areas of life had been making the rounds, usually with no definitive or real solutions in sight.[1]

What was apparent to these men was that the Malays were becoming wretched in their own homeland. Their traditional lifestyles had been disrupted and destroyed. Many Malays were already uprooted from their ancestral villages because these places had made way for new plantations, railway stations, and towns. They had every reason to feel a deep sense of grievance. There developed an exodus of villagers who left their places of origin in search of a better livelihood far away from their villages.[2] Estranged, frustrated, displaced, and anxious about the prospects for the future generations, they proceeded to discuss how the Malays were facing a major crisis that would threaten the very existence of their race. Something had to be done, and done fast.

The founding of the Kesatuan Melayu Muda (KMM) should be read against this sense of crisis that pervaded the minds of Malays during that fateful era. Certainly, the feeling that a calamity had befallen the Malays was shared by Malay thinkers and community leaders long before the creation of KMM, with the Persatuan Melayu Selangor (PMS) and the Kesatuan Melayu Singapura (KMS) being at the forefront of many groups that publicized the

marginal position of Malays in the colonial society. The late 1930s made this sense of crisis even more acute as the impact of the Great Depression became increasingly felt in Malaya. Explaining the effects that the collapse of the world economy had on the Malay society at large, an editorial in the *Saudara* newspaper wrote:

> Readers of this newspaper should be cognizant that the difficulties caused by this recession are felt not only in the Peninsula but the world over. Most Malays lament the lack of money to buy basic necessities, while a segment of the community is desperately starving in these depressing times.[3]

Other Malay writers who wrote commentaries in newspapers highlighted additional crises faced by the Malays in those dark days. According to these writers, Malays had become a pathetic, passive, and regressive (*mundur*) group of people. Unable to find the ways and means to alleviate the negative consequences of the Depression, they had chosen instead to retreat to their respective villages and enclaves, hoping that things would change for the better. By contrast, the Chinese and Indian merchants had chosen to take the bull by the horns and overcome it. They were quick to adapt and reorganize their businesses, engaging in trades that would maintain their wealth in the changing economy. Urging the Malays to learn from other races and get out of the quandary of helplessness, a writer by the name of Bakariah wrote in *Majalah Guru*: "Malays! Oh Malays of My Race! Islam oh Islam of my people! Rise up, rise up to the pedestal! We should now be conscious by the fact that this country has become too cramped, much like a coffin."[4]

The emerging group of young men that formed the KMM was different from the Malay activists and elites that came before them by virtue of their sources of inspiration, their fresh reading of the problems that came in the way of the colonized society, and their radical program of action. The KMM was "radical" in its time because its leaders and followers drew upon and interweaved a number of strands of thinking to churn out ideas and activities that were relatively uncommon. The KMM also departed from many contemporaneous organizations that generally exhibited conservative, feudal, or procolonialist inclinations. They too sought to differentiate themselves from those collectives that were directing their fullest energies to achieving recreational, social, literary, religious, or educational aims.[5] In other words, the KMM was radically different and distinctive, with a focus on politics. The KMM was mainly concerned with the pursuit of power and the inculcation of a sense of political awareness in the Malay community throughout the country.

Indeed, the name "Kesatuan Melayu Muda" itself indicated the radical orientations and aspirations of its members. "Kesatuan" (which translates as "Union" in English) revealed the group's desire to forge a sense of unity among their countrymen and to overcome the deep divisions that had haunted them for too long. This unity must be exemplified first by the KMM through its avowed and ready acceptance of members from different Malay States, occupations, class backgrounds, and status levels. In bridging the gaps that had divided the Malays, the unity that the KMM manifested would serve as a microcosmic foretaste of a united Malay society of the future. "*Melayu*" or "Malay" was understood in the widest sense to mean Malays who originated from Singapore, Malaya, and the Dutch East Indies, or whose parents hailed from these localities even if they were born elsewhere. "*Muda*" (which means "Young") alluded to the median age of the organization's members, which was about thirty years. The word *muda*, however, also connoted something deeper and more wide-ranging. The KMM welcomed anyone to join so long as that person was able to embrace progressive ideas, particularly those that would remake the Malay community. "Muda" implied that the Malay radicals would promulgate new and momentous reforms that would serve the creation of a new and free society.[6]

The Pioneering Batch

The Malay radicals saw the working class and peasant Malays as having the innate potential to be mobilized for the benefit of anticolonial movements and, thereby, to function as a transformative force in society. Such a viewpoint is unsurprising given that most Malay radicals belonged to the lower rungs of the social hierarchy. The high hopes that the Malay radicals placed in the masses, even though the radicals fully recognized the traditions and mindsets that were firmly in place, reflected the radicals' own backgrounds and their subordinate position in society. They reasoned that, if sons of farmers and peasants like themselves could emerge from the slumber that had held them captive for so long, why not the rest of the Malay society? It is here that a brief account of the collective biography of the founding members of the KMM is important. An understanding of their life stories, social positions, and educational backgrounds can help make it possible to better understand the reasons why they insisted on bringing about a populist movement rather than one that was led by the elite.

The first president of the KMM was Ibrahim Haji Yaacob. History has been too kind to this man and his roles in the KMM. He has often been portrayed as the driving force behind the radicalist movement and cast as the most heroic among his companions.[7] In reality, Ibrahim had difficulties holding the organization together and relied too much on the hard work of his subordinates. His exploits as a member of an Indonesian underground movement are well documented, but until recently, all of these adventures have proven to be greatly exaggerated to cover up many of his own misdeeds and miscalculations. Perhaps one of the reasons why many writers have regarded Ibrahim as a larger-than-life figure is that he wrote prodigiously about the nationalist movement in Malaya and about himself.[8] Indeed, even if one chooses to discount all that Ibrahim did for the KMM, one lasting contribution he made was to write accounts of what his peers were doing and thinking. His own take on what should be done provides us with windows into the minds of the men around him. And yet, Ibrahim's importance must not be overestimated, for even in terms of ideas, he was not a pathbreaking thinker when compared to his protégé, Dr. Burhanuddin Al-Helmy. He was, however, a great synthesizer of strands of thought and original insights developed by European and Malay-Indonesian thinkers.

Born in Temerloh, Pahang, Ibrahim was a village boy who excelled in his studies in a local Malay school and thereby gained entry into the SITC. He was not the only KMM founding member who was educated in the prestigious Malay institution and, in the process, was exposed to radical ideas. Another noteworthy figure from Pahang who enrolled in the SITC at almost the same time as Ibrahim and later became a member of the KMM's central committee was Abdul Karim Rashid, a Malay schoolteacher. Both men served in the teaching profession prior to the formation of the KMM. Ibrahim wanted more than a lifetime career in local schools. He quit teaching after only a few years and went on to become a police officer before joining the world of journalism in 1936, when he went to work for the *Majlis* newspaper. There, he was able to hone his writing skills and make contacts with other prominent writers, as well as radical activists in Indonesia.

As a journalist, Ibrahim put his writing skills to the service of the independence movement. Through the articles he wrote for the *Majlis* newspaper, Ibrahim created awareness of the contradictions and failed promises of British colonialism. The students of Malay schools were some of his most ardent readers and, by the time the KMM was founded, the pen name IBHY (which stands for Ibrahim Haji Yaacob) had gained much significance.[9] In view of Ibrahim's popularity, KMM members elected him as the organization's first president. He was not only one of the chief architects behind the formation of the KMM; he was also instrumental in getting his former SITC friends to form a core part of the organization. Among his close associates

who joined the KMM were Hassan Manan, Md Isa Mahmud, and Abdul Karim Rashid, among others. These men shared the experience of receiving education solely from Malay schools. They were a close-knit group who shared views that were different from those of the Malay radicals who had spent some years in English schools.

Five pioneering KMM members who had some years of English education were Ishak Haji Muhammad, Othman Mohd Noor, Sulung bin Chik, Bahar bin Abit, and Mustapha Hussain. Handsome, energetic, strongly built, and poised, Mustapha could be likened to the character "Little John" in the Robin Hood legends—a mythical figure whom he greatly admired and from whom he derived inspiration. Elected as the vice president of the KMM, he quickly mobilized to action his subordinates in Peninsular Malaya in the absence of Ibrahim, who was based in Singapore as the deputy editor of the *Majlis*. Mustapha was also responsible for opening up many new KMM branches while ensuring that the registrar of societies formalized the organization. Just as Robin Hood overshadowed Little John, so did Ibrahim overshadow Mustapha's tireless dedication in the service of the KMM. Although he was courageous and well respected by his peers, he lacked what Ibrahim capitalized on to the utmost—a combination of charisma and shrewdness.[10]

Mustapha was born in Taiping, Perak, where the memories of Maharaja Lela and his compatriots lived on for many decades after their brutal execution by the British in 1875. The fourth son of a family of ten children, Mustapha's immediate and extended families were actively involved in community work and in local politics since he was a child. His two brothers, Alli and Yahaya, were members of the Perak State Malay Association and the Pahang branch of the KMM, respectively. Another maternal cousin, Yusof Ishak, was the editor of the *Utusan Melayu* newspaper and later became the first president of Singapore. Abdul Aziz Ishak, the younger brother of Yusof, was active in literary circles prior to becoming a member of the KMM.[11] After the war, Aziz joined UMNO and became the minister of agriculture upon the declaration of independence. Aside from having an illustrious and politically active Malay family, Mustapha's educational background and the path he took toward radical politics are equally interesting, as his experiences throw into sharp relief the different circumstances that led Malay youths toward anticolonialism.

Mustapha received his early formal education in a Malay school close to his village. This type of education involved spending almost four hours a day in the school, followed by further instruction in a Quranic school where the basic tenets of Islam and the reading of the Arabic letters were taught. This arrangement usually lasted for four years. Most Malay children would quit school at this point to help their parents work in the fields. Few would continue their studies beyond this initial stage. Mustapha's parents decided to place him on another educational route.[12] He was sent to an English school to fulfill his parents' wish that he would eventually pursue a career in the civil service. Mustapha completed a total of four years in the English school and was conferred the Junior Cambridge certificate before landing a job in the Department of Agriculture in Kuala Lumpur.

The experience of being in two linguistic worlds, yet immersed in one, was certainly crucial in widening the perceptual horizons of Malays like Mustapha. He became acquainted with the political writings of European intellectuals that were largely written or translated into English by that time. He bought many books on a variety of topics. Socialism, communism, colonialism, and racial politics were among the subjects that interested him. His love for books was so great that he joined the Left Book and Right Book Clubs in England as an overseas member. The works of Mahatma Gandhi, Nehru, Lenin, and Stalin, as well as accounts of the struggles for self-determination of other colonized peoples, exposed to Mustapha the exploitative nature of colonialism and the particular abuses that characterized European colonialism. He and other English-educated Malay radicals such as Ishak Haji Muhammad became increasingly conscious of the incongruities between the ideals and practices of many European thinkers and philosophers, in contrast to what was actually happening in Malaya.[13]

More popularly known by his pen name and aliases, "Anwar," "Hantu Raya," "Pak Sako," and "Pandir Moden," Ishak Haji Muhammad was another important figure in the founding of the KMM. He was the ideologue. His compatriots regarded his articles and novels as manifestoes for the movement. Through these publications, Ishak highlighted the problems that plagued the Malay community. Of the many themes that concerned him during the 1930s, perhaps the most important was the lack of opportunities open to the Malays due to the control of businesses and various sectors of the peasant economy by British and Chinese entrepreneurs. For Ishak, poverty and inequality led to the loss of Malay honor, identity, and values. His writings about the problems facing Malays reflected his own background and life story. Born in Temerloh, Pahang, he received his early education in a Malay school near his village after learning the basic rudiments of Islamic teachings in local mosques. In 1919 he was sent to the prestigious Clifford School, graduating with a higher secondary education in English.[14] Ishak continued his studies in the Malay College at Kuala Kangsar before joining the Malayan Civil Service. He must have been an exemplary colonial officer, for he rose through the ranks quickly to become a district magistrate only a few years later.

But his career in the service of the colonial state was not to last. After becoming disillusioned with biased British policies and corrupt practices, Ishak switched his career in 1934 to become a schoolteacher in Johore for some months before returning to legal practice. This once again proved to be disastrous, for Ishak was further exposed to the exploitation of the masses in the realm of laws and justice. He wrote articles in Malay newspapers exposing the injustices he saw, much to the annoyance of state officials. Although his legal license was terminated as soon as his critiques of the legal system reached the ears of the British Resident, the articles he wrote had gained the attention of editors of Malay newspapers.[15] Immediately after his termination from service, Ishak was hired as an assistant writer and translator for the Arab-owned *Warta Malaya* in 1937. His stint as a budding journalist was a turning point in Ishak's life. Working with literary giants like Abdul Rahim Kajai provided him with the crucial experience to explore new ideas about society and offer strategies to solve its problems.

So edifying was the time he spent with journalists at *Warta Malaya* that, within a few months, Ishak was able to complete his first novel, *Putera Gunung Tahan* (Prince of Mount Tahan).[16] Now regarded as a classic in modern Malay literature, the novel was less than 120 pages in length and printed on inferior paper during its first run. Yet within those few pages, Ishak was able to highlight several themes that explained the forces acting against the Malays. Malays were backward because of colonialism and the devious greed of local collaborators who helped to sustain systems that served to marginalize their own people. Ishak, however, highlighted the inherent weaknesses of British colonialism in his novel. British colonialism was driven by arrogance and self-aggrandizement, so much so that the very people from whom it sought support and obeisance were left behind. The first step out of colonialism, according to Ishak, was the awareness that all men are born free and the Malays must be freed from the shackles of foreign rule to regain their humanity. Patriotism—the love of one's race, culture, and religion—and the willingness to resist colonialism were the other essential steps toward liberation. Read against the occasion of the founding of the KMM in the same year that the novel was published, *Putera Gunung Tahan* was an oblique way of informing the Malay public that the KMM would play a leading role in instilling patriotism among the Malays.

The fourth figure to be mentioned here is Hassan Manan, who was appointed as the secretary of the KMM. A close confidante and loyal follower of Ibrahim Haji Yaacob, Hassan was born in Selangor in 1910. He was educated in Malay schools until the end of his course at the SITC, where he met Ibrahim. Like Ibrahim, whom he venerated, Hassan eventually became

a Malay teacher at the Jalan Pasar Malay School in Kuala Lumpur, where he taught until the outbreak of the Second World War. The time he spent teaching gave him opportunities to disseminate information about politics and to inform the young of the need to strive toward self-reliance and independence, since these were the crucial steps in regaining Malay pride. Hassan also converted his home into the headquarters of the KMM even though he was conscious of the perils his family would encounter should the KMM become regarded as a threat by the colonial state.[17]

The portraits of these four men provide a glimpse of the architecture of the KMM. The members of the KMM were, first of all, representative of the various Malay states that were most affected by the impact of British rule. As seen from table 1, they hailed largely from Pahang, Selangor, Perak, and Kuala Lumpur—Malay states that came under the rubric of the Federated Malay States—which were among the world's largest producers of tin and rubber. These states were prosperous "cash cows" for the British and the foreign merchants. The British did attempt to decentralize these states, to allow them to govern on their own rather than under a federation. But such a move put other European and Chinese merchants on a collision course with the Malays. The foreign merchants raised their concerns about how decentralization would upset their business interests. Malays, on the other hand, were enraged by such selfish reactions by the merchants. The Malay radicals that formed the core KMM leadership lived through this period in the Malay states that were under contestation. They were also disenchanted with the Malay rulers who were helpless in the presence of foreigners.[18]

Secondly, the founder members of the KMM were all beneficiaries of the colonial enterprise. The word *beneficiary* used here may seem ironic, but the fact was that all of the KMM members had received some form of education in colonial-sponsored schools. It was through these schools that the KMM members developed skills in a language other than their own. This had far-reaching effects because the knowledge of reading and writing opened doors to understanding what politics was all about as well as the function of political collectives in society. Literacy, as Bill Ashcroft has reminded us, provided the colonized with a "special kind of capital" that enabled them to think like the colonizers and to use the same tools of reasoning to reform and fire back at their oppressors.[19] The KMM members were also beneficiaries in other ways besides education. They were, for the most part, employed in state institutions. They were able to identify some of the slippages and weaknesses that were inherent in the colonial system through their experience of working in such bodies. Put differently, the KMM members saw the need to form the new organization precisely because they began to recognize the

problems and contradictions found within the colonial state institutions where they had earned a living. This "view from the inside" allowed them to develop strategies by which the colonial structures of control could be evaded and/or subverted.

Third and perhaps more importantly, the Malay radicals were situated in occupations that offered opportunities for them to purvey radical ideas. They were employed as teachers, clerks, government officers, and journalists. These were jobs that were normally undertaken by Malays, and the positions they held permitted them to reach out to specific sections of the Malay community. Teachers would speak to their students about the importance of politics. Clerks and government officers would reach out to their peers during gossip sessions in coffee shops.[20] As for the journalists such as Ishak and Ibrahim, they served as writers, teachers, and activists to rally Malays from all walks of life under the banner of the KMM.

A Multitude of Influences

The Malay radicals drew inspiration from the Young Turks; the civil disobedience of Gandhi, Nehru, and Jinnah in India; the youthful Thakins in Burma; and the Indonesian revolutionaries. It was the Young Turks who provided them with the notion that youths should form the vanguard of any grand project to uplift the masses. The Young Turks showed that modernity should not be shunned; instead, it should be seized upon to free one's country from foreign intervention. The Young Turks also provided the Malay radicals with new ideas of nationhood that centered on the critical roles of commoners rather than ruling monarchs. And it was the Young Turks who taught the Malay radicals that radical reforms could only be accomplished by dismantling the age-old traditional structures that held back the Malays.[21]

It is easy to see why the Malay radicals were so strongly influenced by the Young Turks. Events in the Muslim world were reported extensively in newspapers and periodicals published across Malaya. Turkey, as Anthony Milner reminds us, "loomed large in the Malay perception of the wider world. It was not, of course, the only foreign land to impinge on Malay consciousness. Britain, Holland and the European powers were becoming increasingly important and, by the early twentieth century, Egypt and Japan had begun to be mentioned frequently in Malay newspapers. Turkey, however, was of special interest."[22] Publishing houses such as the Al-Asasiah Press in Kelantan had already published novels and biographies describing the lives of Turkish figures. Some of the popular titles include *Mustaffa Kamal Basya*, *Cerita*

TABLE 1: Kesatuan Melayu Muda's Founding Members and Their Backgrounds

Name	Position	Education	Occupation	State of Origin
Ibrahim Haji Yaakub	President	Malay Schools	Schoolteacher followed by Journalist	Pahang
Mustapha Hussain	Vice-President	Malay and English Schools	Lecturer	Perak
Hassan Manan	Secretary I	Malay Schools	Schoolteacher	Selangor
Othman Mohd Noor	Secretary II	Malay and English Schools	Typist	Kuala Lumpur
Idris Hakim	Treasurer	Malay and English Schools	Clerk	Perak
Ishak Haji Muhammad	Central Committee Member	Malay and English Schools	Magistrate to Teacher to Journalist	Pahang
Abdul Karim Rashid	Central Committee Member	Malay Schools	Schoolteacher	Selangor
Bahar bin Abik	Central Committee Member	Malay Schools	Subordinate Officer	Kuala Lumpur
Onan Haji Siraj	Central Committee Member	Malay and English Schools	Odd-job worker	Perak
Sulung bin Chik	Central Committee Member	Malay and English Schools	Subordinate Officer	Pahang
Abdul Samad Ahmad	Central Committee Member	Malay Schools	Journalist	Selangor
Abdullah Kamil	Central Committee Member	Malay Schools	Journalist	Kuala Lumpur
Mohammad Salehuddin	Central Committee Member	Malay Schools	Journalist	Kuala Lumpur

Selamat Tinggal Ayuhai Timur, *Jogan Setia*, *Turkey dan Tamadunnya*, and *Kitab Mustafa Kemal*.[23]

Kamal Ataturk was of special interest to the Malay radicals. They saw in him a modern redeemer of the lost glory of Muslims. Ataturk had defeated the Europeans on the battlefield and reformed his nation to become one that was proud and respected the rights of all citizens. Ataturk's vision of reforming a feudal Turkish society impressed KMM members most. They saw the

achievements of Ataturk as the result of his willingness to break away from the chains of customs and conventions. The Turkish leader was great not only because he was a Muslim and shared an Islamic culture like that of the Malay radicals but also because he was vigorous in remodeling his country into a position that equaled that of the world powers.

The anticolonial movements in India and Burma provided other sources of inspiration. Farish Noor rightly observes: "Apart from their admiration for men like Sukarno and Hatta, KMM members also looked to other Islamist and radical nationalist movements in countries like Indonesia, India and Egypt."[24] The Malay radicals admired the heroism and spirit of noncooperation shown by Gandhi and Nehru in India and by Aung San and the Saya San rebels in Burma. They were living evidence that the colonized could initiate their own movements against the colonial powers. The unique leadership shown by these men and their respective forms of resistance (passive as well as active) showed that important and wide-ranging changes would commence if only the leaders of anticolonial movements were willing to sacrifice their lives and energies for the cause of freedom. The Malay radicals saw Gandhi as a unifying figure who was able to rally Indians across the continent, encouraging his countrymen to set aside their provincial loyalties to realize an all-India national movement. This was something the Malay radicals felt should be done via the KMM. The KMM would unite the Malays under a pan-Malayan body rather than a state-based one, as exemplified by other organizations such as the Kesatuan Melayu Singapura, Persatuan Melayu Selangor, Persatuan Melayu Negeri Sembilan, and Persatuan Melayu Pahang, to name a few that were prominent in the 1930s.[25]

The Malay radicals were so animated and impressed with the Indian liberation movements that some of them decided to adopt aliases that resembled the names of freedom fighters in South Asia. For example, Abdullah Thani Raja Kechil, who joined the KMM just a few months before the Second World War, went so far as to change his name to "Ahmad Boestamam" out of his admiration for Subhas Chandra Bose, the leader of the Indian National Army (INA). That name stuck and came to be accepted until Abdullah Thani's demise in the 1980s. In point of fact, the name became a badge of courage to display his uniqueness as an ardent follower and admirer of Subhas Chandra Bose's militancy. Burhanuddin Al-Helmy, another charismatic figure who joined the KMM almost in the same period as Ahmad Boestamam, went beyond the adoption of names. He traveled to India to pursue his studies and, upon his return to Malaya, promoted many of the ideas of Gandhi and Nehru in his rallies and speeches. These men and many others bore testimony that the Malay radicals shared the visions of

their Indian counterparts and that they manifested these influences in ways that were unique to the Malayan context. India, like Turkey, loomed large in the minds of Malay radicals who dreamt of being avant-gardes in the quest for self-determination.

While the heroes and activists in Turkey, India, and Burma shaped the Malay radicals' minds, the Indonesian revolutionaries made a deeper impression on how the Malay radicals ran their newly established movement. Figures such as Sukarno, Sjahrir, Hatta, and Tan Malaka were regarded by the Malay radicals as patron saints whose advice was sought from time to time through visits as well as invitations to events held in Malaya. The Malay radicals regarded the visions of these patron saints as noble and relevant, to be operationalized and articulated in ways that would mobilize the Malay

FIGURE 2 Ahmad Boestamam, secretary of PKMM, during a meeting at Beranang, Selangor, 17 November 1946

masses. This was largely a product of the Malay radicals' early contacts with groups such as the Partai Nasional Indonesia (PNI or Indonesian Nationalist Party) as seen in the case of Ibrahim Haji Yaacob, who was a closet member of that party.[26]

The other reason that could explain this strong Indonesian influence was the movement of peoples back and forth between Java, Sumatra, and Malaya. Most Malay radicals regarded Java and Sumatra as their "second homes." The islands of Java and Sumatra were their birthplaces, where ancestral villages and traditions were firmly situated. On the other side of the coin were the radicals in Indonesia who saw Malaya as what Bolivia was to the Cuban revolutionaries. In 1926 Indonesian radicals fled from Java to Malaya after a failed uprising. Among these radicals were Djamaluddin Tamin, Budiman, Sutan Jenain, Alimin, and Mohamed Ariff. Malaya was seen by these fallen revolutionaries as the second front in the battle to overthrow colonialism throughout the Malay world. Intensive efforts were therefore made by these Indonesians to ignite and rouse the masses in Malaya, pending their eventual return to Java and Sumatra.[27]

Two towering Indonesian personalities who were active in providing the impetus for the development of a *zaman pergerakan* (age in motion)[28] in Malaya were Tan Malaka and Sutan Jenain. Born in 1897 in Minangkabau, Sumatra, and exiled from Bandung in 1922 for his procommunist views and activities, Tan Malaka was a zealous promoter of revolutionary sentiments among Malays and Indonesians. In the late 1920s he paid visits to Singapore to share his ideas with budding Malay activists. He spoke at length about issues relating to anticolonial movements in Indonesia and the ineffectual attempts by many political parties and social movements to negotiate for independence from the Dutch through civil means. For Tan Malaka, the liberty of the Indonesian peoples could only be secured through a revolution led by the masses. Charismatic, energetic, authoritative, stirring, and intellectually stimulating, Tan Malaka received a very cool reception from the Malays because of the apolitical and apathetic attitude that was prevalent in the 1930s. However, he maintained close contacts with the Malay radicals in the decades that followed and offered advice on matters pertaining to politics and mobilization.[29]

Mirroring the life journeys and exploits of Tan Malaka, Sutan Jenain came from Minangkabau and migrated to Malaya after being exiled by the Dutch in 1910. But unlike Tan Malaka, Sutan was soft-spoken, unassuming, and affable. Conversant in Dutch and English and deeply immersed in the local Malay-Indonesian community, Sutan had made Malaya his long-term domicile. However, his heart remained firmly anchored in Indonesia. It was

for this reason that he volunteered to speak at many clandestine meetings organized by the KMM. Sutan's method in generating interest among the youths in politics and anticolonial resistance resembled the Socratic dialectical method. He would begin by asking pertinent questions to stimulate thinking and bring up provocative points about the sad state of the Malays. He would then solicit responses about what had to be done to get the Malays out of their predicament. Those present were allowed to question him and to defend their viewpoints while identifying the ambiguities embedded within their own viewpoints. "Who are the poorest people in Malaya?" and "What are the forces in society that made the colonial powers so powerful even though they were small in numbers?" were among the many questions that were discussed in these meetings. Searching for answers to these questions during the clandestine meetings with Sutan led to the ultimate conclusions: That Malaya must be freed from colonial rule and that a radical organization must lead the way to achieve that end.[30]

Although Sutan had a great influence upon the Malay radicals, his Marxist ideas did not find a secure place in the hearts of the Malay youths. In fact Sutan made little headway in getting the Malay radicals to embrace the logic of dialectical materialism. His failure in this regard was not due to lack of effort; it was just that the Malay radicals saw Marxist ideas of liberation and revolution as too extreme and inflexible for their own purposes. Moreover, the destruction and almost complete annihilation of the radical Marxists in Java served as a strong reminder to the Malay radicals that, while Sutan was to be respected and sought after for advice and counsel, some critical distance was needed to avoid the tragic fate of their Indonesian counterparts.

If Tan Malaka and Sutan Jenain had close interactions with the Malay radicals in the early stages of the formation of the KMM and spent time to help formulate political activities thereafter, then the other Indonesian revolutionaries like Sukarno, Sjahrir, and Sutomo exerted an oblique yet no less powerful hold on the hearts and minds of the radicals. The KMM viewed Sukarno as an ideologue who was able to convey ideas about liberation in a simple yet elegant manner, so much so that thousands of people were moved to oppose the ruling Dutch regime in Indonesia. Despite such high admiration for a man who made history even in the nascent stages of his political activism, Sukarno was also seen in intimate ways, that is, as a comrade in arms and a big brother—he was called "Bung Karno" by Indonesians and Malays alike.

As for Sjahrir and Sutomo, these two men represented the power of virtue and of ideas that could make or unmake the Malay world as a whole. The Malay radicals closely followed Sjahrir's and Sutomo's speeches and journalistic writings that were readily found in Indonesian-based magazines that

were entitled *Suluh Rakyat Indonesia* and distributed across Malaya by local publishers. In Singapore, a Malay bookseller by the name of Haji Kassim Bakri published his own periodical, *Temasek*, which featured the speeches of Sjahrir and his revolutionary aims. Although the distribution of this particular periodical was relatively small, students and teachers of Malay schools in Singapore who obtained copies would pass these periodicals from one person to another.[31] More crucially, these publications were read and internalized by Malay radicals, and the ideas that the radicals found in them would be echoed in their own writings.

To say that only forces outside Malaya had moved the Malay radicals to action is to commit the fatal error of characterizing them as merely passive recipients and not as active contributors to the ideas that shaped their activities and their movement. Certainly, while the Malay radicals appreciated the ideas and examples shown by anticolonial personalities in Turkey, India, Burma, and Indonesia, they were equally conscious of the peculiarities of their own context. They had identified several obstacles that had to be overcome before the independence of Malaya could be achieved. Indeed, the Malay radicals felt that the Malays had a low self-image. Feelings of inferiority about their language, culture, intelligence, and economy, as well as their status in relation to the non-Malays of Malaya, were harbored by Malays of all ages. These inferiority complexes became a self-fulfilling prophecy, and were manifested in day-to-day talk in schools and coffee shops about Malays being "not modern enough," "not developed enough," "not civilized enough," and "behind in many areas of life," encouraging many Malays to embark upon divergent courses of action.[32]

The Malay radicals maintained that because of their low self-image, most ordinary Malays had taken on a defeatist and fatalist outlook. Many were resigned to their position of servility and had come to the conclusion that there was no way out of colonialism. Resisting the colonial regime was seen as an exercise in futility. The best path to survival was to cope with the existing arrangements and to take the opportunities that were provided for them by the British and the British-aligned Malay rulers. For this group of Malays, colonialism was destiny, and man cannot alter what God has already ordained. As long as there was enough to get by, as long as Malays were provided with homes and sources of sustenance, their religion was protected, and their cultural institutions were fully respected, many Malays concluded that they should not take up arms and unite against the people in positions of authority.

On the other end of the gamut were the feudal elites. The Malay radicals saw this other group as more dangerous than the defeatist Malay masses. While the defeatist Malay masses were predisposed to retreating into their

private worlds, imagining that the good life to come could not be realized in the present world but awaited them in the hereafter, the feudal elites sought recognition from the colonial masters while they capitalized on the frailty of the common folk. Incessantly in touch with the Malay masses and depicting themselves as the rightful leaders of their community, the feudal elites were opportunists par excellence even though they remained subservient to the whims and fancies of the colonial rulers. Indeed, the Malay radicals stressed that the feudal elites were, in fact, in cahoots with the British in their efforts to reinforce their traditional hold on the people. Their weapons were the twin forces of adat (Malay culture) and a mystical interpretation of the Islamic faith that demanded the compliance and quiescence of the masses. They—the feudal elites, according to Ibrahim Haji Yaacob—were responsible for maintaining political apathy and perpetuating a sense of powerlessness among the Malays and thus injuring their self-worth.[33]

Another group, which the Malay radicals saw as contributing to the backwardness and disempowerment of the Malays, were the westernized bureaucratic elites. Entrenched in the new bureaucracies established by the British while mimicking the traditions and lifestyles that came from Europe, these Malays were averse to local cultures that stood in the way of modernity. The westernized Malays regarded their own society and their own Malay heritage with disgust. They regarded Malays with little or no education in English as "country bumpkins."[34] To these westernized Malays, colonialism was a blessing in all senses of the word. It had brought civilization to Malaya and introduced the language of science and technology. Colonialism and Western modernity nurtured a scholarly culture that was never made available by the old kerajaan order. According to these westernized Malays, all that was "Malay" was to be eschewed, and the way forward was to embrace European modernity and the English language in totality. What came before must be eradicated. That Malays were now under British rule was clear enough evidence that something was fundamentally wrong with their culture to start with and that the burden of their history must be jettisoned.

Many activists and writers shared the Malay radicals' aversion toward the westernized Malays. A writer in the *Majalah Guru* magazine wrote with much sarcasm that these westernized and urban-based Malays were "progressive in walking around the billiard table; they have become expert actors in local operas; they can dance and sing well. They look smart in their suits (with collars for neckties) and various types of hats to match. They smoke cigarettes and opium (with pipes and stylets), in secret these groups are friends with all sorts of devils, and they are adept at gambling with cards. Is that what we call progress?"[35]

The despondent masses, the feudal elites, and the westernized elites were the three groups that the Malay radicals critiqued in their writings and activities. What emerged out of the amalgamation of ideas from Turkey, India, Burma, and Indonesia, as well as the Malay radicals' diagnoses of the problems of their time, was a brand of indigenous socialism that was dressed up in Malay and Islamic clothes. The Malay radicals believed that the Malayan economy and society should be run in ways that would ensure equality for all. The monopoly that certain social and political groups—the colonial state, the feudal elites, and the foreign races—had in the management of the country must be dismantled. The progress of colonial capitalism, which had cast a long shadow over Malaya and was progressively encroaching into Malay life in even the most remote of villages, must be resisted. Colonial capitalism, so the Malay radicals reasoned, had consigned the Malays to the margins of society. Holding on to the ideals of socialism also meant that the Malay radicals were committed to bringing about a more egalitarian society. All Malays must be provided with basic educational opportunities and rights to the ownership of land.[36]

The brand of socialism to which the Malay radicals subscribed had a spatial dimension. The KMM stressed that equality in society could only be achieved through the establishment of the Melayu Raya (sometimes referred to as Indonesia Raya), which would consist of the British and Dutch territories of Singapore, Malaya, Borneo, and the Dutch East Indies. The end of colonialism must usher in this new political arrangement that was seen as viable and appropriate because of the similarities in terms of ethnic stock, language, religion, and culture of the peoples in these different territories. This was not all. The realization of the Melayu Raya was necessary because it would bring back the glories of native empires to the Malays, such as Sriwijaya, Majapahit, the Malaccan Sultanate, and the Johor-Riau Sultanate, which had once ruled the region with integrity and fairness.

Melayu Raya, as Rustam Sani argues, "was one version of the Malay 'nation of intent' adopted by a group of Malays because they were more inclined towards an ethnicist concept of the Malay nation rather than because they were 'pro-Indonesian' as claimed by some writers."[37] Elaborating on the Melayu Raya ideal in one of his polemical pieces published in the *Majlis* newspaper, a member of the KMM wrote:

> Oh, my Malay people, the entire peninsula and the Indonesian archipelago are the proprietorship of our common ancestors, the Malays. What is known as Minangkabau, Bugis, Jawa, Brunei, Aceh, Lampung, Palembang, Rawa, Kampar, Kelantan, Perak, and so forth, are not nations but states. Our real identity is none other than "Malay." The entire Indonesia possesses customs akin to the peninsular Malays. Why then are we separated? It is a consequence of the machinations of two colonial powers, the Dutch in the Indonesian Archipelago and the British in the peninsula. But this fact should not change the unity that binds our people, a unity that would not yield to the effects of rain nor fracture by the clout of the sun.[38]

The origins of the Melayu Raya idea ought to be broached here, at least briefly. The concept emerged from the writings of teachers based in the SITC who were dissatisfied with the manner in which the Malay pasts had been conceptualized by British authors. In the school textbooks and articles written by administrator-scholars such as Richard Winstedt and Richard Wilkinson, for example, the "Malay archipelago" was often spatially limited to the Malay Peninsula, with references made to cultural connections and historical links with the nearby Riau-Lingga archipelago.[39] This was part of a larger colonial project of narrowing the geographical vision and scope of the Malay world to fit squarely into British notions of territorial boundaries. By painting a picture of the Malay Archipelago as consisting only of the Peninsula, with Riau as an appendix, the British also aimed to delimit the conception of Malayness to one that was less expansive and more parochial. The British hoped that this would pave the way for a new generation of Malays who would see themselves as different from the Malays in the Dutch East Indies. Such parochialisms and insularity would, in turn, stifle the making of cross-border alliances among the Malays in the region.

Malay teachers in the SITC were needled by British representations of the Malay Archipelago in the school textbooks. The man at the forefront of the venture to provide new interpretations that reflected Malay conceptions was Abdul Hadi Haji Hassan. His three-volume book entitled *Sejarah Alam Melayu* (The History of the Malay World), published between 1925 and 1929, detailed the origins of the Malays since ancient times, the achievements of the Hindu kingdoms in Java, and the spread of Islam in the region, right up to the coming of European colonialism. Geographically, the Malay world is depicted as areas covering Java, Borneo, and Sumatra under the term *tanah Melayu* (Malay lands). Although Abdul Hadi himself never used the term *Melayu Raya*, his radical notions about the Malay world provided the germ for the Melayu Raya ideal that the Malay radicals believed in.[40] Another alternative explanation for the Malay radicals' use of the term *Melayu Raya* or *Indonesia Raya* could be found in the gripping work of Tan Malaka entitled *Massa Actie*, which the Malay radicals read with much interest.[41]

That the Melayu Raya was a utopian projection of the past is quite apparent to modern-day historians, but it was less so for the Malay radicals. Native empires in the region were never united to begin with. Moreover, the Malays never had a well-defined regional identity, as the Malay radicals claimed. But such a utopian vision had to be invoked, even if it were not realized, or in fact could never be realized; the mere invocation of it would open up the Malay mind to possibilities above and beyond what had been invented and set in place by the colonial powers. The Melayu Raya utopia, in other words, served as a denunciation of the colonial situation and the declaration of a brave new world that the Malays could shape with their own hands. It was a "target for both action and reflection, and thus offers the possibility of a revolutionary praxis."[42]

One element that the Malay radicals downplayed as one of their sources of inspiration during this period was Islam. This is not to say that Islam was unimportant to the Malay radicals. They were "Muslims" at heart in no uncertain terms and even recruited members from the Islamic schools. They knew that Islam was a powerful rallying cry and could function as a uniting force for the Malays because the faith has exerted an enormous influence on the Malays for many centuries. But the Malay radicals saw that using Islam as the basis of their ideology could be both an asset and a liability because the ideology had been used by religious groups to describe the problems affecting the Malays as the result of the lack of faith and belief. This, to the Malay radicals, was a shallow and defective supposition. The root causes of the decline of the Malays lay not in religious backwardness per se but rather in the political, economic, and social barriers that had structured the Malay sense of self. Poverty, the lack of opportunity, poor education, social estrangement, political impotence, feudal traditions, and colonial exploitation were crucial stumbling blocks that needed to be addressed first because they formed the very foundations upon which Islam was lived and practiced.[43]

The Program of Action

A new collective had been founded, the ideology defined, and the roles of each and every member determined. It was time to get to work. One of the earliest tasks that the Malay radicals undertook was to recruit as many members into the KMM as possible. This was achieved in several ways. The Malay radicals capitalized on personal friendships and kinship ties to bring in new members. Siblings, cousins, and members of extended families were

the first people the Malay radicals approached, and they were inducted into the KMM through political classes. Following that, close friends, colleagues, neighbors, and students were called upon. Abdullah C. D. recalled his neighbor's role in bringing him into the fold of the Malay radicals. Besides lending him books written by authors such as Tan Malaka, Abdullah recalled that Pak Inu "explained to me the meaning of freedom, colonialism, revolution, and so forth. He would also explain Malaya's place as one of Britain's colonial possessions and illuminate KMM's function in the larger scheme of things. According to him, KMM was an organization of Malays in Malaya who will struggle for independence from the British."[44]

The third group that the Malay radicals targeted was the working-class Malays and peasants from the villages where they lived. This was part of a wider plan to transform the KMM into a mass-based populist movement. The Malay radicals also targeted those youth organizations that were on the verge of closure or had yet to establish their foothold in a fast-changing Malayan society. The *Persatuan Belia* (Youth Association) of Kuala Lumpur and the *Persatuan Pemuda Bawean* (Bawean Youth Association), along with youths from technical, trade, and agricultural colleges, were formally inducted into the KMM as new members.[45]

A conscious and all-out effort was also made to entice the literary elites. These included journalists as well as those persons who failed to join the colonial civil service or who had resigned from it. The Malay radicals saw that journalists could play a vital role in spreading political ideas within the Malay community. Ibrahim Yaacob and Ishak Haji Muhammad were most vigorous in seeking talented journalists to become members of the KMM. Among the many Malay journalists who were brought into the fraternity were A. Samad Ahmad and Ahmad Boestamam. Both men became known in the post–World War II period as writers who penned accounts of the struggles of Malay nationalists. Although not part of the pioneering batch of the KMM, joining the group just weeks prior to the outbreak of the war, Ahmad Boestamam rose rapidly to become a radical youth leader and the Don Quixote of Malay radicalism in the late 1940s. Fired by the ideals of nationalism, socialism, and anticolonialism, he wrote more than thirty-three books and pamphlets of varying genres, including novels, poems, short stories, literary criticism, political manifestos, and biographies, which were rooted in his day-to-day encounters with prejudice and subaltern resistance to colonial power and class oppression.[46]

The strategy to induct Malays who failed to join the colonial civil service or had resigned from it proved to be successful for a few key reasons. Entry into the Malay Administrative Service (MAS), a special division within the

larger colonial civil service, was competitive and extremely difficult, mainly due to the stringent qualifying tests, interviews, and examinations. For many ordinary Malays, such lofty employment criteria meant that only the sons of the feudal elites would qualify for recruitment into the service. Even if a son of a peasant could somehow manage to make his way into the MAS, he would find himself faced with other obstacles that would soon break his spirits. The prospect for promotion after many years of dedicated service was discouraging. Salary increments for Malay officers were rare. Malay officers were also treated as inferior to the Europeans at the level of everyday interaction and even at social events.[47] The frustration and disappointment that these Malays felt toward the colonial service was something that the KMM used to recruit potential members and supporters of their movement. They were correct in their calculations. Close to a dozen persons who joined the KMM prior to the outbreak of the Second World War were former officers of the MAS or those who harbored grievances because of their failure to enter the colonial civil service. One such person was Othman Mohd Noor, who worked as a typist in the MAS.[48] Mustapha Hussain brought him into the KMM.

Finally, the Malay radicals worked hard to attract religious teachers into the fraternity. Moved by the array of religious reforms started by the Al-Imam group, by To' Kenali in Kelantan as well as Malay-Indonesian students who came back from Egypt in the 1920s, religious teachers in many parts of Malaya were already politically conscious by the 1930s. They established religious schools and introduced students to nationalist writings in Malay, English, and Arabic. The students were also exposed to reformist journals such as *Pedoman Masyarakat*, *Chenderawaseh*, and *Pewarta Deli*, and were encouraged to write in other publications known as *Pengasuh*, *Al-Hidayah*, *Kenchana*, and *Putera*. Upon graduation, many of these religious school graduates joined Malay literary clubs and welfare organizations. A select few nestled themselves in a Malay-Indonesian network called the *al-Jam'iyya al-Khairiyya al-Talabiyya al-Azhariyya al-Jawa* (The Welfare Association of Malay Students at al-Azhar), also known for short as al-Jam'iyya. The al-Jam'iyya published their own journals, the most influential being the *Seruan Azhar* (The Call of al-Azhar), which attacked the excesses of colonialism.

Seruan Azhar became a bridge between the religious teachers and the KMM. The religious teachers saw that the KMM could serve as a vehicle for them to pursue some of the aspirations promoted by the journal. Among the graduates of Al-Azhar University who joined the KMM was Othman Abdullah, a writer and manager of the *Majlis* newspaper, who later founded

the Persatuan Melayu Selangor (PMS). Attracted by the pan-Malayan outlook of the KMM and moved by the sincerity and commitment of the Malay radicals toward the cause of Malayan independence and noncooperation with the British, he joined the KMM in 1939.[49] By 1941 religious-trained activists such as Ustaz Abu Bakar al-Baqir, Abdul Kadir Adabi, Ibrahim Fikri, Asaad Shukri, Haji Nik Yusuf bin Haji Ismail, and the legendary Dr. Burhanuddin Al-Helmy, all graduates of local religious schools, became KMM members, coloring the organization with religious overtones yet ensuring that Islam did not appear to be the overarching ideology of the KMM.[50]

One group that was left out by the Malay radicals was the womenfolk. Although they did see much potential in women, who were already establishing organizations in the 1930s, the Malay radicals felt that the time was not ripe for women to enter into radical politics, given the conservative gender rhetoric and attitudes found in the Malay community. This stance toward the role of women in politics was to change during the postwar years as more and more Malay women became aware of the part they could play as political activists. More spaces were created within radical organizations and parties to include women. The Angkatan Wanita Sedar (AWAS)—a radical women's organization—was one of the groups that pushed the boundaries of Malay radicalism in ways unprecedented in the history of Malaya.

All told, the KMM membership grew to more than 150 persons by the third year after its founding. By early 1941 branches were established throughout Malaya in Kajang, Perak, Pulau Pinang, Trengganu, Kelantan, Kedah, Pahang, Singapore, Malacca, and Johore. The KMM headquarters was located at Seremban along Swettenham Road.[51] The Malay radicals failed to recruit members in the Malay state of Perlis, in part due to the hold that the Malay royalty and aristocratic elites had over the local population. This slow growth in membership was also connected with the stigmatization of anything that was new and out of the ordinary. Malays regarded the KMM as yet another offshoot of the Kaum Muda movement that was sparked and sustained by Shaikh Al-Hadi and his Al-Imam group.

The Kaum Muda was regarded as wayward and impetuous, challenging traditions, defying social conventions, and disturbing the normalcy of life and public tranquility. Malay religious elites of the traditionalist religious mindset, the "Kaum Tua (Old Group)" as they came to be known, advised their followers to keep away from the KMM because they felt it was propagating a modernist version of Islam that was contrary to the traditional and customary understanding of the religion in the Malay world. Among the contentious issues at hand were the *Maulid* (the celebration of the Prophet's birthday) as well as *tahlil* and *talkin* (the recitation of Quranic verses to bring

blessings to the living as well as the deceased), which some members of the KMM saw as unacceptable innovations (*bid'ah*) in Islam.[52] Adding to this was the nature of the politics that the KMM displayed. The ordinary Malay saw radical politics as antifeudal, anti-British, and smacking of communism, an ideology that was regarded as un-Islamic and godless, and which was therefore to be abhorred.[53]

Certain other dynamics made the KMM unattractive to the population at large. It was seen as elitist and lacking in sufficient resources to pursue its aims. The composition of the KMM's central and district committees made this apparent. All of the leaders belonged to the literate class of the Malay community, and there was very little representation of the illiterate classes in the rank and file of the organization. This is ironic, considering that the Malay radicals saw the illiterate masses as the potential support base of the KMM. Such a lack of attention to having leaders that represented the day-to-day concerns and sorrows of peasants, fishermen, and the like made the KMM's declaration of fighting for the cause of the masses appear to be mere lip service. Making the KMM even more unappealing was the inability of its key leaders to contribute their time to the movement because many had to work long hours or take on two jobs to make ends meet.

To this should be added the lack of a manifesto or constitution that was made known to the public. This was a product of the obsession with the likelihood of infiltration. The Malay radicals were paranoid about the British security agencies to the extent that they assigned members to act as guards and comb the vicinity where meetings were held. So fearful were the Malay radicals of infiltration and espionage that they implemented the ritual of checking each other's pockets to assure all parties that there was nothing to hide and that no one was an agent of the British. When one member, Othman Mohd Noor, was suspended from work for a few months for reasons that may have been job-related rather than political, the Malay radicals saw it as a clear sign that the British were out to get them.[54] Because of this obsession with the possibility of repressive acts by the colonial state, no manifesto was printed.

Since no manifesto was put into writing, there were many interpretations of what the KMM actually stood for. Some members held that the organization hoped to provide motivation and inculcate a strong sense of self-worth and political awareness to the Malay youths in particular, while others openly declared that the group aimed to address the marginalization of the Malays and work toward national self-determination. Whichever interpretation was the correct one, and whether all of these interpretations formed different facets of the KMM's ideas and ideals, the lack of a well-thought-out and

publicized document that anyone could refer to had the effect of making the Malay public confused about what the KMM actually sought to achieve. All was not lost, for the Malay radicals did devise relatively effective strategies to attract others into the KMM. Political classes were conducted to ensure that the few dedicated members were trained and exposed to the ideas of socialism and the dream of establishing the Melayu Raya. These political classes also functioned as springboards to identify potential leaders and movers of KMM. New recruits imbibed the spirit of sacrifice for one's motherland and were also taught slogans of Indonesian politicians to make them aware of the shared links between Malaya and Indonesia. Other than these classes, key KMM members were also assigned to conduct visits to all Malay states so as to speak to other Malay organizations about the KMM, asking for support to enable the new organization to grow. Another motive of these visits was to stimulate the Malays to think deeply about their predicament.[55]

More crucially, the Malay radicals engaged in an ideological battle in defense of the ideals of freedom while attacking the various forces that had contributed to their backwardness and subjugation. Newspapers and magazines became strategic launching pads in the struggle for the hearts and minds of the Malays. The Malay radicals published novels, short stories, and travelogues to reach out to the public who were keen to read books that were light in content. It was in this aspect of the KMM movement that the Malay radicals had their widest impact. They managed to generate interest about broader political and societal issues in Malay society, despite being unable to attract the masses to readily commit themselves to political activities.

Ideological Battle on the Racial and Territorial Fronts

Ibrahim Haji Yaacob and Ishak Haji Muhammad were most heavily involved in waging ideological battles against all segments of the Malayan society and the British. This is not at all astonishing given that both men were journalists in leading Malay newspapers of the time. This dynamic duo flooded newspapers such as *Warta Malaya*, *Utusan Zaman*, *Utusan Melayu*, and *Majlis* with commentaries and articles that provoked and stirred the sensibilities of the Malays. Their writings invited impassioned dialogue and debates about the Malay plight. The place where they were based made their writings even more persuasive and incendiary. They were based, for the most part, in Singapore, an island colony that was well known for its cosmopolitan dynamism and served as a conduit for travelers and activists from the region and elsewhere. Singapore eclipsed the rest of Malaya in terms of

new communication technologies, such as wireless radio broadcasting that provided news and other information from the wider world.[56] The two men were certainly affected by this environment and the forms of knowledge that were readily made available to them, unlike in mainland Malaya. They also witnessed at first hand the battle of ideologies that had already been waged in other non-Malay communities, most notably among the Chinese who were divided across communist, capitalist, republican, and pro-British lines.

Ibrahim contributed to KMM's ideological battle by writing and lecturing about three main issues: race (bangsa), "Malay" territorial sovereignty, and the exploitative policies of the colonial state. He delivered talks across the Malay Peninsula in places such as religious schools, youth associations, community clubs, and even the villages, to thoroughly discuss these issues. These talks were first published as short articles in newspapers that were later compiled into a book that is now regarded as a cornerstone of Malay nationalist literature.

The book was entitled *Melihat Tanah Ayer*, and the choice of these three keywords for the book's cover was not incidental. These keywords were "elements of an active vocabulary—a way of recording, investigating, and presenting problems of meaning in the area in which the meaning of culture and society have formed."[57] Ibrahim's overt intention in choosing these keywords was to urge the Malays to pay close attention to what was happening around them, to them and to others in their midst. The word *melihat* in the title of the book connoted several things. It meant seeing, surveying, mapping, and recording various aspects of the landscape, which included people, places, events, and the things around them. But Ibrahim also used *melihat* to mean something more. He wanted Malays to closely examine their conditions to assess what had happened to them, and what would happen to them in the future. *Melihat* was placed along with the words *tanah ayer* (homeland) as part of the book's title to direct readers' attention away from their immediate surroundings. Ibrahim was calling upon the Malays to transcend their inordinate attachment to their homes, their villages, and the states to which they belonged, and to learn to see the Peninsula as a unified entity. Through this, he hoped that his readers could fully appreciate the Malay problem in its totality.

The term *tanah ayer* that Ibrahim used in his book's title had already become current before the Second World War. Many Malay historical and creative works had popularized the notion of homeland to argue that Malaya as a whole, and not just the state and the village, was the home of the Malays. One such writer was Abdul Majid Zainuddin, who wrote about the *tanah ayer* in relation to the rights and privileges of the Malay people.[58] *Tanah*

ayer as defined by Abdul Majid consisted of the Straits Settlements, the Federated Malay States (FMS), and the Unfederated Malay States (UMS). This conception of a Malayan geobody was, of course, a product of colonial rule. Through maps and cartographic visualizations, the British introduced the idea of Malaya as a geographical entity. These maps were taught to students and schoolteachers, and to district officers and clerks, many of whom were Malays who became acquainted with the idea of a geographical entity termed "Malaya." In time, as the Malayan "geobody gains additional meanings and values, it becomes a force pushing for the shifts of meanings of discourses too."[59]

Ibrahim knew that pushing the meanings of discourses about the tanah ayer would enable him to capture the attention of Malays and to make them more responsive toward their situation and the importance of supporting the KMM. He propounded the view that the chief reason for the dire situation of the Malays was the lack of consciousness about their shared identity. Malays were too steeped in their loyalties to their states and their sub-ethnic groups. Such parochial attitudes had created divisions within their own community. The locally born Malays would brand those who came from other parts of the archipelago as immigrant Malays (referred to as *anak dagang*, translated as "traders"). Most Malays would also describe themselves as *orang Kelantan*, *orang Perak*, *orang Bugis*, *orang Minangkabau*, and *orang Jawa* rather than to simply say that they were "Malay." Such provincial identification and practices of othering were, according to Ibrahim, superficial at best because almost all Malays in the Peninsula with the exception of the *orang Asli* (aboriginal peoples) came from elsewhere in the region. He writes:

> Ethnic and racial sentiments among persons hailing from Minangkabau, Baweans, Javanese, Mandailings, Banjarese, Malukus and other backgrounds still persists particularly so in Perak. Such sentiments are less noticeable in Selangor. In Negeri Sembilan, only the Baweans, the Banjarese and other sub-ethnic groups are still manifestly proud of the countries of origins. In Perak, local born Malays would differentiate themselves from those who came from other parts of the Malay world, and even if they are worse off than those "outsiders," they would look down at the Banjarese, Mandailings, people originating from Kampar, Javanese, Baweans, and so forth. Aren't they aware of their own origins?[60]

Intra-ethnic splits and hostile factionalism had helped put the Malays in a position of weakness. Many organizations established in the name of

sub-ethnic groups and places of origin had small membership rolls. These organizations showed little activity and were stifled by the lack of funding due to the already-depressed economic position of the Malays in general. In the northern parts of Malaya right down to the city of Singapore at the southern tip of the Peninsula, these divisions made Malays dependent on the Arabs, the Indians, and the Chinese for jobs and other forms of financial aid. Because Malays were not able to marry their energies and resources together for their own common good, they were left behind in business and education, and even in the administration of their own country.

One way out of this quandary was to promote and inculcate a frame of reference that could unite the Malays. That frame of reference was bangsa. Ibrahim's writings about bangsa were a creative synthesis of prevailing views about the concept. He drew on elements of the thinking developed by prominent Malay writers such as Za'ba (Zainal Abidin bin Ahmad) and Abdul Rahim Kajai, as well as foreign authors like Rupert Emerson, to conceive of the Malay bangsa in highly politicized and activist terms. Za'ba, in particular, portrayed Malays as hybrids, a blend of peoples from across the Malay world that included the Jakuns, Sumatrans, Acehnese, and Bugis. Malays also intermarried with "*bangsa luar*" ("outside or foreign bangsa"), namely the Indian and Arab Muslims who had come to the Peninsula many hundreds of years earlier. While the Malays can be said to be a hybrid group by virtue of their mixed backgrounds, intermarriages that occurred within their own community and the unique customs and lifestyles that they have developed for several generations in Malaya, have made them distinct from other communities. It was this uniqueness that prompted Za'ba to proclaim the existence of a Malay bangsa. For him, the Malay bangsa identity was greater than the sum of the Malays' sub-ethnic and hybrid origins.[61]

Za'ba's experiment with the bangsa notion fell on deaf ears, and it was only more than a decade later, in 1939, that the notion of bangsa became foundational, partly due to references made to the term in many magazines and newspapers published at that time. The polemical writings of Abdul Rahim Kajai, regarded as the "father of Malay journalism," made the bangsa idea sharper than before. Kajai rejected the hybridity that Za'ba espoused. Malays should be understood as a group of people native to the Malay world, whose ancestors had been domiciled in the region for many centuries. This included peoples from the Dutch East Indies, the Malay Peninsula, and also the indigenous peoples in the region. "*Takrif Melayu*" ("the definition of who is a Malay") was simple, according to Kajai. It excludes Arabs, Indians, and Chinese, even if they had embraced the religion of Islam, practiced Malay culture and customs, and were accepted as part of the Malay community.

Kajai joined the chorus of Malay exclusivist descriptions of Arabs and Indians as DKA (Darah Keturunan Arab, or "those of Arab descent") and DKK (Darah Keturunan India, or "those of Indian descent") to emphasize the different lineages of these two ethnic groups and strengthen the point that they were not to be categorized as "Malay."[62] Forceful and provocative, these ideas did not however gain much traction in the minds of the ordinary Malays, who accepted Arabs and Indians as part of the Malay community.

A disciple of Kajai and an admirer of Za'ba's writings, Ibrahim took on these ideas of Malayness to rally the community toward embracing the concept of bangsa. His was an interpretation of bangsa that had a socialistic coloring to it. To be part of the bangsa community, Ibrahim reasoned, was to acknowledge that all men are equal. The different titles in society—Tengkus, Rajas, Datuks, Tuans, Inchis—were but constructs created by the ruling class. Such constructs should not blind the Malays from being conscious (*sedar*) of the fact that they belong to one united race. Ibrahim, like other Malay writers of the awakened generation of the 1930s, was not particularly clear about whether this Malay bangsa shared some common biological traits. He must have known that to argue through that line of reasoning would open up the question of "who was or was not a Malay" to limitless possibilities. Malays were not necessarily brown in color, as some of his contemporaries would argue; in fact, they could be yellow (read: the color of most Chinese). Nor did Ibrahim follow in Kajai's path to exclude the Arabs or the Indians, for that would limit the support that the KMM badly needed from those two affluent social groups.

Ibrahim's notion of bangsa, therefore, was one that was centered on a robust commitment to territory and to unity among the people who were born and bred in the Malay homeland. Malays must be loyal to the place where they were born, and they ought to affiliate themselves to a united community. That is to say, one could not be a true Malay if their allegiance lay elsewhere, be it in India, the Arab World, or China. In addition, one could not be part of the Malay community while rejecting the idea of the unity of the Malay bangsa.[63] The influence of Ibrahim's writings may never be known. However, it is known that *Melihat Tanah Ayer* was widely circulated and that the first edition of this book was quickly sold. There is thus a good reason to infer that Ibrahim's idea of bangsa did sink deeply into Malay minds, and that the call for unity under one common umbrella was slowly taking shape and coming into sharp focus.

While Ibrahim had written a text that was meant to display the "facts out there" so as to publicize why the Malays were in the state they were in and what would become of them should they remain divided, Ishak Haji Muhammad capitalized on his strengths as a writer of satirical fiction to

highlight the economic and political barriers that stood in the way of the Malays. Ishak used the short stories (*cerpen*) that he wrote and published in newspapers such as *Warta Ahad* and *Utusan Zaman* to fortify Ibrahim's main points. He saw short stories as the best means to focus attention on some of the long-standing problems of the Malays because newspaper readers enjoyed reading fictional writings more than long commentaries about politics and difficult issues of the day. Furthermore, short stories provided writers like Ishak with subtle and indirect means to attack the colonial regime and the ruling classes. Ishak's experience in the police force and as a legal officer had informed him that these short stories were seldom taken seriously by the security services. Still, such writings were powerful in making the Malays more attentive to their marginal position and helping them to eventually see the value of supporting movements such as the KMM.[64]

In his short story entitled "Rumah Besar Tiang Sebatang" ("A Large House with One Pillar"), Ishak tells Malay readers of the arrogance and treacherous attitude of the British and their well-concocted schemes to strip Malay rulers of their powers and Malays of their land.[65] The same sardonic plots can be seen in other short stories such as "Cerita Awang Putat" ("The Story of Awang Putat"), "Dari Perangkap Ke Penjara, Kemudian Lalu ke Syurga" ("From Being Trapped in Prison to Heaven"), and "Dolly—Bidadari dari Shanghai" ("Dolly—The Maiden from Heaven"). The short story entitled "Dolly—The Maiden from Heaven" was about the adventures of a beautiful girl from China who surreptitiously entered Malaya. Dolly soon came under the sway of Chinese conspirators who managed to persuade her to become the mistress of a Malay raja, as part of a long-term plan by the conspirators to take over Malaya. Dolly was against the plan and proposed instead the strategy of false assimilation of the Chinese into the Malay community, as exemplified by the Indians and Arabs who had pretentiously proclaimed that they were natives. She acted on her plans by marrying the son of a Malay ruler. Malays developed love and affection for Dolly because she showed a strong commitment to their well-being. Her own home became a communal gathering point and a hub for religious activities.

A few years passed and the time was ripe for Dolly to execute her ultimate plan. She called upon the Chinese to demand citizenship rights similar to those of the natives in Malaya. However, her plans were foiled by a group of men belonging to a group called "Merampas Kembali Tanah ayer dan Harta Benda" ("Grabbing Back the Homeland and Possessions"). They had been tracking her movements and insidious plans and were waiting for an opportune moment to take her captive. Dolly was interrogated and released only when she agreed to stay permanently in Malaya. The story ended with Dolly repenting her past sins and deeds by embracing Islam and marrying one of her Malay captors.[66]

Many Malay short-story writers of the 1940s built on Ishak's tropes about the Europeans, Chinese, and other races.[67] Cumulatively, such writings revealed a strong sense of antagonism against non-Malays, and especially toward the Europeans who controlled much of Malaya's wealth and its administration. What Ishak, Ibrahim, and other writers who shared KMM's aspirations had done through their writings was to reveal some of the key weaknesses of the Malay community, while offering pathways to freedom from oppression. Divisions, lack of will, greed, avarice, and mutual animosity had made the community vulnerable to external exploitation. Hope was, however, not lost, for in their writings, both Ibrahim and Ishak showed attempts by the Malays to take control of their own destiny and regain what they had lost. Both men sought to show the crucial roles that the KMM could play and how both of them, as self-appointed leaders of the community, were at the forefront of the effort to push the Malay community forward.

But just as these writings and ideological battles were slowly taking hold in the minds of the populace, the KMM was beset by many difficulties. Differences sharpened between key leaders of the organization and the radical movement. Among the key factors that made such differences apparent were individual temperaments, educational backgrounds, occupations, and ideas about the direction that the KMM should take. Although such cleavages did not result in a total breakdown, the dissolution of the KMM, or the abandoning of their collective aims, they nevertheless did contribute to development of cliques within the group. These cliques took it upon themselves to engage in activities that reflected the appetites of certain influential personalities, at the expense of the movement as a whole.

Two main cliques were evident, centered on Ibrahim and Mustapha respectively. Ibrahim commanded the respect of Malay-educated KMM members who shared his strategy of gaining Malayan independence through militant means. Adhering to the principle that "the enemy of my enemy is my friend," Ibrahim, along with Hassan Manan, Abdul Karim Rashid, and Mohd Isa Mahmud, maintained that the KMM should remain small. They also secretly arranged meetings with the Japanese, acting as spies in preparation for the invasion of Malaya. Mustapha, on the other hand, wielded influence over the English-educated KMM members. He held that the KMM should remain independent of any group, be it the Rajas, the British, or the Japanese, in order for the organization to gain respect from the Malay community as a group with integrity and strong principles. His approach to gaining independence, unlike Ibrahim's, was that of a bottom-up organizer

and mobilizer. Mustapha and his associates held that a revolution against the British should grow out of mass support for what the KMM stood for, unlike Ibrahim, who believed that it was more convenient to get an external power to fight alongside the Malays to gain independence.

Adding to the clash of personalities was the manner in which decisions were made. Ibrahim passed many important resolutions without prior consultation with the key members. He demanded full compliance from all members and expected them to see the wisdom of his approach in managing the KMM. The turning point came in April 1941, when Ibrahim bought the *Warta Malaya* newspaper company for $18,000 from an Arab merchant, Syed Hussein Alsagoff. The plan was to use the newspaper office as the center for espionage activities. The newspaper would function as a tool to spread anti-British propaganda and to prepare the Malay masses for Japanese rule in the Peninsula. The Malay radicals close to Ibrahim were incorporated into a group called KAME, which meant tortoise in Japanese.[68]

After buying the *Warta Malaya* newspaper, Mustapha developed suspicions that Ibrahim was moonlighting as a spy for the Japanese in preparation for the invasion of Malaya. He knew that what Ibrahim did would soon earn the Malay radicals a place behind bars should the plot be uncovered. Advising Ibrahim to steer clear of such schemes was a futile option. Before he was able to disassociate himself and his followers from Ibrahim's maneuvers, British intelligence arrested Mustapha along with more than a hundred Malay radicals on 4 December 1941. In a report sent to the Colonial Office in London, it was stated that:

> A search of his [Ibrahim Haji Yaacob's] premises showed that Ibrahim's organization had agents in all states and settlements of the Peninsula. On the information received one hundred and ten Malays were taken into custody in the FMS, Malacca, Johore and Singapore.[69]

The KMM had fallen into disarray, and the dreams of Melayu Raya were smashed in the faces of the Malay radicals.

Chapter Three

Perjuangan under the Flag of the Rising Sun

› NO ONE FORESAW that the once majestic and powerful British Empire would someday crumble under the onslaught of an Asian conqueror. For more than a century, British subjects in Asia were made to believe that the Crown was able to protect its colonies and ensure that any threats to the empire would be dealt with swiftly. Britain was, after all, *the* superpower of its time. Its naval forces were decidedly more formidable than those of any other nation during the heyday of European imperialism. In the air and on the ground, British troops and weaponry projected the image of a colossus that could strike anywhere at will at any given time. But as the war in Europe swung into its full stride, the myth of Britain's superiority progressively waned. Hasty preparations were made in Malaya and Singapore to withstand the impending assault by the Japanese.

Old beliefs die hard, unfortunately. Even as the threat of Japanese invasion loomed large on the horizon, the British prime minister, Winston Churchill, stressed in all seriousness and with an assured faith that "should Japan enter the war on one side and the United States on ours, ample naval forces will be available to contain Japan by long-range controls in the Pacific. The Japanese navy would never attempt a siege of Singapore with a hostile, superior American fleet, in the Pacific."[1] At midnight on 8 December 1941, Churchill's "never" became a reality as the first wave of Japanese marines landed at Kota Bharu in the northern part of Malaya under the cover of dawn. The Malay radicals who were doing time behind bars not far from the site of the invasion were fully anticipating the attack. They knew that it would not be long before a new order would be installed in Malaya. The new order, in their minds, would lay the foundations for

the spread of the radicalist ideology just as it would provide firm support toward establishment of the Melayu Raya.

From Kota Bharu, the Japanese army marched across the Malay Peninsula, encountering fierce opposition from armies loyal to the British Crown. Resisting the blitz of the attacking forces was, for want of a better description, "an imperial disaster" just as it revealed the ingenuity of the Imperial Japanese Army.[2] Acutely mindful that jungle terrain work made the movement of equipment and ammunition difficult, the Japanese formulated their offensive tactics through the use of the intelligence they had received, thanks to the help of the Malay radicals and dozens of other local spies recruited many months prior to the war. Detailed information about the terrain, paths within thick jungles, and British installations gave the Japanese an added advantage at overcoming the British troops and outflanking them in areas where they were firmly fortified. Another unconventional tactic was the use of bicycles to travel across the rural terrain of Malaya. The Japanese brought many of these bicycles for their landing in Kota Bharu. These human-powered vehicles, however, seldom lasted for more than several miles. While standard accounts of the rapidity of the offensive have created the belief that the use of bicycles made it all so startlingly easy for the Japanese soldiers to overwhelm their European nemesis and their subjects who were loyal to the Crown, the realities on the ground were different. As one Japanese platoon commander vividly recalled:

> It was really a hard march with no sleep and rest. Meanwhile, the road became a very small rough path on which we could no more ride bicycles. We hurried dragging our bicycles on the road or bearing them on our shoulders. Although we sometimes rode the bicycles, the very rough road often caused tyre punctures and sometimes even pedal fracture or chain displacement.[3]

With the aid of light tanks and air support from the superior Mitsubishi A6M Zero planes, the Japanese reached Kuala Lumpur within a month of their initial landing. Thereafter, one state after another fell to the Japanese, as the number of casualties mounted among the British, Australian, and Indian soldiers, as well as civilians. Malay radicals were released from prisons wherever the Japanese army was able to locate them. The Japanese army rounded up sixty of them and gave them orders to travel or march alongside the Japanese troops to locate other members of the KMM who had escaped internment by the British. Merely a month after the war in Malaya ended, a meeting was held in Taiping in the presence of Major Fujiwara Iwaichi, the chief of the F. Kikan, a Japanese military intelligence unit. The

Malay radicals were given strict instructions to abide by Japanese military plans in the endeavor to create an "Asia for Asians" and a "Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere" with Malaya as an important base. The Malay radicals were also expected to be loyal to the new order and to provide in-depth information about Malaya to ease Japanese administration of the country.[4]

For a while, the Malay radicals thought that the Japanese victory in Malaya was a victory for them too. They were not alone in believing this. Many rural Malays welcomed the Japanese invasion with hopes that they would soon enjoy economic prosperity and equal treatment previously unimaginable under British rule. Villagers in Kelantan went to the extent of volunteering to give food and aid to Japanese soldiers. They held thanksgiving prayers when their hometowns were taken over by the Imperial Japanese Army.[5] The positive attitude shown by the Malays was based on their previous experiences with Japanese expatriates, traders, and businessmen, who sold affordable goods to the locals while maintaining friendly relations with the Malay community. The Malays wanted a change from the degraded state they were in under the British. They believed that the Japanese were their Asian counterparts who would bring about that transformation.

A mythical dimension could explain the all-out support shown by Malays and Indonesian migrants from Java in particular toward the coming of the Japanese. They held the belief that the Japanese invasion was part of the fulfillment of the Joyoboyo prophecy, which predicted the looming installation of a Just Ruler (*Ratu Adil*) soon after the coming of a "yellow race" into the country. Many actually looked forward to a brief interlude under the Japanese for "as long as the life of corn (*saumure jagu)* or four and half months" before a native ruler would emerge and assist the local society to enter into an era of peace, prosperity, and social justice.[6]

Unbeknownst to them and to the rest of the Asian communities, the Japanese businessmen and migrants in Malaya and other parts of Southeast Asia were mostly working on the payroll of the Imperial government. Prior to their arrival in Southeast Asia, these expatriates were briefed in detail about cultivating "trust in the minds of the local people and an attitude of trust towards the Imperial Army. Then [gradually] they will be indoctrinated with the policy of the liberation in East Asia, so that they will be available for use in our [Japanese] operational schemes. Security of property rights and destruction of the hated white races' power should be [played up] in the propaganda."[7] The Japanese businessmen sold their products at cheap prices, mainly with the aim of getting the locals to see the benefits of Japanese rule in the near future. All Japanese expatriates working under the Imperial Japanese Army's directives built close relations with local leaders

to make them accustomed to the customs and practices of the Japanese, hoping that once Japanese rule was in place, these local leaders would be supportive of the new government.

By 15 February 1942, British Malaya and Singapore had fallen into the hands of the Japanese. The Japanese policy of giving Malay radicals a free hand to expand the KMM during this early period of occupation further boosted the members' confidence that fate had finally swung to their side. Malay radicals were given official recognition as "community leaders" by the Japanese Malayan Military Administration (MMA) during the few months following the formal surrender of British rule in Malaya. They were granted logistical and administrative support to induct young people from all corners of Malaya into its branches.

To give the Malay radicals more leverage to expand their appeal within the Malay community, the Japanese summarily closed all Malay newspapers and established new periodicals and newspapers. The *Semangat Asia, Fajar Asia*, and *Berita Malai* came under the influence of Ishak Haji Muhammad. He received help from his old mentor, Abdul Rahim Kajai, as well as other prominent journalists, namely Abdullah Kamel, Taharuddin Ahmad, Muhammad Zallehudin, and Abdul Samad Ismail. Although never a member of the KMM, Abdul Samad Ismail held radical views and identified with the ideals of the Malay radicals as well as their project of establishing the Melayu Raya. Because of his prodigious writings and radical activism, in his later years Abdul Samad Ismail gained the title "Malaysia's Jean-Paul Sartre," a designation that is perhaps too hyperbolic for someone who categorically denied that he was a "communist."[8] This notwithstanding, Abdul Samad and the Malay radicals worked closely with the Japanese to spread nationalist ideas to the Malay masses.

Malay radicals were also provided with basic military training during the first few months of the Japanese occupation of Malaya. They were trained in the use of firearms, and they were each given a red "F-sign" band to be placed on their arms and were instructed to draw the same F-sign at the doors of their houses to ensure their safety from being harassed by Japanese soldiers in their hunt for British agents. Ibrahim and Mustapha were given cars and other amenities to ease their work as community organizers and as interpreters. Mass rallies were immediately held from March right up to April 1942 in various states, where the Malay radicals would call upon youths to join the KMM and explain the aims and purposes of the KMM. During these mass events, much emphasis was given to the history of Malay struggles against colonial rule. The Malay radicals traced the history of the resistance struggle back to the fifteenth century, during the formative years

of European imperialism in the Malay world, and continued the narrative right up to the arrival of the Japanese, who were depicted as having come to liberate the Malay masses.[9] In other words, history and memory were used as tools during these rallies to pique people's interest in eventually becoming part of the KMM and showing support toward the Japanese administration.

It is therefore not strange that, from February to June 1942, the once-banned KMM suddenly received overwhelming interest from Malay youths, who joined the organization in large numbers. Membership from different parts of the Malay Peninsula and Singapore leaped to ten thousand. A small fee of one dollar was imposed on new members, and they were issued KMM cards that could be shown to Japanese guards at sentry posts. These cards would ensure that the KMM members would be safe from harm.[10] All of these developments seemed to signal that Malaya would soon be granted independence. Malay radicals such as Mustapha queried the Japanese on such a possibility. They were rebuffed, only to painfully realize that the British had gone and another colonial power was in their homeland to stay. For the Malay radicals, Japanese victory was a pyrrhic victory at best.

The lowest point of the Malay radicals' *perjuangan* (struggle) under the Flag of the Rising Sun came when the military administration declared that all Malay organizations were to be dissolved immediately, including the KMM. Although the Malay radicals were treated well as allies of the Japanese administration thereafter, they witnessed at first hand the brutality of the Japanese toward the Chinese and the violence that was meted out toward Malays and other communities in their midst. By June 1942 it was obvious to the Malay radicals that the Japanese were making use of them as cogs in their colonizing machinery. "This victory (of the Japanese) is not our victory," Mustapha Hussain declared in utter disappointment to his loyal followers.[11] Decisions had to be made on which course the Malay radicals should take. In view of the exigencies of their time and place, they chose different forms of struggle and collaboration, all of which were undertaken to ensure that the *perjuangan* and the dream of achieving Malaya's independence were kept alive, or at the very least, that the Malay radicals would still be alive to witness it.

Forms of Struggle and Collaboration

Malay radicals struggled to protect Malays from persecution and reprisals during these years of instability, uncertainty, and routine violence. Since they had first set foot in Malaya, Japanese soldiers exhibited

extreme brutality toward former Malay civil servants, particularly those in the uniformed services who gallantly resisted the invading force. Many Malay soldiers and policemen were summarily executed. Some were decapitated and their heads were put on display for public view. Dozens were tortured before they were bayoneted to death.[12] Others who escaped the wrath of Japanese soldiers during the initial stages of occupation were later arrested for owning radios or hiding British government-related materials. They were beaten up and sent to detention camps.

Making the already-difficult situation chronic was the much-feared Kempeitai and its agents. The Kempeitai was the military police force tasked solely with crushing civilian resistance to Japanese rule in occupied territories. Run by only a hundred or so Japanese officers, the establishment maintained its tentacles on the Malayan people through the help of local agents, who, as many accounts have testified, could be even more vindictive than the Kempeitai itself. The Kempeitai subjected Malays who were suspected of sympathizing with the British to severe treatment: beatings, water torture, electric shocks, burning, dislocation of limbs, and threats of execution. So dreaded and horrid were the Kempeitai and their agents that their deeds were seldom forgotten by survivors of that period. The Kempeitai became the subject of novels, short stories, plays, and films by Malay creative artists soon after the war. One novel written by Ahmad Murad Nasaruddin entitled *Nyawa di Hujung Pedang* (Life at the Edge of the Sword) depicts the daily life of Malay men who lived in constant fear of being killed by the Kempeitai throughout the Japanese occupation.[13] Ibrahim Chik, a member of the radical youth movement, the Angkatan Pemuda Insaf (API), which flourished after the war, recalled in his memoirs that the atrocities exhibited by the Kempeitai were episodes that he found very difficult to forget. Violence against civilians worsened day by day. "Because of this, it was difficult for anti-Japanese forces to expand their influence in Malay-dominated villages."[14]

The Malay radicals saw that the choice was between the devil and the deep blue sea. The deaths and anguish of ordinary people forced many to abandon their ideals and retreat into the kampungs, where they could live in isolation from the larger society. The Japanese had shown their true colors and were even worse than the British who preceded them. At no time in the history of Malaya had the Malay radicals witnessed the killings of so many people within such a short period of time, murders that were committed in cold blood and without mercy. True, the British had been brutal in suppressing the rebellions of Maharaja Lela and those that followed, but the colonial rulers avoided the magnification of a climate of fear soon after and sought to win back the colonial subjects, even though they were seldom successful.

The Japanese were different. And yet, the Malay radicals saw that the larger interests of the Malay community were at stake. As the stench of death filled the air, they collaborated with the Japanese to give detailed information about the Malay community and about possible British hideouts. This was a strategy to gain the trust of the Japanese as they strove to rescue as many former civil servants as they could from persecution and reprisals.[15]

One notable incident involved a gathering of Malay soldiers at Farrer Park in Singapore in late 1942. These Malay soldiers had fought and killed many Japanese troops during their last stand to defend Singapore. Following the British surrender, many Malay soldiers went into hiding for fear of reprisals. The Japanese arranged this gathering under the pretext of wanting to have a head count of war casualties and as a recruitment drive of servicemen who were willing to work with the new administration. Fully aware that the gathering of soldiers was a fabricated attempt by the Japanese to exact revenge on a segment of the Malay community, the Malay radicals moved into action to remind as many Malay soldiers as they could find to steer clear of the gathering at Farrer Park. Meantime, those who arrived at the venue were told to report to the Malay radicals stationed there who, in turn, provided detailed explanations to the Japanese that these soldiers were fighting in defense of their motherland and were not loyal servants of the British.[16] A Malay soldier by the name of Shaari bin Muhammad who barely survived such ordeals reminisced:

> The battles were proceeding up until the Pasir Panjang sector when myself and 18 other Malay soldiers were captured by a group of Japanese soldiers. I had a Tommy Gun in my possession then. The Japanese Captain raised his sword to decapitate me but I was fortunate to receive the help of a young man with an "F" on the wrist of his shirt who stopped the Japanese officer. . . . We were then taken by a KMM member to a building at Bukit Panjang and it was there that we met Mr Mustapha bin Haji Hussain. He instructed me as a leader to take stock of my men and to prepare food and lodging for the night. I also heard that two platoons of Malay soldiers under the command of Sergeant Major Mohd Noor were saved by Mr Mustapha and that they were placed in a nearby police station.[17]

In these and many other incidents, thousands of Malays were saved, including several royal family members who were safely escorted to their palaces.[18] Still, Malay soldiers seldom escaped detention as prisoners of war and were eventually made to work as forced laborers, working to their deaths on railways and construction sites. Although the Malay radicals saved many

lives during this period, they could not stop the Japanese from murdering many Malay soldiers and civilians at random.[19]

To collaborate with the Japanese for the sake of evading persecution and reprisals meted out to the common people was to place oneself in a state of constant peril. It required the application of the art of deception and the skill of inventing reasons as to why certain people ought to face discrimination and why others should be spared the harsh punishments of the Japanese. This was a struggle the Malay radicals had to undergo that often required them to go against their conscience for the sake of the common good of the Malays. The Malay radicals also had to win the trust and respect of the Japanese, who were usually distrustful of the very people from whom they demanded compliance and cooperation. The Malay radicals gained confidence from the Japanese by promptly completing the tasks that the Japanese assigned to them.

This was not without setbacks. Some Malay radicals were caught helping fellow Malays by bending the rules and breaking the orders the Japanese had given to them. Their punishments included physical violence and insults hurled by Japanese officers. But these forms of punishment meant nothing in a context where the threat of death for treason was ever-present. To be slapped by Japanese soldiers was undeniably something that all radicals accepted, no matter how important they thought they were. Many were even kicked and beaten when they forgot to bow to the Japanese.[20]

Collaboration with the Japanese was also seen as necessary by the Malay radicals as a way to gain access to resources and to obtain special favors from the occupiers.[21] For example, at the Batu Pahat branch of the KMM (which was by then defunct), Malay radicals acted as petitioners for requests to purchase more rice for villagers. They helped many Malays to gain employment, and to buy, sell, and transport goods from one state to another. Most Malays then knew that the Malay radicals wielded some influence in that context. In return for the favors they obtained from the Malay radicals, many Malays offered small tokens of appreciation and kind words of thanks.

Not all of the Malay radicals were struggling and collaborating for causes far larger than themselves. Faced with making a choice between risking one's life for the preservation of other people or trying to reap as much gain as possible from the few opportunities that were made available, a number of Malay radicals chose the latter option. Some Malay radicals collaborated with the Japanese by accepting positions as journalists, radio broadcasters, and office workers. Others worked as teachers in local schools to help the Japanese fulfill their long-term project to Nipponize the Malay society by making Malays more familiar with the Japanese customs, language, and way

of life. These jobs seldom paid more than what the British companies and other institutions had offered prior to the war.

So low were the salaries of schoolteachers that many did not report for work on most days of the week in order to earn some extra cash elsewhere. A large number of these Malay teachers resigned from their jobs and joined Japanese companies as laborers and office workers.[22] More crucially, being in close contact with the Japanese through any form of employment enabled the Malay radicals to live a decent life even under military rule. Since the wages they earned from their jobs were insufficient, some Malay radicals moonlighted by engaging in black-market trade, while others planted food crops in their own backyards. Had the Malay radicals not worked with the Japanese and gotten the most out of the wartime economy, they would have lived in deep poverty throughout those three long years.

Through the Japanese, the Malay radicals also developed their power and influence in society. The Malay radicals realized that the aristocracy and the British-trained bureaucratic elites had fallen out of favor soon after the conquest of Malaya by the Japanese. The time was ripe to fill this void. They sought to influence the Japanese to impress upon the Malays that feudalism must be abolished. One way to plant the seeds of a new power base for themselves was to exercise some form of direct influence over the lives of the Malays. This was something that the aristocrats could not do in that context, at least not during the immediate aftermath of the Japanese invasion. Malay radicals demonstrated their power by distributing special food rations and issuing letters of safe conduct to the Malays. This led many ordinary Malays to regard the Malay radicals as their new patrons, much to the chagrin of the Malay aristocrats and former bureaucrats. A segment within the Malay aristocratic and bureaucratic elite knew that the only option was to cooperate with the Malay radicals, since the Japanese had endowed the radicals with some powers. Many members of the Malay aristocracy actually joined the KMM out of pragmatism. This new crop of members included Datuk Onn bin Jaafar in Johore, Tengku Mohammad bin Sultan Ahmad in Pahang, Tengku Mohammad bin Tengku Besar in Negeri Sembilan, Datuk Hamzah bin Abdullah in Selangor, and Raja Shariman in Perak, among many others. These elites led some of the KMM branches and upheld the ideals of the movement.[23]

The test of the Malay radicals' character, of course, came with the new powers, privileges, and occupations that they had received from the Japanese. While many used their new positions and authority to help as many people as they could or to obtain as many resources as they could for their own survival, other Malay radicals used their new power to harm their fellow Malays. For example, Onan Haji Siraj abused his position as an enforcement officer for

the Malay community to instill fear in the minds of villagers. He made it his personal mission to expose all those who had worked closely with the British. A Malay policeman recalled that, when the Japanese arrested him, Onan Haji Siraj was one of his interrogators. Onan repeatedly threatened him with "all sorts of nasty words among which was that I would be killed. . . . I practically lost my mind due to the mental torture meted out by Onan Haji Siraj."[24] The excesses of Onan and a small number of Malay radicals who followed his lead gave rise to a pervasive perception among Malays that the Malay radicals had used their powers to distribute favors to those who were close to them and to threaten those who refused to cooperate.

The imperious reputation acquired by some Malay radicals earned them the labels of "informers" and "berjewa borjuis dan berfaham fascist pula" ("bourgeois at heart and also fascist in the way of thinking"). Other Malay radicals who craved power during this difficult period showed their arrogance by demanding that former civil servants follow their orders strictly and promptly, even though they had no real authority to make them do so. Perhaps the most obvious demonstration of power was to be found in the Malay radicals' instigation of the arrest and interrogation of Malay aristocrats and civil servants. They did all this to shame the aristocracy and civil servants and degrade them to a position that was lower than that of ordinary Malays.[25] Such spiteful conduct reveals that at least some of the Malay radicals had a deep sense of grievance against the Malay aristocrats and bureaucrats.

One common thread that bound all of these forms of struggle and collaboration was that they were mostly focused on issues directly affecting the Malays. The Malay radicals saw the Japanese occupation as a long-awaited opportunity to broaden their own influence and popularity within their community. They saw no real need to extend it to other groups in Malaya. This focus on Malay communal issues was one of the major limiting aspects of the radicalist movement during the Japanese occupation. For most Malay radicals, all matters "Chinese" and "Indian" should be left under the jurisdiction of the Japanese. The Malay radicals' decision to ally themselves with the Japanese without any consideration toward the Malayan Chinese who were launching an underground resistance would become a liability for the radicals in the immediate postwar period.

The Quest for Relevance

By June 1942 the Japanese had developed other ideas about the management of the countries they had conquered. Policy makers and military

planners in Tokyo opined that native populations in the occupied territories should not be allowed to establish political movements and institutions. They argued that, if left unchecked, political activities would soon develop into uprisings on a scale that would go beyond the capacity of the military governments to quell. The Japanese felt that an organization filled with idealistic young men and women who knew not what to make out of endless political meetings "would be a nuisance to the Government and the inhabitants of Malaya."[26] Many Japanese military officers based in Malaya were displeased with this line of thinking because they had developed a great degree of sympathy for freedom movements and native leaders who showed the utmost sincerity and patriotism toward their homelands.[27]

The stark contradiction between the views of the wartime Japanese government and the perspectives of the Japanese officers on the ground in Malaya was somewhat inevitable. In the first place, no blueprint existed for the reconstruction of Malaya after the Japanese conquest. Because of this, disagreement among the Japanese was rife—from the military and civilian administrators in Japan right down to their subordinates in the colonies—about which parts of the East Asian Co-Prosperity Sphere should be given the most attention in their grand strategy. Should India or Southeast Asia be given priority in the making of the Japanese Empire in Asia? Most Japanese policy makers and war strategists maintained that more resources should be devoted to fostering the Indian Independence League (IIL) in Southeast Asia than to other nationalist movements, in order to concentrate on preparations for the invasion of India, the Jewel of the British Empire.[28] The cumulative effect of this confusion and a long catalogue of internal disagreements was a constant shifting back and forth in Japanese policies toward political movements such as the KMM. The end result of this vacillation was the unforeseen decision made by the newly installed Colonel Watanabe Wataru to dissolve the KMM.

This shift in Japanese policy away from support for the continued existence of the KMM was also related to the Malay radicals' inability to maintain unity and fraternity in their ranks. Within the first few months of the occupation, Japanese spies and local administrators had collected enough intelligence to conclude that the KMM was a poorly organized movement. Disputes among the top brass of the KMM were frequent, with Ibrahim Haji Yaacob's Malay-educated clique opposing Mustapha Hussain's English-educated group. There were also mavericks, such as Onan Haji Siraj, who were pursuing their own power-hungry ends. He had recruited young men into his own "terror" group and threatened anyone who came in his way. The Malay youths were caught between these hostile factions. While the KMM

seemed intent on tearing itself apart, the Japanese noted that the Malay traditional leadership had the strong support and allegiance of the Malay community. The influence of the sultans and the other Malay traditional leaders had not been badly affected by the war. Malays remained resentful of any attempt by political activists to sideline the aristocrats whom they had always revered. Many did not want the old order to be removed completely, and they were suspicious of the Malay radicals who showed little respect for the local customs, traditions, and the aristocratic class, which were the bedrocks of Malay society.[29]

The Japanese shut down the KMM sometime in June 1942. The verdict came as a shock for the Malay radicals, especially Ibrahim Haji Yaacob and his loyalists, who had benefited greatly during the first few months of the Japanese occupation. Once the KMM's dissolution became public knowledge, support for the Malay radicals evaporated almost overnight among the youth. No longer were the Malay radicals seen as independent and influential personalities who could decide on their own fates and work for the betterment of the Malay community as a whole. Instead, they came to be viewed as lackeys of the new foreign rulers, who were eager to do whatever the Japanese wanted them to do, including dismantling their own organization. This antipathy toward the Malay radicals was felt especially strongly in the state of Kelantan, where the KMM had maintained a vibrant base for some years prior to the war. The youths were inducted into the KMM through the work of Islamic reformists and the Malay publishing houses that disseminated the writings of Malay radicals. The KMM's closure convinced its former members in Kelantan that cooperation with the Japanese was an unequal alliance that disadvantaged the Malays—a marriage doomed to fail. As a result, many decided to go underground and work closely with anti-Japanese forces to overthrow the colonizers.[30]

The KMM's closure also resulted in widening rifts among the former leaders of the now-defunct organization. Mustapha Hussain, Ahmad Boestamam, Idris Hakim, Abdul Kadir Adabi, and M. N. Othman severed their ties with Ibrahim Haji Yaacob because of the latter's increasingly arrogant character and his autocratic and nonconsultative leadership. They were incensed when Ibrahim accepted a post in the Japanese administration as advisor on Malay affairs without informing anyone except his trusted former SITC friends. There were deeper reasons for the Malay radicals' unhappiness with Ibrahim. Foremost among them was his compromising stance in regard to the cause of independence for Malaya. Ibrahim felt that the idea was not feasible in the wartime context and that any attempts by the Malay radicals to demand independence from the Japanese would be cast aside

as an act of folly. Ibrahim's favoritism toward his own "inner" circle was another factor that pushed a number of Malay radicals to part ways with him. People close to him were given jobs in many Japanese governmental departments through his personal recommendations, while those he did not see as his close confidantes were simply neglected and left to try to find jobs on their own.

However, all was not lost with the demise of the KMM. During the short time when the KMM flourished under the Japanese, the Malay radicals had managed to flame the *semangat perjuangan* (the spirit of struggle) across a broader spectrum of the Malay youth population than they had ever managed to do before. The youths were empowered to become involved in community work, such as becoming officials at food distribution stations and doing basic paperwork for villagers. These experiences of public responsibility gradually gave them the confidence they would need to take on heavier responsibilities and improve the conditions of their own society. Had the KMM not been proscribed and had the Japanese not broken their promise to grant independence, the KMM might have become a mass popular movement. But now that the tide had turned, the politicized youths needed alternative platforms to pursue their aims. They capitalized on a few fronts that developed along the way.

Many youths gravitated toward the Japanese-directed movements and schemes led by Ibrahim Haji Yaacob, who exerted some residual influence among those who were impressed with his resoluteness and his will to mobilize the Malays despite the constraints imposed by the Japanese. Banding together with Ishak Haji Muhammad, Onan Haji Siraj, and youths loyal to these men, Ibrahim launched a propaganda campaign to sustain the politicization of the Malays, using radio, posters, and letters. This propaganda campaign had three functions. First, it served to convince the public that they would enjoy benefits and rewards if they cooperated with the Japanese occupation. The pages of Japanese-sponsored newspapers were laced with articles written by Ibrahim and his followers portraying the Nippon government as the patron of native empowerment, the Japanese as the supporters of Malay literary and cultural activities, and the Japanese emperor as a protector of the Muslim religion. One editorial note published in the *Syonan Shimbun* clearly bore the marks of Ishak's prewar writings: "Malay literature will indeed provide an interesting field of study and if carefully fostered and encouraged [by the Nippon government] will advance the culture of the Malays as it rightly should."[31] The British, on the other hand, were described as enemies of the Malays and their way of life. They were branded as "imperialists" and "exploiters" of Asia for their own

selfish ends. The fall of Southeast Asia into the hands of the Japanese, so went the editorials of *Syonan Shimbun*, bore eloquent testimony that the era of European colonialism was over and Asia would rise again under the leadership of an Asian power.

The propaganda publications and talks delivered by Ibrahim also functioned as a call to the Malays to be aware of their nation's role at that point in history. The Malays should view the Japanese occupation of Malaya as the dawn of an "Age of Awakening" (*zaman kesedaran*) and a "Time of Light" (*zaman memanchar*). They should seize the historical moment to carve out a new future for themselves. From this propagandistic perspective, Malays were made to realize that the British had made them backward. Ibrahim and his clique called upon the Malays to change their attitudes and mindsets. Malays should be prudent. They should accumulate wealth, work hard, and not be lazy. Malays should learn the art of entrepreneurship from the Japanese. Malays should take their future into their own hands and not be left behind by the industriousness and productive traits of the foreign races. If Malays failed to seize this opportunity to embrace change, then they would be doomed to continue to suffer under the domination of foreign races.[32]

Ibrahim's clique did more than launch a propaganda campaign to win over the hearts and minds of the masses while discrediting the colonial legacies that the British had left behind. They also participated in regional councils established in every state and municipality throughout Malaya and Singapore. The Japanese created these councils as feelers to understand the concerns of the Malay community and to solicit popular support for the war effort.[33] Burhanuddin Al-Helmy, who was close to Ibrahim during the occupation years, was appointed as an advisor on Malay customs and Islamic affairs by the military administration. He, along with other religious scholars in Malaya and Singapore, organized two Islamic conferences, one in April 1943 and another in December 1944. These conferences discussed issues pertaining to the welfare of Muslims, the enforcement of religious laws, and strategies to mobilize Muslims to defend their homeland and uphold Japanese rule.[34]

Although the Malay radicals contributed much to the shaping of these prominent councils and served as conveners of major events, the banning of the KMM meant that the influence they had built up during the first few months of the occupation was handed over to the traditional leaders of the Malay community. The Japanese took the pragmatic path of reappointing aristocrats and British-trained former civil servants in its administrative organs and community councils. Hence, the power balance shifted away from the radicals and back to the aristocrats and civil

servants. Having faced humiliation at the hands of the Malay radicals earlier on, these aristocrats and civil servants prevented the Malay radicals from running these councils.

Dissatisfied with the prospect of being consigned to the dustbin of history and always in fear of being treated like any ordinary Malay, in December 1943 Ibrahim and his followers worked hard to establish the "Giyu Gun"—the "Volunteer Army," which was also known as "Giyu Tai" and as the *Pembela Tanahair* (PETA: Defenders of the Motherland). As the name suggests, the Giyu Gun consisted of civilians who were trained in battle tactics. Such voluntary armies were not unique to Malaya. They were established in most Japanese-occupied territories as an additional line of defense against Allied invasion and local insurgencies.[35]

Ibrahim ensured that the Giyu Gun was ethnicized, that is, that only Malays were allowed to join the volunteer army. He went around the country to recruit Malay youths from all states and all walks of life to join the new militant force. Appeals were made in the pages of local magazines for Malays to support the Giyu Gun because it was a symbol of the Malay struggle for independence and an avenue to manifest love for the motherland. The Giyu Gun was also publicized as a volunteer army that would live up to the patriotic spirit of the legendary warrior Hang Tuah. As an announcement in the *Fajar Asia* magazine declared, the Giyu Gun

> is a genuine Army which will consist of Malays only. The recruits must have a genuine desire to defend their motherland. The second unit has already been formed and is waiting for the arrival of more dedicated youths who are prepared to carry out their responsibilities to the motherland. Malay *pemuda* (youths) must seize this excellent opportunity to show the world that within their breasts flows the blood of Hang Tuah [the Malay historic warrior] who once reminded us that: "The Malays shall not vanish from this world." Mr. Ibrahim Yaacob, who has been appointed commander of the Malay Giyu-gun, says he wishes to see every Malay man enlist as a soldier and establish the Army.[36]

By the fifth month of its formation, Ibrahim was able to muster a two-thousand-man volunteer force that was well equipped with Japanese uniforms and weaponry. The volunteer force was indoctrinated with the Bushido code and loyalty to the Japanese emperor. A scholar studying this facet of Malayan history might be baffled by the contradiction between the loyalty that Malays felt toward their homeland and the loyalty they were expected to display toward Japan as soldiers of the Giyu Gun. What were

the Malays in the Giyu Gun thinking when they decided to be part of an army that owed its primary allegiance to Japan rather than to their own homeland? There could be a few plausible explanations for this seeming incongruity. A consideration of the educational backgrounds of the new recruits may offer the best explanation.

Many Malays who joined the Giyu Gun had already received some form of education in Japanese schools and institutions and were impressed with what they saw and experienced. Some were even given scholarships to study in Japan and other neighboring countries, such as Indonesia, Thailand, the Philippines, and Burma.[37] Malay youths who were not granted the opportunity of overseas study were enrolled in training schools called the *koa kurenjo* (leadership training schools). While pursuing their studies at these institutions, these Malays learned about the *Nippon Seishin* (Nippon spirit) that emphasized toughness, resilience, self-reliance, pride, and a positive outlook on life.[38] Through rugged military exercises and regimentation, these Malays were exposed to the Japanese concepts of morality, ethics, the spirit of sacrifice, and camaraderie. While some loathed the strictness and regimented lifestyle they had to undergo, many actually developed a sense of admiration for Japanese culture and society. Malays who had received instruction in the Japanese schools therefore saw the issue of loyalty to Japan as an extension of their sense of loyalty to their homeland, rather than a contradiction. To be loyal to Japan by participating in the Giyu Gun was to be loyal to the cause of ensuring that their country remained free from British colonialism.

The active participation of Malays in the Giyu Gun and their display of loyalty to Japan have to do also with pragmatism. Many Malays knew that they were caught in the web of hostilities between the Japanese, the guerrillas in the jungles, who were led primarily by the Chinese-dominated Malayan Peoples' Anti-Japanese Army (MPAJA), and the British-sponsored underground movements that were on the lookout for Japanese collaborators. Like "an egg on the tip of a horn" (*bagai telur di ujung tanduk*), the Malays came to realize that the only way they could protect themselves and their families against violence was to be fully armed and equipped. The setting up of the Giyu Gun provided that opportunity. Malays in the Giyu Gun had the privilege of carrying weapons for training purposes and could use these firearms for self-defense. Loyalty to Japan or the Japanese emperor, for that matter, meant little to these Malays, when the larger and more immediate concern was to minimize their vulnerabilities.

At any rate, all Giyu Gun volunteers had to memorize the five guiding principles that signified their total adherence to *Dai Nippon* (Great Nippon). During training drills and marches, Giyu Gun volunteers would shout aloud the following:

> We, the *Malai Giyugun* are to be loyal to the Empire of Nippon above all. We, the *Malai Giyugun* are to assimilate and to display the spirit of Nippon soldiers. We, the *Malai Giyugun* are to undergo training after the model of Nippon soldiers. We, the *Malai Giyugun* are to complete the defense of the peninsula with the Imperial Forces as the nuclei. We, the *Malai Giyugun* are to contribute to the attainment of the prosperity of *Malai* and the reconstruction of *Dai Toa* [Greater East Asia].[39]

In the long run and in the most ideal of situations, Ibrahim envisioned that the Giyu Gun would eventually become the National Army of Independent Malaya. However, the reality in the shorter term was quite different. Having been appointed to be the lieutenant colonel of the Giyu Gun, he saw at close range that the Japanese were not about to dedicate significant resources to the new army or for the betterment of the Malays in general. Ibrahim quickly recognized that it was fruitless to put all of his eggs in one basket. While he was training his Giyu Gun troops for the defense of Malaya against an Allied counteroffensive, Ibrahim and other Malay radicals such as Ibrahim Chik, Rashid Maidin, and Abdullah C. D. established contacts with the MPAJA, which had been fighting Japan ever since it had conquered Malaya.

Still, Ibrahim remained noncommittal about joining the MPAJA and was, in the words of historian Cheah Boon Kheng, "backing two racing horses [the Japanese and the resistance movement] and hoping that at least one would be a winner."[40] Ibrahim Chik, Rashid Maidin, and Abdullah C. D. chose the more dangerous path of joining the MPAJA's militant struggle against the Japanese. They recruited Malays to become spies for the MPAJA, with the responsibility of gathering information on Japanese movements within the villages and towns. Seeing that the economy of Malaya had fallen into shambles and that the general populace was suffering from poverty and a lack of food, the Malay radicals in the MPAJA engaged in the opening of new farms in the thick jungles for growing food such as tapioca, corn, and vegetables. The resistance movement led by these Malay radicals also organized their own community policing system to fight rampant crime and looting during the occupation. Criminals were tracked down and put on trial by the "community court" (*mahkamah masyarakat*) and sentenced to various punishments.[41]

By the early months of 1944, it was clear that the Japanese were becoming increasingly defenseless against the constant roadblocks, ambushes,

and acts of sabotage that the MPAJA launched against the occupying forces and their collaborators. Ibrahim knew that it would not be long before the MPAJA and the Japanese would get the better of him for having backed two warring sides at once. In the meantime, the youths in the Giyu Gun had grown impatient and were ready for action. In July 1944 a bloody clash broke out with the MPAJA in the state of Johore. Twenty-five guerrillas were killed and many others were injured. This incident brought Ibrahim into direct collision with the MPAJA, while the Japanese developed deep suspicions about his activities.[42]

Malay radicals also played a crucial part in another paramilitary organization of auxiliary troops called the "Heiho." Ahmad Boestamam was one of the prominent leaders of the Heiho. He worked as a journalist for some months before accepting an offer by the Japanese to be part of this new organization in June 1943. Unlike the Giyu Gun, which prided itself on having its own Malay commander, the Heiho was not an independent entity. It was created as a unit of volunteer soldiers attached to a larger Japanese fighting platoon. Basic training in the use of light arms, artillery, and other weapons of war was given to each soldier. Because of its auxiliary function, the Heiho seldom engaged in direct confrontation with guerrillas other than to assist the regular Japanese army as drivers or guides. But the ostensibly insignificant function that the Heiho played and the small allowances and privileges that volunteers received immediately upon joining the unit made it popular and appealing. Thousands of Malays from villages and towns across Malaya lent their energies and support to the Heiho. The number of women joining the Heiho was so large that a Malay Women's Auxiliary Corps section had to be created in late 1944.[43]

However, it was a completely different story with regard to Japanese attempts to recruit non-Malays in the service of the Japanese Empire. Recruitment drives conducted by the Japanese with the assistance of Malay radicals to get non-Malays in Malaya to join the Heiho failed miserably. The Chinese, for example, were nonchalant about becoming a part of the armed body for reasons that were both historical and contemporaneous. The Japanese conquest of China and their harsh treatment of the Malayan Chinese community as evidenced in the Sook Ching massacre in Singapore from February to March 1942 were clear indications to the Chinese that the Japanese were prejudiced against them. To volunteer as soldiers and paramilitary troops was to condone the killings of their own people. Most Chinese deemed collaboration with the Japanese as immoral. The Chinese also knew that the MPAJA spared no one within the community who had collaborated with the Japanese. It was for this host of reasons coupled with the marginalization of the Chinese by the MMA that most Chinese were reluctant to join the Heiho. Other communities also shared their indifference. The Eurasians, Arabs, and other minorities, who knew that little could be gained from supporting a foreign government they abhorred, refused to join the Heiho.

Cultivating the *Perjuangan* through Prose, Poetry, and Fiction

The Japanese occupation was a time of darkness. For the Malay radicals, the days grew longer, filled with frustration and failed attempts to achieve immediate independence. Most, if not all, of the projects to win the Malays over to the Melayu Raya ideal and the KMM were stillborn or hijacked by the Japanese, who were unwilling to let anyone get in the way of their imperialistic designs. By the second year of the Japanese occupation of Malaya, the Malay radicals became increasingly unpopular as the local populace turned their attention to seeking help from their traditional leaders who had been granted more power and influence by the military administration. As life under the Japanese worsened due to rapid inflation and scarcity, the Malay radicals became helpless and could do little to play a leading role in their society, except to do what their Japanese conquerors had instructed them to do. The Malay radicals' partnership with the Japanese turned sour by the end of 1944, when it became clear that the Allies were on the verge of winning the Pacific War. By then, well-meaning efforts of some Malay radicals to empower the Malay community were perceived by most Malays as self-serving lip service.[44]

There is another side of this story that should also be considered. Even if the Malay radicals' experiments with the Japanese had proved fruitless, the period under the military administration was a time that witnessed the production of creative works devoted to sustaining the cita-cita perjuangan. This was a time that saw the flourishing of imaginative writings by the Malay radicals. Indeed, the Japanese fostered the growth of Malay culture and arts because they saw these facets of Malay life as the most effective propaganda tools to incite Malays to fight alongside the Japanese. Cultivating writers and other creative artists to showcase their talents and works during the occupation also helped to achieve other desirable goals. Novels, plays, music, and stage performances helped distract the common people from their daily suffering. The Japanese saw this as important to ensure that support from the Malay community remained firm and undivided.[45]

Japanese hegemony over the world of publishing and the arts in Malaya during the occupation has led some historians to conclude that *all* creative

works produced during this period were part and parcel of the war propaganda machine. From this perspective, Malay writers lacked independence during this period, particularly those of the radicalist bent. Be it fact or fiction, prose or poetry, their writings tended to lend credence to Japanese claims of being the liberators of Asia. Malay writers thus were mere cogs and tools in the larger project of justifying Japanese rule.[46] Such a standpoint is understandable given the sheer mass of writings that depicted the Japanese as "enlightened rulers" and the declarations made by religious and secular elites alike that the Japanese takeover of Malaya was a blessing for the Malay race. To be sure, anyone who skims through the opinion pieces, short stories, and poetry written by Malays during the Japanese occupation will easily detect the presence of propagandist elements in these writings.

However, what is seldom acknowledged is the *agency* of the Malay writers, particularly the Malay radicals. Malay writers managed to produce works that served their own purposes, despite the Japanese control of Malaya. As the literary giant Arena Wati observed in his study of short stories written during the period of Japanese occupation, many of the works written by Malay radicals served a double-edged purpose. Aside from promoting the visions and schemes of the Japanese, they also fanned the flames of anticolonialism among the masses. The Malay radicals were given enough support and space to cultivate the minds (*asuhan mental*) of the ordinary Malays in thinking about their nation's future. Through the use of fiction and other literary devices, the Malay radicals informed the masses about how they could prepare for the independence of Malaya.[47]

Creative works published during this period deserve close attention because they provide evidence of how the Malay radicals used propaganda both for the common good and for their own political ends. This was achieved via supplementing propaganda materials with implicit messages that promoted pride in the Malay race (or bangsa), patriotic feelings about the homeland, and support for independence movements in other colonized lands outside Malaya that were struggling for freedom from foreign rule. These messages were delivered so discreetly and indirectly that they escaped the watchful eyes of the Japanese censors, who had little knowledge of the deeper nuances of the Malay language and culture.

Ishak Haji Muhammad and A. Samad Ismail were the two Malay radicals who were especially prolific in using their pens to inspire the Malays to change their mindsets and take action. They were joined by Thaharuddin Ahmad, Abdullah Kamel, and Abdullah Sidek, as well as by sympathizers of the radicalist cause such as Masuri S. N. All of them

frequently contributed to the pages of *Semangat Asia*, *Fajar Asia*, *Berita Malai*, *Sinaran Matahari*, *Suara Timur*, and *Matahari Memancar*. These men realized they could easily be overwhelmed by the propaganda work that the Japanese assigned to them. To keep their spirits up and to avoid being caught in the Japanese project of spreading misinformation about the realities of life under the occupation, these radical activists wrote short stories and poems to record the true nature of life under the Japanese and their dreams for the future.

Whether their writings had any important influence on the masses is perhaps something that will never be firmly established. Given the lack of any alternative reading materials and the fact that newspapers and periodicals were still read aloud in public places during the occupation, it would not be excessive to surmise that these writings had some impact on the Malay masses. What the Malay radicals had done through the writing of prose, poetry, and fiction was to get the Malays thinking about their dismal state and, at the same time, to start dreaming about a brighter future. Needless to say, no novels were published during this period, unlike the days prior to the occupation, which saw the flowering of novel writing. The Malay radicals knew that their novels could not be popular, or even be read, during this difficult time. Moreover, the cost of printing novels was too high, and the prospect of selling them was too discouraging, for anyone to engage in this type of writing. The Malay radicals therefore saw the need to keep their writings as brief and as simple to read as possible, in order to more effectively deliver their call for political awareness and social responsibility to the masses. The content of the message was more important than its length.[48]

Of the 105 poems that were written during the Japanese occupation, eighty touched on the spirit of struggle and sacrifice. Although most of these poets had few connections or affiliations with the Malay radicals, they shared the same mobilizing concepts used by the radicals, and formulated their own concepts as well. In the highly emotive and moving poems of Masuri S. N., for example, there is explicit usage of the words *perjuangan* (struggle), *kesedaran* (consciousness), *kesatuan* (unity), *kebangsaan* (nationalism), and *merdeka* (freedom). One oft-cited poem written by Masuri that soon became a classic in Malay literature was entitled *National Negara* (Soldier of the Country). It reads as follows:[49]

Berbaris berjejer, hebat bergaya
Pergi bertempur, penuh darura
Menyerah raga dengan sukarela
Mencipta bahagia "Asia Raya"

Dengan semangat yang bernyala-nyala
Tujuan hati tetaplah satu
Menghancurleburkan bangsa penganiaya
Pihak Sekutu dirangkum tentu

Berjuang, Berjuanglah "Perajurit Negara"

Tunjukkan keperwiraan bangsa Asia
Sanggup membela, turut bertempur
Haram menyerah tak pernah undur

Jangan bimbang, janganlah walang
Teruskan menggempur pihak Sekutu
Bunga pujaanmu, mekar berkembang
Menanti pulangmu sarat merindu

[translation]
Lined in rows, dressed in style
Off to battle, filled with danger
Keenly placing one's life at risk
To build the harmonious "Asia Raya"

With a passion so fiery
A united aim at heart
Pulverize the oppressors' race
Surely the Allies will be defeated

Struggle, keep struggling on, "National Soldier"

Display the heroism of the Asian race
Willing to defend, all set to offend
Never surrender, at no time retreating

Do not worry, do not fret
Keep storming the Allies
The flowers you adore will continue to bloom
Awaiting your return with deep yearning.

Thaharuddin Ahmad also wrote a short yet influential poem that achieved the same degree of fame and popularity as Masuri's *Perajurit Negara*. A religious teacher turned political activist, Taharuddin was born in Sumatra, Indonesia, where he received instruction in Islamic studies. He moved to Peninsular Malaya in January 1940 and joined the editorial staff of *Warta Malaya*, where he met Ibrahim Haji Yaakub. It was Ibrahim who invited Taharuddin to become a member of the KMM. A dedicated radical activist even during the wartime period, Taharuddin was a founding member of the Malay radical youth movement GERAM (Gerakan Muda) after the war ended.[50] The poem Thaharuddin wrote bore the provocative title *Ibu dan Tanahair* (Mother and Homeland). The mother figure was an important symbol in Malay society, regarded by Malays in that context as a pillar of the family and a foundation of stability in the community. Thaharuddin coupled this symbol with the homeland to stress that these bedrocks of Malay life were mutually dependent and reinforcing. One could not stand without another, and all mothers should train their sons to become protectors of the homeland. To defend the homeland entailed sacrificing one's life, time, and energy to ensure that the Malay community as a whole would enjoy peace and prosperity. Thaharuddin writes:[51]

Bukan harta,
Bukan Benda,
Yang menjadikan kehendak Bonda,
Ibu Pertiwi Tanahair kita.

Hanya Pengorbanan,
Tiap masa,
Harta benda hattakan nyawa,
Supaya Negara tetap sentosa.

Indah permai cuba pandang,
Gunung-ganang sawah ladang,
Kelapa melambai awan memandang,
Itulah Negara nan kita timang.

[translation]
Not Wealth,
Nor Things,
That you so wished, O Mother,
Mother Earth of our Homeland.

Only by Sacrificing
Every moment,
Possessions and even life
For the country to remain safe.

Observe the beautiful, picturesque
Mountains, farm fields
Coconuts swaying in the shade of clouds
That is the Country we adore so dearly

Close to thirty Malay short stories were written, among which half were by the Malay radicals. Most of these stories touched on the themes of patriotism, living conditions during the war, independence struggles against the British, and the reconstruction of Malay society.[52] The Malay radicals would often use the examples of well-known figures in society, including themselves, to draw connections between personal experiences and the forces that shaped the lives of the Malays under Japanese rule. These short stories were not only fictional narrations of events and happenings of the time; they also served as literary devices to awaken the minds and spirit of the Malays, fostering them to take pride in their glorious heritage and learn from their past mistakes, as well as to view the challenges they were facing during the occupation as merely a passing phase. The point was to call upon the Malays to embrace a paradigmatic shift in thought and to work hard toward realizing a better future for their community. Subtly, these stories also offer critiques of the brutal policies of the Japanese.

These themes and the functions found expression in the short stories of Abdul Samad Ismail, namely *Seorang Pengail* (A Fisherman), *Ubi Kayu* (Tapioca), *Ke Bintan To* (Going to Bintan), and *Budak-Budak Main Soldadu* (Children Pretending to be Soldiers). *Seorang Pengail* narrates the trials and tribulations of a Malay fisherman. Disheartened about having to hand over part of his daily catch to the Japanese, the fisherman encountered Pak Kemat, who offered him good counsel, telling him to be patient, calm, and unyielding in earning a living for his family. Hard times, according to Pak Kemat, would soon be followed with a time of abundance. By skillfully depicting the intertwining lives and lively conversations between these two men, Abdul Samad Ismail indirectly urged the common people to be resilient. He urged his readers to hope for the future so that they could rise above their distress and affliction. Instead of lamenting their current state, they should construct plans in preparation for a better time to come after the Japanese occupation.[53]

Ubi Kayu (Tapioca), the sequel to *Seorang Pengail*, was published only one month later, in March 1944. Here, the author places himself at the heart of the story by telling his readers about his search for tapioca. Although tapioca was an insignificant and low-valued food before the war, the Japanese occupation transformed it into a staple for the Malays, to the extent that people believed that it would be better to plant tapioca than to have the Japanese-issued currency. Because tapioca was so valuable then, living in the rural parts of Malaya was far more advantageous than in the cities, as tapioca was more easily found and grown in the countryside. Tapioca, in this story, is a literary device to condemn the worthless Japanese currency while simultaneously admonishing Malays to be self-reliant.[54]

Ishak Haji Muhammad's *Mengajar Bangsa dengan Perbuatan* (Teaching Race with Action) employs a different narrative strategy from that of Abdul Samad Ismail. Moving away from highlighting the difficulties of life during the occupation, which was a common theme among Malay writers, Ishak tells of a young man named Mansor bin Haji Bakri who worked together with the Japanese to set up a volunteer army. The reader could easily detect that the story was about Ibrahim Haji Yaacob who, like the fictional Mansor, had worked with the Japanese to help his community to *bangkit* (arise). The Malays, according to Mansor in his monologue, needed to wake up from their long slumber and excel in all areas of life. But Mansor's call was not heeded. Malays around him sneered and scoffed at his idealism. Like the Malay radicals whom Ishak was trying to promote through this story, the character Mansor in the short story was undeterred. The story ends with Mansor working tenaciously to establish his own business, soldiering on with his noble intentions of stirring his countrymen to work hard for their own well-being.

Dashed Hopes and the Beginnings of Chaos

By September 1944 the war in the Pacific had turned against the Japanese. France had already been liberated, with the other neighboring European countries following suit in the months that followed, marking the end of the long years of Nazi rule. Having conquered almost half of Europe at lightning speed, the Germans were forced to defend themselves as their homeland was subjected to heavy bombardment. This change in the fortunes of the Axis Powers was also visible in the Pacific, where attacks on Japanese bases met with one victory after another. In late October the Americans gained control of the Philippines after the last few Japanese naval ships were

destroyed at the decisive Battle of Leyte Gulf. This battle and the subsequent annihilation of thousands of Japanese troops showed that Japan was no longer able to resist the invasion of its colonies by the superior air, land, and sea forces of the Allied nations.

It was during the days immediately before the Allied victory that the idea of setting up a new defense force was mooted. Seeing that Malaya was inevitably falling into the hands of their former colonial masters and that the Giyu Gun and Heiho units were functioning largely at the local levels, the Japanese founded a pan–Southeast Asian movement known as KRIS in late July 1945. The acronym KRIS meant *Kekuatan Rakyat Istimewa* (The Special Strength of the People). This name was later changed slightly to *Kesatuan Rakyat Indonesia Semenanjung* (The Union of Peninsular Indonesians) with no substantial reforms made to the overall organization of the force. In its most idyllic form, the main purpose of KRIS was to promote Malay-Indonesian patriotism and instill a desire to achieve independence among the locals. KRIS was tasked to devise a constitution for an independent Malaya and Indonesia as a single political unity, a union that harked back to the Melayu Raya ideal that the Malay radicals had proposed before the war.[55]

The word *kris* was chosen deliberately by the Malay radicals in view of its importance in the Malay-Indonesian consciousness. The kris is a Malay weapon that is traditionally believed to possess amazing abilities and supernatural powers. The most famous kris was the Kris Taming Sari. Legends have it that the weapon was used by Hang Tuah to protect his king and the Malay homeland from foreign attacks and incursion. The kris was also a weapon that Malay warriors, commoners, and even women used to defend their honor and protect their loved ones. By choosing KRIS as a name for the new organization, the Malay radicals hoped to send a signal to the masses that they would be at the forefront, yet again, in paving the way for Malayan-Indonesian independence at the cost of their own lives.

The Japanese appointed Dr. Burhanuddin Al-Helmy to lead KRIS in Malaya. Burhanuddin was probably chosen due to his active involvement in the management of Muslim affairs in Malaya. He had gained respect among the Malays for his depth of knowledge in Islamic matters and also for advising the Japanese to pay particular attention to the religious needs of Muslims. The Japanese chose him instead of Ibrahim Haji Yaacob to lead KRIS because they wanted to promote a new leader from among the circle of Malay radicals, someone who would not invite much controversy and criticism from the general public. Burhanuddin was aware of his own limitations when it came to drafting constitutions and crafting plans for KRIS. He solicited the help of Mustapha Hussain, who, after suffering disappointment

while working under the Japanese, reluctantly accepted the task of drafting what was supposed to be the "Independent Malaya Constitution." The document was to be made public along with the Indonesian declaration of independence on 17 August 1945, during the KRIS Congress to be held at Kuala Lumpur.[56]

However, all hope was lost when the Japanese surrendered just two days before the KRIS Congress. The surrender was prompted by the American atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki a week earlier, which had claimed more than two hundred thousand lives. News of the surrender sent shock waves across Japanese-held territories in Southeast Asia. Japanese troops and military administrators immediately saw that there was no longer any real need to ensure law and order in Malaya. Chaos thus became the norm, with civilians trying to get rid of useless Japanese currency and militant groups intensifying their activities in the heart of Malaya. The MPAJA settled old scores by hunting down Japanese collaborators in the villages. Because the Japanese had been lenient toward the Malays and because many Malays refused to participate in the work of anti-Japanese resistance, what began as a program of systematic killings of wartime collaborators rapidly evolved into a communal battle between Malays and Chinese.

In the twelve bloody months following the Japanese surrender, Malays and Chinese committed acts of violence against one another. Seeds of hatred between the two races deepened as families and friends became victims of atrocities committed by both sides. A number of the Malay radicals were assassinated by the MPAJA. In order to protect their villages from harm, many radical youths reacted by murdering any Chinese they could find. This experience of engaging armed violence would make these youths prime recruits for the militant groups that would flourish in the mid-1940s. The legacy of the wartime chaos would haunt Malaya for many years to come.

In the intervening period, Ibrahim Haji Yaacob grew apprehensive about his future in Malaya. He knew that, when the British returned, they would put him on the wanted list for his all-out loyalty to the Japanese during the war. Going to prison was not an option that he was willing to accept. There was certainly a high chance of his being hanged for crimes committed against Allied and other anti-Japanese troops. Having made contacts with Sukarno, the would-be president of Indonesia, Ibrahim left Malaya with hopes that the Malay radicals would continue the fight for Malayan independence. Whether Ibrahim's actions should be regarded as an act of cowardice or a strategic move has become a point much debated among the men around him and by historians of this uncertain period in Malayan history. There is evidence that Ibrahim fled with funds that were supposed to

be used for activist purposes, which suggests that his move to Indonesia was a decision made solely for his personal benefit.[57] Whatever the interpretations of Ibrahim's decision to flee Malaya, the fact remains that his departure marked the beginning of a new phase in the history of Malay radicalism. Graduates of institutions such as the SITC had become dominant, and the torch of leadership had now been passed to a new crop of Malay radicals.

Things went downhill for the Malay radicals thereafter. At 10:00 on the morning of 17 August 1945, Sukarno, Hatta, and the Indonesian Pemuda loyal to them declared the independence of Indonesia. The dream of the Indonesia Raya or Melayu Raya was dashed by Sukarno's decision that Indonesia should be independent without Malaya as part of the equation. In Kuala Lumpur, where Malay radicals such as Burhanuddin and Mustapha Hussain were waiting anxiously, news of the Indonesian declaration of independence was received with utter disappointment. The Malay radicals were unwilling to follow suit and declare Malayan independence since they were confronted with opposition to the declaration from three sides: the MPAJA, the Malay feudal elite, and the British forces that had already spread out across the country.

The Malay radicals who lived through this upsetting period realized that it was pointless to sit back and cry over missed opportunities. The long days under Japanese rule had taught them that they should march forward with commitment and courage. They saw that it was crucial to adapt their ideas to the changing environment and to rethink their strategies of resistance and mobilization as they moved along toward a new Malaya. Their experiments in thought and in action, and the travails and tribulations that came with these ventures, must now be examined.

Chapter Four

An Age of Ferment and Experimentation

› THE END OF the Japanese occupation of Malaya marked the beginnings of a new age of ferment and experimentation for the Malay radicals, a time when their ideas and activities were magnified in ways they had never imagined. The revolution in Indonesia was already in full swing, with the young freedom fighters in what was once a Dutch colony exhibiting to the world that they would die to reclaim a country that was rightfully theirs. Little wonder then that the Indonesian Revolution has also been termed the "Revolution of Youths" (*Revolusi Pemuda*), in which thousands died fighting the Dutch.[1] Impressed by the martyrdom of their brothers and sisters in neighboring Indonesia, the Malay radicals were also moved by the anticolonial struggles in other parts of Southeast Asia, South Asia, and the Arab world. From afar, they observed carefully the discourses, tactics, and alliances that various individuals and collectives built to put an end to imperialism in their respective countries.

The deeds of activists in other parts of the colonized world convinced the Malay radicals that broad possibilities awaited them as the British painstakingly sought to renew their grip on the institutions and channels through which they had once asserted their dominance in Malaya. The Japanese had left behind a functioning publishing house for radical writers and ideologues to air views that had been suppressed under military rule.[2] Mosques, coffee shops, and markets served as gathering places for the Malay radicals. Their immediate objective was to revive the defunct Kesatuan Melayu Muda and breathe new life into an independence movement that was crippled by the British and the Japanese.

A major problem for the Malay radicals was that the British had incarcerated many of them. Having drawn up a long list of the radicals' names with

detailed descriptions of their physical appearances and the places where they stayed, the British Military Administration (BMA) enlisted the services of reinstated Malay policemen and auxiliary troops to conduct a Malaya-wide manhunt for Malays who had worked for the Japanese. The Malay radicals topped this list and were tracked down soon enough. Mustapha Hussain was arrested at a police station in Perak just two weeks after Japanese surrender. He had actually sought refuge with the British Military Administration to escape the vengeance of the MPAJA. But that course of action made life worse for him and his family when he was arrested. The inspector who locked him up was, ironically, a man Mustapha had once assisted during the painful days of occupation. Good deeds were soon forgotten during this period of the reinstatement of British rule. Mustapha was a wanted criminal whose capture would guarantee anyone a secure place in the colonial order.[3]

A. Samad Ismail, once editor of *Berita Malai*, was arrested at his home in Singapore. He underwent several rounds of police interrogation regarding his links with the Malay radicals. His close relationship with Ibrahim Yaacob and their involvement in the Japanese propaganda campaigns were matters of highest importance for the British. After days of questioning, Samad was placed in Singapore's Outram Prison, where he was subjected to rigorous interrogation. He spent a few months there before being put on trial for treason.[4] These stories of incarceration and trials could be told and retold many times, forming part of the collective suffering of Malay radicals in the days following the Allied victory.

Although most Malay radicals were released by the BMA within six months of relentless questioning, isolation, and hard labor, the decision to release them was not motivated by leniency. The British were desperately trying to regain the popular support and legitimacy they once enjoyed in the eyes of a broad section of the Malay public. For many Malays who had lived through the war and saw how helpless the British soldiers and administrators were at the hands of the Japanese, the return of the British was not welcomed with much enthusiasm. The more things changed, the more they seemed to remain the same. Because the British wanted to avoid an Indonesia-style revolution in Malaya, they were lenient toward the Malay radicals.

Experiments in Party Politics and Civil Disobedience

On 17 October 1945, Malay activists from various states converged on Ipoh to attend a meeting that marked the formalization of the first Malay political party, the Parti Kebangsaan Melayu Malaya (PKMM), which was

also known in English as the Malayan Nationalist Party. The name itself suggests the budding party's not-so-distant ancestry. The PKMM was the successor of the KMM that had been dissolved twice—once before the war, and again during the occupation. But the newly established PKMM was very different from the KMM in several important ways. It was avowedly political in its agendas, interests, and purposes, and its members did not hide their power-grabbing intentions and aims. This was in stark contrast to the KMM, which operated in such secrecy that the organization even avoided publicizing what it really stood for. With the founding of the PKMM, the Malay radicals openly professed their aim of ending British rule in Malaya.[5] As Ishak Haji Muhammad, one of the leaders of the PKMM, explained: "We, the Malay radical nationalists in the Malay Peninsula, had established the Parti Kebangsaan Melayu Malaya [PKMM] solely with the aim of agitating for the full independence of the homeland of the Malays and the Malay race."[6]

The PKMM was also far more inclusive in that it embraced Malays from all social backgrounds, classes, and ideologies, so long as they embodied the spirit of Malay nationalism (kebangsaan). This was a radical shift from the practices of the KMM, which had directed all of its attention to the Malays, particularly those who came from nonaristocratic backgrounds, in its futile hope to mobilize the peasants and the laboring classes. The wartime experience had taught the Malay radicals the hard lesson that Malayan independence could not be achieved if any stratum of society was excluded or downplayed. For if anything, the Malay aristocracy and bureaucratic elites still had a strong influence upon the Malay society up until the 1950s.

To manifest the inclusive nature of the PKMM, the Malay radicals invited a variety of delegates to the party's inaugural congress.[7] Running for four days from 30 November to 3 December 1945, the congress featured activists from various walks of life and ideologies across Malaya. Communists, royalists, socialists, Islamic preachers, and students, as well as proponents of Malay culture and customs, converged to discuss the shape of the new party and its role in the new Malaya. The congress resolved that the PKMM would be guided by the following goals:

- To unite the Malay race while planting the spirit of nationalism in the minds and hearts of the Malays so as to unite Malaya with the larger family of the Indonesia Raya.
- To advocate freedom in speech, movement, thought, and education.
- To reinvigorate the economic status of the Malay race by promoting entrepreneurship and agriculture so as to enhance the Malay quality of life.

- To obtain freedom in cultivating crops. Cultivators should be freed from land taxes and be permitted to sell their harvests in any market.
- To demand that the Malays be provided with national schools where they could study any subjects for free.
- To demand freedom to publish books and teach democracy in order to uplift the state of Malay politics and encourage nationalism among Malays.
- The Malayan Nationalist Party [or PKMM] would work together in harmony with other races in the country to create a Malayan United Front to achieve independence and prosperity for Malaya as part of the Republic of Indonesia Raya.
- To support the Indonesians in their movement to gain independence.[8]

A quick reading of these goals shows how deep-seated the ideas of freedom had become in the minds of the Malay radicals and those who were present during the congress. The Malay radicals realized that freedom from foreign domination was something they should demand more vigorously now that the war had ended and that this freedom should not be partial with strings attached, as seen in many other former colonies that were granted independence but remained reliant on the former colonizers. Freedom, as articulated by the Malay radicals in the above-mentioned goals, included social, political, economic, intellectual, and physical freedom, a state of being that would restore the dignity of the Malays.

The PKMM's main goals also reflected the coming into being of a new form of cosmopolitanism that was not seen prior to the coming of the Japanese to Malaya, a collective frame of mind that enabled the new party to transcend racial particularisms. For the first time in the history of the radicalist movement, there developed the recognition that independence could only be achieved in earnest if Malays worked hand in hand with other races—Chinese, Indians, and Eurasians—in the Malay Peninsula and beyond.[9] One is enticed to see this as a result of the socialist influence on the minds of the Malay radicals that enabled them to transcend their own racial politics. But this conclusion may be slightly off the mark, because the PKMM was essentially a "Malay" party and its members and leaders came solely from the Malay community.

One other reason for this growth of cosmopolitanism among the Malay radicals could be found in the tumultuous context in which the Malays and non-Malays found themselves at this time. The Malay radicals were caught up in the communal clashes and the climate of deep-seated distrust between different communities during the last days of Japanese occupation. Moreover, the Malayan population was undergoing significant changes. The total

number of Chinese inhabitants in the Malay Peninsula had grown from 1,171,740 in 1921 to 2,614,667 in 1947. The number of Indian immigrants, in turn, had expanded from 471,514 in 1921 to 599,616 more than two decades later.[10] Mindful of these demographic changes and wary of violent confrontations with the Chinese, the Malay radicals saw that working with the non-Malays was necessary to avoid conflict. It was only by propounding a more inclusive image that the PKMM could hope to achieve its long-term goal of freeing Malaya from colonialism. The Malay radicals reasoned that strategic alliances with the other communities could also help to expand the mass appeal of the PKMM.[11]

More crucially, the new party clearly stated its strong links with its Indonesian counterparts and the steps that they would undertake to achieve the dream of a united Melayu Raya. This declaration thus represented much more than a mere revival of the KMM. The PKMM was, in essence, a party founded by "Melayu Rayans" who saw themselves as more than just Malays. Their dreams of creating a unified Indonesia Raya consisting of a combination of Malaya and Indonesia found expression not only in the goals of the PKMM, but also in the symbolism of the party's decision to adopt the Sang Saka Merah Putih (the Red and White Flag) of the Indonesian Republic as the PKMM's flag. The flag was carried in all marches and demonstrations and was displayed at the PKMM's headquarters and branch offices.[12]

The symbolic importance of the Sang Saka Merah was reflected also in the artistic works of the Malay radicals. Usman Awang, a prominent member of the PKMM who was more commonly known by his pen name, Tongkat Warrant, dealt with the importance of the flag and the ideals of freedom that it represented in his poem "Pesananku" ("My Admonition"):[13]

Setelah kita mengikat janji,
Tersimpul pertunangan di cincin seri,
Dinda melepaskan dalam ucapan air-mata,
Pemergianku ke medan peluru bahaya.
Sepeninggalanku, simpanlah sebuah pesanan,
Untuk menunggu dan jahitkan untukku,
Merah-Putih lambang perjuangan,
Untuk dikibarkan bila kepulanganku nanti.

Tapi . . .
Andainya aku tidak juga kembali,
Air-mata jangan dibuang lagi,

Hanya harapan yang telah kupesankan,
Taburkanlah bunga di pusaraku,
Dengan doa, aku pergi untukmu,
Untuk ibu pertiwi merdeka abadi.

[translation]
After we have made our promise,
Engaged to each other by an adorned ring,
You released me in tearful words,
My departure into the dangerous arena of war

Hold fast to my advice as I depart,
Await and sew for me,
The Red-White symbol of struggle,
To be flown upon my return.

But . . .
If I do not return,
Shed no more Tears,

I have left behind nothing but hope,
Sow flowers on my grave,
And say prayers, for I have left for your sake,
For an independent homeland that will continue to exist in eternity.

The PKMM founding executive committee consisted of members representing diverse backgrounds and leanings. Elected almost unanimously as chairman was the enigmatic Mokhtaruddin Lasso, who was a true-blue communist and an Indonesian patriot. Dr. Burhanuddin Al-Helmy, whose credentials as a Muslim scholar and political activist loomed large in Malay minds, was sworn in as vice chairman along with Baharuddin Tahir, who was a communist sympathizer. Baharuddin also served as a spokesperson for the party, which was inevitable considering his considerable oratorical skills, which often captivated crowds during PKMM rallies.[14] Other prominent members included Dahari Ali (secretary), Zulkifli Auni (assistant secretary), Ahmad Boestamam (treasurer), and Salleh (head of religious affairs).

While holding positions in the central hierarchy of the PKMM, these leaders received the help of new members, including Hamzah, Musa Ahmad, Haji Latif, Awang, Hashim, Ghafar Baba, and Sardon Jubir. These men were greatly influenced by the socialist and anticolonialist ideals that circulated

throughout Asia in their time. Ghafar and Sardon rose to prominence through the PKMM and would play important roles after independence, eventually serving as cabinet ministers in the UMNO-led government.

That such a diverse group of Malays (including communists, socialists, religious leaders, aristocrats, English-educated Malays, and Malay-educated Malays) could come together as fellow members of the PKMM indicated that another layer of cosmopolitanism was beginning to take root within the Malay community. This, in turn, had a great impact on the growth of the radicalist movement. Persons coming from differing ideological positions were increasingly tolerated; this rule applied more strongly to those who had displayed courage while resisting the Japanese. Even though many PKMM members saw the communists as persons who harbored un-Islamic ideas, they also saw members of the Malayan Communist Party (MCP) such as Musa Ahmad, Dahari Ali, and Zulkifly Auni as formidable mobilizers of the masses toward freedom. This cosmopolitan outlook flourished in the PKMM for the first two years of its existence and would aid in the expansion of the party. Meanwhile, the new party came under the watchful eyes of the British, who profiled each and every member down to the minutest details.[15]

Mokhtaruddin Lasso, the first chairman of the PKMM, was an unknown figure in the history of the Malay radicalist movement prior to the war. His personal background cries out for some exploration, since it exemplifies the fluid and changing nature of the PKMM during this initial stage. Mokhtaruddin was of Minangkabau Sumatran descent, a sub-ethnic group that dominated the PKMM's leadership until its eventual end in the mid-1950s. Little is known about his early life except that he was said to be a wayfarer of sorts. For that reason, he was known by his alias *Lang Lang Buana*, which meant "traveler" in Javanese. In the reports written by British intelligence officers, Mokhtaruddin was said to have been a schoolteacher who spent some years in Moscow being trained as a communist. Although Sukarno himself made no mention of this elusive figure in Malayan and Indonesian history in his speech and memoirs, the British regarded Mokhtaruddin as one of Sukarno's disciples. He had continuously expressed a desire to return to Indonesia and join the ongoing revolution. A former leader of the Malay section of the MPAJA during the Second World War, Mokhtaruddin was one of the core leaders of the MCP before he was elected as PKMM chairman.[16]

Mokhtaruddin's sudden disappearance from Malaya, vacating his position as the first chairman of the PKMM and effectively transferring the leadership of the organization to Dr. Burhanuddin Al-Helmy, makes him an enigmatic figure in the history of Malay radicalism in Malaya. And yet, his short stint with the party left some lasting legacies that the Malay

radicals developed throughout the postwar period. Mokhtaruddin was instrumental in securing funds amounting to almost six thousand pounds, which enabled the PKMM to begin life as a political party.[17] He was also responsible for setting up the first of a series of periodicals published under the ambit of the PKMM. The *Suara Rakyat* (Voice of the People) was probably one of the most brazen and daring periodicals published in Malay and English in the 1940s. Later permutations of this unique publication came in the form of *Pelita Malaya* (Light of Malaya) and *Suluh Malaya* (Torch of Malaya), both of which echoed *Suara Rakyat*'s efforts to call attention to the goals and ideals of the PKMM. These periodicals aired the political and social aspirations not only of the Malays but of the wider Malayan populace as well.[18]

Together, these three periodicals provided the inspiration for the growth of other publications that were pro-PKMM in orientation, even though the party did not own them or have a hand in their everyday operations. These included *Kenchana* (Light), *Plopor* (Pioneer), and the revived *Utusan Melayu* newspaper. Abdul Majid Salleh, a member of PKMM, served as a feature writer for the *Kenchana*. *Plopor*, in turn, published articles by Ahmad Boestamam and new members of the PKMM, such as Shamsuddin Salleh. The *Utusan Melayu* came under the influence of Abdul Samad Ismail, who, together with other writers and the owner of the newspaper, Yusof Ishak, put the newspaper and its offices at the disposal of the purveyors of radical ideas. The *Utusan Melayu*, as Abdul Samad Ismail handsomely described it, "placed no restrictions over any topic that its members were interested in—from Marxism and religious ideology to sexual matters. No taboos were present in the writers' office of the *Utusan Melayu*, particularly in the 50s. As the English put it, there were no sacred cows in *Utusan*."[19] More crucially, all three periodicals popularized the mobilizing concepts that the Malay radicals advocated, namely cita-cita perjuangan, kesedaran, kesatuan, kebangsaan, Melayu Raya, and merdeka. *Utusan Melayu* went so far as to assert that Malay radicals and their non-Malay allies were following a "moderate path," unlike the British and their collaborators.[20]

We may never fully understand how the *Suara Rakyat*, *Pelita Malaya*, and *Suluh Malaya* were financed, given the scarcity of sources in this chaotic postwar period. There is evidence suggesting that the MCP gave Mokhtaruddin funds to establish the periodical.[21] Regardless of who helped to bring the periodical to life and the reasons behind such charitable acts, Mokhtaruddin quickly got to work and solicited the services of many Malay authors who had been silenced during the wartime period. These authors gave *Suara Rakyat* the attention it needed.

Political Polemics and Popular Journalism

Readers of the *Suara Rakyat* welcomed the publication with much enthusiasm when it first appeared in August 1945. This was especially so in Perak, a state known for its tradition of political and social activism. Merely two months after the inaugural issue of the newspaper came an English edition, the *Voice of the People*. This was quickly followed by the publication of *Suluh Malaya* and *Pelita Malaya*, both of which functioned as the official mouthpiece of the PKMM. Managing these newspapers in the midst of the shortages of the postwar period was no easy task. Writers were poorly paid, and even the editors lived wretched lives, barely making ends meet while sometimes going without any salary for weeks at a time. Most editors had to juggle two jobs in the day and editorial work at night so as to support their families. Their difficulties were assuaged only after philanthropists—probably sympathizers of the Malayan Communist Party—offered to pay the salaries of the editors and staff. Even so, each of these newspapers survived for no more than six to eight months. The haphazard ways in which they were managed were reflected in abundant misspellings, odd phrases, typographical errors, verbosities, and factual inaccuracies. It is astonishing that such defects did not in any way taint the popularity of these publications. Indeed, it seemed that the more slip-ups occurred, the more these publications animated the minds of their readers.[22]

While these three periodicals were different in language and style, they were nevertheless extensions or elaborations of one another. This was to be expected given that the same group of writers and editors was involved in all of these newspapers. Among the people who contributed frequently to these publications and assisted in their day-to-day production were Rashid Maidin, Abdullah C. D., Ishak Haji Muhammad, Salleh Daud, Dahari Ali, Burhanuddin Al-Helmy, Onan Haji Siraj, Makcik Muda, Airama, and Ahmad Boestamam.[23] Together, these writers provided coverage of world events, of developments on the domestic scene, and the steps to be taken to realize the dream of establishing the *Tanah Melayu bagi Bangsa Melayu* ("Malay Homeland for the Malays").[24] Short stories and poems were also published in the newspapers as part of the PKMM's endeavor to widen the circulation of all these periodicals.

A few main themes link all the different types of material published in these periodicals, including news reports, opinion pieces, and literary contributions. The most noticeable of these themes was the concept of freedom. Through these newspapers, the PKMM highlighted the growth of freedom movements and a concept of liberation itself among the colonized peoples.

These newspapers devoted a great deal of attention to the upheavals and resistance efforts in Egypt, Palestine, China, Vietnam, India, Burma, and the Philippines, which showed the Malays that other colonized peoples shared their struggle for self-determination.[25]

"We live in an age of freedom," declared an editorial in the *Suluh Malaya*. "Here and there, chiefly in countries that have yet to be declared independent, the word 'freedom' will always be the rallying cry. The colonized countries demand their freedom. The freed countries seek to preserve and defend their independence. In sum, the world today is crying out for freedom."[26] In another editorial with the same theme but referring to the period when Malaya was under Japanese rule, the *Suluh Malaya* stated:

> The various races in Asia do not want to be colonized again, or to be dominated or enslaved; indeed, Asia is demanding freedom and equality for all races within its boundaries and will not back down in the face of attempts to stifle its spirit, whether through peaceful means or through violent actions (of the colonizers). We Asians have been conditioned to deal with threats by oppressive states as evident in the past three years, a time when murder and violence were commonplace. Because of that experience, the people of Asia, particularly those who have felt the full brunt of Japanese occupation, have no fear of any threats, even if they involve the use of the atomic bomb.[27]

Many Malays then saw the PKMM's use of the word for "freedom" (merdeka) in many of its publications as belligerent and aggressive. Freedom from colonial rule was almost unthinkable, given the Malay deference toward the British, who drew their sources of legitimacy from the Malay aristocracy. Most members of the Malay aristocracy were not keen on promoting total freedom, for it would destabilize the basis of their authority, which was already on shaky ground because of the Japanese occupation. If all Malays desired "freedom" in the sense that the PKMM had articulated it, which basically meant freedom from feudalism and colonialism, what then would be the future of the aristocratic class, whose very existence was hinged on the idea that men are not born equal?

Little wonder then that the PKMM's calls for freedom gained little acceptance among the Malays who were, by and large, bound by the force of tradition. But the very fact that these ideas of freedom were articulated was novel in the Malayan context, for no Malay organization had ever expressed such ideas as flagrantly as the Malay radicals. The idea of freedom as something that should be paid for in sweat and blood was practically unheard of in Malaya until it first appeared in the pages of *Suara Rakyat*, *Suluh Malaya*, and *Pelita Raya*.

This was different from the situation in other parts of Southeast Asia. In nearby areas such as Java and the Philippines, for example, the Javanese and the Filipinos had been deeply engaged in discussions about freedom since the early twentieth century. Jose Rizal's concept of *kalayaan* (freedom) became mainstream soon after his execution. Peasant protest groups as well as urban intellectuals used the term as a rallying cry for their activities in the decades that followed Rizal's execution.[28] So pervasive was the spread of the ideas and ideals of freedom in Indonesia that an influential Surabaya-based newspaper wrote: "The word 'freedom' [*merdeka*] can be heard from every direction. Wherever people gather, there we hear people talking about freedom. . . . one must have seriousness to study the science of true freedom and to perform all the obligations thereby involved."[29] In the 1940s, during the heat of the Indonesian revolution, radical Indonesian groups made it clear that their ultimate goal was "freedom or death!"[30]

After reading about the concept of freedom that had already gained so much importance in the Dutch, Spanish, and American colonies, the PKMM's members sought to employ the term as a mobilizing concept of their own. The front pages of *Pelita Malaya* made it clear that the publication was working "Towards the Truth, Peace and the Freedom of the Nation" (*Menuju kebenaran, perdamaian dan kemerdekaan bangsa*).[31] Such loud calls for complete independence contrasted sharply with UMNO's slogans, such as "*Hidup Melayu*" ("Long Live the Malays") and "*Berkerajaan Sendiri*" ("Self-government"), which the Malay radicals saw as insipid, compromising, and pandering to the whims and fancies of the British.

The second theme that binds these three publications together pertains to the importance of kesatuan or unity to the achievement of independence. Mention has already been made of kesatuan as a concept that was in wide circulation among many Malay activists in the 1930s. The *Kesatuan Melayu Singapura*, established in 1926, was probably the first political body that repeatedly emphasized the importance of unity among the Malays in order to carve out a better future for the community. The PKMM built upon this idea of unity to craft its own vision of what it meant to be united.

Through these publications, the need for Malays to be united mentally and spiritually was emphasized. The PKMM called upon the Malays to recognize that they belonged to one race (bangsa) and that the differences in origins, status, and class should not override the commonalities Malays shared in terms of belonging to the region. "Let us forget our ancestors and where they came from," urged an editorial in the *Voice of the People*. "That is immaterial. What concerns us now, at the present moment, is to be together and fight together for our existence as one whole solid body—the Malay Nation!"[32]

According to this argument, unity in the mind and spirit must be complemented by unity in action. Many editorials in these newspapers urged Malays to take concrete steps to work together and engage in partisan politics to free themselves from colonial rule. The time had come for the Malays to join parties and lobby groups that would help unify their nation. Fence sitting and passivity must be rejected as unacceptable options that would further deepen the divisions in the community.[33] An editorial in the *Suluh Malaya* explained that the colonial powers had

> amplified small issues within our midst and minor differences between us while belittling the unity and fraternity of our nation. With such schemes came conflicts and dissension to a point that sovereignty was lost. Hence we became an enslaved nation and not a sovereign one and we all lived in servitude in our homeland and became preoccupied with our own comforts and ourselves.[34]

Unity in action, therefore, meant that Malays should devote their energies to politics and other activities to liberate their homeland from foreign rule. To be united entails sacrificing one's time and luxuries for the common good. The *Voice of the People* urged Malays to "rally around any National Movement to advance the Malay Cause! They must not remain indifferent any longer. They should jump to it and support it unhesitatingly."[35] The national movement that the editorial mentioned was none other than the PKMM.

The third theme that recurred in the pages of the three publications related to the role of young people—the pemuda. The Malay radicals criticized the old guards (*angkatan lama*) who were generally unwilling to push for full independence and were too compromising in their approach to politics. These figures, including Malay aristocrats as well as well-known intellectuals such as Za'ba and Datuk Panglima Bukit Gantang, were described as meek and submissive to the colonial powers.[36] Alternatively, Malay radicals put much hope in the younger generation of activists, who were not burdened by the old thinking that independence should be achieved through gradual means. This hope was expressed in many articles about pemuda that appeared in the *Suara Rakyat*. Particularly noteworthy among these is a lengthy piece by Ahmad Firdaus entitled "*Perjuangan dan tenaga pemuda-pemuda*" ("The Struggle and Energies of the Youths") which summarizes all of the articles about the pemuda in the three publications sponsored by the PKMM.[37] What makes this article so remarkable is the author's use of mobilizing concepts, hyperbole, and historical anecdotes to make the cogent point that the pemuda could play a major role in the independence movement. More

crucially, the author interweaved religious symbolism with the ideals of freedom promoted by prominent figures such as Sukarno.

Ahmad began the article with a universalizing view that the history of mankind bears witness to the crucial importance of youths, for they represent a powder keg of revolutionary potential. Alexander the Great had built a vast empire by the time he was thirty, and featured strongly in the Malay Annals (*Sejarah Melayu*), in which he was purported to be the forebear of Malay kings. Ahmad mentioned Julius Caesar's young armies, Napoleon Bonaparte's troops, the young men who fought during the first and second world wars, and the millions who risked their lives in many liberation movements. "The blood of youths," Ahmad claimed, is

> sharper than shining swords, hotter than fire or the sun. The blood of youths is far stronger than thunder, tremors, and lightning that tears the earth, the blood of youths is more potent than a volcano with its fierce fires, more spectacular than the waves and whirlwinds in the China Sea, the blood of youths knows no fear of death and knows not the meaning of peace when their rights and aspirations are cast aside and oppressed by autocratic rulers, the traitors of all mankind.

Put simply, it is only through the flesh and blood of youths that victory could be achieved and justice be upheld.

Ahmad then shifts the mood of the article by quoting Sukarno, whose statement on youths had become a mantra for activists: "Give me a thousand old men, and I will move a mountain. Give me ten young men whose hearts are burning with love for their homeland, and I will shake the world." The point of highlighting Sukarno's quote here was to expose the readers to influential figures in Indonesia. Other figures often highlighted in the *Suara Rakyat* were Mohammad Hatta and Sjahrir. Hatta was quoted in another article as saying: "You are the younger generation that will form part of our nation in the future and you have dedicated your life to the homeland. But you must also prepare yourself for survival, to uphold the freedom of your kind in the times to come. The common folk in Indonesia have entrusted their lives to you, and you must realize your responsibilities to our nation."[38] The coverage given to the speeches of these Indonesians was in line with the Melayu Raya ideal that the Malay radicals sought to popularize. Sukarno and Hatta provided the pretext for another argument that Ahmad developed in his long article: that youths must manifest a deep love for their homeland.

The homeland, according to Ahmad, refers specifically to Melayu Raya, including Singapore, Malaya, and Indonesia. In Ahmad's view, the union of

these territories was not merely an imaginary construct. Rather, the Melayu Raya concept was an ancestral relic (*tanah pusaka*) and a legacy (*warisan*) that was handed down from one generation to another until the present. Ahmad thus subscribed to the belief invented and promulgated by the Malay radicals that the Malays had always inhabited the same land, much like the indigenous peoples (*orang Asli*) of the country. This runs contrary to the fact that the Malays, in Malaya specifically, were a peripatetic people who moved across the states and other lands beyond the Malay Peninsula in search of a livelihood.[39] To further buttress his point about the need for the youths to love their homeland, Ahmad stressed that most Malays had spent their entire lives in their villages and hometowns and had developed memories that would be taken away from them should the colonialists remain in power.

The article climaxed with the use of religious symbols to agitate for a greater involvement of the youths in nationalist movements. Man, according to Ahmad, is created by God to be free. All men should fight to regain their freedom in the event that their freedom was ever taken away from them. In Malaya the freedom of the Malays had been snatched away from them. It was the duty of all Malays as servants of God to destroy all those systems and structures that had subjugated them, so as to be able to serve God better.

How, then, could Malays regain their stolen freedom? Ahmad believed that the answer could be found in the unity of youths struggling at the helm of a movement advocating for change. In his words:

> Oh youths who are my kin, the time has come for us to be honest and frank about whatever it takes to strategize and struggle as a strong and cohesive united front. We will not be divided and torn apart from each other, nor shatter when we are smashed, nor be reduced to ashes when set on fire, and we should bind ourselves together as tightly and as firmly as possible, so that our beliefs are strong and sustaining and will never yield until we breathe our last.[40]

The fourth and no less significant theme that cuts across these publications was the amplification of the novel aims of the PKMM and the call for mass support for its cause. Appropriate words were chosen to simplify the party's long list of aims and make them palatable to the public. The central aim was to set the PKMM apart from other parties that were making their presence felt in that age of ferment and experimentation. Radical newspaper editorials described the PKMM as a "National Movement" for the Malayans led by the Malays. As a national movement, its activities were devoted to the restoration of the rights of the Malays and the liberation of all communities that had chosen to take Malaya as their homeland.[41]

These radical newspapers also argued that the PKMM was the best platform for the restoration of Malay rights. The Malay radicals would ensure that the Malay community would once again possess their homeland, which had been taken away from them by the Europeans. The PKMM would also restore the rights of the Malays to rule, to organize their society in accordance with their traditions, to practice their religion freely, to speak their minds on things pertinent to them, to manage their own economy, and to be treated as equal citizens in their own country. The forces of colonialism had deprived the Malays of these rights. Restoring these rights to the Malays would enable their downtrodden community to once again stand on the same level as other communities in Malaya. Malays and other communities should therefore "support the Malay Nationalist Party (or PKMM) that would provide clear guidance towards achieving that end. We must unite now and encourage ourselves to support the MNP. The MNP will bring freedom to the Malays. . . . We feel that it would be better to die than to neglect the freedom of our country. With that, we call upon all youths and the people to provide the MNP with your fullest support."[42]

Colonial Effects—A Malay Radical's Pioneering Analysis

These three publications reflect the ferment that characterized postwar Malaya and the experimentation with concepts and ideas that could not be openly expressed before the war or during the Japanese occupation. But newspapers and magazines were not the only tools that the Malay radicals used to expand their political reach and to plant new ideas into the minds of the Malays. These radicals also wrote treatises and books to analyze the conditions of their people and to encourage their readers to think about what their future would be if nothing were done to transform their situation. One person who stood out in this respect was Burhanuddin Al-Helmy, the second chairman of the PKMM (1946–1947), after the disappearance of Mokhtaruddin Lasso. He should now be given more attention here in view of the key role he played in expanding the radical Malay intellectual culture of his time.

A deeper elaboration of Burhanuddin's ideas and those of his contemporaries is important for other reasons as well. Scrutinizing their analyses of the colonial situation in detail could help to decenter the tacit or, even worse, false assumption among most Malay and foreign scholars that the Malay radicals offered little in the way of conceptualizing, theorizing, or explaining the various transformations that colonial rule brought to local

societies. Indeed, it is often said that the writings of Malay radicals were generally journalistic and populist in nature, and therefore lacking in the theoretical sophistication and methodological rigor that is evident in the works of anticolonial writers outside of Malaya. Mined solely for facts and figures, literary styles, and linguistic conventions, rather than for wide-ranging insights and relevant generalizations, Malay radical intellectuals are said to never be on par with postcolonial thinkers such as Frantz Fanon, C. L. R. James, or Aimé Césaire—to mention just a few prominent names—whose writings have spawned detailed and globally acclaimed studies aimed at decentering the dominance of European thought.[43]

A close reading of the writings of Malay radicals in the postwar period provides evidence that they contributed to the formulation of critical perspectives (some theoretical and others reflexive) about colonialism in Malaya in particular and the Malay world in general. These ideas may help in understanding the impact of colonialism in other contexts outside Southeast Asia. One distinguishing feature of the Malay radicals' ideas is that they were grounded in experiences and subjectivities shared not only by Malays, but also by other anticolonial writers, thinkers, and activists around the world. The Malay radicals found inspiration in the writings of these well-known thinkers and, in some cases, through direct communications with them. Burhanuddin Al-Helmy was a good example of a Malay radical who contributed his own original ideas about colonialism as well as borrowing ideas from other thinkers around the world.

To be sure, no book on Malayan and Malaysian politics in the post–World War II period would be complete without a discussion of the writings and activism of Burhanuddin Al-Helmy. Already the subject of biographies, monographs, scholarly articles, and academic theses, he has been described by a noted historian as "one of Malay nationalism's most important ideologues."[44] Burhanuddin was one of the pioneering Malay writers who sought to analyze the colonial situation in a precise yet intuitive manner while playing an important role in the resistance movement against the British. His ideas were informed by the discourses of the subalterns and the literate elites, which places him squarely in the Gramscian category of "organic intellectuals."

Gramsci's notion was discussed by Edward Said, who wrote: "Gramsci believed that organic intellectuals are actively involved in society, that is, they constantly struggle to change minds and expand markets; unlike teachers and priests, who seem more or less to remain in place, doing the same kind of work year in year out, organic intellectuals are always on the move, on the make."[45] Although it must be acknowledged that several aspects of the ideas of Malay organic intellectuals such as Burhanuddin are empirically

FIGURE 3 Dr. Burhanuddin during his visit to Tanjung Ipoh, 1 December 1946

inaccurate in view of later developments in scholarship and a lack of access to vital information that could buttress his analysis, Burhanuddin's analysis of colonialism is still particularly instructive in expanding an understanding of non-European intellectual responses to foreign rule.

It should be noted that Burhanuddin was also a prolific writer who delivered hundreds of speeches, some of which were transcribed by his admirers

and published posthumously. One text that stands out among his many published writings and speeches is a small yet significant book entitled *Perjuangan Kita* ("Our Struggle"), which was published in 1946. Although the first edition of this book consists of no more than a hundred pages, it is very valuable for several reasons. First, it was written during the period of British decolonization, which coincided with the heightening of anticolonialist sentiments in Malaya. The ideas embedded in the book reflect a spirited attempt to expose the evils of European colonialism and the problems facing Malay society, as well as to chart new trajectories toward the creation of an independent state.

The book's importance is evidenced in the wide popularity that it enjoyed in its time. Having influenced a whole spectrum of Malay and non-Malay audiences since its first publication, Burhanuddin published an extension of the main arguments he developed in *Perjuangan Kita* in a book called *Asas Falsafah Kebangsaan Melayu* (*The Foundations of Malay Nationalism*) in 1954. Both books were reprinted several times in Singapore, Malaya/Malaysia, and Indonesia in the 1950s and 1960s, which indicates their wide appeal. More recently, these two works have been collated and republished with other speeches, demonstrating their enduring appeal. According to Kamaruddin Jaafar, Burhanuddin's works have received widespread support from the Malays since the post–World War II period, to the extent that they have become sources of reference for scholars and lay readers alike. These factors, along with the intrinsic significance of his analysis of colonialism, are sufficient justification to elevate Burhanuddin's *Perjuangan Kita* to the pantheon of "classic" studies of the Malay world and colonialism in the region.[46]

A perceptive and urbane reading of Burhanuddin's *Perjuangan Kita* can be achieved by situating the issues he raises squarely within the history of ideas, as well as within the general context of the colonial experience. What follows is an attempt to uncover Burhanuddin's governing concepts, implicit methodologies, and tacit assumptions, while exposing the underlying logic of the author's arguments. By situating this unique text within a multitude of local, regional, and global historical contexts as well as influences and opinion, and by placing them in dialogue with the prevailing discourses of their times, it can be shown how Burhanuddin's ideas may (and may not) transcend the circumstances in which they were created. It is this complex dialectic and, in some instances, the ruptures in the relationship between texts and contexts, that makes Burhanuddin an intriguing (if not menacing) radical Malay thinker who has shaped the minds of his admirers and interlocutors, and even his critics.[47]

Two intertwining influences played major roles in shaping Burhanuddin's analysis of colonialism. The first was social and contextual, while the second involved textual ideas that he derived from deep readings of several major works in the Islamic and secular traditions. To begin with the social and contextual influences, a brief survey of Burhanuddin's life, education, and activism up until his writing *Perjuangan Kita* reveals that he derived his ideas from a variety of persons and institutions. Born in Perak on 29 August 1911, Burhanuddin was exposed to the reformist ideas of the Kaum Muda during his schooldays in Jambi, Sumatra, in 1924. The two years of intense study in an Islamic pondok school there were enough to instill in him a growing sense of awareness that the Muslim world was in a state of rapid change and decline. Muslims, from Burhanuddin's perspective, had lost their selfhood by becoming blind imitators of Western civilization. These developments had compelled many to abandon their faith. Conversely, the shunning of the spirit of reason and scientific inquiry among Malay elites and educated Malays, who thought that modern forms of knowledge and education had corrupted the minds of ordinary Muslims, had reinforced tendencies toward parochialism, insularity, and fanaticism.

In 1927, Burhanuddin enrolled in the famous Madrasah al-Mashor al-Islamiah in Pulau Pinang, established in 1916 by Arab philanthropists and managed by renowned Muslim scholars such as Shaikh Tahir Jalaluddin, Syed Shaikh Ahmad Al-Hadi, and Ghulam Sarwar. Burhanuddin mastered the Arabic language and the Islamic studies during a year's stint there.[48] Next, he went to India in search of knowledge and self-exploration. The revolutionary pulses in the subcontinent convinced him that the Malays and Muslims in general urgently needed to recover their lost pride by taking their place at the vanguard of social, educational, and (most importantly) political reform. His exposure to the Indian independence movement led by Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru, and his travels to Palestine during the heat of protests against the Balfour Declaration, strengthened his conviction that colonialism was the essential obstacle to the healthy growth of the Malay world. Several years of study in the field of homeopathic medicine and Islamic studies at the Ismailiah Medical College in Delhi and Aligarh Muslim University, respectively, opened his mind to deeper problems facing colonized societies. Like Frantz Fanon, who was similarly trained in the medical sciences, Burhanuddin realized that physical health and the liberation of the body and the mind from inferiority complexes and mimicry of the West were the first essential steps toward the larger project of liberation from the yoke of colonialism.[49]

It is therefore unsurprising that, upon his return to Malaya, Burhanuddin set out to promote ideas about independence and resistance. In 1937 he was arrested for publishing a magazine that criticized biased British policies in Malaya. Two years later, Burhanuddin accepted an invitation from Mustapha Hussain to become a member of the KMM. Immersing himself in the politics of the movement, he embraced the idea of unifying the Malay world into a conglomerate called the Melayu Raya. Although the KMM was eventually dissolved upon the Japanese occupation of Malaya in 1942, the Japanese occupation period was eventful in that it provided Burhanuddin with an opportunity to widen his exposure to Muslim anticolonial activism via the famous Madrasah Maahad Il-Ihya Assyarif as well as within the armed groups established by the Japanese.

Seeing that the popularity of the radical movement had waned rapidly following the return of the British, and mindful that the Japanese occupation had stained the reputation of the Malay radicals, Burhanuddin wrote *Perjuangan Kita* as a restatement of the positive contributions of the radicals before and during the war. The book can also be regarded as an attempt by a leftist-nationalist Malay intellectual to look back to the past glories of the Malays, to review the ill effects of colonialism, and to bring the story up to the present defining moment, which would determine whether the Malay world would reclaim its freedom or endure continued servitude at the hands of the Europeans. Burhanuddin argued that the Malay radicals offered a program of action for the future.

Yet these contextual influences provide only a partial picture of the conditions and circumstances that led to the writing of *Perjuangan Kita*. A close reading of the book indicates that Burhanuddin was deeply influenced by several leading texts in both the Islamic and secular traditions. Although he did not explicitly refer to each of these texts as one might expect a professional academic to do, Burhanuddin demonstrated an acute ability to harmonize these two traditions in order to develop his own unique interpretation of colonialism and its effects upon colonized societies, so that he could offer his readers a way out of their predicament.

From the Islamic tradition, he developed and employed the method of argument by way of theological reasoning. From the Quran, he learned that the only way to defeat tyranny was to follow the central teachings of the Islamic faith. He cited verses such as Surah Ali-Imran verse 110 to argue that Muslims in the Malay world should rally together under one banner to free themselves from the nonbelievers, here referring to the non-Muslim colonizers. The verse from Surah Ali-Imran reads:

> You are the best among all the nations that were raised among mankind, you enjoin good deeds and forbid immorality and you believe in Allah.

Clearly, some degree of exegesis is at play here. This is characteristic of Burhanuddin's use of Quranic verses in his writings and speeches, just as Quranic verses also appeared in many articles in *Suara Rakyat*, *Suluh Malaya*, and *Pelita Malaya*. Read in a literal fashion, the verse cited above refers to a group of people who are seen in the eyes of God as preeminent simply because of their faith in Him and their fulfillment of the commandment to display good conduct on Earth. No special reference is made to Muslims or to interlocutors and antagonists. Burhanuddin, however, provides a contextualized reading of the verse to refer to Muslims in Malaya as exemplars for mankind who have yet to discharge the duties assigned to them by God. Entwined with this narrative of an obligation is another narrative of how colonialism in Malay caused the marginalization of Muslim rulers, the decline of public morality, and the deprivation of the native peoples' natural rights. The best of nations has thus become the worst of men with the coming of the West. Thus, Malaya's political, social, and moral decline could be attributed to the rule of non-Muslim Western colonialists.

The second set of Muslim sources in Burhanuddin's writings consists of the ideas of Muslim thinkers. Burhanuddin refers to Sayyid Jamaluddin Al-Afghani, Muhammad Abduh, Amir Shakib Arsalan, and Muhammad Sayyid Tantawi, known Muslim scholars who shared the belief that a strong adherence to Islam was the key to reviving the Muslim Ummah (community). Another commonality among these thinkers was that they were convinced that "to love one's country is part of faith (*hubul watan minal iman*)." The road to freedom must begin with a strong commitment to one's homeland. Only then would God help the colonized and the subjugated.[50] Burhanuddin began his book by weaving this argument together with the early traditions. The first paragraph of *Perjuangan Kita* ends with an invocation: "Hasil dunia dan akhirat, hidup dan mati kita, seperti tuntutan yang dikehendaki dan diredhai Allah rabbul alamin," which means: "The outcomes of this life and the hereafter, our life and death, will be in accordance with Allah's wishes."

Burhanuddin also made use of historical accounts to develop his points. He devoted nearly half of his book to explaining the origins of the Malay ethnic stock, the rise of Malay sultanates, the reasons for their decline, and the memories and stories of resistance encountered in the process of colonization. His narrative analysis is filled with tragedy and romance interwoven

with narratives of the past magnificence of the Malay peoples, reminding one somewhat of Jawaharlal Nehru's *The Discovery of India*.[51] He also used history to defend the leftist-nationalists against accusations of collaboration with the Japanese. Burhanuddin highlighted that the radicals' short-term strategy of cooperating with the Japanese was adopted to achieve the long-term goal of Malayan independence. The Malay radicals had never departed from their main aim of achieving complete independence by whatever means necessary.[52]

Although there is little evidence that Burhanuddin was influenced by the works of leading socialists or communists, this possibility should not be discounted, since his discussions of colonialism and the rule of capital indicate that he may have read their writings and used their ideas in ways that did not necessarily reveal his own views of their ideology.[53] Indeed, even if Burhanuddin was influenced by communism and socialism, he kept that ideology subservient to his overarching religious faith as a Muslim.[54] It is, however, important to note that the title of Burhanuddin's book is similar to that of a pamphlet written by Sutan Sjahrir, an Indonesian nationalist. The book was indeed informed by Sjahrir's ideas about socialism as a rallying ideology for the mobilization of proletarian Muslim and non-Muslim masses to resist the colonial state.[55] Another socialist thinker who shaped Burhanuddin's thoughts was Jose Rizal, the Filipino freedom fighter and novelist. Burhanuddin drew from Rizal the argument that the colonialists used the idea of Malay indolence to justify the imposition of foreign rule.

Ibrahim Haji Yaacob, Burhanuddin's mentor-in-exile and a brotherly figure, must not be forgotten in this list of figures whose writings published during the same period had an indelible impact on Burhanuddin's own thinking about harmonizing socialist ideals with those of Malay nationalist thinking. *Perjuangan Kita* could, in many ways, be read as a dialogue with Ibrahim's *Sekitar Malaya Merdeka*.[56]

This catalogue of influences on Burhanuddin's thinking as revealed in the pages of *Perjuangan Kita* will conclude with a consideration of Malay rhetorical devices derived from textual and nontextual sources. Malay rhetorical devices refer to an array of tropes, proverbs, idioms, metaphors, similes, images, metonymies, and euphemisms that pervade the entirety of *Perjuangan Kita*. The use of these various forms of rhetorical devices was meant to appeal to the senses and emotions of a largely Malay audience, which was accustomed to an oral culture. These devices also served as an effective method to convey complex ideas without resorting to the use of too much factual information. Burhanuddin's style was partly informed by the writings of Munsyi Abdullah, the famous Malay social critic. His trope of the

greatness and subsequent fall of the Malaccan sultanate as a momentous event in Malay history also suggests that Burhanuddin had an in-depth knowledge of the hikayat literature, notably the *Sejarah Melayu*, a text that was taught in schools during his time and was a compulsory text for radical Malay activists. A few examples of Burhanuddin's rhetorical devices are sufficient to show that he was a product of his Malay social, cultural, and textual environment:

> Kemakmuran, kebesaran, kemegahan dan keagungan kerajaan Melayu semerbak namanya seluruh dunia.
>
> (The prosperity, opulence, magnificence, and greatness of the Malay Kingdoms were known the world over.) (p. 32)

> Anak Melayu di atas ibu pertiwinya sendirinya yang kaya dan makmur jadi seperti ayam kelaparan di atas padi, itik kedahagaan berenang di air.
>
> (Malays, whose motherland was rich and prosperous, became like chickens dying of hunger in the paddy fields, or ducks suffering from thirst while paddling in water.) (p. 38)

> Gajah berjuang pelandok mati terhimpit, ibu pertiwi meraong menjerit minta selamatkan anak-anaknya.
>
> (The fighting elephants trample the deer in their path, the motherland laments and screams for the safety of her children.) (p. 41)

> Bangsa lemah jadilah ugamanya lemah. Bangsa yang rendah, ugamanya juga turut diperhina dan diperendahkan. Bebas dan merdeka bangsa dan watan baharulah betul merdeka ugama yang dianuti oleh seseorang itu.
>
> (When the race is weak, so are its beliefs. A weak race yields beliefs that will be scorned and insulted. It is only when a race and its country are free that the beliefs which the race holds dearly are proven to be true.) (p. 48)

All of these influences and methods inform Burhanuddin's analysis of colonialism, which touches upon the causes and forms of European rule and its effects on the Malay world. Before engaging in a deeper scrutiny of his analysis, it is important to clarify at the outset the concepts that Burhanuddin used to describe colonialism and his definition of the term. Burhanuddin uses the term *imperialis*, a Malay transliteration of the English word *imperialist*, to describe colonial rule.[57] He attributed colonialism specifically to the European powers, here referring to the Portuguese, Dutch, English, and Spanish. It can be established that this is a fact because, while he mentioned

the Indian and Chinese "empires" (*empayar*) and described the Malay sultanates as "polities" (kerajaan), he did not label them as imperialists. Why? Burhanuddin believed that, while the Indians and the Chinese had once established empires, they had not exploited the regions they subjugated on the massive and devastating scale of European colonialism.

Burhanuddin believed that European projects of domination were unlike those of previous empires in that they were driven by capitalist (*kapitalis*) greed in a manner that was unparalleled in history. The symbiosis of capitalism and imperialism together with the attendant establishment of industries and markets through formal and informal means made European colonialism far more global in design and intent, far more extensive and obnoxious than any previous empire-building project. Here the similarities between Burhanuddin's analysis of imperialism and the ideas of Vladimir Lenin are evident. According to Lenin,

> imperialism is capitalism at that stage of development at which the dominance of monopolies and finance capital is established; in which the export of capital has acquired pronounced importance; in which the division of the world among the international trusts has begun; in which the division of all territories of the globe among the biggest capitalist powers has been completed.[58]

For Burhanuddin, the origins of colonialism in the Malay world began in the sixteenth century, after the fall of the Malaccan sultanate to the Portuguese in 1511, and the situation remained unchanged until the second half of the twentieth century.[59] Burhanuddin saw the dismantling of the first Muslim polity in the Malay Peninsula as symbolic of the decline of the Malay world as a whole.

But what are the factors that brought about the ascendance of European colonialism in the Malay world? Burhanuddin outlined six key causes, which are closely intertwined with one another. The first was the treason of the political elites, whose acquiescence in the colonialist project provided the pretext for British domination in many areas of Malay life. Burhanuddin directs his discursive attacks toward the Malay monarchs who sought to protect their personal interests by seeking the help and protection of the British. These Malay monarchs signed unequal treaties with the imperialists, which resulted in the political elites developing a culture of dependency upon foreign power.

Second, Burhanuddin also blamed the Malay aristocracy for instilling in their subjects an unquestioning attitude toward their leadership and

traditions. Malay monarchs were exalted to the point of being worshipped. To question the basis of their policies, of authority and legitimacy, was to commit treason, even in times of crisis and in instances when injustice was apparent.[60]

Then there was the backwardness of the religious class (*ahli agama*). Having internalized a fatalist conception of life, the bearers of religious faiths justified European colonialism by propagating the belief that the colonial phase in human history was part of *nasib dan takdir* (luck and fate). Such defeatist attitudes found wide acceptance among the common people and opened the doors to European interference in local affairs.[61]

Disunity within the Malay community was the fourth cause of their slide into foreign domination. Civil wars and internal struggles weakened local societies and paved the way for external control. Burhanuddin believed that this process began right after the fall of the Malaccan sultanate, which Malays regarded as the pinnacle of Malay civilization. The end of the Malaccan sultanate signaled the fall of other sultanates at that time and thereafter.[62]

But these human causes would not have spelled the end of freedom for the Malays had it not been for retribution from God. Burhanuddin writes: "Hence, the curse of God was cast upon the Malay race due to the faults and negligence of the rulers."[63]

The last point should be further probed from the perspective of postcolonial analyses of the writings of nationalist writers. Partha Chatterjee has argued that many of the writings of nationalists and anticolonial activists share the same thematic concerns and premises as those of the colonialists, even when the problematics are the exact opposite. While opposed to the rule of difference imposed by the Europeans (the problematic), nationalists and anticolonial activists embraced the notion of progress toward reason and modernity (the thematic) that the imperialists employed to justify and legitimate their colonial project and its "civilizing mission."[64]

Some exceptions to Chatterjee's general observation should be made with regard to Burhanuddin. He was not only critical of European modernity and conceptions of history; he also constructed arguments to explain the causes of colonial encroachment into Malay life that transcend the logic of Western reason. Although Burhanuddin believed in the importance of God (Allah) in history, he also believed that God's role in the making and unmaking of civilizations was contingent upon the actions of men. Colonialism was thus a consequence of the failure of men to obey God's commandment that human beings should free themselves from tyranny and oppression and chart the course of their own lives. In sum, Burhanuddin posited that the causes of colonialism were to be found within the colonized societies, in

their failings and complacency. The longevity of colonialism, on the other hand, rested on the schemes of the imperialists.

Among the main themes of *Perjuangan Kita* were the strategies that colonialists used to expand and sustain their control over the Malay world. Burhanuddin identified several of these strategies. By deepening the divisions among the political elites, the rulers and their subjects became part of the imperial chess game (*percaturan politik koloni*). This led to the total collapse of the indigenous political system.[65] A related colonial strategy was to regulate and monopolize trade in the colonized lands. Chinese, Indian, Persian, and Arab merchants were brought into the Malay world with the sole aim of grabbing the lion's share of the commerce in the region from the Malays. Europeans, in turn, came with the implicit motive of dominating Malay lands through trading companies, such as the Dutch and English East India Companies.[66] Coupled with the mass migration of Asian workers employed on rubber plantations and in gold and tin mines in the service of the European masters, the sheer numbers of these immigrants and their predominance in the economy made colonialism an almost indispensable facet of Malay life.[67]

Perhaps more importantly, Burhanuddin attributed colonialism's hold on the Malay world to the role of ideology. The colonialists propounded the myth that Malays were uncivilized and were stifled by their innate negative traits. Malays were portrayed as the lazy sons of pirates and robbers. These ideas contributed to the historical amnesia that became lamentably commonplace in books and in the minds of Europeans and Malays alike.[68] Although this aspect of Burhanuddin's analysis of colonialism was left undeveloped in his writings and speeches, the topic had already been discussed in detail by his predecessor, Jose Rizal, and would later be discussed at great length by Burhanuddin's contemporary, the Malaysian sociologist Syed Hussein Alatas.[69] Even so, one common ground that these three thinkers shared was the great significance they attached to the relationship between the political economy of colonialism and the myths and ideologies that justified European rule. Exploitation of the Malay economy and interference in political affairs gave rise to ideas about the indolence and backwardness of the Malays. These ideas became a self-fulfilling prophecy that Burhanuddin and the Malay radicals sought to combat.

Finally, at the heart of Burhanuddin's analysis of colonialism is an attempt to delineate the damaging impact of European rule upon the Malay way of life. Colonialism annihilated the Malay civilizations (*tamaddun*). Colonialism uprooted the long-standing Malay political systems and replaced them with a system that was modeled upon European polities. Colonialism reduced indigenous rulers into mere puppets who were under the

command of European governors and advisors. Colonialism also reconfigured the political geography of the Malay world. Artificial boundaries were constructed, which led to the rise of local particularisms. These border restrictions minimized interactions between communities, of kith and kin across state borders.[70]

Burhanuddin argued that colonialism also brought about stark inequalities in society. Malays were confined to the rural areas, and only a few benefited from the country's prosperity. Most Malays worked in the fields and were hobbled by poverty. Indians, Arabs, Persians, Europeans, and Chinese, however, lived luxurious lives as the members of the trading class. Burhanuddin did not deny the problems inherent within the precolonial sultanate system. He acknowledged that inequality was an embedded feature of the kerajaan-based society and argued in the same vein as Aimé Césaire, who famously posited that "colonialist Europe has grafted modern abuse onto ancient injustice, hateful racism onto old inequality."[71] To put it in the words of Fanon (whose position was, in a number of ways, analogous to that of Burhanuddin and Césaire):

> Colonialism hardly ever exploits the whole of a country. It contents itself with bringing to light the natural resources, which it extracts to meet the needs of the mother-country's industries, thereby allowing certain sectors of the colony to become relatively rich. But the rest of the colony follows its path of under-development and poverty, or at all events sinks into it more deeply.[72]

More crucially, for Burhanuddin, colonialism begets anticolonial responses. This paradox of colonialism occupies the last section of *Perjuangan Kita*. In his formulation, resistance to colonialism was rooted in the Malay mind and culture. Resistance was a legacy (warisan) "that was handed down by the Malays who came before us who strove to uphold the independence of the race and the land and this lived on from generation to generation in the hearts of the Malays."[73]

Drawing from the social memories of Malays at that time of failed rebellions and fallen heroes, Burhanuddin cited the Naning War, the killing of Birch in Perak, and the resistance of Tok Bahaman in Pahang, Tok Janggut in Kelantan, and Haji Abdul Rahman in Trengganu, as instances of violent responses to colonial rule. These incidents, according to Burhanuddin, suggest that running *amok* is an innate feature of the Malays, unlike other races. The phenomenon of running amok has been commonly said to be a culture-bound syndrome that is specific to the Malay world. Someone who ran amok would usually kill several people and animals before being subdued

or killed by others. While colonial writers and later scholars tend to attribute the causes of amok to moral shock, anomie, or psychological distress, Burhanuddin regarded amok as a creative energy that flows in the life and blood of all Malays, making them naturally averse to foreign rule and exploitation. That is to say, amok became more widespread than ever before with the imposition of European rule in the Malay world.[74]

But traits and traditions cannot fully explain the rise of anticolonialism. Burhanuddin argued that external factors also contributed to the development of a liberationist ideology. The rise of print capitalism in the form of newspapers, books, and magazines contributed to a new consciousness among the Malays. Having studied in global centers of learning such as Mecca, India, and Egypt, Malays who returned home developed ideas of progress and civilization. The exploitation of peasants who were poorly paid for their labor, and the low incomes of teachers, brought about disenchantment with colonial rule. All these factors provided the conditions for the birth of a new political spirit that resulted in an explosion of talks, writings, clubs, organizations, and congresses. To Burhanuddin, the Second World War was a turning point in anticolonialism because the Japanese destroyed the myth of white invincibility. He declared that colonialism had run its course and was nearing its end.[75]

Breakthroughs in Politics

Colonialism did not end as soon as Burhanuddin hoped it would. Nevertheless, his calls to action received a warm response from the Malay masses, thanks in part to the publications discussed above, and thanks also to the PKMM's recruitment activities. The post–World War II period saw the Malay radicals making Malaya-wide tours to drum up mass support for the PKMM, in much the same way that Ibrahim Yaacob and Mustapha Hussain had toured Malaya to promote the KMM before the war. While the KMM received only a lukewarm response from the Malay masses prior to the war, the PKMM received a radically different reception. The party was seen as the only avenue for the realization of a new way of life and political order for the Malays. The Malay youths thus joined the PKMM in great numbers, coming under the wing of Ahmad Boestamam, who formed the Angkatan Pemuda Insaf (API) on 17 February 1946. With its smart white uniforms, impressive drills, fiery slogans, and inspirational songs, the API struck a chord in the hearts of the male youths in the postwar period, who were looking for a sense of purpose and the ability to control their country's destiny. One of

the songs sung by API members was entitled "*Wahai API Perwira*" (Oh API Warrior); its stirring lyrics are as follows:[76]

Wahai API perwira
Lekaslah sedia
Menyusun barisan kita
Membela nusa bangsa
Maju, maju wahai API perwira
Maju, maju dengan gagah maju
Untuk nusa untuk bangsa
Serahkan jiwa raga

Maju, maju, wahai API maju
Maju, maju dengan gagah maju
Membela bangsa kita
Setia sampai mati

[translation]
Oh API warriors
Hasten to readiness
Organize our ranks
Protect the honor of our race
Advance, advance API warrior
Advance, advance with a mighty advance
For honor, for race
Sacrifice [our] lives wholeheartedly

Advance, advance, API advance
Advance, advance with a mighty advance
Defend our race
With loyalty till death comes

Wherever the PKMM members went to recruit new members, the API and a female wing of the PKMM, the Angkatan Wanita Sedar (AWAS), were also there to take the youth under their wings. One of the earliest recruits of the API was Mat Indera, who later joined the Malayan Communist Party in the militant struggle against the British.[77]

The PKMM found its widest appeal among union members and the peasantry. The unions in postwar Singapore, according to Bayly and Harper, "were formidable combinations of workers, and stoppages in one sector

could easily escalate to become general strikes."[78] The situation was no different in Peninsular Malaya, where more than a thousand man-days were lost because of industrial action. The PKMM capitalized on this rising wave of trade unionism by sending its members to actively participate in the Pan-Malayan Federation of Trade Unions (PMFTU). Abdullah C. D. and Abdul Majid Salleh became PKMM's representatives in the PMFTU, which included members of different ethnic groups in the country working on plantations and in factories, cinemas, coffee shops, transportation companies, and all other occupations that paid meager salaries in colonial Malaya.[79] Musa Ahmad, another affiliate of the PKMM, worked hard to gain the support of farmers and peasants through an organization he founded with the acronym BATAS (Barisan Tani Se Malaya).

By early 1946 the PKMM's membership had swelled to more than ten thousand. This rapid growth provided the boost the PKMM needed to make bold political moves to address pressing matters of the day. The most contentious issue was the Malayan Union episode, a major event that induced Malays to full-blown activism. The British introduced the Malayan Union scheme in October 1945 as part of their strategy to consolidate their hold on the Malay States. Malay political activists in the Malay Peninsula were disturbed by the proposal, which they saw as an attempt to erode the powers of the sultans. At the core of Malay unhappiness was the dilution of Malay special rights should the Malayan Union scheme materialize. The PKMM leadership originally viewed things otherwise; indeed, they initially voiced their full support for the scheme in the belief that the old system of administration (that is, the Malay monarchical system) was no longer relevant. The party's newspaper declared: "Let it be known that because of that [the monarchical system], the PKMM is inclined towards change that the party believes will be brought forth by the Malayan Union scheme."[80]

Yet the PKMM's support for the Malayan Union plan did not mean that the party was endorsing Britain's attempts to consolidate its rule in Malaya. The position taken by the Malay radicals was guided by their ultimate goal of establishing the Melayu Raya, which the party leadership felt could only be realized when all of the Malay states were brought under the rule of a single administration. The PKMM envisioned itself, once such a centralized administration had been put in place, acting as a catalyst for a nationwide revolution that would eventually topple the British. The new, independent Malaya, led by the PKMM, would then call for the merger of Indonesia and Malaya. Supporting the Malayan Union scheme and accepting the British plan to erode the power of the sultans, from this perspective, was merely the means to an end.

However, the position taken by the PKMM precipitated a conflict between the party and the newly established United Malays National Organization (UMNO) party. Registered in 1946, UMNO was a coalition of dozens of smaller Malay social and welfare organizations that were enraged by the British announcement of the Malayan Union scheme. Led by the brilliant, eloquent, yet short-tempered Dato' Onn bin Jaafar, UMNO campaigned for an alternative to the Malayan Union plan, known as the "Federation of Malaya." The proposed Federation would safeguard the powers and authority of the sultans while ensuring that the different states in the Malay Peninsula would work together as a single unit for the benefit of the Malays. The UMNO leaders' rallying cry was *berkerajaan sendiri* (toward an autonomous governing status). The PKMM felt that the UMNO slogan was pathetic, and countered with its own slogan: *Malaya Merdeka* (An Independent Malaya).

Because of this and other unresolved differences between Dato' Onn and some members of the PKMM, on 30 June 1946 the PKMM decided against joining a coalition with UMNO to present a united resistance against the Malayan Union plan. This did not diminish UMNO's growing fame. UMNO gained widespread support, especially in the days following open demonstrations against the Malayan Union plan. The PKMM's withdrawal from the coalition sowed the seeds of an inter-Malay party rivalry. After walking out of the coalition with UMNO, the PKMM publicly announced that there were two different strands within Malay politics. The first strand was the right-wing group (*golongan kanan*) that was, in essence, pro-British and was not keen on independence in the immediate future. The second strand consisted of left-wing political parties (*golongan kiri*) led by the PKMM. This delineation of the "left" and the "right" soon entered the consciousness of the general public as the masses began to take sides and both parties grew in strength.[81]

The British eventually retracted the Malayan Union scheme in favor of UMNO's proposal for a Federation of Malaya. UMNO's victory encouraged the growth of political activities among the Malays and brought the age of ferment and experimentation into full bloom. The PKMM rode on the wave of that enthralling age to widen its appeal within the Malay community. The Malay radicals received far more mass support than UMNO due to the PKMM's people-centered activities, and the PKMM became a platform for various neglected groups in society to embrace radical politics. Among these groups were Muslim activists and Malay women, whose popular resistance and mobilization marked a dramatic turning point in the history of Malay radicalism.

Chapter Five

Muslim Activists and Malay Women Mobilized

› THE MALAY RADICALIST movement grew rapidly as new ways of popularizing the movement were put into practice by its lieutenants and foot soldiers. The PKMM's membership peaked at fifty-four thousand by the end of 1947. The bulk of its members were youths below the age of thirty-five, with the majority coming from the state of Perak. This was to be expected, given that Perak was the center of radical and leftist activities in Malaya at that time.[1] Pahang was another main catchment area for the PKMM, which was not surprising considering that Pahang was the home of anticolonial resistance fighters such as Datuk Bahaman, Tok Gajah, and Mat Kilau—each of whom was prominent within the collective memories of the people of that Malay state. The PKMM also attracted members from Trengganu, Selangor, Malacca, Penang, and Singapore. The Malay radicals faced the least resistance in the recruitment of new members in Malacca, Penang, and Singapore, since these three places were under British administrations that ruled without the partnership of Malay monarchs. Thus, the Malays who lived in these three places were the least affected by the influence of the Malay aristocracy, and the traditional norms and customary rules regulating the day-to-day life of Malays in these places were relatively weak. This could explain the positive reception shown by Malay residents of these places toward a radical party such as the PKMM.

Among the groups toward which the Malay radicals directed their recruiting strategies were the religious teachers and the students of religious schools that were scattered across Peninsular Malaya. The Second World War had done much to strengthen the relationships between the religious teachers and their students. Burhanuddin Al-Helmy kept track of these developments and maintained close ties with many influential religious

TABLE 2: PKMM membership (including API and AWAS) in 1947

State	Total Number of Members	Level of Activism
Perak	13350	High
Pahang	7100	High
Trengganu	5560	High
Malacca	4970	High
Selangor	4950	High
Penang Island	3600	High
Kelantan	3080	Moderate
Singapore	2740	High
Negeri Sembilan	2620	Moderate
Seberang Perai	1640	Moderate
Johor	1530	Low
Perlis	920	Low
	53380	

Source: A. J. Stockwell, *British Policy and Malay Politics During the Malayan Union Experiment 1942–1948* (Kuala Lumpur: MBRAS, 1979), p. 142.

teachers in his capacity as an advisor in the Department of Malay Customs and Islamic Affairs during the Japanese occupation. Soon after the war, he paid visits to the Maahad Il Ihya Assyarif at Gunung Semanggol in Perak to convince the legendary Ustaz Abu Bakar al-Baqir that his support of the PKMM would further expand the allure of the party.[2]

Abu Bakar's response was swift and decisive. He called upon his closest deputies to induct students into the PKMM and to delve deeply into the activities that were organized by the Malay radicals. This brought about a number of transformations within the PKMM and in the makeup of the Malay radicalist movement in general. By mid-1947, almost half of the party's membership consisted of students of Islamic schools. Among the Islamic schools that supported the radicalist movement were Maahad Il Ihya Assyarif, Madrasah Al-Masyhur, Madrasah Al-Ahmadiah, Madrasah Dairatul Maarit, and Madrasah al-Akhlak as-Salam.[3]

Changes in the composition of the PKMM's membership led to the blending of communist, Islamic reformist, socialist, and nationalist elements of Malay nationalism within the radicalist movement. PKMM members who subscribed to different ideologies would sit together to strategize and execute activities, in the shared hope of hastening the movement toward Malayan independence. The entry of Muslim students and activists into the PKMM also had other implications. These freshly minted radicals provided a counterbalance to the growing influence of communism in the party. This was largely the brainchild of Burhanuddin Al-Helmy, who was wary of a communist takeover of the PKMM. By bringing Islamic-trained students and teachers under the same umbrella to work together with communists toward the shared goal of independence, Burhanuddin and a select group of Malay radicals who shared his anxieties sought to bring about a fusion of ideas between the communists and the Muslim activists. The interaction between the two groups, Burhanuddin reasoned, would create a middle ground within the PKMM, one that would harmonize Islam, socialism, communism, and nationalism. In this way, Burhanuddin hoped to set in motion a process that would magnify the impact of the radicalist movement. His strategy worked.

With the keen support of Islamic teachers and students, the PKMM held several congresses, which discussed socioeconomic, educational, and religious issues. The many problems besieging the Malays in colonial Malaya were discussed at great length. The Malay radicals recognized that dealing with the socioeconomic and religious backwardness of the Malays would require a total transformation of the community. The Malay radicals proposed that courses on constitutionalism and democracy should be conducted to better prepare the Malays for the management of their own country. The congresses that were held between March and November 1947 resulted in the establishment of four innovative bodies known as PERPEMAS (Pusat Perekonomian Melayu Se-Malaya, or the Pan-Malayan Center for Malay Economics), LEPIR (Lembaga Pendidikan Rakyat, or the Institute of Citizens' Education), MATA (Majlis Agama Tertinggi Se-Malaya, or the Pan-Malayan Supreme Council of Religious Affairs), and the Hizbul Muslimin (Muslim Party).

As the names of these organizations indicate, each of them was established to address a particular neglected aspect of Malay life. PERPEMAS was founded to foster the spirit of entrepreneurship and economic independence among the Malays.[4] This led to the creation of the "Rakyat Trading Company" and the "Malay National Banking Cooperation Limited." Both institutions were publicized with the motto *dari rakyat untuk rakyat* (from the people to the people). True to its motto, peasants, laborers, teachers, businesspeople, and literary figures owned the company and bank, and bought shares sold at ten dollars each. This foray into the world of finance and business led by PERPEMAS survived for nearly a decade, which was surely one of the most remarkable achievements of the Malay radicals and an indication that their aspirations were readily accepted and embraced by the Malay masses at that time. Also, the early success of PERPEMAS was linked to Malay reactions toward the dominance of Chinese and European capitalists in the Malayan economy. The Malay National Bank made perfect sense to many Malays, who saw the bank as a way to circumvent the clutches of banks and enterprises owned by non-Malays.[5]

Yet PERPEMAS lasted only as long as its progenitors could withstand the challenges posed by the colonial state and the internal setbacks it encountered. The Malayan Emergency deterred many Malays from supporting PERPEMAS's projects because they feared that it would be used as evidence to show they were anti-British. The lack of expertise and honesty in managing the company and the bank added another layer of difficulties, with numerous cases of embezzlement of funds every year. The general manager of the Rakyat Trading Company, Mohd Isa Sulaiman, remembered the dire situation the company faced within a few years after its creation:

> It was obvious that the business Rakyat Trading had engaged in was close to ruin [when I joined it in 1957]:
>
> a. the business made less than 100 dollars of profit monthly.
> b. arrears of 3 to 4 months of rent ($70 a month).
> c. there was not enough space to store the publishing materials.
> d. the salaries of workers could not be paid and, because of this, some workers moved to other companies.
> e. all kinds of machinery were old and worn-out and could not be used.[6]

Stifled by the poverty and the lack of resources of the Malay masses, PERPEMAS was unable to contribute fully to the economic growth of the Malays. By early 1957 both the company and the bank were closed down.

LEPIR (Lembaga Pendidikan Rakyat, or the Institute of Citizens' Education) was created to provide the necessary support for the establishment of schools for the Malays. It also had other noble aims, such as to raise awareness about the importance of higher education, to safeguard and upgrade the existing Malay and Muslim schools, to infuse political education among the youths, and to provide disbursements for Malay students to study abroad. One major obstacle that stood in LEPIR's way was the stiff competition it

faced from UMNO-sponsored educational projects that had already started prior to the establishment of LEPIR.[7] LEPIR thus developed at a snail's pace, characterized by the false starts of several projects that ended in total disarray. The idea of setting up a tertiary institution with the name *Universiti Rakyat* (Peoples' University) was mooted in March 1948 but was soon shelved forever because of the Malayan Emergency.[8] One positive development that emerged from LEPIR was the infusion of new life into the Maahad Il Ihya Assyarif, as this Islamic school enjoyed thorough upgrades of the quality of its facilities, curricula, and teaching staff. The improvements made to the school were so rapid, and the teachers and students became so influential, that UMNO leaders eventually began to regard the Maahad as a threat to their own power. UMNO's first president, Dato' Onn, warned the public about the danger of radicalism that was emanating from the "mountain." The "mountain" he was referring to was Gunung Semanggol, the home of the Maahad Il Ihya Assyarif.[9]

MATA (Majlis Agama Tertinggi Se-Malaya or Supreme Religious Council of Malaya) and the Hizbul Muslimin were two other experiments that emerged from the collusions between the Malay radicals and the Muslim teachers and students. At its prime, MATA brought more than forty prominent Malay religious scholars under its umbrella. Each of these scholars commanded a following of two hundred people in their respective villages and towns. Within a few months of its creation, MATA had established branches in Penang, Perlis, Kedah, Malacca, and Johore.

MATA's objectives were far from modest. The Council was bent upon uniting the two-and-a-half million Muslims of Malaya under the ambit of the syariah (the Islamic legal and ethical code). The organization would set up Islamic studies centers across the country to guide adults in the Malay community toward becoming good Muslims and respectful citizens. As an autonomous coalition of religious teachers and scholars in Malaya, MATA also envisioned itself as a controlling body for religious affairs. Ultimately, MATA strove to dissolve the powers of the sultans over Islamic matters.[10] This last objective was clearly an open challenge to the traditional roles of the sultans as custodians of Islam. Although the sultans made no public statements against MATA's callous disregard of their authority and position in the country, UMNO leaders were quick to react. When interviewed by the *Utusan Melayu* newspaper, an UMNO spokesman said: "The demands of those from Gunung Semanggol for the powers over religious affairs to be handed to them is puzzling because MATA has no expertise in administration. And if indeed they were given such authority, the rights, religion and the land of the Malays would soon be in ruins."[11]

MATA grew from strength to strength despite attempts by UMNO and the British to degrade its credibility and aims. Aside from publicizing proposals to reform the management of Islamic affairs in Malaya, MATA also voiced its strong backing of Muslim movements overseas, such as the efforts of Patani Muslims to resist the Siamese government and the struggles of militant groups that were at war against the Dutch in neighboring Indonesia. MATA also made public its opposition toward the British plan to establish a Jewish state in Palestine; MATA depicted it as part of the colonial grand plan to secure a foothold in Muslim lands in an age of decolonization.[12]

Within a few months of its existence, the Malay radicals felt that the time was ripe for a Muslim party—Hizbul Muslimin—to be established. This decision grew out of the desire of many Muslim teachers and scholars to participate in politics and lend support to the project of independence. Hizbul Muslimin was also formed to curb the growth of UMNO among the Malay masses. By early 1948 UMNO had stretched its wings throughout Malaya by opening branches in almost all states. UMNO leaders were also vocal in their opposition toward the PKMM, portraying it as a party of impatient men who were moving too drastically toward independence without making adequate preparations for Malays to govern.

Hizbul Muslimin was modeled upon the Masyumi coalition in Indonesia, a platform created in 1945 for religious teachers and ulamas to take part in the political process.[13] To ensure the safety of the newly founded party at a time when Malaya was still under colonial rule, the leaders of Hizbul Muslimin declared that its main interest was to raise the awareness of Muslims about their religion. Hizbul Muslimin would readily work together with the existing regime for the betterment of Muslims and to promote understanding between Muslims and non-Muslims in Malaya. These public pronouncements proved fruitful, and the party grew substantially until the declaration of the Malayan Emergency in July 1948. With the arrest of its leaders, namely Ustaz Abu Bakar al-Baqir, Haji Ariffin Haji Alias, and Daud Jamil, along with other Malay radicals, Hizbul Muslimin struggled to decide which direction to follow.

The Malay radicalist movement would not have expanded as rapidly as it did during the immediate postwar period if not for the efforts of another dynamic organization called the Angkatan Wanita Sedar (AWAS). Very little has been written about AWAS, which is astonishing, especially when one considers that it did much to expand the appeal of radical politics by mobilizing Malay women in that exciting period in Malayan history. The problem is not that there is a dearth of sources on AWAS, but rather that many historians have scrutinized these sources through narrow lenses.[14] Less attention

has been given to radical Malay women who displayed "troublesome" and/or "unwomanly" traits, in contrast to those who willingly (and sometimes unquestioningly) assisted their male counterparts—as seen in the case of accounts of female activists within UMNO and its women's section, the Kaum Ibu—who have already been the subject of scholarly monographs.[15]

A way around this historical oversight is to travel outside the beaten path and explore what is not easily visible in the established historical narrative. A paradigm shift about the roles of radical Malay women in shaping the independence movement is sorely needed to rescue them from scholarly oblivion and amnesia. AWAS, as the following pages will demonstrate, displayed the remarkable capacity of Malay female radicals to draw upon a broad array of relationships, connections, solidarities, and networks operating at the local and supralocal levels to agitate for female emancipation and national self-determination.

Moreover, what makes the history of AWAS a truly absorbing subject is that the ebb and flow of the movement was fraught with so many difficulties and episodes of gendered domination, from the time the organization was founded right up to its eventual dispersion. The participation of these Malay women in radical activism against the European colonial order meant that they had to contend with multiple hegemonies right from the outset. Their ability to overcome these hegemonies depended largely upon the temperaments of AWAS leaders and their ability to garner the energies of willing volunteers. The term *hegemony* is used here to refer to a form of power that manifests itself in daily practices as policies, norms, ideologies, and cultures that are embedded in the structures of everyday life. Hegemonic practices may be hidden, but they make themselves felt at all times. They are, as Jean and John Camaroff have proposed, often "internalized, in their negative guise, as constraints; in their neutral guise, as conventions; and in their positive guise, as values. Yet the silent power of the sign, the unspoken authority of habit, may be as effective as the most violent coercion in shaping, directing, even dominating social thought and action."[16]

The multiple hegemonies that AWAS contended with came from different levels of the sociopolitical hierarchy—the high echelons of the colonial establishment, the Malay ruling and upper classes, male anticolonial activists, and even the lowest rungs of the colonized society. While the persons and institutions that constituted this hierarchy may well have had different and opposing aspirations and conceptions about how their society should be organized, they nevertheless acted in tandem as powerful engines in the maintenance of a masculinist social order. In other words—and in a rather ironic twist—the colonized and the colonizer tended to coalesce to form a

neutralizing force in the face of radical women's movements such as AWAS. The coming together of seemingly contending actors in the colonial society has to do with the sexism that pervaded both the Malay society and the colonial state, making both sides unconscious allies against radical women activists. Yet the story of AWAS would not be complete without first considering some processes of modernization and social change that had impacted the lives of Malay women in general.

Malay Women and Multiple Hegemonies in Colonial Malaya

The end of over three years of Japanese rule in 1945 signaled a new era for Malay women in colonial Malaya in four main overlapping areas: education, employment, migration, and activism. Although the Japanese had disrupted female education as most schools were closed down during the occupation, the infrastructure and frameworks that had been established and set in motion since the 1900s by the British as well as by other nonstate actors such as Muslim reform groups were revived during the immediate postwar years. Malay parents who lived through the war saw the disadvantages of illiteracy as Malaya entered into a rapidly changing modern capitalist economy. They also regarded literacy and the knowledge of the English language as status symbols in a society that was recovering from the ravages of war. This popular interest in education, along with the colonial government's policy of extending educational opportunities, resulted in more Malay females entering vernacular, religious, and English-medium schools at a rate that far exceeded the trends in the prewar period.[17] By 1947 more than three thousand Malay women were reported to be attending English-medium schools, with four times that number attending vernacular and religious schools. Ten years later, the number of Malay girls enrolled in formal education had expanded tremendously, such that 20,617 were reported to be attending English-medium schools.[18]

This rapid growth in female education had implications for the types of employment that Malay women could secure for themselves. With better qualifications, Malay women managed to gain jobs as teachers and office workers, enabling them to move away from traditional unpaid work at home and on plantations in the rural areas. Higher educational achievements among Malay females also meant more migration to the urban areas. Malay women in search of social mobility and opportunity entered various professions that were open to them in the hundreds of new towns and urban centers created by the colonial state as part of its campaign to hasten the

pace of urbanization in the colonies. By the late 1940s, 14 percent of the Malays in Malaya lived in towns and urban areas. Malay women constituted slightly less than one-third of these rural-urban migrants, who generally gravitated to towns in states that were predominantly Malay, such as Kelantan, Trengganu, Negeri Sembilan, and Pahang. In the highly urbanized cities of Singapore and Penang, the bulk of the population remained largely Chinese.[19]

The progress in education, shifting patterns of employment, and rural-urban migration among Malay women had a great impact on their outlook on life in general and their attitudes toward politics in particular. They became exposed to modern ideas of egalitarianism and female emancipation, which sensitized them to the injustices of colonialism, and this awareness made their marginal social position in the Malay society obvious.[20] A landmark event that heightened Malay women's engagement in political activism was the Malayan Union episode from December 1945 to the closing months of 1946, when Malay women featured significantly in protests staged by political parties. In one instance, a twenty-five-year-old schoolteacher by the name of Zaharah binti Abdullah spoke at a protest rally in Johore, exclaiming that, "we women were greatly surprised when we were completely ignored by Sir Harold MacMichael. We will not agree to a MU [Malayan Union] whatever happens. We make our protest strongly. We will work with our men to regain our rights. In short, we don't like the union."[21] Zaharah was not the only woman who came out strongly in the open to attack the political edifice of the time. A British colonial officer noted:

> In towns, there were demonstrations with 5,000 to 10,000 people standing in front of us. But the most remarkable thing of all—by far the most remarkable thing of all—was the part the women were playing in this great national movement. In the 14 years I lived in Malaya, I scarcely ever spoke to a Malay woman. But today, they go up on political platforms and make speeches; unmarried girls make speeches through microphones that would not have disgraced anybody in this Committee. That has all happened in the short space of six months. If one can say there is such a thing as a national movement, then here it is.[22]

Such unique developments within Malay society did not mean that the hegemonic structures, cultures, and norms that regulate gender relations had been completely removed, or that radical female movements such as AWAS were allowed to flourish. Rather, Malay women in colonial Malaya were entangled in multiple hegemonic processes that could not easily be

broken by their involvement in politics, radical or otherwise. The first form of hegemony confronting female Malay activists came from their own society. The twin forces of local customary conventions and class differences assigned Malay women to a secondary and private sphere, while keeping in place the notion that women active in public life could only fulfill roles that were complementary, but never alternative, to men's. According to the Malay customs (*adat*) that prevailed in the postwar period, women were expected to be unassuming and yielding at home and in public. Although women were allowed to take part in political activities and to express their views freely, they were also made to realize that members of their community would inexorably view them with suspicion and hostility.[23]

The few Malay women who became involved in public activities were often admonished from the outset that they would not be permitted to hold high offices. Class divisions buttressed such customary practices. Only women hailing from the elite class in the Malay community were allowed by their families and communities to be involved in activist work.[24] This had implications for the ways in which radical female activists (such as those who belonged to AWAS) were viewed by the Malays of their time. Aside from being confronted with a lack of support and participation from the majority of elite Malay women in colonial Malaya, their peasant and working-class backgrounds as well as the customs that governed them meant that AWAS members were vulnerable to derision for being upstarts, as well as being accused by the men and women of their community of transgressing the established boundaries of Malay femininity.

Above and beyond the influence of customs and class divisions, female activists also faced another line of hegemonic practices that, ironically, originated from within their own ranks. Because female Malay political movements in colonial Malaya usually grew out of their parent organizations, such as the PKMM (or the Malayan Nationalist Party) and UMNO, and because patriarchal tendencies still had a strong hold even among the most progressive male anticolonialists, female activists were susceptible to censure and criticism whenever they were perceived as overstepping the limits of their designated functions as auxiliaries for male nationalists. The feminist scholar Kumari Jayawardena is not wrong in arguing that one of the insurmountable obstacles to female emancipation in Asia throughout the epoch of decolonization was the "in-built conservative bias in many reform movements."[25]

William Roff, the late doyen of the study of Malayan nationalism, made this point in the sharpest terms by stating that Malay women in particular have for many decades substantially outnumbered men within political

movements. They "have played a hugely important part both in getting out the vote and in voting, not to mention in other respects. The failure of male party hierarchies to recognize this importance and to respond with anything like an appropriate number of electoral candidacies, senior party posts, and cabinet offices seems to have diminished little with the years and to have been replicated in all respects within Malaysian Chinese and Indian political organizations."[26] It would not be excessive to suggest that party leaders from the whole spectrum of political leanings in colonial Malaya consciously placed limits on the roles and activities of women activists in order to avoid challenges to their authority.

British colonialism, as manifested in its highly developed juridical, educational, social, and political structures and institutions, constituted the third hegemonic force that stood in the way of Malay women radical activists, such as those who joined AWAS. It is now a truism to argue that colonialism was, in essence, a masculinist enterprise supported by an androcentric vision of the colonized society. The main aim of European colonial rule in Malaya was to ensure that the subjects remained compliant and useful to the imperial will, and this was achieved by constructing the image of "effeminate," "childlike," "emotional," "unreasonable," and "instinctive" Malays. The local populace internalized such images, which were delivered to them through education, social reforms, and colonial propaganda.[27]

Female radical activists, then, had to wrestle with a double colonization—that is, in order to improve the condition of Malay women, they had to dispel the myth of the diffident Malays which, when grafted onto the already-established masculinist practices in Malay society, meant that Malay women were viewed by the colonial rulers as the most marginal of the marginals. Furthermore, by contravening both colonial and traditional axioms, women's movements such as AWAS were constantly threatened with proscription should they pose a threat to the colonial state, while they also risked the hostility of the male-dominated leftist movement to which they belonged. How then did the women of AWAS circumvent these hegemonies? To answer this question, we must begin with the tangled genesis of a forgotten chapter in the history of Malay radicalism.

Troubled Beginnings

Multiple and conflicting accounts surround the origins of AWAS, but there is little doubt that the chief architect behind the emergence of the movement was none other than Burhanuddin Al-Helmy. Impressed and influenced by the

strategies undertaken by anticolonialists in Indonesia and India, and himself a product of a matrilineal society in Sumatra, Dr. Burhanuddin envisaged that the setting up of a women's wing within the PKMM could help to expand mass support for the party, in much the same way that the PKMM had succeeded in attracting support from the Muslim activists. Women, after all, constituted most of the Malay population in the country.[28] To exclude them or downplay their strategic importance in the battle for self-determination, Burhanuddin and other leaders of the PKMM reasoned, would waste a vast pool of talent and resources that could benefit any independence movement, even one that was dominated by men.

Male Malay radical leaders' resolve to recruit female members was thus motivated largely by the desire of these men to rapidly expand their influence within Malayan society, rather than by a real commitment to openly tackle women's issues.[29] Hence, though the women's section of the PKMM was a trailblazing foray in that it inspired the birth of other Malay women's political movements, its male creators regarded it as useful only to the extent that it would help to bolster the image and legitimacy of the male leadership. Such practices were certainly not unique to Malayan liberation movements. In many parts of the decolonizing world of the 1950s and 1960s, women were recruited precisely for the purpose of lending additional strength to male-dominated organizations, rather than to overcome inequalities between men and women.[30]

The PKMM's decision to establish a separate women's wing resulted from internal conflicts between the PKMM's top brass, specifically between Dr. Burhanuddin and Ahmad Boestamam. Ahmad advocated radical actions to rapidly transform the colonial situation, while Burhanuddin urged caution to avoid drastic reprisals by the regime. Arguably, AWAS came into being due to Ahmad's yearning to gain influence over a larger group of youths above and beyond the militant wing he had already established—the Angkatan Pemuda Insaf (API). The name *Angkatan Wanita Sedar* (Generation of Conscious Women) mirrored API's aspirations while invoking the spirit of the legendary 1930s radical Indonesian women's movement, the *Isteri Sedar* (Conscious Women), which was opposed to Dutch imperialism and was a strong advocate of women's participation in politics.[31] The acronym AWAS (which is pronounced the same as the Malay word *awas*, which means "beware") served as the battle cry of the organization, to be yelled while holding up a clenched fist with an index finger pointing to the sky during public events and mass parades. For members of AWAS, these performative acts were a symbolic warning to the colonial powers of the awakening of Malay women and their resistance to all forms of oppression.[32]

AWAS's ideology, much like that of API and other emerging youth radical groups, such as Gerakan Angkatan Muda (GERAM, Organized Youth Movement) and Pemuda Radikal Melayu (PERAM, the Radical Malay Youths), was a mix of modernism, socialism, and anticolonialism dressed up in familiar symbols drawn from Malay culture and Islam.[33] Nothing is unique about this, as Reynaldo Ileto has shown in his seminal study of grassroots movements in the Philippines. Anticolonial leaders and ideologues in colonial Southeast Asia recognized the utility of appropriating traditional signs and language and combining them with those of modern ideologies in their endeavor to mobilize a wide range of social groups for contentious politics.[34] The degree of adherence to each of the elements that made up their hybridized ideology differed among AWAS members, in accordance with their socioreligious backgrounds and individual dispositions.

Collectively, however, AWAS advocated the abolition of customary practices and conventions regarding the position of women in Malay society in order to allow for the education of more Malay women. AWAS also believed that women should be allowed to make their own life choices in matters relating to occupation, marriage, and motherhood. Furthermore, AWAS promoted the active participation of Malay women in politics and endeavored to make AWAS members aware of the vital roles they could play in the struggle for independence. The main aim of political participation, in the minds of AWAS members, was to free Malay women from what they perceived as the shackles of domesticity. As one member of AWAS wrote in the *Suara Rakyat* newspaper:

> By changing the texture of society, and by giving the same rights to men and women, a new society will be born, that is, a society that will shape the lives of the Malays in the future towards becoming a nation that is progressive.[35]

A new society, in other words, could be created if Malay women would stand up for themselves and stop being parochial, ignorant, and tongue-tied. AWAS members believed that the position of women in Malay society was comparable to the proverbial Malay image of "a frog under a coconut shell" (*katak bawah tempurung*). AWAS therefore aimed to serve as a unifying platform for Malay women in the struggle for female emancipation and to establish the equality of men and women as enjoined by Islam. This would be achieved by gaining freedom from colonialism, by force if necessary.[36] This component of its ideology was closely connected to the ultimate objectives of the API. Known for its motto, *Merdeka dengan Darah* (Freedom through Blood), the core leaders of the API maintained that full independence could

FIGURE 4 AWAS, API, and GERAM demonstration held in Malacca, 22 December 1946

only be realized through armed struggle, as exemplified by other formerly colonized peoples across Asia and Africa. Training in arms and guerrilla warfare tactics was organized for the API's core activists.[37]

The ethnic undertone of AWAS's ideology is one area that requires some elaboration here. Insofar as AWAS members established relations with other non-Malay organizations in Malaya and advocated a cosmopolitan approach to addressing women's issues, the movement remained firmly committed to its primary mission of advancing the interests of Malay women before the interests of women of other ethnic groups. AWAS members also saw Malayness as the locus of its identity and regarded the campaign for the rights of Malay women as the mainstay of the group's activities. In so doing, they were somewhat mired in the ethnic frame of reference that was institutionalized by the British. This was one of the Achilles' heels of radical and leftist movements in Malaya during this period. The ethnic frame of reference that defined the ideology of groups such as AWAS became a restraining factor for organizational growth, just as it had inhibited the leveling of the cleavages between the Malays and other ethnic groups and between men and women in society.[38]

The first supremo of AWAS was Aishah Ghani, whose leadership of AWAS saw the organization gain visibility and momentum. Born in 1923 in Ulu Langat, Selangor, and a graduate of a religious school in Padang, Sumatra, Aishah was among the many women of her time who benefited from the change in Malay attitudes toward female education and employment choices. Her secular and religious education helped her get a job as a journalist for PKMM's newspaper, the *Pelita Malaya*. She applied her wealth of experience with great success during her public talks and visits to places such as Kuala Lumpur, Seremban, and Ipoh to recruit Malay women into AWAS. The choice of Kuala Lumpur, Seremban, and Ipoh was not random or accidental; these places were deliberately chosen to attract female audiences, including women of all ages. To be sure, these places were deeply affected by the profound changes brought about by the constant flow of foreign labor and rapid urbanization during the interwar years. Malaya's painful experience under the Japanese occupation added to the transformative processes that were already taking place. But at the same time, the period also ushered in a new awareness of gender relations and roles, and of the position of women in society. In the painful years under Japanese rule, Malay traditions were challenged, as people sought to cope with the agonies of wartime scarcity. This ultimately contributed to the empowerment of women.[39] As Aishah herself recalled:

> The Second World War was the genesis of a change in societal attitudes towards women. Women began to leave their homes and there were some who opened up businesses, taking trains as far away as Siam in search of rice. Women had to work to support their husbands to secure daily provisions and clothing. . . . The situation forced women to leave their homes because staying at home would only result in more people dying of starvation. Women went to the villages to sell used items. Some even sold jewelry. In short, they did all they could to help their families.[40]

Speeches by Aishah and other AWAS members emphasized the urgent need to reform the dire state of Malay women. They called for the end of the tyranny of irresponsible men whose discriminatory attitudes and practices toward women contributed to the weakening of Malay society as a whole. Colonialism must be put to an end, they explained, but this could only be achieved if men and women were regarded as equal partners in the making of a liberated and just society. Each of the mass events organized by AWAS ended with a dramatic closing parade, with AWAS, API, and GERAM members dressed in white uniforms to symbolize unity and

fraternity among the radical Malay youths, as well as the purity of their goals and mission. Nationalistic songs were sung, urging the Malay people to awaken from their slumber and work toward the union of Malaya and Indonesia into one country, called "Melayu Raya." Flags and placards with words such as *Merdeka*! (Independence!) and "API, AWAS, GERAM (directly translated as "Fire, Beware, Anger") were carried by the leaders of these processions.[41]

The membership of AWAS grew as Aishah and her small team of young women traveled throughout Malaya canvassing for support. By the end of 1946, a total of 610 Malay women had enrolled as members, with the largest numbers coming from Ulu Langat, Port Swettenham, and Malacca. Although this showed that AWAS—which started with fewer than a dozen core activists—was growing, the rate of growth in membership did not bode well for a radical movement that was aiming to overthrow the colonial government. The majority of Malay women held reservations about joining the organization because politics was regarded as a male province, and women who engaged in political activities were often viewed with disdain.

Why did Port Swettenham, Ulu Langat, and Malacca provide the most new members for AWAS?[42] The sociological makeup of the Malay female population in these three towns provides the first clue. Half of the Malay females in these towns were between the ages of fourteen and twenty-five years. Having gained access to literacy and other education while being exposed to modernist and liberal ideas, these women were more open to the notion of female emancipation and the thwarting of gender bias advocated by AWAS. Islamic schools were aplenty, established even in the outermost fringes of these three towns. The schools were linked to a network of other similar institutions in various parts of Malaya and Indonesia, and they functioned independently of the mainstream British educational system. Ideas about gender equality germinated in these sites of learning, and for the many graduates of religious schools who were keen on propagating what they had learned, AWAS came as a blessing and a much-needed platform.

More importantly, Port Swettenham, Ulu Langat, and Malacca were time-honored hubs for the spread of nationalist and anticolonial ideas in the 1940s. Trade unions and Malay civic organizations established in these towns were vigorous in their demands for social and legal reforms, and these activities were given extensive coverage by the lively press of the time. The existence of Sumatran and Javanese settlers and wayfarers, whose revolutionary experiences had informed them of the importance of encouraging a liberationist spirit among the young, smoothed the path for female youth participation in AWAS's activities.[43]

As AWAS grew in numbers and strength in other Malay states, so too did the countervailing forces that served to hinder its advance. Colonial authorities began paying increasing attention to AWAS's activities and sent spies to infiltrate the movement. Reports pertaining to AWAS's progress written by the British intelligence service expanded from short notes to detailed coverage of the statements made by the leaders and the nature of their activities. Although no recommendations were made about the governmental actions to be undertaken against AWAS, the colonial state was becoming increasingly apprehensive about the radical aspirations of the group.[44] It was found that the extremism of youths in the API was augmented by the speeches made by AWAS leaders. For example, in a joint meeting held by API and AWAS, an AWAS member from Temerloh, Che Yah binti Pakeh Besar, declared her staunch support for the API and promised to train her volunteers toward achieving "independence with bloodshed."[45]

The British were even more concerned about the close links between the communists, Indonesian revolutionaries, and members of AWAS and API. The president of a local Chinese women's association that was said to have communist links was personally invited to grace the inaugural meeting of an AWAS branch at Kuala Lipis in July 1946.[46] Political and oratory courses organized by members of the Malayan Communist Party (MCP) and the Partai Komunis Indonesia (PKI) were also made compulsory for selected AWAS and API activists. One of these MCP organizers was Abdullah C. D., who was also a member of the PKMM. These sessions featured discussions of Marxist and communist literature, and the instructors (some Malay and some non-Malay) taught the participants about the success of the Bolshevik revolution and other revolutions. These courses sometimes lasted for as long as nine days.[47]

Born and bred in a distinctively Malayo-Islamic community, and having witnessed the brutal killings of Malays by the communist-led Malayan People's Anti-Japanese Army (MPAJA) following the fall of Japanese rule, Aishah (like many of her close associates) was perturbed by the Marxist sympathies shared by the key leaders of the PKMM and their attempts to encourage Malay women to internalize what she saw as a "foreign ideology." Although they were radicals and feminists, the AWAS members who shared Aisha's concerns could not accept the total annihilation of the monarchical system in Malaya as proposed by the communists. The reconciliation of Marxist ideas with Islamic theology promoted by PKMM leaders such as Abdullah C. D. and Musa Ahmad was problematic for some female radicals, since they (like most Malays) regarded Islam as superior to all ideologies. This fact, along with the belief in the concept of kerajaan (Malay kingship) and a deep suspicion of communism, were two of the key characteristics that defined what it meant to be a Malay female anticolonialist.

Aishah's and her followers' ideas of Malayness should be expounded further at this juncture because they provide windows into the minds of the female Malay radicals. Their ideas of Malayness resulted from their enculturation, growing up in a society where the *rajas* (kings) of the Malay states were seen as the unifying factors and cornerstones that held the fabric of the Malay society together, much as Islam was regarded as a marker of Malayness.[48] To most Malays, the disappearance of the monarchies from the Malayan landscape was unthinkable and unfathomable because they regarded the rajas as the pillars of the Malay society, even though those pillars could well require a radical reformation to ensure their continuing relevance.

After inducting a younger recruit, the twenty-two-year-old Shamsiah Fakeh, and introducing her to the PKMM and API leadership as a possible candidate to preside over AWAS, Aishah tendered her resignation toward the end of 1946, citing her upcoming marriage and her obligations to her new husband as her reasons for stepping down. In reality, Aishah had become disillusioned with the PKMM and the radicalist movement, and so did several other members of AWAS who resigned with her. Given their uneasiness over Aishah's constant objections to communists and communism, PKMM leaders accepted her resignation without hesitation. Aishah and her pioneering AWAS team left the movement entirely and steered clear of any involvement in female activism for some months before some decided to join UMNO.[49]

One can choose to read this episode as evidence of "sexism" that seemed so much more indomitable within Malay radical movements in comparison to their non-Malay counterparts. Recent research on the Malayan Communist Party (MCP), for example, suggests that women in that movement "enjoyed greater freedom, higher self-esteem and greater confidence, both as women and as a committed party of guerrilla members."[50] But one must be careful not to push the argument too far, to the extent of concluding that sexism was abolished completely in the MCP or that the MCP was a direct opposite of the Malay radical movements of its time in terms of its overall approach toward women. For all the freedom that women in the MCP enjoyed, it is clear that none of these women had ever held office in the upper ranks of the MCP's leadership, and this attests to the fact that men still maintained the upper hand in terms of power in political movements in Malaya, including communist, leftist, ethno-nationalist, and anti-communist movements.[51]

Fortifying the Movement

The resignation of pioneering members ushered in a new phase in the history of AWAS and its subsequent metamorphosis into an independent group of its own making. At the helm of the organization of at least eight hundred members was Aishah's designated successor, Shamsiah Fakeh. Unlike Aishah, Shamsiah's life was dominated by agonizing crises, which made her increasingly determined to wage a radical battle against gender subordination in the colonial society. Her marriage at the age of seventeen ended when her husband abandoned her while she was pregnant with their second child. Both children died, and as soon as she began to start life anew with her second husband, he was discovered to be an informer for the Japanese invaders. Her divorce eventually led her to participate in anticolonial activities.[52]

Aishah had made a strategic choice in nominating Shamsiah as the new leader of AWAS. She must have recognized that Shamsiah was a living representation and embodiment of the plight of many Malay women of her time, especially in the realms of marriage and divorce. The median age at marriage for Malay women in Malaya in the 1940s was below seventeen. Relations between husbands and wives, particularly in nonmatrilineal Malay societies, were akin to a master-servant relationship, or else like that of an obnoxious father to a child. A sympathizer of AWAS who later became a female member of the Communist Party of Malaya, Siti Mariam Idris, described the situation vividly: "I got married when I was 14 years old; my husband was 25 years old. Life changed after marriage. My father no longer beat me. I left him. . . . Although my father stopped beating me, my husband started to beat me instead. It was just as bad. My husband was not good to me either."[53]

Another problem facing Malay women was the widespread practice of easy divorce that stemmed largely from the fusion of adat (customs) and localized Islam acting upon the already downtrodden community. Men in their twenties, whose wives were generally much younger, would seek to enter into polygamous marriages within the first three months of marriage if no signs of pregnancy were evident.[54] Female infertility was a cause of shame for women and their families and this fact, along with conflicts between the spouses and members of extended families arising from the men's decision to remarry, often led to divorce. High divorce rates among Malays were also related to the kinship structure of the Malay society. The close ties that were maintained by women with their own families even after marriage meant that divorce was seen as unproblematic because the estranged women and their children would be taken care of by their parents or relatives after

separation. Social structures also played a big role in encouraging divorce and early marriages. In the rural areas of Kelantan and Trengganu, as well as other eastern Malay states where education and literacy were markedly low during the 1940s, Malay parents considered the marriage of their daughters to religious teachers, village officials, and Arab merchants as honorable acts. In many instances, women were forced into these marriages, and these types of marriages were especially prone to divorce and polygamy.[55]

Acutely aware of these problems, Shamsiah's first task upon assuming the leadership of AWAS was to ensure that the key members of the organization shared her vision of reformed and independent Malay women. She appointed a new committee and district leaders who were unflinching in their advocacy of female emancipation and anticolonialism. They were also expected to be exemplary in their conduct and speeches. The activists who were enticed to join AWAS included Sakinah Junid (AWAS Perak), Aishah Hussain (AWAS Selangor), Sawiyah Jalil (AWAS Perak), Mariah Ahmad (AWAS Singapura), Che Zaharah Noor Mohammed (AWAS Singapura), Siti Norkiah Mahmud (AWAS Benta), Khatijah binti Ali (AWAS Ipoh), Zainab Mahmud (AWAS Tanah Melayu) and Siti Aishah Mat Nor (AWAS Lebuk Kawah).[56] The biographies of each of these female activists have yet to be written, and their tireless efforts in popularizing AWAS among the urban and rural Malays are deserving of studies in their own right. These women shared some common characteristics despite their diverse sub-ethnic backgrounds and outlooks.

Their shared characteristics included their youth and their familiarity with both urban and rural areas. All of them were below the age of twenty-five, with no prior experience in organizational work. Their ability to garner support for AWAS and their willingness to find ways to recruit new members into the burgeoning organization by trial and error tells one a great deal about how strongly they felt for the cause of female emancipation and the degree of their idealism.

The second commonality was their relative exposure to both rural and urban areas of Malaya. While some of these women had rural origins and others came from urban areas, all of them were acquainted with the differing conditions and the particular natures of both urban and rural societies. This should not be seen as uncharacteristic if one recalls that Malays in the 1940s typically had relatives spread across the rural-urban divides of Malaya and Singapore. Malays were a peripatetic people who tended to move "to Singapore from the Peninsula and elsewhere in the archipelago; and to and from the Middle East to complete the pilgrimage or to pursue a religious education."[57] Mobility was the rule of the day, and kinship ties cut across political and administrative borders.

For this reason, AWAS members in urban areas in Perak and Singapore did not find it difficult to address crowds in the rural areas of Malaya, even though they may not have traced their own origins to these places. Their backgrounds, travels, and social interactions had informed them of the unique challenges of Malay women in a variety of settings, especially those who came from an *adat perpatih* (matrilineal social organization) background, and they were well aware of the concomitant impact of colonialism upon the female Malay peasants. Yet knowledge of places and peoples in themselves would not have been enough without the strength of familial ties, which the members of AWAS exploited. They recruited daughters, sisters, wives, and/or distant relatives and friends and used these ties to bind them together in the organization.[58]

AWAS members wanted to do more than merely complement API's grand dreams of bringing Malayan youths into their fold. As the number of new members in the organization grew by the day, Shamsiah, Sakinah, and other district leaders felt that more energy should be directed toward making AWAS autonomous and self-sustaining, while maintaining close affiliations to the other Malay leftist organizations in the country. The first step toward that objective was to raise funds and acquire provisions for the organization. Villages were asked to donate a minimal sum of ten cents each day from the profits earned from tapping rubber. Appeals were also made to female padi farmers to set aside a cupful of rice for AWAS members. At times, jewelry and other valuable items were donated or pawned to pay for the rental of AWAS offices.[59] These generous donations were made possible by the grassroots and social-welfare efforts of AWAS activists. They participated in helping peasants to cultivate their fields and rear their poultry, thus challenging colonial stereotypes prevalent at that time regarding the "passive" and "domestic" Malay woman.[60] As one keen female observer recalled: "They [AWAS and API members] planted padi [i.e. rice] together. With the money obtained from the sale of the padi, they were able to buy things. The women's group was beautiful. They each had the spirit of Datuk Bahaman and Mat Kilau. They were both ancestors of our Malay women comrades. They hated the colonizers."[61]

AWAS members also joined the daily congregational prayers in mosques and organized *kenduri* (mass feasts), using these occasions to spread awareness about anticolonial activities. Classes were also held to expose the women to social and political issues in the country and the world over, as well as to eradicate illiteracy and the apolitical culture among Malay women. Among the globally known figures that AWAS informed Malay women about was Clara Zetkin, an advocate of feminist politics and the formation of the

Communist Women's International in Moscow in July 1920.[62] In Temerloh, Pahang, a private company, was established to encourage women to engage in handicrafts and then to sell their products in the markets. In Singapore, AWAS treasurer Che Zaharah came into the limelight when she declared her intention to establish a new organization to combat the desertion and exploitation of Malay women in many parts of Malaya. Named the Malay Women's Welfare Association (MWWA), the organization pressed for major reforms and helped divorcées. Fifty female Malay schoolteachers pledged to join the MWWA in October 1947, and they created awareness about the plight of Malay women through cultural activities and advocacy work.[63]

AWAS activists also organized and participated in activities that involved their non-Malay compatriots. They acted and sang with API members in *sandiwara* (dramas), *bangsawan* (Malay opera), and stand-up comedies. Attended by people of different ethnic groups, these performances' themes included anticolonialism, the suffering of colonized peoples, and the heroic deeds of female leaders.[64] Members of the Chinese community were also invited to attend AWAS meetings. In one of these meetings held in Malacca in October 1946, three hundred men and dozens of women from various ethnic groups participated in a mass procession. The texts of banners that were carried by AWAS and API members read: "Down with the Imperialists" and "Malaya and Indonesia are One." One AWAS member declared during the congress that AWAS and the API would both struggle for independence through bloodshed. "A youth will not be permitted to marry an AWAS girl unless he is prepared to sacrifice his life for independence."[65] These words were provocative and prophetic, and they indicated a new turn toward greater radicalism for AWAS in the months that followed.

A Crackdown and the Road to Militancy

The bold move made by the leaders of AWAS to assert their autonomous space within the anticolonial movement and the Malayan political scene was indicative of the mood of the age. Throughout Malaya and other parts of Southeast Asia, female activists were making their presence felt in anticolonial politics. In Burma, for example, the Anti-Fascist People's Freedom League (AFPFL) led by General Aung San acknowledged women's right to vote, regardless of whether they were literate or illiterate. Women participated in political activities alongside men; indeed, they were the more aggressive supporters of AFPFL, as exemplified in the Women's Freedom League that opened branches throughout the country. In Malaya, female

UMNO members who were undoubtedly moved by the popularity of AWAS came together to propose the establishment of a separate women's wing, which was later to be called the Kaum Ibu UMNO. Little wonder then that 1947 and early 1948 have been described by two eminent historians as "heady days for Malay radicals" and for anticolonialists throughout Asia.[66] These were momentous times that provided crucial opportunities for female anticolonialists to push the limits of their advocacy and cement their rightful position in a male-dominated world. Radical groups such as AWAS and the API provoked the colonial state and the Malay leaders through their loud calls for independence and by agitating for the end of feudalism. It did not take long for the men in power to annihilate them.

Meantime, at the rhetorical level, AWAS leaders attacked male dominance and their inept leadership in all spheres of life, while making it known that AWAS members were second to none in the battle for independence. AWAS demanded that Malay women must "not die in their beds but must die in the battle for Malaya's freedom."[67] Zainal Mahmudi, secretary general of AWAS, said that Malay women in the prewar years were more interested in beautifying their fingernails with henna than fighting for independence. With AWAS's encouragement, they would soon be more than "prepared to bathe in blood if the occasion arose." At the meeting in Bentong, an AWAS member stated, "We are under the rule of the British which claims to guarantee our security, but instead the people are being dominated and are suffering. We are forced to accept the Constitution which completely disregards the voice of the people."[68]

These rhetorical stances were consistent with the more general transformations that were in motion within the organization and the exposure of the leaders to movements and ideas emanating from overseas. By January 1947 the number of active members had grown rapidly to 1,490 women from all walks of life.[69] Viewed comparatively against other Malay women's organizations at that time, the AWAS membership base was relatively large. Most Malay women's organizations during this time did not have more than a thousand active members. The Kaum Ibu UMNO, a rival organization to AWAS, suffered a decline in membership only a few months after its founding owing to restrictions imposed by male leaders against women delivering speeches at rallies.[70] The growth in membership experienced by AWAS prompted the organization to confidently motivate API members to lead rallies and to independently organize its first congress from 10 to 12 October 1947 at the Queen's Theatre in Selangor.[71]

About twenty-four representatives of branches from all over Malaya attended the congress. Male leaders from the PKMM, API, GERAM, BATAS, and MCP as well as Chinese representatives were invited to deliver

speeches, but the AWAS leaders were in the spotlight. It was stressed that AWAS's main objective was to raise the social and political status of Malay women in Malaya. Illiteracy among Malay women was still widespread under the colonial government, and AWAS planned to educate the Malay women by establishing People's Schools (*Sekolah Rakyat*) that would be managed by anticolonial activists. The other purpose of the People's Schools was to teach the children of peasant and working-class families to have a democratic outlook and a spirit of self-reliance, an appreciation of the glory of national independence and the dignity of manual labor, as well as a will to destroy colonial exploitation. The idea of such schools did not originate from AWAS. Earlier permutations of the People's Schools were developed in West Sumatra and they had served as hubs for the spread of nationalist and anticolonial ideas since the 1930s.[72]

AWAS also affiliated itself with the World Federation of Women's Associations and the Indonesian Red Cross and provided financial support for these organizations' activities. In the realm of politics, AWAS formed a core component of the PUTERA-AMCJA (Pusat Tenaga Rakyat-All-Malaya Council of Joint Action) and was involved in the constitutional proposals tabled before the colonial government.[73] PUTERA-AMCJA was the first interracial coalition ever of leftist political parties and social organizations in Malaya. The

FIGURE 5 Mass gathering organized by Parti Kebangsaan Melayu Malaya (PKMM), Rembau, Negeri Sembilan, 8 November 1946

coalition demanded equal rights for anyone who regarded Malaya as their home and produced an alternative constitution, dubbed the People's Constitution, in opposition to the British-enacted Constitutional Proposals, for the newly created Federation of Malaya. AWAS participated in the deliberations on the constitution and a countrywide *hartal* (voluntary closing of schools and places of business) that was soon declared on October 1947. These activities were significant because AWAS was the only Malay women's organization to participate in such a historic example of interracial civil resistance toward British policies—a nascent yet burgeoning form of cosmopolitanism that was soon stopped short by the Malayan Emergency.[74]

The growing prominence of AWAS and the multiplying effect of its mobilization invited a range of responses from those whose authority was put into question, thereby leading to tensions and contestations. AWAS members challenged the members of the API to the extent that the API reacted by stabilizing patriarchal power on AWAS above and beyond organizational work. This is unsurprising given that gender relations "are always arenas of tension. A given pattern of hegemonic masculinity is hegemonic to the extent that it provides a solution to these tensions, tending to stabilize patriarchal power or reconstitute it in new conditions."[75] Stabilization of patriarchal power was indirectly achieved through the marriage of Ahmad Boestamam to Shamsiah Fakeh. This was a union of the leaders of two leftist organizations that encouraged many others to follow suit, thus bringing the members closer together. The other effect of this marriage was that it pushed API members into taking on a more militant stance than ever before to exhibit their masculinity in the face of the belligerent posture of AWAS members.

In July 1947 the API became the first political party in colonial Malaya to be banned. To the colonial state, API members were mere "firebrands," "fanatics," "thugs," "bandits," and persons who sought to challenge the moral economy of the ruling regime. The young Malay radicals were construed to have the potential of stunting "progress" and "development" in their home societies through their outright refusal to submit to the rule of capital that colonialism set in place. Underlying this negative imagery of Malay radicals was the idea of the "docile," "subservient," and "moderate" Malays who were vulnerable to being misled by "extremists" in their midst.[76] This is evidenced in the following secret correspondence between colonial officials based in London and Malaya several days before punitive measures were imposed upon the Malay radicals in 1947:

> The Angkatan Pemuda Insaf (API) is an extreme, radical, and militant organization open to young men and women between the ages 18 to 35 with the declared aim of "independence with blood." It appears to follow the pattern of youth movements familiar in countries such as Germany and Palestine. [It] is practicing intensive military training and discipline and inculcating a fanatical spirit which will stop at nothing to attain its objects. It is generally undesirable that an organization of this kind should be driven underground, but equally it clearly cannot be allowed to continue subversive activities unchecked. The suppression of this organization is likely to cause some excitement locally and it is unfortunate that it should occur when the new constitutional proposals are about to be announced.[77]

The crackdown on the API was enough to convince some members of AWAS to terminate or, at least, minimize their involvement in leftist activities. AWAS branches in Singapore and many parts of Malaya became temporarily inactive after the banning of the API. Plans for injecting new life into these branches were put forward by AWAS leaders with only minimal success. Some AWAS members even opted to switch sides and join UMNO.[78] The banning of the API also raised suspicions among Malay parents and leaders about AWAS's ideological inclinations. In Ulu Langat district where AWAS had gained a strong following, opposition against the organization mounted as heads of villages refused to permit their *anak buah* (dependents) to indulge in what they termed "useless diversions."[79]

A deeper consequence of this rising tide of animosity against AWAS was that it provided the necessary conditions for hardcore AWAS members to attack the entire spectrum of colonial, procolonial, and even anticolonial leaderships in Malaya. By the beginning of 1948, AWAS members had launched fervent critiques against Malay royalty and Anglophone Malay elites. An AWAS leader, Zainal Mahmudi, was reputed to have said that the sultans and UMNO had forced an oppressive form of government upon the Malays through the establishment of the Federation of Malaya.[80] The leaders of the PKMM were not spared from AWAS's critiques. AWAS leaders scorned the PKMM leaders for their lack of moral courage. "It is easy to shout Merdeka but very difficult to translate it into action," quipped one AWAS leader who sent a letter of reminder to the general secretary of the PKMM.[81]

Interestingly, PKMM leaders did not seek to relieve AWAS leaders from their positions despite the strong statements made against them. They must have realized that to remove these influential activists from their leadership positions would result in a major split in the party, in addition to possibly alienating a large number of Malay women. AWAS was thus left to its own devices. New branches were opened in northern Malaya as well as in other places, such as Sungei Buloh and Tanjung Karang in Selangor. Shamsiah

herself made tours throughout Malaya to inspect all the branches. The AWAS Headquarters at Ipoh was moved to Seremban as part of Shamsiah's attempt to maintain a critical distance from the PKMM headquarters based in the same town. So palpable was the rift between AWAS and PKMM that British intelligence regarded the two organizations as being completely at odds with one another.[82]

But AWAS had by then suffered from fissures that developed within its ranks and the resignation of many members who felt that the movement was growing too radical and affiliating itself too closely with communist movements. Still, AWAS leaders sought to increase their contacts with non-Malay and regionally based movements in an effort to widen the organization's support base and maintain its visibility to the public. On 8 March 1948, AWAS joined the International Women's Day celebrations together with other women's organizations in the country. This marked the first occasion of the left wing's celebration of Women's Day and saw the attendance of one thousand Chinese, Malay, Indian, and Indonesian women activists in Singapore. The newly appointed secretary of AWAS Singapore, Marliah binte Ahmad Dadab, also reported that AWAS's connection with Indonesian female movements had become closer than before. AWAS branches throughout Malaya were recognized in Indonesia. Marliah served as the publicity agent for the Indonesian feminist magazine *Karya* and forwarded copies of this publication to the central leadership of AWAS.[83] AWAS leaders also attended meetings organized by Chinese and Malayan trade union leaders in support of their causes. As increasing numbers of AWAS members attended these meetings and the courses conducted by communists such as Alimin Prawirodirdjo and Sutan Jenain, the sense of respect shown to the PKMM leaders progressively waned.

Shamsiah Fakeh was again crucial in this regard, urging the PKMM leaders to be consistent in adopting a policy of noncooperation toward the colonial government. "It is," she said, "to be regretted that the PKMM has not seen fit to alter its formal method of struggle. The masses have progressed far in comparison." She went on to ask, "Are we being influenced by rightist opportunism? If so, such influence should be immediately scrapped so that we will not become tools of the imperialists. If that happens, I shall withdraw myself from the party. There will be no compromise on the part of AWAS."[84]

By then AWAS members were already receiving intensive military training and jungle survival courses conducted by MCP and API leaders. Militancy was regarded as the best means to obliterate colonial rule, and preparations were made to achieve immediate independence. In participating dutifully in

these training sessions and anticipating an outbreak of war, militant AWAS members, much like the women guerrillas of the Huk Rebellion in the Philippines during these years, had completely ruptured the image of Southeast Asian women as domesticated and less prone to taking up arms in defense of the homeland.[85] Together with ex-API members, AWAS members formed a guerrilla force to engage Siamese troops in defense of Muslims in South Thailand. The group came under the command of Ahmad Boestamam, who opted to situate the headquarters of the guerrilla force at Kampung Temenggor, Perak. An AWAS member by the name of Hamida binti Haji Sanusi was a core member of the guerrilla force; she and other female activists were already hiding arms and explosives in their houses.[86]

On 5 April 1948, Ipoh AWAS secretary Che Katijah Rais told her members that a revolution was looming on the horizon. Chinese communists would soon dominate the world when the revolution was complete, and AWAS would flourish in the new global order.[87] Che Katijah's faith in the victory of communism was an example of the ultraradical visions to which some AWAS leaders subscribed. Race and origins were no longer pertinent when freedom was at stake. In fact, AWAS members were more hopeful about their non-Malayan counterparts in the last push toward militancy. During the May 20th celebration of Indonesian independence, the Malayan Security Service reported that an AWAS member openly stated that she was "very disappointed at the difference between the women of Malaya and the women of Indonesia. The latter, she said, took an active part in the struggle for independence, while the former were content to stay in their kitchens."[88]

Shamsiah was reprimanded by the PKMM leaders for allowing her members to make such comments and for her callous disregard of the party's leadership. She was requested to explain to AWAS what she had done and was told that the PKMM leadership was against AWAS's independence and its militant posture. She was also warned that disciplinary actions would be taken against her should she refuse to comply with the rules governing party members.[89] All this had, however, come too late. Neither Shamsiah nor AWAS were willing to compromise in their opposition to the hegemony of male power, whether colonial or otherwise. In June 1948 the British declared the Malayan Emergency, which would last for twelve years. Within a few weeks, more than 1,700 communist sympathizers and leftist leaders were detained.[90] This was the death knell of AWAS and, by implication, of the radicalist movement as a whole. The PKMM and all its sister organizations and affiliated groups fell into disarray as many of its members fled into the Malayan jungles to launch a revolutionary war shoulder-to-shoulder with their comrades in the Communist Party of Malaya.[91]

The demise of AWAS created a vacuum in female radical activism in colonial Malaya. This vacuum was filled by the Kaum Ibu UMNO, which welcomed former AWAS activists to join the organization and rally for female equality and independence from colonialism. In fact, Kaum Ibu UMNO began to take on some of the activities and ideals that were articulated by AWAS, urging the government to provide higher tertiary education for females and initiating reforms in marriage laws. The membership of Kaum Ibu swelled to more than ten thousand by the early 1950s. As its confidence grew, in part due to the impetus given by former AWAS members and sympathizers, the organization also came into direct conflict with religious leaders, who argued that women were too involved in politics and had forgotten their basic roles in the family. These concerns were rebuked by Kaum Ibu UMNO leaders; one of them argued, "If women take part in politics, men will be inspired to work hard."[92] This statement bore a striking similarity to statements made by the leaders of the defunct AWAS. By the mid-1950s, radical women's activism in Malaya reached a crescendo when the UMNO Johore Bahru division sacked the head of Kaum Ibu, Khatijah Sidek, for breaching party discipline. It was the start of a protracted battle between Malay female activists in UMNO and the beginning of the end of female radicalism within UMNO itself. As Kaum Ibu succumbed to the multiple hegemonies that bore down upon it, so too did other female radical movements in colonial Malaya.

In hindsight, the eventual downfall of a radical female movement such as AWAS was somewhat predictable given the barriers that stood in the way of its progress. The organization was a victim of processes that were determined by men who sought to exercise dominion and control over any far-reaching attempts to promote gender equality. More than that, AWAS did not fully overcome the ethnic cleavages that determined the minds of even the most radical of anticolonial activists. Despite efforts to forge relations with other non-Malay women's groups, AWAS did not completely break free or join a Pan-Malayan women's movement that was race-blind. This in itself was limiting because it placed AWAS in a precarious position of depending on support from Malay women who had reservations about its aims and causes. Notwithstanding the many weaknesses of AWAS, its brief yet influential career and the eagerness of its members to stand up against all odds provide lessons that are timeless and universal; namely, that even in the most unjust of political systems and the most hegemonic of societies, women have devised powerful means to preserve their integrity and have found novel ways to effect change in the interpretations and governance of their everyday lives.

Chapter Six

Resistance behind Bars

› THE MALAYAN EMERGENCY dashed all hopes and dreams of building a mass movement for the achievement of an independent Malaya. By the beginning of the year 1949, the Malay radicalist movement had been fragmented into numerous groups, each defining paths and fates of their own. Many chose to be inactive because of fear for their lives and the well-being of their family members. This group of disheartened men and women retreated to their hometowns and avoided all forms of political activities. Almost one-third of the core members of the PKMM, API, AWAS, and other radical groups were placed in detention camps. Their physical and social isolation from society meant that they had to devise ways to keep their idealism alive to continue the struggle upon their release. A small yet influential minority among Malay radicals who escaped imprisonment launched an armed rebellion against the British through the 10th Regiment of the Malayan Communist Party. Seeing the futility of fighting a conventional war against the colonial army, these radicals adopted guerrilla tactics and established strategic outposts deep in the Malayan jungles. Daily attacks were made against British installations and even civilians in anticipation of a violent takeover of the entire Malay Peninsula. Shamsiah Fakeh expressed the spirit of militant struggle well when she wrote: "I ran into the jungle to participate in the armed struggle against the British to fight for independence for Malaya. I was twenty-four years old at that time. Since then, I have left my parents, family, and village for the independence of the motherland."[1] No reliable information is available about the total number of Malay radicals who took this militant path. Rough estimates based on the accounts of survivors suggest that no more than a hundred men and women chose this option. Because many of these militants were once public figures

known to have helped villagers, peasants, and the underclass, they gained sympathizers as they painfully plotted their way through the dangerous corridors of violence.[2]

Another group chose instead to join UMNO. Wary of the punitive actions of the colonial state that were on the horizon and not wanting to face imprisonment, these radicals continued to push for independence via platforms that were tolerated by the British. With their ideals kept close in their hearts, Malay radicals rose rapidly within UMNO. For example, Mustapha Hussain was able to contest the chairmanship and vice chairmanship in the party general elections of July 1951. However, luck was not on his side, and he lost by just one vote to Tengku Abdul Rahman and was then voted out by the chairman's vote in his subsequent bid to be UMNO's new vice chairman. The election results resulted in protests from UMNO youth members, who expressed their readiness to push for the radical reforms within UMNO that Mustapha represented.[3] Strangely enough, Mustapha's unsuccessful bid was also an upshot of the work of former Malay radicals who had changed their political outlook prior to the Emergency. Mustapha had to contend with Aishah Ghani, a former leader of AWAS who turned conservative and became staunchly opposed to all forms of radicalism.

Spared from detention during the early days of the Emergency, hardcore Malay radicals struggled hard to keep the PKMM afloat. Not only was the party running short of cash after having spent much of its funds to organize congresses, rallies, and marches as well as to fund schools and other newly founded institutions, but what remained of the core leadership were a few individuals who were of two minds about the best course to take. Combative youths from the defunct API and AWAS advocated for a determined protest against the arrest of thousands of Malay radicals. They expressed their anger toward the colonial state's move to imprison its subjects without evidence of their crimes or trials to prove their guilt. Burhanuddin Al-Helmy, however, felt that such confrontational tactics would completely remove the radicalist movement from the political map. The PKMM, therefore, was at an anguished crossroads, in a state of stasis and stagnation for many months, as more and more of the Malay radicals were hauled off to prison.

Throwing in the towel was, however, not an option. The Malay radicals had known greater catastrophes than to lament over the suppression of their activities during the Malayan Emergency. Declaring openly during a PKMM mass meeting that the British government was manifestly prejudiced against the Malay radicals, Burhanuddin exclaimed that no emergency law would stop the radicals from agitating for the independence of Malaya. Somewhat caustically and in a manner that gained him pride of place in British

intelligence reports, Burhanuddin mentioned: "Let the prisons be filled up, the people will still continue their struggle. No one can go against nature."[4]

Together with some close loyalists, Burhanuddin looked for other avenues to mobilize the people against the British. The opportunity came in May 1950 with a legal battle for the custody of a thirteen-year-old girl, Maria Hertogh. After she was separated for more than seven years from her Dutch Catholic parents and raised as a Muslim by a Javanese lady named Che Aminah, Maria's parents demanded her return to the Netherlands. A series of court hearings began in Singapore in May 1950. Midway through the trials, it became clear to Burhanuddin that the case could be used to pursue the Malay radicals' stunted political aims. He, along with other radical activists such as Karim Ghani, Taha Kalu, Muhammad Mustaza, and Darus Shariff, mobilized the support of a group of Muslims to generate public interest in the court case.[5]

They began their activism by using newspapers as their mouthpieces. On 29 August 1950, the Malay radicals began publishing a newspaper called *Melayu Raya* in Singapore. The newspaper made stinging attacks upon the colonial state on a daily basis, to the extent that the British intelligence agencies described the publication as a nuisance to public order and as having "extremist views."[6] Positioning itself as the champion of Malay rights and the moral conscience of society regarding educational backwardness, social estrangement, and economic deprivation, the newspaper achieved meteoric prominence during the Maria Hertogh episode. Within three months of its first appearance, the newspaper acquired the support of more than seven thousand shareholders and a circulation of about twenty-eight thousand copies throughout Malaya.

Malay radicals were pleased by the meteoric success of the *Melayu Raya*. To further their political agendas, they volunteered to join the writing team and editorial board of another publication, called *Dawn*. These publications, together with the already-established *Utusan Melayu*, which was managed by Abdul Samad Ismail, predicted that the British court in Singapore would eventually rule in favor of Maria Hertogh's Dutch parents. Such a ruling against Che Aminah was part of a veiled strategy on the part of the colonial powers to reassert their waning influence in the region.[7]

If this was not enough to inflame the Muslims in Singapore and Malaya regarding the colonial state's callous handling of the custody case, the Malay radicals went on to provide sensational coverage of Maria Hertogh's personal crises. Pictures of Maria Hertogh's brief stay at a Catholic convent, and stories about her struggles to remain devoted to Islam amid efforts to make her renounce her faith, were splashed across the front pages of the

newspapers. As Muslim ill feelings against the British developed rapidly in the following weeks, the Malay radicals declared in public that they would be at the forefront in defense of the faith of Maria Hertogh. The situation worsened when the British court annulled the marriage between Maria Hertogh and a Malay teacher, Mansoor Adabi, which took place in the midst of the court hearings. The Malay radicals were ready for action, along with many Muslims in Singapore.

In December 1950 a dozen influential Muslim personalities formed the "Nadra Action Committee," which incited crowds at mosques in Singapore to wage a holy struggle against the enemies of Islam. Newspaper reports on the Maria Hertogh case and its implications for Muslim life were widely discussed in mosques, coffee shops, and other public places in Singapore. Though well aware of the rising Muslim rage against the colonial state, the Singapore police force did not foresee an outbreak of mass violence. The police did not register the rapid escalation of religious tensions in the colony, and the fact that Muslims were, in the words of William A. Langdon, the American consul-general based in Singapore, "prepared to act in a unified manner where their religion is involved."[8]

Within minutes after the court categorically ruled that Maria Hertogh should no longer remain in the custody of her foster mother and that she was to go to the Netherlands, one of the most deadly ethnic riots in Singapore broke out on 11 December 1950. Sporadic attacks quickly escalated into widespread incidents of murder and other forms of brutality, with Europeans and Eurasians as the main targets. The riots spread rapidly across the entire island when Malay policemen (who formed the bulk of the enforcement arm of the colonial state) decided to leave the rioters to their own devices. By the time the bloodshed was brought to an end on the afternoon of 13 December 1950, eighteen people were dead and over a hundred were injured.[9]

During the three days of mayhem that brought Singapore to an almost complete standstill, the Malay radicals thought that the uprising could eventually culminate in a violent revolution that would overthrow the colonial regime. This was part of the cita-cita perjuangan) on the road to the creation of the union between Singapore, Malaya, and Indonesia—the Melayu Raya.[10] However, the anticipated revolution turned out to be stillborn. Under the command of a veteran of two world wars, Major-General Dermott Dunlop, three battalions of Malay infantrymen quelled the riots within hours of mobilization. Members of invulnerable cults, triads, and militant groups in Malaya who were seeking to enter the island were repulsed at the causeway.[11] By 14 December, order had been restored in the island colony. More than a

thousand people were incarcerated in the days that ensued, including many Malay radicals who had been spared arrest by the British during the first waves of repression in June 1948.

It is this story of the experiences of imprisonment among the Malay radicals that is conspicuously absent in many accounts of their activism. This lacuna becomes all the more glaring when one considers the availability of a whole array of unpublished documents, prison annual reports, and digests, along with memoirs, diaries, and autobiographical works written by former political prisoners in Malaya during the era of decolonization. The yawning gap in historical writings about imprisonment in colonial Malaya is closely tied to the excessive emphasis given by many scholars to the activities of the Malay radicals when they were not imprisoned. Colonial prisons in Malaya, rather than being seen as important sites of both resistance and forced submission to imperial power, have been perceived as merely transitory places for the Malay radicals, to be noted in passing but not rigorously investigated in the historian's endeavor to narrate Malaya's long journey toward freedom and independence.[12]

In truth, colonial prisons formed an important part of the history of the Malay radicals and the radical experience. The years they spent in colonial prisons had an indelible impact on them and the ideals they stood for. On the one hand, the initial experience of arrest and imprisonment tended to threaten the Malay radicals' self-confidence in their ability to rise up against the colonial state, given that their minds and bodies were left defenseless in the face of disciplining regimes and the tools of incarceration. However, rather than resulting in total disempowerment, this shattering of the self, identity, and aspirations often encouraged the Malay radicals to rethink their own tactics in confronting the colonizer. As it became clear to them that the prisons epitomized the limited degree of control and hegemony that the colonial power could exercise over Malaya as a whole, the Malay radicals sought to cultivate social and political networks within the prisons and capitalize on the weaknesses of the prison system.

The Malay radicals successfully used their prison experiences for their own purposes through the establishment of solidarities and alliances and by brokering deals with agents of power while launching various strategies of resistance to ensure the survival of their mortal selves and their liberationist intents. Although it would be too far-fetched to maintain that in asserting their rights to space and other resources the Malay radicals had, in the process, colonized the prisons as had their counterparts in colonial India, the Philippines, Indonesia, and Vietnam, there is little doubt that the

experience of imprisonment had a transformational effect on the Malay radicals by politicizing them even more intensely than they had been before they were detained.[13]

Imprisonment, therefore, was a transformational experience for the Malay radicals, a site where their commitment to the perjuangan (struggle), their dreams of merdeka (independence), and their desire to establish the Melayu Raya were tested. The colonial prisons, where they were confined for several years, were also fertile grounds for the shaping and restructuring of the Malay radicals' sentiments. These were also spaces where new forms of collective action, compromises, and adaptations emerged. That is to say, the years in prison affected the emotions, attitudes, and behavior of the Malay radicals, challenging them to formulate new ways to ensure their survival and pursue their politics more effectively. The close contact the Malay radicals had with the agents of the colonizer laid the conditions for tangled and usually uneasy relationships, contestations, and struggles between the two seemingly opposing sides of the colonial situation. Such circumstances led to the alteration of the everyday practices not only of the colonized, but also of those in positions of authority.[14]

Many of the Malay radicals had, in fact, undergone incarceration, both before the war and again soon after the Japanese surrender, because the British regarded them as threats to the security of the colonial state; but those periods of detention were usually brief. The Malayan Emergency—from 1948 to 1960—was perhaps the longest period that most of these radicals served time behind bars. So memorable were these years, in contrast to all other times in captivity, that they were described by the former leader of the API, Ahmad Boestamam, as his "seven long, dark years."[15] No exact statistics are available regarding the number of Malay radicals who were arrested within this twelve-year period. One approximation has it that almost one thousand Malays were detained during the early years of the Emergency, which meant that the number of Malays put behind bars was no more than 20 percent of the total number of people who were imprisoned during the Malayan Emergency, most of whom were Chinese.[16] What is clear, however, is that the mass arrests of the Malay radicals (including teachers, journalists, trade union activists, and popular preachers) indicate that they were becoming more influential and were gaining substantial support from a broad section of the Malayan populace.[17]

Persons detained under the Emergency Regulations were sent to different prisons according to where they were first arrested and the sentences they received thereafter. A total of fifteen prisons housed the detainees, who were sentenced for periods ranging from three months to a maximum of twelve years. These prisons were located in Kuala Lumpur (known to many as the "Pudu Prison") as well as Singapore, Taiping, Penang, Johore Bahru, Kelantan, Alor Star, Trengganu, Batu Gajah, Seremban, Malacca, Kuantan, Kuala Lipis, Kangar, and Sungei Patani. In each of these prisons, the Chinese prisoners made up at least one-half of the total population, with the remainder including Malays (33 percent), Indians (12), and the rest categorized as "others"—Europeans, Eurasians, Arabs, and other minorities.

This ethnic breakdown within the prison population remained fairly constant throughout the years of the Malayan Emergency, and the ratio of male to female detainees was consistent at a ratio of a hundred to one. Female detainees were kept in separate buildings apart from the men and, because their numbers were relatively small, persons of different ethnic groups were allowed to stay in the same cells. As for the men, interethnic contacts were disallowed to minimize the spread of communist propaganda and the coming together of leaders from the different ethnic groups to form a united front in the prisons. The division of the cells and buildings across ethnic lines also reflected—as will be explained in detail below—the wider colonial policy of divide and rule and the assumption that each of these ethnic groups had their own peculiar sets of problems and needs.[18]

The wider context of the Malayan Emergency is worth briefly reiterating here before proceeding to the struggles of the Malay radicals in colonial prisons. The Emergency resulted from the activities of the Malayan Communist Party (MCP), a populist organization comprised mainly of Chinese trade unionists and grassroots activists, with a minority of Malays and Indians. The MCP's plans to launch an armed conflict between March and May 1948 were preempted by the imposition of martial law by the colonial regime a month before any widespread attacks could be launched. Terrorism and counterterrorism led to the loss of thousands of innocent lives, with hundreds of villages burned down, large populations relocated to new settlements, and scores of people deported to China and Indonesia. While mass detention provided the British with more information on the MCP's operations, it did much to alienate the Chinese and a section of the Malay populace.

Karl Hack, in an incisive reassessment of the Malayan Emergency, has divided the twelve long years of struggle into three key phases: "(1) Counterterror and sweep (1948–49); (2) Clear and hold characterized by population control, persuading minds, and massive concentration of resources, along with the declaratory aim of self-government (1950–52); and (3) Optimization, characterized by winning hearts as well as minds, faster progress to

independence, finessing operations, and becoming an efficient 'learning organization' (late 1952–60)."[19] Most Malay radicals were arrested during the first phase of the Emergency, with the remaining group joining their confined compatriots in prison during the second phase. Many were actually released by 1955 after serving five to seven years of imprisonment. The Malay radicals' ability to sustain anticolonial resistance in the prisons, despite a host of constraints imposed upon them, points to some of the inherent weaknesses of the emergency strategies put in place by the British and the resoluteness of the Malay radicals even while suffering incarceration.

Arrest and the Shaken Self

No analysis of imprisonment, especially of the Malay radicals' experience of imprisonment, can be considered complete without reference to the trauma of being suddenly detained at a moment's notice when one least expects it or when one is in a vulnerable situation with no way to evade capture. For it was during this intervening period leading to the Malay radicals' incarceration that their characters and the strength of their devotion to their cause were put to the test. To be sure, like many anticolonialists throughout the colonized world who came under the thumb of European rule, the Malay radicals anticipated their arrests. Many even longed for days in captivity as a means to gain the much-desired legitimating credentials of a prison term, which would confirm their status as freedom fighters against the colonial rulers. But what often came as a hard shock was not the fact of detention itself, but rather the inopportune times in which they were arrested, together with the spectacle of families and friends saddened and threatened by the presence of uniformed men with dogs and guns. Nelson Mandela, South Africa's legendary political prisoner who later became the country's first black president, captured the deeply held feelings of the Malay radicals when he wrote: "It is not pleasant to be arrested in front of one's children, even though one knows what one is doing is right. But children do not comprehend the complexity of the situation; they simply see their father being taken away by white authorities without an explanation."[20]

Malay radicals played out the traumas of initial detention most dramatically. Ahmad Boestamam, for example, was suffering from a high fever when a lorry full of policemen came to his house to arrest him. Although he was known for his bravery as shown in his sharp critiques of the colonial state and his militant nationalism as seen in the instrumental role he played in the banned Angkatan Pemuda Insaf, he was nevertheless deeply shaken by the impending separation from his family. Ahmad broke down and cried in front of his wife, who clung to his arms while his children grieved at the moment of parting. His thoughts at that moment turned to questions about his future and the future of his family, rather than the independence movement of which he was a leading representative.[21]

Similarly, Ishak Haji Muhammad regarded the day of his detention as an event that he "will not forget until the day I die."[22] He was arrested at his home by Malay officers of the Special Branch in the midst of experimenting with cooking some new dishes. It was clear to him at the very outset that life in prison would be hard and mortifying. Malayan independence was not the highest priority in his life at that moment. Khatijah Sidek's experience was far more trying because she was seven months pregnant when she was arrested. Already informed of the arrests of the spouses of other female activists, Khatijah was arrested when her husband was not at home. She was very anxious about the effect that her imprisonment might have on the health of her unborn child, as well as the fact that she would have to give birth behind bars.[23]

All told, the radicals were arrested in the most unusual places, at the most capricious times, and even by persons they once regarded as close associates. In the dead of night, in the midst of working on farms and plantations, while boarding or alighting from buses, while shopping in the market, while relaxing with families and friends, and even as they were leading the daily prayers, the Malay radicals were suddenly taken into the custody of the security agencies. The sense of disillusionment with the anticolonial cause grew even deeper when the radicals saw familiar Malay faces among the men who were responsible for their arrest. The Malay radicals had once regarded many of the undercover Malay policemen as "loyal" and "staunch" supporters of the radical movement.[24]

One of the greatest difficulties that the Malay radicals faced when they reached the detention centers was the subjection of their bodies and minds to disciplining regimes. If the insights of the French philosopher Michel Foucault have any relevance here, the purpose of these regimes was to undermine the captives' morale and generate "docile bodies" that could perform the tasks expected of them by the prison management and by the colonial state upon their release.[25] The point was also to instill fear and to break the will of the radicals at the start of their imprisonment in order to obtain cooperation and to ensure minimum resistance. One could add that these disciplining regimes were also directed toward severing the individual from his radical past and from the group that he represented and transforming him into an individualistic, compliant, and timid subject of the state.

These regimes came in a few forms and typically involved a series of stages during the duration of imprisonment, foremost being debasement and deprivation. After their identities were verified, all political prisoners were ordered to strip naked en masse for routine inspection and were made to shower in an open bathing area. This experience of public nudity particularly affected the Malay radicals because their culture taught them that they must not expose their private parts in public.[26] Making matters worse was the condition of the cells that were allocated for political prisoners. These places were badly lit, overwhelmed by the stench of latrines, and infested with bed bugs and rats, which ensured that the prisoners had minimal rest. The prisoners were required to relieve themselves in the cells, where they were not provided with any water, and they could only dispose of the filth every morning. They were also deprived of reading and writing materials and forced to squat while consuming their meals. Such deplorable treatment of political prisoners prevailed up till the end of British rule in Malaya.[27]

Following their initiation into prison life, the new prisoners were subjected to a period of isolation during which they were forbidden to communicate with other prisoners and warders. Malay radicals who were reputed to wield enormous influence in society were placed in solitary cells for as long as a hundred days, while those of lesser social status were lumped together in cells where the prisoners were often suspicious of others as threats to their security or position. The next step was the inculcation of a sense of impermanence. Political prisoners were moved from one prison cell to another and from one prison to another. At each stage, they were given the impression that the next cell would be worse than the one before. In the movement from one cell to another, the prisoners were chained or handcuffed in rows of three to twelve, and when they were moved to a different prison they were made to march through public places to the train stations.[28]

Those arrested in Peninsular Malaya were first placed in a lockup within the confines of a local police station before being moved to a state prison and then to a detention camp at either Tanjung Beruas in Malacca, or Taiping, or Ipoh, or Seremban, or Pulau Jerejak off Penang Island, or the infamous Pudu Prison in Kuala Lumpur for men and the prison for women at Batu Gajah. Samad Ismail was placed in a "recalcitrant house" at Outram Prison in Singapore that was designated especially for dangerous criminals, prior to being moved to solitary confinement. Samad was then moved to a high-security prison on St. John's Island, about six kilometers south of Singapore. After experiencing physical suffering in various cells, he fell into a psychosis, running hysterically around his cell, shouting his wife's name repeatedly and knocking his head against the wall until he bled.[29]

No less arduous was the series of interrogations to which the Malay radicals were subjected. Interrogation sessions for political prisoners were held repeatedly, and these sessions were designed to obtain more information about certain persons and groups, to solicit plans that had been hatched by the prisoner unbeknownst to the colonial state, and to drive home the guilt of the accused. Aside from the ordeal of having to answer the same set of questions while trying not to contradict themselves or reveal information that could jeopardize their organization and movement, the Malay radicals were deprived of food and drink and subjected to verbal assaults in sessions that could last for several hours at a time.[30]

Practically no evidence exists of systematic torture or programmed violence meted out to the Malay radicals. Corporal punishment was avoided mainly because the British rulers saw physical violence in prisons as reminders of their own painful experience when the Japanese incarcerated them. Not wanting to be compared with or, even worse, seen as a continuation of the Japanese colonialists, the British were also aware that the rapid change in the global political climate during the age of decolonization meant that any maltreatment of political prisoners would soon be exposed by the international press or the prisoners themselves. Such revelations might serve to destabilize the legitimacy of British rule in the eyes of the general populace, while encouraging public support for the political prisoners.[31] Nevertheless, Malay radicals who were arrested and found guilty of the possession of firearms and ammunition or of having committed serious acts of violence against the security forces were sentenced to death by hanging.[32]

Imprisonment as Empowerment

The demoralizing effects of these disciplining regimes tended to last for as long as the colonial state was able to sustain their imposition. Clearly, the British were unable to maintain their grip on the political prisoners in Malaya arrested during the Emergency given the shortage of resources that affected the management of prisons throughout the British Empire during the post–World War II period. An official report on the prisons from 1948 to 1954 stated that the declaration of the Malayan Emergency worsened the state of prisons almost everywhere in Peninsular Malaya and on the island of Singapore. The prison population grew rapidly, from 3,497 in 1947 to 9,879 in 1954, resulting in severe overcrowding. The ratio of prisoners to warders during these seven years was more than four hundred to one. In spite of many restructurings that were made to transform prisons into "healthy

and homely villages," the pace of reforms was too slow to mitigate the rapid spread of contagious diseases and the dissemination of radical ideas within these institutions.[33]

But even if finances and associated resources were readily available, the British were unwilling to apply the penological methods that prevailed in the United Kingdom to other places outside the metropolitan center, let alone improve upon them. The basic rationale was that the large majority of prisoners in England had at the very least attended school, but this was not the case in the colonies. The educated person who possessed the ability to adhere to rules and regulations and to act with a measure of equanimity should be treated differently from inmates who lacked such thinking capacity.[34] So odious and onerous then was the task of managing criminals and political prisoners during this period that the commissioner of police, O. V. Garratt, wrote that superintendents and their senior officers had "to combat a virile propaganda—both verbal and written—in addition to maintaining discipline and introducing the various methods of training. . . . The struggle inside prisons is a silent one and, because of this, it is perhaps more intense."[35]

Although additional personnel were brought in to staff the prisons in response to the growth in the number of prisoners, this did not alleviate the problem of prison warders having to work fourteen-hour shifts. Lax discipline among the rank and file was commonplace, and this provided fertile grounds for illegal and illicit practices. Within the twelve years from the end of the Japanese occupation in 1945 to the declaration of Malayan independence in 1957, several hundred warders were warned or fined for offenses such as "insubordination," "negligence," and being "asleep on" or "absent from" duty. Of these, 120 were dismissed for various crimes committed within the prison complex, and the number who tendered their resignations was equally high.

Adding to the list of difficulties was the ethnic composition of the prison staff. More than two-thirds of the lower-ranking officers who dealt directly with the prisoners on a day-to-day basis were Malays and other local people who felt a strong sense of belonging to the local community. Because the Malay radicals were usually persons who were well known and admired within the Malay community for their daring calls for the immediate end of colonialism, and given the media coverage of their activities, it was not surprising that Malay warders tended to display much sympathy toward this class of prisoners. To this must be added the shortage of Chinese warders in the colonial prisons. Sikh, Indian, and Malay warders were thus assigned to watch over prisoners belonging to the Chinese community. Linguistic differences meant that propaganda and other clandestine attempts to spread anticolonial ideas and communism in the prisons could not be detected easily or effectively curbed.[36]

Some bargaining, concessions, and compromises, official or otherwise, had to be made with the political prisoners to ensure the smooth running of the prisons. This was achieved in ways that were akin to how the colonial state managed the Malayan society at large based on a model that was developed in India. Divide and rule was one of the methods used to encourage cooperation and to prevent the creation of troublesome cliques within the ranks of the political prisoners. The prisoners were ethnically segregated, with Malays, Chinese, and Indians locked up in separate blocks. The prisoners were then divided into groups incarcerated in different cells, usually based on the time period when they were arrested.[37]

Overall, it could be said that Malay political prisoners received far more humane treatment than the Chinese detainees. The Malays were provided with special places to say their prayers and opportunities to take part in other cultural activities. This was intended to convey the message that the prison administration was more concerned with the welfare of the "native" race (the Malays). Any efforts by the Malays to identify themselves with the cause of the non-Malay races, more specifically with the promotion of communism (which was especially identified with certain elements of the Chinese component of the Malayan population), would result in the loss of these special privileges for Malays. The better treatment given to Malay prisoners did not, however, exceed the many liberties that European and Eurasian prisoners enjoyed. These two groups of political prisoners were segregated from the rest of the prison population and were seldom subjected to ill treatment or kept in cells under the appalling conditions experienced by the Asian prisoners, which underlined the racism that pervaded the colonial penal institutions.[38]

To further divide the Malay fraternity, particularly the fraternity of the Malay radicals, special treatment was given to prisoners who demonstrated a keenness to reform and to comply with the rules of imprisonment. The most sought-after concession was to be given a temporary release from prison to attend a relative's funeral. Depending on the proximity of these funerals, prisoners who were considered to be showing progress in terms of conformity to rules and a good attitude toward the warders could be given up to a week out of prison, albeit with police escorts. Some other rewards offered by the prison administration included extra time in canteens and authorization to order groceries and other products outside prisons, as well as placement in work that was far less grueling. Cigarettes were also used as rewards for collaboration.[39]

The prison authorities also instituted a program of differentiated work, leisure activities, and dress codes for the political prisoners. The more recalcitrant Malay radicals were given jobs that entailed the use of heavy equipment, such as blacksmithing and construction work. Spare time was to be spent watching propaganda films and attending anticommunist talks. They were also required to wear black uniforms to signify that they were dangerous and resistant to reform. Prisoners wearing gray uniforms were seen as less dangerous and were required to undergo frequent counseling at a rehabilitation center.[40] As for the majority who demonstrated a readiness to drop their radicalism, they were assigned white uniforms and were given less strenuous jobs, such as supervising their peers and other lighter trades in the areas of gardening, sewing, carpentry, printing, and bookbinding.

The prison management's measures to deal with the Malay radicals yielded unanticipated outcomes. On the one hand, the special privileges offered to the Malay radicals enticed a minority of the political prisoners to choose to steer clear of political activities in prison. A select few went even further and agreed to serve as spies for the British. Unable to cope with the stresses of prison life and not wanting to serve long sentences in the manner of the hardcore detainees, these spies chose to inform the authorities about the plans made by the more committed Malay radicals. The activities of these spies did not go unnoticed, which leads to a consideration of the second line of responses by the Malay prisoners to the attempts by the prison management to gain the cooperation of political prisoners.

Indeed, as the prison systems and structures gradually became more familiar and predictable to the prisoners after several months in custody, and as the political prisoners became increasingly conscious that the colonial state could only do so much to break their spirits and turn them into willing collaborators, the Malay radicals devised and employed a multitude of tactics to deal with the deterioration of their condition and to further their pursuit of political change and mass support. The execution of these tactics was made possible not only by the weaknesses of the colonial prison system but also because of the gathering of Malay radicals from different parts of Malaya and Singapore in a few detention centers. For many, imprisonment was probably the first and most opportune time in their years of anticolonial activism to meet and craft plans with other like-minded compatriots. This was also evident in other Southeast Asian colonies. Ian Brown, in his illuminating study of colonial prisons in Burma, the Philippines, and the Netherlands East Indies, argues that political prisoners tended to view their time in colonial prisons "as an opportunity for political education, for learning techniques of political agitation, and for building comradeship and party organization."[41]

One of the survival tactics was to build a political hierarchy within the prison population. The chief purpose behind this tactic was to keep political activities and awareness alive so as to prepare the Malay radicals to confront the colonial state after their release. Another purpose was to maintain discipline within the ranks regarding the distribution of food and issues relating to health, education, religious affairs, cleanliness, and other concerns. Ironically, this political hierarchy was modeled on the image of European democracy and the parliamentary system, which reveals the influence of Western notions of governance on the minds of even the most vehement of Malay anticolonialists. While opposing the hegemonic rule of the Europeans, the Malay radicals embraced Western-style democratic systems as an alternative to the feudalism of precolonial Malay polities and traditional elites, which the radicals believed had persisted into the postwar period.

Elections were held periodically among the prisoners to elect "ministers" from different groups that took on the names of political parties. These ministers were given portfolios, such as the prime minister, minister of food, minister of health, minister of culture, and minister of religious affairs, and they were entrusted with political duties. Together with representatives from different blocks in the prisons, these ministers formed a cabinet, which did not exercise absolute authority over the prisoners, since it was vulnerable to votes of no confidence and actions taken in connection with complaints against malpractice, such as corruption. Fresh elections would be called upon the airing of such complaints, and the frequent leadership changes provided many prisoners with opportunities to gain valuable leadership experience.[42]

Concomitantly, new members were recruited into the political movement and its leadership hierarchy. This was made possible through personal interactions during recreational activities and through classes that were conducted by the Malay radicals. Subjects taught during the classes included basic reading and writing, conversational English and Chinese, Quranic reading and exegesis, history, and literature, all of which were infused with political messages. Interestingly, the use of intimidation and violence to forcibly recruit prisoners with no strong political convictions into the political movement was more common in the women's prisons than in the prisons for men.[43]

The prison thus became a school for the inculcation of democratic values and practices. This raises the question of the correlation between democratic processes and disciplinary regimes. On the surface, it would seem that democratic processes could not flourish within the colonial prison environment due to inhibiting factors such as the design and physical layout of the

prisons and the regimented time structure imposed on the prisoners. The long set of rules and regulations in place also served to restrict prolonged communication between the prisoners and, thus, might have been expected to hamper consensus building.

But the very conditions that restricted the movement and activities of the Malay radicals became motivating forces in their own right. In trying to recover their humanity and ensure that their political ideals and objectives would not dissipate under the weight of the disciplining regime, the Malay radicals sought ways and means to construct democratic structures of their own. They ensured that no person or collective could exercise complete power over others. They also kept alive the construction of a fluid prisoner organization, one that allowed new leaders to be elected and functions to be redefined as and when necessary. In other words, the more draconian the colonial prisons became, the more resolute the Malay radicals became in keeping democracy alive among them. The same proclivity among political prisoners was seen in the colonial Philippines.[44]

To safeguard the political hierarchy, close relationships were forged with the prison warders and staff of different prison departments. The most sympathetic of these warders would assist the Malay radicals by allowing them to secretly conduct political classes and organize their elections. The more brazen ones would go so far as to smuggle banned newspapers to the prisoners and relay information about the progress of anticolonial activities, and even smuggle manuscripts written by the detained Malay radicals to political activists outside the prison walls. Ahmad Boestamam, for example, related how two prison warders named Yusuf and Husain assisted in sending his manuscripts to editors of Malay newspapers, such as *Utusan Zaman*.[45]

The radicals who gained the trust of the senior prison officers were permitted to publish magazines for the reading pleasure of fellow prisoners. One of these magazines was named *Siasat* (Investigate) and another was called *Cempaka* (Cloves). Handwritten on old school exercise books, these magazines were between sixty and one hundred pages long. Each issue was filled with commentaries on politics and social affairs, as well as short stories and poems written by voluntary contributors from across the prison complex. Once completed, the magazines were passed from one prisoner to another until a whole block of prisoners had the opportunity to read them. Besides getting to know the warders, the Malay radicals also cultivated cordial relations with the staff of the prison kitchens, and this resulted in extra rations during meal hours.[46]

At the same time as selected prison personnel were won over by the Malay radicals, deliberate efforts were made to form an underground communication

FIGURE 6 Malay radicals in Tanjung Beruas Prison, 11 February 1951

network. At the center of this network was a group dedicated to the work of counterespionage. They were tasked with rooting out spies to ensure that the solidarity within the prison remained strong and committed to anticolonialism. Referred to by prison inmates as "*hantu-hantu*" ("ghosts") or "*musang-musang berbulu ayam*" ("civet-like animals with chicken feathers)," spies who solicited information from the Malay radicals were ostracized by other prisoners, who often learned about their activities through interactions with warders. Rumors about the spies' work were spread by way of informing as many people as possible about their activities. This policy of denunciation and social exclusion was applied only to the group of spies who were once friends but had fallen for the rewards offered by the regime.

The Malay radicals were aware of espionage work carried out by other self-proclaimed Malay radicals planted among the prisoners by the British. Groups of prisoners made plans to assault these spies before their "release." Men in hoods would corner the spies in an unguarded place and beat them up. As expected, there were no inquiries into these beatings, because all would thereby learn the identities of the victims. Another facet of this

underground communication network was a covert postal system. A Malay radical in one block who wished to send a secret message to friends in another block would write the message on a piece of paper, wrap it around a stone, and throw it to a messenger in the next block. The message would then be relayed to the rest of the prisoners in that block.[47]

Reprisals and Resistance

It would be historically inaccurate and misleading to claim that the struggles between the Malay radicals and the prison management that functioned as the tentacles of the colonial order receded as both parties made compromises and adjustments. On the contrary, more serious conflicts between the two opposing sides developed as the Malay radicals became increasingly organized and sophisticated and as the prison management realized the impending danger of losing control over the political prisoners. The tensions between Malay radicals and prison warders were usually over issues of food, sanitation, verbal and physical abuse, and disagreements over work assignments. Most, if not all, of the Malay radicals were averse to being treated like common criminals, by being provided with only basic rations (such as porridge and hard bread) for their daily meals, and by being made to clear the latrines in their cells. The political prisoners were resistant to the idea of serving their time in prisons as cheap laborers and engaging in hard labor at construction sites. They maintained that their guilt had not yet been legally established and, therefore, there was no real basis for them to adhere to the obligatory tasks assigned to convicted criminals. Moreover, although incidents of physical abuse of political prisoners were generally uncommon, in some cases the warders were guilty of brutality. Verbal abuse of political prisoners was also commonplace, especially by Sikh warders who were well known for their unflinching loyalty toward the colonial state. The warders branded the Malay radicals as "communists," "dreamers," and "fools," and these remarks were often made in the absence of high-ranking officers.[48]

Humiliation and abuse by the prison staff provoked a range of resistance strategies on the part of the political prisoners. These strategies were aimed primarily at circumventing and dismantling the sinister practices and underhand methods of the prison management, which sought to demoralize the prisoners and cripple the various hierarchies and structures that the radicals had established. The repertoire of resistance employed by the Malay radicals also helped to further publicize and strengthen the political movement within the prisons. The most basic form of resistance was discursive

in nature. The Malay radicals would respond to offensive remarks directed against them by calling the Malay warders "traitors" and the non-Malay warders "dogs" who were loyal to the Europeans. In some instances, the warders were even threatened that they would be beaten or otherwise penalized if verbal complaints were made to the higher authorities about abusive remarks and insulting behavior. Indeed, the political prisoners often made complaints through their representatives, and this could result in the transfer of a particular warder or even his suspension and termination from service.

Another variant of discursive resistance involved the writing of petitions. A survey of archival materials relating to political prisoners in Malaya and Singapore during the postwar period revealed that prisoners and their families sent more than one hundred petitions to the colonial government. While many of these petitions pertain to the wrongful arrests of Malays, an equal number consist of written complaints made against warders and counselors. These petitions provoked a series of investigations by the Commissioner of Prisons, which culminated in the setting up of a Detainees' Advisory Committee to attend to the prisoners' misgivings and to redress misconduct among the prison staff.[49]

The Malay radicals also embarked on a series of strikes to demonstrate their discontent with the prison management and to send a strong signal to the other prisoners that the struggle for their autonomy within the prison walls must be kept alive. Two types of strikes were discernible. The most prevalent were hunger strikes that could last for more than three days at a time, with prisoners refusing to eat and warders resorting to force-feeding them. The second type of strike was called a "go-slow" work strike. Political prisoners would abandon their tools or refuse to finish the tasks assigned to them. The precipitating causes behind these strikes ranged from the inability of a given prisoner to attend the funeral of a close relative to violence or insufficient food against prisoners, but not all strikes were motivated by specific causes. Some were the handiwork of firebrands who were simply bored or despondent with life in prison.

One of the most highly publicized strikes was a combined hunger strike and work stoppage that occurred at Tanjung Beruas Camp in Malacca on 23 November 1949. Led by some radicals and supported by more than ninety Malay prisoners, the strike broke out in reaction to poor sanitary arrangements.[50] Another incident involved close to three hundred male and female prisoners at Batu Gajah Camp in Ipoh on 14 June 1955. As the hunger strike was underway, "the women detainees in the camp created a row. They tore down the walls of some of the huts, banged on the zinc roofs and shouted as the men were taken away."[51]

The British reactions to these strikes varied from prison to prison and depended on the seriousness of each incident. Because of concerns not to make martyrs out of the Malay radicals, the concerns of the prisoners were addressed promptly on many occasions, with political detainees being relieved from hard work and subsequently allowed to occupy their time with gardening and games. Many were, in fact, allowed to consume food given to them by relatives and friends and thereby avoid the prescribed rations provided by the prisons. More often than not, the ringleaders of the strikes were sent to another camp to avoid a recurrence of such incidents. The remaining leaders were forbidden from receiving visits or letters from friends and relatives.[52]

The political prisoners established a disciplinary structure to govern the conduct of their group and discourage violence and escape attempts, since these acts would lead to negative consequences for the rest of the prison population. Nevertheless, violence and escape attempts did occur from time to time. Political prisoners in the Seremban prison, for example, often assaulted their warders whenever they felt their rights had been violated. Assaults on the warders were so frequent that a prison report noted that the political prisoners in Seremban refused "to co-operate and frequently cause[d] trouble by their defiance of authority. During the year, a 'go-slow' labour movement and several serious assaults on warders necessitated serious measures."[53]

Some of the serious measures included the lengthening of the period of detention and the confinement of violent prisoners in dark rooms for close to a hundred days. Escape attempts were relatively rare among the Malay radicals. The explanation for this can be found in a study of political prisoners on Robben Island during the height of apartheid in South Africa. Fran Buntman argues that, while many political prisoners on the island contemplated and even planned their escape, a majority felt that "one kind of escape was to use the prison against itself—to survive as individuals and organizations but also to craft a society based on a social code of their creation, not the regime's, to forge a new polity in and from the prison."[54] This was undoubtedly the prevailing line of thinking among the Malay radicals. Moreover, the Malay radicals were aware that the failure to evade their pursuers once outside the prison walls would lead to a lengthening of their sentences or even being shot to death. The physical location of most detention camps, isolated far from inhabited areas and in close proximity to the sea or to enforcement agencies such as military camps and police stations, reduced any thought of escape to an exercise in futility and wishful thinking.

But there were exceptions to this rule. In the years between 1950 and 1954, six prison escapes occurred in Singapore and Malaya, with two of the cases

arising from assistance given by a prison warder. The number of escapes in the years prior and subsequent to those cited above would have made the figures greater than what has been reflected in official statistics. Most of the escapees were caught within a few days.[55]

One interesting story of a failed prison break involved a Malay political prisoner at Tanjung Beruas in 1949. One night, the young man climbed over the fence and tried to swim across the sea. However, he was soon caught by Malay warders and was lucky to have lived after being shot at. On 15 February 1952, two prisoners jumped off a lorry as it was entering the Johore Bahru prison compound in an unsuccessful bid to escape.[56] These incidents sent a powerful message to all prisoners. Rashid Maidin concluded that he must "act in a calculated and rational fashion" if he hoped to escape and avoid recapture.[57] He pretended to show signs of a reformed attitude toward the warders before he was allowed to engage in work outside the prison in the presence of Malay policemen. Once outside, Rashid exploited the opportunity to befriend the Malay policemen to the point that they would allow him to roam around unattended. With the help of communist workers operating in the area, Rashid and another political prisoner ran into the jungle and were never recaptured.[58]

As for the Malay radicals who did not manage to escape, they achieved a new awareness of the colonial order of things while serving their prison sentences. The years spent as prisoners had informed the Malay radicals of the frailty of state institutions and revealed the possibilities and prospects of resisting colonialism through subverting and exploiting the very systems that were established by the foreign power. It was obvious that the British in Malaya were no longer able to extinguish the forces of anticolonialism operating at all levels of society and even within the penal institutions. Within the prison walls, the Malay radicals also learned about the stark discrepancy between colonial policies and everyday practice. Colonial prisons, like the colonial society, were marked by shortages, disorder, and mismanagement, and these conditions provided crucial spaces for Malay radicals to ensure the survival and longevity of their movement.

After the initial shock of arrest in the presence of their loved ones, and after being subjected to loathsome disciplining regimes, the paradoxes of incarceration came to the fore and were laid out in front of the Malay radicals. The rigors that they endured taught them how to employ different tactics and strategies of resistance, compromise, and adaptation. Warders, who were previously seen as tools of the colonial state, were courted as potential allies for the dissemination of crucial information and the smuggling of necessities to make life in the prisons more tolerable. Political hierarchies

and a closed system of espionage and communication networks functioned as channels of feedback, propaganda, and mobilization. Petitions, strikes, and violence held back attempts by the state to dissolve the battles waged within the prisons. These measures taken by the Malay radicals and the lessons learned from many setbacks and successes informed their anticolonial activities after their reentry into mainstream society.

Finding Their Place after Detention

Upon their release, the Malay radicals thought that more could be done to regain their lost political ground. Although badly battered and bloodied, they were enthusiastic that, because they had the badge of honor of having been imprisoned, the Malay masses would be more appreciative of their struggles. Most Malay radicals gravitated to Singapore, which they found to be the most conducive place to spread their radical ideas. But instead of establishing a new political party on the island, former PKMM members launched a literary movement called the ASAS 50.

Driven by the motto of *Seni Untuk Masyarakat* (Arts for Society), the group championed several aims, including the goal of freeing Malay society from those elements of its culture that were obstructing or negating the pursuit of modernity and progress, as well as the aim of advancing the intellectual awareness of the rakyat toward the ideals of social justice, prosperity, peace, and harmony. The ASAS 50 also sought to foster Malay nationalism and to refine and promote the Malay language as the lingua franca of Malaya.[59] The prominent members of ASAS 50 included Kamaludin Muhamad (Keris Mas), Usman Awang (Tongkat Warant), Suratman Markasan, Masuri S. N., Abdul Ghani Hamid, Muhammad Ariff Ahmad (Mas), and Asraf Haji Wahab.

Going against preceding genres of Malay writing, which they thought were too preoccupied with stylistics and trivial aspects of human life, the ASAS 50 adopted the realist mode of writing novels, short stories, and poems, with the deliberate intent of reflecting the true suffering and aspirations of the common people. Their fictional writings and manifestoes were also heavily imbued with the mobilizing concepts of warisan, cita-cita perjuangan, kesedaran, kesatuan, kebangsaan, and merdeka. It is worth quoting Keris Mas at length, since he succinctly described the ASAS 50 at the peak of their engagement and the context in which they operated:

> In the field of literature, the proponents of ASAS 50 adopted a new breadth of style, employing a mode of language that is fresh, departing from the preceding genre of writers, propounding the themes of societal awareness, politics and culture with the aim of revitalizing the spirit of freedom, the spirit of independence of a people (bangsa) of its own unique sense of honour and identity, upholding justice and combating oppression. . . .
>
> We criticized societal backwardness and those whom we regard as the instruments responsible for the birth of such backwardness. We criticized colonialism and its instruments, that is, the elite class, those whose consciousness have been frozen by the influence of feudalism and myths, and superstition that has been enmeshed with religion.[60]

Aside from the publication of hundreds of literary works related to society, language, and literature, ASAS 50 gained prominence through three regional congresses that were held in 1952 and 1954. Issues such as the establishment of a Malay Language Department in the University of Malaya, the inculcation of the Malay language as the second language of all non-Malays in Malaya, and romanization of the Jawi script were proposed during these landmark meetings.[61]

Together with other prominent Malay activists and organizations in Singapore, the Malay radicals in ASAS 50 remonstrated against what they considered the insidious British scheme to downplay the importance of the Malay language in education and daily life through the "Reorientation Plan." The plan was made known to the public in mid-1951 as part of a British policy to equip students in Malay schools with the English language and other knowledge and skills necessary to cope with the rapid changes of the postwar years. The colonial administration envisioned that the plan would open up a wider range of career choices for the Malays in order to help them to compete with the other ethnic groups on the island. Under the plan, the Malay language was to be employed as the language of instruction during the first three years of school. The English language would be taught concurrently in the first year. From the fourth to seventh year of primary education, all subjects would be in taught in English, with the exception of Malay literature. In this way, the Malays would be better prepared for secondary school education, in order to qualify for the Cambridge School Certificate.[62]

The ASAS 50 maintained that the plan had beer conceived without prior consultation. The most vehement resistance came from members of the Singapore Malay Teachers Union, whose opposition was based upon the concern for the loss of relevance and employment in the years to come. Resistance against the government's proposal became particularly acute with the formation of the Malay Education Council (MEC, known in Malay as Majlis Pelajaran Melayu [MPM]). Consisting of 52 Malay/Muslim

organizations in Singapore, the MEC issued petitions and public protests against the plan. Their efforts received full support from all leading Malay newspapers and organizations on the island.[63] By February 1957 the Reorientation Plan was abandoned to make way for the enhancement of Malay language education in Singapore.[64]

But inasmuch as the ASAS 50 became an influential movement in the realm of literary and linguistic reforms, it did not spawn the sort of popular resistance and mobilization that the PKMM, API, AWAS, and other groups had inspired prior to the Malayan Emergency. ASAS 50 remained quintessentially elitist, led by men of letters who were speaking for the largely illiterate masses. The Malay radicals accordingly fought hard to jump-start their political careers as they watched UMNO moving in reformist directions and adopting the populist styles and tone that the Malay radicals once used.

Having been elected as the second president of UMNO on 26 August 1951 (following the fall from favor and resignation of Dato' Onn), Tengku Abdul Rahman moved purposefully to fill the political vacuum left by the Malay radicals. The Tengku used his aristocratic credentials and personal charisma to unite his party while cooperating closely with the British to plan for Malayan independence. With the British kept in check, the Tengku rode on the wave of radicalism that he saw was growing within his own party via the agency of former members of the PKMM. The Tengku strategically changed the party's rallying cry from "Hidup Melayu" ("Long Live the Malays") to "Merdeka" ("Freedom").[65] Abandoning the communal stance that UMNO had taken since its founding, the Tengku formed an alliance with other races in the country, most notably with the Malayan Chinese Association (MCA) and the Malayan Indian Congress (MIC), to prepare for elections that would be held in the mid-1950s. This alliance, which became a seemingly permanent feature of Malaysian politics, proved to be compelling in that context, at the expense of the Malay radicals. The alliance allowed UMNO to dominate the politics of Malaya and downplay the appeal of rival parties, such as the Independence of Malaya Party (IMP) established by Dato' Onn. UMNO's dominance, which peaked from 1955 until the declaration of Malaysian independence in August 1957, counteracted any attempt at re-creating the heady days of Malay radicalism.

Conclusion

The Radical Legacy

› THE BANDUNG CONFERENCE of April 1955 was a momentous event that left a lasting imprint on the global history of decolonization. The world had never witnessed anything like it. It was a meeting among previously colonized countries, which represented nearly one-fourth of the world's population at that time, to discuss the prospects of total freedom from Western dominance. India, Burma, Pakistan, and Ceylon were the key players, with Indonesia acting as the initiator and, predictably, taking the lead in steering all of the conference proceedings. There was a profound antipathy toward what was left of European colonialism. There was also much hope that the conference would result in the formation of a "third bloc" consisting of the Afro-Asian countries. The third bloc would remain impartial toward the two superpowers, the United States and the Soviet Union. It would assert its right to self-determination and would agitate for the independence of all Afro-Asian nations. In his opening speech, entitled "Let a New Asia and a New Africa Be Born," President Sukarno exclaimed:

> But I hope this Conference will give *more* than understanding only and goodwill only—I hope that it will falsify and give the lie to the saying of one diplomat from far abroad: "We will turn this Asian-African Conference into an afternoon-tea meeting." I hope that it will give evidence of the fact that we Asian and African leaders understand that Asia and Africa can prosper only when they are united, and that even the safety of the World at large cannot be safeguarded without a united Asia-Africa. I hope that this Conference will give *guidance* to mankind, will point out to mankind the way which it must take to attain safety and peace. I hope that it will give evidence that Asia and Africa have been reborn, nay, that a New Asia and a New Africa have been born![1]

By the time detailed discussions began in earnest, the ideal of forging Afro-Asian unity fell flat in the face of the ideological passions, pragmatic considerations, and implicit loyalties of the conference participants. While agreeing to the general notion that colonialism should be brought to an immediate end and that human rights, respect for territorial integrity, recognition of the equality of mankind, and the promotion of mutual cooperation and the upholding of justice would be included in the long list of conference resolutions, the participants could not agree about one basic thing: what colonialism actually meant. They were deeply divided over the finer points relating to the strategies of resistance against European hegemony and the ways to emancipate Asia and Africa from the tentacles of colonialism.

Radical statesman such as Nasser, Sukarno, and Nehru called for an all-out condemnation of colonialism in all its guises and forms, urging the Bandung conference participants to completely disassociate themselves from cooperating with the West in order to achieve complete control over their countries. Politicians who were more pro-Western in their outlook, or were more predisposed to communist ideology, adopted a conciliatory and accommodating stance toward the supremacy of the United States and the Soviet Union, respectively. After almost a week of intense debates from 18 to 24 April 1955, the conference participants agreed on a ten-point declaration of world peace and cooperation that would be embraced by what came to be known as the "non-aligned nations." However, a few months after that milestone declaration, the key players were embroiled in conflicts among themselves. Some became caught up in a spiral of violent clashes over territory, claiming the lives of thousands of Asian and African peoples.[2]

The Bandung Conference, an epic event with fine ideals but contradictory outcomes, mirrored the spirit and fates of the Malay radicalist movement in the mid-1950s. Moved by the ideas of Third World unity and anti-imperialist internationalism, the Malay radicals organized the Kongres Pemuda Melayu (Malay Youths Congress) only a week before the Bandung Conference. The Kongres Pemuda Melayu was an enthusiastic attempt to make a comeback and forge a Pan-Malayan political force that would capture the hearts and minds of the populace in the upcoming elections. Fallen UMNO members like Dato' Onn, who had established his new Parti Negara (National Party), and representatives from Islamic political groups under the aegis of the Pan-Malayan Islamic Party (PMIP), were invited to attend, as well as former members of PKMM, API, AWAS, and forty other organizations. Emulating the forthcoming Bandung Conference, the three-day Malay Youths Congress held at Kuala Lumpur from 8 to 10 April fell short of its ambitious goals.[3]

Latent ruptures between the representatives of the Malay Youths Congress became apparent over the course of the three-day meeting. After a long break from political activity following his incarceration, Dr Burhanuddin changed his political views to adopt a pro-Islamic and Malay-centered vision of politics. He and the members of PMIP regarded the Chinese and Indians as aliens in Malaya. They called for the return of Malay lands to the rightful sons of the soil. Dato' Onn disagreed with such insularity and advocated instead for the congress to consider a brand of Malayan nationalism that would embrace all communities in the fight for independence.

A third stream of thought was linked to youths who were inclined toward socialism. They disagreed with both Burhanuddin and Dato' Onn. These young Malay radicals argued for a class-based struggle against colonial injustice. Such an approach smacked of communism in the minds of Burhanuddin and Dato' Onn and was therefore sidelined in the overall discussions.[4]

The Malay Youths Congress ended with a resolution that a Barisan Kebangsaan Melayu (BKM or Malay Nationalist Front) should be formed to contest in the 1955 elections. Soon after, the BKM agitated for the release of Ahmad Boestamam and other Malay political detainees. This proved to be effective as Ahmad Boestamam was released on 28 June 1955. He had originally been given a much longer prison sentence. But that was all that the BKM achieved before it was finally dissolved and forgotten in the beginning of 1956.[5]

Invited to attend the Bandung Conference, Burhanuddin and Abdul Samad Ismail met with self-exiled Malay radicals in Indonesia to reestablish the ties that had been broken. They were greeted with much enthusiasm by Ibrahim Haji Yaacob and were received by President Sukarno himself, who, in his usual flamboyant style, declared that Indonesia would give its fullest support to the radicalist movement in Malaya in order to free that country from British colonialism.[6] That promise was never quite fulfilled, as Sukarno became increasing exasperated with the close ties that UMNO leaders had forged with the British. Sukarno's frustrations eventually led to the beginning of the Indonesian *Konfrontasi* in 1963. Meantime, upon his return from Indonesia, Burhanuddin rode the wave of support he received from the Muslim public. Addressing a five-thousand-strong crowd in Selangor to share his experiences in Bandung, he spoke of strong backing from Indonesian parties such as Masyumi for Malaya's independence struggle.[7]

Unbeknownst to Burhanuddin and the Malay radicals, the landscape of Malayan politics had changed drastically since Tengku Abdul Rahman had taken over the leadership of UMNO in 1951 and established the Alliance in the years that followed. The results of the Federal Legislative Council

elections held in July 1955 clearly showed that public support had radically swung in favor of UMNO and parties allied with it, with the Alliance sweeping 51 out of 52 seats. The only seat left was won by the PMIP. Islam was used by the PMIP as a device to win votes among the Malay masses. The July 1955 election, together with the radicals' inability to achieve the goals of the Malay Youths Congress and the BKM, signaled a new turn in the history of the Malay radicalist movement. The radicals' dreams of creating a populist collective that would blend different radical ideological streams together for an independent Malaya was slowly dying.

Another cleavage that developed within the Malay radicalist movement appeared only three months after the 1955 elections. Harun Aminurrashid, Ishak Haji Muhammad, and the recently released Ahmad Boestamam set out to establish their own party that differentiated itself from UMNO, Parti Negara, and the PMIP. Dubbed the Partai Rakyat Malaya (PRM, or People's Party of Malaya), the party subscribed to an ideology of Marhaenism, a term used by Sukarno to refer to a brand of Indonesian socialism that promotes the welfare and interests of the poor, the disenfranchised, and the disadvantaged classes in society. True to its ideological agenda, the party avoided any references to Islam.[8]

Although Burhanuddin played an instrumental role in the establishment of the PRM, he was reluctant to take on any important positions in the party. It had become clear to him that the way forward for the Malays in Malaya was not to be found in the type of radicalist ideology he had promoted for so many years. The future was in Islam and in examples provided by Muslim history. This was the thinking he developed after having led the PKMM for some years and seeing how socialism, if left unmanaged, could morph into godless and militant communism. His views about the importance of Islam as a rallying cry for politics were further sharpened by the Maria Hertogh debacle and his eventual imprisonment. Right after the Bandung Conference, he became more inclined to join the PMIP, a stance that earned him much disapproval among the Malay radicals.

One former member of the KMM, Alias Hj. Zahid, told Burhanuddin to be careful of becoming a "Prisoner of Zenda" should he decide to join parties such as the PMIP.[9] But Burhanuddin saw himself as a politician and an activist who could harmonize nationalism with Islam and utilize the fusion of faith and patriotism "to serve as a tool for both national liberation and sociocultural development."[10] After lengthy discussions with Muslim clerics and Malay radicals, on 25 December 1956, Burhanuddin contested and won the elections to become the PMIP's third president. The party was later renamed the Parti Islam Se-Malaysia (PAS). Burhanuddin's

entry into PAS and his pronouncements that the party was not just nationalist but also a party by Muslims for Muslims left a lasting Islamic imprint on Malaysian politics.

Indeed, the ultrasocialist and ultrareligious postures taken by Ahmad Boestamam and Burhanuddin respectively caused both men to drift apart just as their personal divisions had fragmented the radicalist movement they once led. The common denominator that continued to link them was their shared opposition to UMNO and the colonial government. The first opportunity to mend the split that was developing among the Malay radicals was in March 1956, in response to the Reid Commission. The Reid Commission was tasked with drafting the first constitution of independent Malaya. PAS, PRM, and Parti Negara aired their united stand on a variety of issues, including the composition of the commission, citizenship for migrants, the status of Malay as a national language, the defense and security of Malaya, and national education. These parties organized mass rallies and public speeches to oppose all recommendations of the Reid Commission. The PRM slammed the constitutional drafting as "undemocratic," while PAS maintained that the commission and UMNO had failed to protect the rights of Muslims and the religion of Islam.[11] Dato' Onn and his party went even further to highlight that the Reid Commission was a "shroud for the Malays" and the new constitution would be "the grave in which they would be buried."[12]

Although these parties were wedded together against the British and UMNO, they had differing visions about Malaya as an independent country. Burhanuddin tried to bridge these divisions by organizing a Malay Nationalist Congress in May 1957. He received support from some UMNO members who were unhappy with Tengku Abdul Rahman for giving in to the citizenship-related demands of non-Malays in the Alliance. But just as the Congress was entering its critical phase of recommending an alternative constitution, Ahmad Boestamam took the controversial step of walking out of the Congress. When interviewed by the press, he accused the remaining participants in the Malay Nationalist Congress of using communalism to further their political interests. "Since most of the recommendations on Malaya's new constitution are opposed to the principles of Party Rakyat, I see no point in remaining at the meeting," he said.[13]

Ahmad's departure from the meeting trivialized the proposals prepared by his long-time comrades as an unrealistic sham. The British and UMNO were delighted by the internal splits within the radical collective and rejected the alternative constitution that the Congress members tirelessly discussed and tabled, portraying it as the Malay radicals' pathetic effort to slow down the "progress" toward independence. It would not be excessive to argue

that what Ahmad had done was to diminish a powerful last stand among the Malay radicals and their allies to forge an alternative blueprint for Malayan independence.

On the morning of 31 August 1957, large crowds of men, women, and children gathered at a newly constructed stadium in downtown Kuala Lumpur to observe an unforgettable occasion that cost more than two million dollars in state funds. Standing at the podium was Tengku Abdul Rahman, the leader of UMNO and the first prime minister of Malaya.[14] It was the day of Malaya's declaration of independence. The three shouts of "merdeka" (independence) on that historic morning marked the birth of a new nation called the Federation of Malaya, which would be renamed "Malaysia" in 1963. Merdeka Day also marked the dawn of a new age for the Malay radicals. No longer would they be able to stand together as a united force in constructing the Melayu Raya that they longed for.

It would, however, be excessive to contend that the Malay radicals ceased to play any major roles in the making of Malaysia after the fanfare at the Merdeka Stadium. Rather, what used to be a movement that incorporated a composite of persons from different ideologies and temperaments had splintered into groups that have continued the legacy of Malay radicalism in their own ways. The political thoroughfares that some of these groups chose widened and became so popular in the decades that followed that they became forces to be reckoned with that still survive today. PAS under Burhanuddin proceeded to become an Islamic party devoted to implementing the syariah (the Islamic law) with the view of transforming Malaysia into an Islamic state. The Islamic party has dominated politics in the northern states of Malaysia in such a powerful manner that it is now impossible to imagine Malaysian politics without PAS.[15]

The PRM and its affiliates maintained their socialist stance. The party gained very little following due to the lack of proper outreach to the non-Malays, from whom the PRM had hoped to obtain support. It was only after a coalition between the PRM and the Labour Front Party was formed in the 1960s that Malay socialism was able to make some inroads into Malaysian politics. PRM was, however, implicated in militant activities as soon as the party was developing a strong following in Malaysia. A revolt led by A. M. Azahari, a PRM activist based in Brunei, earned the party a massive crackdown. Almost all of the Malay radicals affiliated to the PRM met with another round of incarceration. Burhanuddin, Ahmad Boestamam, and new recruits to the radicalist movement such as Said Zahari, were placed behind bars throughout this tumultuous period of the Indonesian Konfrontasi (or Confrontation), a bloody conflict and war of

words that put Malaysia and Indonesia on a collision course. The ideal of the Melayu Raya was completely discredited.[16]

From the start of the Indonesian Confrontation onward, the postcolonial Malaysian government, scholars, and writers alike have sought to downplay or present a distorted view of the experiences of the Malay radicals. The history books that have been written since the 1960s generally portray Malay radicals as controversial subjects. To be radical is to inherit the legacy of failed resistance against the preceding colonial state and be unable to fully adapt to the changing landscape of politics in the Cold War era. In most books, articles, and commentaries written since the 1960s, Malay radicals were considered only in the context of the eventual triumph of Anglophone and British-sponsored political elites. The impression anyone might well gain from this long-standing master narrative is that the Malay radicals lacked a sense of realism, as well as the political acumen to enable them to deal with imperialism to their advantage. They were greenhorns in the art of high diplomacy. They were poorly organized, misguided, and susceptible to wayward ideologies, with a tendency to resort to aggressive actions. They, the Malay radicals, have been portrayed as polar opposites of all those valiant national heroes whose moral courage and quick-wittedness (combined with some good luck) enabled them to turn the colonial regime against itself. Radicals, from this viewpoint, are thus seen as brave men fighting for a lost cause and as heroes who are to be written about but not celebrated, as relics of an imperfect past.[17]

Nor have recent revisionist historians helped to better explain the ebb and flow of the radicalist experiment. While taking issue with the UMNO-sponsored teleology that depicts radicals as losers in the struggle for political control and aberrations in the course of anticolonial struggles, revisionist historians tend to slide into an "Indonesian cum Socialist-centric" perspective—or what may be thought of as an *Indosoc perspective*—even as they attempt to bring the radicals back to the center stage of history. Radicals are placed within the frame of reference of revolutionary happenings on the islands of Java and Sumatra in Indonesia and the impact that these events and their participants had on Malays in other parts of Southeast Asia. From this vantage point, the ideas, programs, and influences that shaped the lives and work of radicals in colonial Malaya are portrayed as having been derived primarily, if not solely, from the "Indonesian cum Socialist" core.[18]

That is to say, Malay radicals are seen as marginal actors lurking in the shadows of a drama that was centered on the activities of Indonesian freedom fighters. They are depicted as merely the junior counterparts of their Indonesian heroes. Close comparisons have been made between radicals

in Indonesia and in Malaya to argue that the lives of these activists in two different countries were inextricably bound together and to emphasize the power that the Indonesian radicals supposedly had over their Malayan counterparts.[19] One could safely surmise that one key reason why the Indo-soc perspective has become so predominant and indisputable is the mistaken conception that Malaya was an intellectual and political desert that became enlivened only with the advent of the fresh spirit of activism from the Indonesian front.[20]

We know now that such viewpoints sponsored by nation-states and perpetuated by preceding historians are no longer defensible. This book has shown that the Malay radicals were never oblivious to the global forces and developments above and beyond the Indonesian context and the lure of socialism per se. They showed creative agency and intellectual acuity in devising and sustaining their own anticolonial campaigns. They drew from many different ideologies and persuasions to construct a hybrid framework of thinking and action of their own. Such suppressed legacies of the Malay radicals, which this book has sought to recover, have only recently become more visible in Malaysia today.

Consider, for example, the recent debates over Mat Indera (1920–1953), a Malay radical who took up arms against the British upon the declaration of the Malayan Emergency in 1948. Mat Indera was part of the Angkatan Pemuda Insaf who later joined a militant group that killed not only colonial soldiers but also Malay policemen who were guarding villages against attacks by communist anticolonial forces hiding in the jungles. The mere suggestion by a local politician affiliated with the PAS in late 2011 that Mat Indera should be regarded as a "freedom fighter" and not as a "terrorist" sparked heated debate in Malaysia about the real "heroes" and "villains" in the fight for the country's independence. Professional historians, war veterans, and surviving witnesses joined the debate to advocate for and against Mat Indera's inclusion in the long list of champions of Malaysian nationhood. What emerged from this contest of historical perspectives were two divergent groups that define Malaysian politics. The first, which is under the influence of UMNO, would portray the Malay radicals in negative, absolutist, and almost ahistorical terms. Malay radicals were associated with everything that was vulgar, unbecoming, immoral, ostentatious, and unprincipled. They made bombs, not ideas; they wrote manifestos and manuals, not books of knowledge and learning. This view belittles Malay radicals by portraying them as mere objects of aversion.[21]

The second emerging line of thought that is now gaining political visibility and is manifested in the form of new political parties in Malaysia today drew much of its main sources of inspiration from the progressive legacies of the Malay radicals while highlighting their positive contributions to the making of modern Malaysia. One could safely say that the Peoples' Justice Party (Parti Keadilan Rakyat), with its non-communalist approach to politics, its call for the freeing of space for civil society, and its support for social justice for all Malaysians, bears a striking resemblance to the PKMM and the PRM. The statements made by Mat Sabu, a member of PAS, which were cited above, provide further evidence that opposition politicians have attempted to break the stranglehold of colonial and UMNO-centric histories by consciously evoking the Malay radicals as part of their heritage. Malaysia is doubtless still haunted by the ghosts of Malay radicalism, despite all the elisions and avoidances in national histories and social memories, and all the sufferings of the radicals over the years. Will these ghosts be forever forgotten?

Looking back, one wonders whether the history of the Malay radicals could have turned out differently. It seems unlikely. Being a radical in a place like colonial Malaya was akin to sailing a boat across an uncharted sea of uncertainties and risks, where the forces arrayed against it were too strong for it to have any chance of survival. Relying largely on their guts, their wits, and the memories of the fallen Malay heroes of the past, the Malay radicals had to construct their movement from scratch, synthesize and put to use ideologies that came in handy, and try to build a mass base among the Malays. To sustain their motivation and drive, the Malay radicals internalized and put into action the mobilizing concepts of warisan (heritage), cita-cita perjuangan (spirit and the ambitions of struggle), kesedaran (consciousness), kesatuan (unity), kebangsaan (nationalism), Melayu Raya (a union of Singapore, Malaya, and Indonesia), and merdeka (freedom). This effort was burdened by many obstacles. The Malay radicals had to overcome the conservatism of the Malay community and its entrenched feudal culture. Locked in a social and political milieu where politics was a taboo subject and where respect for traditions was a primary virtue, the Malay radicals faced great challenges in trying to find support for their idealistic dreams of an independent Melayu Raya.

To dub themselves as "Malay radicals" also meant that these men and women came under the constant surveillance and disciplinary actions of the colonial state, the Japanese occupiers and, ironically, their own countrymen right after independence. With radicalism came bouts of imprisonment, untold periods of isolation, and the experience of being outlawed and disbanded, as well as being marginalized by their own community while being cast as extremists by the regime. The radicals tried to ride out the storm by forging alliances and collaborating with even the enemies of their enemies when they saw these alliances as instrumental in achieving their goals. But

such strategies of survival lasted only as long as their backers and transient allies would have it. In the end, whatever the Malay radicals did left them in a perpetual state of crisis, in which they shed sweat, blood, and tears and felt the sorrow of separation from their families and friends, all for the sake of their struggle for the liberty of their country.

The Malay radicals have left a legacy of fearlessness in the struggle against colonial rule. They risked their lives, honor, and sanity for the sake of their compatriots. They braved hardships and experimented with new hopes and dreams unheard of in their time. They made mistakes, learning from their errors and misjudgments without regret or embarrassment. In doing so, the Malay radicals became agents of change in their society, who introduced new vocabularies of struggle, a new language of resistance, and new visions of politics, while imprinting the spirit of freedom in the minds of their compatriots. The experience of being radical, of forming new relationships, of being loyal to a given cause, of standing up to injustice, and of enduring the pains of betrayal and confinement, shows that to be radical is to be on the margins of society in any given era. But the radicals were the ones who eventually emerged as the makers of history. For that, they deserve to be remembered.

Notes

Introduction

1. *The New Straits Times*, 12 May 2010; *The Star*, 20 June 2010.
2. Mariana Isa, "A Conservation Statement on Pudu Jail, Kuala Lumpur" (Master's thesis, University of Bath, 2006), 7, 10, and 15.
3. Roff, *The Origins of Malay Nationalism*, 224–225; Means, *Malaysian Politics*, 88; Stockwell, *British Policy and Malay Politics*, 129–145; Firdaus Abdullah, *Radical Malay Politics*; Cheah Boon Kheng, *Red Star over Malaya*, 101–123; Khong Kim Hoong, *Merdeka*, 23; Ramlah Adam, *Gerakan Radikalisme di Malaysia*; and Mohamed Noordin Sopiee, *Malayan Union to Singapore Separation*.
4. An exception to this rule is Rustam Sani, who gives primacy to regional factors, which gave rise to what he calls the "Malay left." However, Rustam ignores the role of the global context in shaping the radicalist program of action. See Rustam Sani, *Social Roots of the Malay Left*.
5. Cohen, *History in Three Keys*, 61.
6. Ibid.
7. Stoler and Cooper, "Between Metropole and Colony," 9.
8. Said, *Orientalism*, 49.
9. Milner, "Ideological Work," 153.
10. Khoo Kay Kim, "Malaysia."
11. Barnard and van der Putten, "Malay Cosmopolitan Activism."
12. Bayly and Harper, *Forgotten Armies*, 320.
13. Milner, "Colonial Records History." Milner has described such an approach to history as "colonial records" history, an approach that has often been taken by historians studying British Malaya.
14. Ileto, *Pasyon and Revolution*, 1–11.
15. Stoler, "Colonial Archives," 97. Ann Stoler has discussed in detail the problems inherent in the making of colonial archives, the materials that are kept in them, and the ways in which the categorizations of sources affect the manner in which historical accounts have been (and are still being) written. As she puts it: "Colonial archives were both sites of the imaginary and institutions that fashioned histories as they concealed, revealed, and

reproduced the power of the state." Stoler developes this point at some length in her book entitled *Along the Archival Grain*.

16. Mustapha Hussain, *Malay Nationalism before UMNO*, 130–131.

17. By "Malay," I am referring to the "everyday-defined" identity that included, in the period from the 1920s to the 1960s, persons who spoke the Malay language, practiced Malay customs, professed the Islam faith, and were seen by the Malay community as belonging to that community, even if these persons may have claimed other ethnic identities, such as Javanese, Bugis, Achehnese, or Boyanese.

18. Ishak Saat, *Radikalisme Melayu Perak*.

19. Young, *Postcolonialism*.

20. Aljunied, *Colonialism, Violence and Muslims*, 13.

21. Ranajit Guha, "The Small Voice of History," 1–12.

Chapter One

1. Mustapha Hussain, *Malay Nationalism before UMNO*, 7.

2. Ibid., 119.

3. Anthony Short has highlighted the powerful influence of Malay folklore about failed rebellions such as the one that was led by Dato' Bahaman in Pahang in 1874 in inspiring many Malays to join the communist guerrillas during the Malayan Emergency. These stories, which became part of the social memory and popular consciousness, did much to politicize a segment of the Malay population. See Anthony Short, *The Communist Insurrection*, 208.

4. Swettenham, *Malay Sketches*, 233–234.

5. For details of the Malay indigenous political systems during this period, see Gullick, *Indigenous Political Systems*.

6. Robinson, "Non-European Foundations of European Imperialism," 117–138.

7. *Enquiry as to the Complicity of Chiefs*, 25.

8. Abdullah Zakaria Ghazali, *Pasir Salak*, 135.

9. Tarrow, *Power in Movement*, 220.

10. Bayly, *Empire and Information*, 3.

11. Maxwell, "Penglipor Lara," 88. See also Gullick, *Malay Society in the Nineteenth Century*, 348–349.

12. Khoo Kay Kim, "Malay Society, 1874–1920s," 183–184.

13. Gullick, *A History of Kuala Lumpur*, 25.

14. Gullick, *A History of Negri Sembilan*, 96.

15. Allen, "The Kelantan Rising of 1915," 242.

16. Michael Adas and Ranajit Guha have argued that rebellions in colonized societies were not so much the products of irrationality (as perceived by most historians) as the outcomes of rational decision-making and carefully thought-out plans. See Adas, *Prophets of Rebellion*, and Guha, *Elementary Aspects of Peasant Insurgency*, 1999.

17. Aruna Gopinath, *Pahang, 1880–1933*, 137.

18. "Rasu and Bahaman to To' Raja Jelai, 19 April 1894," CO 273/196.

19. Yeo Kim Wah, *The Politics of Decentralization*, 10–11.

20. Abdul Rahman Haji Abdullah, *Gerakan Anti-penjajahan di Malaysia*.

21. "Anderson to Stubbs, 3 August 1909," CO 273/350.

22. Smith, "Conflict and Collaboration."

23. Malhi, "Making Spaces, Making Subjects."

24. Cheah Boon Kheng, *To' Janggut*, 25.

25. *Singapore Free Press*, 29 May 1915.

26. *Utusan Melayu*, 7 August 1915.

27. Timah Hamzah, *Pemberontakan tani 1928 di Trengganu*, 86.

28. Shaharil Talib, *After Its Own Image*, 134–174.

29. "Report of British Resident of Perak (H. W. Thomson)," 30 June 1928, CO 273/61.

30. For a fuller discussion of British postures toward Pan-Islamism and the influence of developments in the Muslim world on Malaya, see Syed Muhd Khairudin Aljunied, "Edward Said and Southeast Asian Islam."

31. Khasnor Johan, *Modern Malay Administrative Elite*, and Lees, "Discipline and Delegation."

32. Roff, *Malay and Arabic Periodicals*.

33. Emmanuel, "Viewspapers."

34. Wilkinson and Winstedt, *Papers on Malay Subjects*, 61.

35. *Al-Imam* 1, no. 1 (1906): 8.

36. Laffan, *Islamic Nationhood and Colonial Indonesia*.

37. Wan Suhana Wan Sulong, "Saudara (1928–1941)."

38. *Utusan Melayu*, 7 November 1907.

39. Michael Yudell, *Race Unmasked: Biology and Race in the 20th Century*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2014, p. 168.

40. Anthony C. Milner, *The Malays*. Oxford Blackwell-Wiley, 2008, pp. 126–128.

41. Zainal Abidin bin Ahmad, "Malay Journalism in Malaya," 249.

42. Proudfoot, *Early Malay Printed Books*, 20–48.

43. Wheeler, *The Modern Malay*, 180.

44. Milner, *The Invention of Politics*.

45. Ratnavadivel, *The Social Origins*, 33.

46. *Malay Mail*, 8 December 1897.

47. Loh Fook Seng, *Seeds of Separatism*, 14.

48. Whitehead, "British Imperial Education Policy."

49. *Perak Government Gazette*, 4–7.

50. Loh Fook Seng, *Seeds of Separatism*, 29.

51. Wahi Long, "Guru Melayu dan Kebangsaan," *Majalah Guru*, September 1947, 10–14.

52. Zainal Abidin bin Ahmad, "Modern Development," 158.

53. "Fusion of Horizons" (*Horizontverschmelzung*) is a term used by Hans-Georg Gadamer in his classic work, *Truth and Method*. It is a process by which new meanings are created through the integration of the strange and unfamiliar without affecting what was previously believed. See Gadamer, *Truth and Method*.

54. Awang Had Salleh, *Malay Secular Education*, 140–141.

55. Roff, *The Origins of Malay Nationalism*, 146.

56. Cheeseman, "Education in Malaya," 31.

57. Shamsiah Fakeh, *Memoir Shamsiah Fakeh*, 4 and 16.

58. Roff, "Pondoks."

59. Wan Maswati Wan Yusoff, "Tok Kenali," 72–90; Abdullah al-Qari Haji Salleh, "To' Kenali," 87–100.

60. *Pahang Annual Report 1905*, 11.
61. Nabir Haji Abdullah, *Ma'ahad al-Ehya al-Sharif*.
62. Radin Soenarno, "Malay Nationalism 1896–1941," 18.
63. Ishak Haji Muhammad, *Memoir Pak Sako*, 14.
64. Mustapha Hussain, *Malay Nationalism before UMNO*, 7.
65. *Majlis*, 8 September 1932.
66. *Saudara*, 15 October 1932.
67. *Majalah Guru*, 1 June 1932.
68. Ibid., 1 May 1932.
69. Kahn, *Other Malays*, 37–43.
70. *Majlis*, 8 September 1932.

Chapter Two

1. Van der Putten, "Negotiating the Great Depression."
2. Shamsul A. B., *From British to Bumiputera Rule*, 41.
3. *Saudara*, 20 November 1935.
4. *Majalah Guru*, August 1933.
5. Roff, "Persatuan Melayu Selangor."
6. Some KMM members preferred to call the organization *Kesatuan Melayu Merdeka* (The Union of Independent Youths), but the preference for this name was restricted to a small circle who felt strongly about the immediate independence of Malaya but knew only too well that if they openly declared the organization advocated immediate independence, it would put them in jeopardy.
7. Ramlah Adam, *Pejuang-Pejuang Kemerdekaan*, 317.
8. Among the works that tend to overstate Ibrahim's importance in the Malay radicalist movement is Mat Jusoh Husin, *Ibrahim Hj. Yaacob*.
9. *Majlis*, 7 April 1932.
10. His daughter wrote the most authoritative biography of him. See Insun Sony Mustapha, *Mustapha Hussain*.
11. Abdul Aziz Ishak wrote a lot about his experiences in politics, including his time in prison: Abdul Aziz Ishak, *Special Guest*.
12. Abdul Halim Nasir, *Memoir Abdul Halim Nasir*, 10.
13. Mustapha Hussain, *Malay Nationalism before UMNO*, 115.
14. Gerwyn Elidor David Lewis, *Out East in the Malay Peninsula*, 167.
15. Abdul Latiff Abu Bakar, *Ishak Haji Muhammad*, 49–50.
16. Ishak Haji Muhammad, *Putera Gunung Tahan*.
17. Mustapha Hussain, *Malay Nationalism before UMNO*, 150.
18. Rabushka, *Race and Politics*, 28.
19. Ashcroft, *Caliban's Voice*, 50.
20. See Aljunied, "Zones of Contentious Publics."
21. Shahrom Hussain, *Memoir Shahrom Hussain*, 332–378.
22. Milner, "Impact of the Turkish Revolution on Malaya," 119.
23. A. Samad Ahmad, *Sejambak Kenangan*, 110.
24. Farish Noor, *Annexe Lectures Vol. 1*, 188; Ibrahim Haji Yaacob, *Nusa dan Bangsa Melayu*, 59–60.

25. Roff, *Origins of Malay Nationalism*, 117.
26. Bachtiar Djamily, *Ibrahim Yaacob*.
27. Cheah Boon Kheng, ed., *From PKI to the Comintern*, 21.
28. Shiraishi, *An Age in Motion*.
29. Tan Malaka, *From Jail to Jail*. See also Zulhasril Nasir, *Tan Malaka*, and Ahmat Adam, *Melayu*, 58–60.
30. Mustapha Hussain, *Malay Nationalism before UMNO*, 130–132.
31. Syed Husin Ali, "Sedikit Mengenai Pengaruh Indonesia," 55.
32. Some of these "coffee shop" discussions about the backwardness of the Malays were published in mainstream newspapers. See, for example, *The Straits Times*, 21 May 1933, and 13 June 1936.
33. Silawatan (Ibrahim Haji Yaccob), "Wakil-wakil Melayu," *Majlis*, 18 June 1937.
34. Mustapha Hussain, *Malay Nationalism before UMNO*, 113.
35. *Majalah Guru*, January 1935.
36. Ibrahim Haji Yaacob, *Nusa dan Bangsa Melayu*, 59.
37. Rustam Sani, *Social Roots of the Malay Left*, 64.
38. *Majlis*, 1 December 1932.
39. Wilkinson, ed., *Papers on Malay Subjects*.
40. Abdul Hadi Haji Hassan, *Sejarah Alam Melayu*.
41. Ahmat Adam, *Melayu*, 58.
42. Camilleri, *Civilization in Crisis*, 184.
43. Radin Soenarno, "Malay Nationalism 1896–1941," 11.
44. Abdullah C. D., *Memoir Abdullah C. D.*, 18.
45. Khoo Kay Kim, "Political Extremism in Malaya," 123–125.
46. Zabidin Haji Ismail, *Pemikiran Politik*, 20–22.
47. Khasnor Johan, *Modern Malay Administrative Elite*, 197.
48. Abu Talib Ahmad, *The Malay-Muslims*, 87.
49. Roff, "Persatuan Melayu Selangor," 128.
50. Abdul Rahman Al-Ahmadi, *Abdul Kadir Adabi dan Asaad Shukri*.
51. "Buku Catitan—Peringatan dan Catitan (Pergolakan Politik Tanah Ayer)," SP 84/75, Malaysian National Archives.
52. Abdul Aziz bin Mat Ton, "Gerakan Ansarul Sunnah."
53. "Clementi to Cunliffe-Lister," CO 273/589, 11 January 1933.
54. Mustapha Hussain, *Malay Nationalism before UMNO*, 139.
55. Ibrahim Haji Yaacob, *Melihat Tanah Ayer*, 14.
56. Chua Ai Lin, "The Modern Magic Carpet."
57. Williams, *Keywords*, 15.
58. Abdul Majid Zainuddin, *The Malays in Malaya*, 90–94; *Wandering Thoughts*, 159–160. See also Milner, *Invention of Politics*, 106.
59. Winichakul, *Siam Mapped*, 135.
60. Ibrahim Haji Yaacob, *Melihat Tanah Ayer*, 65.
61. *Al-Ikhwan*, November 1926.
62. *Utusan Zaman*, 17 September 1940.
63. Ibrahim Haji Yaacob, *Melihat Tanah Ayer*, 12–18.
64. Ishak Haji Muhammad, *Pengalaman Pak Sako Tiga Tahun di Singapura*, 24–31.
65. *Warta Ahad*, 7 December 1941.
66. *Utusan Zaman*, 31 August 1940.

67. See Hashim Awang, *Cerpen-cerpen Melayu*.

68. "Security Intelligence for Planning Section Proforma 'A' Strategical: Penang and Province Wellesley, April 1945," RG226 21417, 4, United States National Archives and Records Administration (NARA).

69. "Minute, Monson to Keating, December 1941," CO 273/671/50790/43.

Chapter Three

1. "Churchill to First Lord and First Sea Lord, 22 November 1940," CAB 84/24.

2. Jackson, *The British Empire*, 406.

3. Fusayama, *Memoir of Takao Fusayama*, 13.

4. Mustapha Hussain, *Malay Nationalism before UMNO*, 174–175. See also Iwaichi, *Japanese Army Intelligence Operations*, 99.

5. Abu Talib Ahmad, *The Malay-Muslims*, 31.

6. Des Alwi, *Friends and Exiles*, 72.

7. Ooi Keat Gin, ed., *Japanese Empire in the Tropics*, 30. See also Abdullah Hussain, *Terjebak*, 18.

8. Li Chuan Siu, *Modern Malay Literature, 1942–1945*, 19.

9. Abdullah Hussain, *Terjebak*, 239.

10. Cheah Boon Kheng, *Red Star over Malaya*, 104, and Halinah Bamadhaj, "Impact of the Japanese Occupation."

11. Mustapha Hussain, *Malay Nationalism before UMNO*, 207.

12. Abdul Aziz Zakaria, *British, Japanese and Independent Malaysia*, 12.

13. Ahmad Murah Nasaruddin, *Nyawa di Hujung Pedang*.

14. Ibrahim Chik, *Memoir Ibrahim Chik*, 24.

15. Abu Talib Ahmad, *The Malay-Muslims*, 96.

16. Mustapha Hussain, *Malay Nationalism before UMNO*, 226–227.

17. "Detik-detik peristiwa peperangan antara pehak Tentera Jepun dengan tentera British di Malaya, 1941–1942 [Testimony by Shaari bin Muhammad, undated]," SP 89/93, Malaysian National Archives.

18. "Peristiwa Seram [Testimony by Raja (Dato' Sri) Ahmed Hisham, 11 November 1975]," SP 89/4, Malaysian National Archives.

19. "Kepada Sesiapa Yang Berkenaan" [Testimony by Lieutenant Mohd Desa bin H.A. Rashid, 4 January 1978], SP 71/79, Malaysian National Archives.

20. A. Samad Ismail, *Memoir A. Samad Ismail*, 198.

21. Zabidin Haji Ismail, *Memoir Dato' Shaharudin Abdul Rahman*, 71.

22. *Annual Report for Singapore 1946*, 16.

23. Ramlah Adam, *Dato' Onn Ja'afar*, 65–66.

24. "Catatan Peristiwa" [Salahudi bin Abu Bakar, undated], SP 89/95, Malaysian National Archives.

25. Cheah Boon Kheng, *Red Star over Malaya*, 106–108.

26. "Interrogation of Lt. Col. Fujiwara Kikan," WO 203/6314.

27. "Principles Governing the Administration of Occupied Southern Areas, 20 November 1941, Document No. 1," in *Japanese Military Administration*, ed. Benda, Irikura, and Kishi, 2; Elsbree, *Japan's Role in Southeast Asian Nationalist Movements*.

28. Getz, *Subhas Chandra Bose*, 78.

29. Itagaki, "Aspects of the Japanese Policy," 256.

30. Abdul Rahman Al-Ahmadi, "History of Malay Periodicals."

31. *Syonan Shimbun*, 17 November 1943.

32. *Semangat Asia*, February 1943.

33. Ibid., July 1943.

34. Abu Talib Ahmad, "Japanese Policy towards Islam."

35. Lebra, *Japanese-Trained Armies*, 133.

36. *Fajar Asia*, December 1943.

37. "Othman bin Mohd Noor to Mustapha Hussain, 9 November, 1975," SP 89/1221, Malaysian National Archives.

38. Akashi, "The Japanese Occupation of Malaya," 66.

39. Cheah Boon Kheng, *Red Star over Malaya*, 86.

40. Cheah Boon Kheng, "Aspects of the Interregnum," 68.

41. Abdullah C. D., *Memoir Abdullah C. D.*, 24–64; Ibrahim Chik, *Memoir Ibrahim Chik*, 21–23; and Rashid Maidin, *Memoir Rashid Maidin*, 18–22.

42. Cheah Boon Kheng, *Red Star over Malaya*, 72.

43. Lebra, *Japanese-Trained Armies*, 97.

44. Abu Talib Ahmad, "The Malay Community," 45–89.

45. *Syonan Times*, 17 November 1942.

46. Soh, "Literary Activities of Malay Nationalists," 93–106.

47. Arena Wati, *Cherpen Zaman Jepun*, 53.

48. Yahaya Ismail, *Sejarah Sastera Melayu Moden*, 69.

49. Masuri S. N., "Perajurit Negara," *Berita Malai*, 12 September 1944.

50. "Interview notes with Thaharuddin Ahmad, undated," SP 84/34, Malaysian National Archives.

51. Thaharuddin Ahmad, *Semangat Asia*, Volume 4, April 1943.

52. Abdul Samad Ismail and Nigel Phillips, "Two Stories by A. Samad Ismail."

53. *Semangat Asia*, Issue 2, February 1944.

54. Ibid., Issue 3, March 1944.

55. Akashi, "Japanese Research Activities," 166–168.

56. Mustapha Hussain, *Malay Nationalism before UMNO*, 273–280.

57. Abdul Malek Haji Md. Hanafiah, "Sejarah Perjuangan," 326.

Chapter Four

1. Benedict Anderson first coined this term in his classic *Java in a Time of Revolution*.

2. Ahmad Boestamam, *Memoir Ahmad Boestamam*, 115.

3. Mustapha Hussain, *Memoirs of Mustapha Hussain*, 322.

4. A. Samad Ismail, *Memoir A. Samad Ismail*, 149.

5. Ahmat Adam, "Partai Kebangsaan Melayu Malaya."

6. Ishak Haji Muhammad, *Memoir Pak Sako*, 187.

7. Abdullah C. D., *Memoir Abdullah C. D.*, 10.

8. UMNO/SG No. 96/1946—Rang Undang-undang 1946, Parti Kebangsaan Melayu Malaya.

9. Ahmat Adam, *Melayu, Nasionalime Radikal*, 171.

10. *Report on the 1947 Census*, 40.

11. Details of communal clashes between Malays and Chinese in the immediate postwar years are found in "Supreme Allied Commander Southeast Asia (Mountbatten Diaries)," WO 172/1784, and "Growth of the Inter-Racial Feeling in Malaya," CO 537/1580.

12. *Pelita Malaya*, 5 March 1946.

13. *Utusan Zaman*, 28 August 1949. For discussions about the many nationalistic poems written during this period by the Malay radicals and other activists, see Kamaruzzaman Abd. Kadir, *Puisi Melayu Moden*, 93.

14. Mustapha Hussain, *Memoirs of Mustapha Hussain*, 336.

15. A special file was created to document developments within the party aside from weekly intelligence reports on the movements of its members. See Malay Nationalist Party, CO 537/4742.

16. "Malayan Security Service, Political Intelligence Journal No. 7/1946," MS Ind Ocn S. 251.

17. "Federation of Malaya Political Report for January 1949," CO 537/4742.

18. Abdul Majid Salleh, *Memoir Abdul Majid Salleh*, 70.

19. A. Samad Ismail, *Memoir A. Samad Ismail*, 186.

20. *Utusan Melayu*, 20 October 1947.

21. All of these newspapers were published by the Kuala Lumpur–based Tai Chong Press, which sympathized with the communist movement.

22. Ahmad Boestamam, *Memoir Ahmad Boestamam*, 126 and 162.

23. Abdul Majid Salleh, *Memoir Abdul Majid Salleh*, 68.

24. *Pelita Malaya*, 4 March 1946.

25. Adnan Hj. Mohd Nawang, "Pelita Malaya," 147.

26. *Suluh Malaya*, 27 April 1946.

27. Ibid., 15 June 1946.

28. Abinales and Amoroso, *State and Society*, 111.

29. Cited in Shiraishi, *An Age in Motion*, 324–325.

30. Reid, "Merdeka," 156.

31. *Pelita Malaya*, 4 March 1946.

32. *Voice of the People*, 16 November 1945.

33. *Pelita Malaya*, 29 March 1946.

34. *Suluh Malaya*, 4 May 1946.

35. *Voice of the People*, 16 November 1945.

36. *Pelita Malaya*, 27 March 1946.

37. *Suluh Malaya*, 15 June 1946.

38. Ibid., 15 June 1946.

39. Kratoska, "The Peripatetic Peasant."

40. *Suluh Malaya*, 18 May 1946.

41. *Voice of the People*, 16 November 1945.

42. *Suara Rakyat*, 25 June 1946.

43. One Malaysian scholar claimed that Malaya was an "intellectual desert" until the 1970s, a view that is far from accurate and is historically misleading. See Alatas, *Intellectuals in Developing Societies*, 7.

44. Harper, *The End of Empire*, 13.

45. Said, *Representations of the Intellectual*, 4.

46. Kamaruddin Jaafar, *Dr. Burhanuddin Al Helmy*. All references to Burhanuddin's ideas in this chapter have been taken from this book. *Perjuangan Kita* was published earlier in the Jawi script. I have crosschecked Kamaruddin's transliterated edition with the original and found them to be similar, although Kamaruddin made many editorial corrections, since the original text was littered with spelling mistakes and missing words. For the original edition, see Burhanuddin Muhammad Nor, *Perjuangan Kita*.

47. I adopted this method of reading Burhanuddin's text, with slight variations, from three intellectual historians: Quentin Skinner, Fazlur Rahman, and Muhsin Mahdi. See Skinner, *Visions of Politics*; Rahman, *Revival and Reform in Islam*; and Muhsin Mahdi, *Ibn Khaldun's Philosophy of History*.

48. Amini Amir Abdullah, "Madrasah al-Mashoor al-Islamiah."

49. Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*.

50. Kamaruddin, *Dr. Burhanuddin Al Helmy*, 48.

51. Jawaharlal Nehru, *The Discovery of India* (New York: John Day, 1946). For a study of emplotment and tropes in historical writing, see Hayden White, *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe*.

52. Kamaruddin, *Dr. Burhanuddin Al Helmy*, 31–47.

53. Ibid., 34.

54. Ahmad Boestamam, *Burhanuddin Al-Helmy*, 7.

55. Sutan Sjahrir, *Perjuangan Kita*, and Rudolf Mrázek, *Sjahrir: Politics and Exile*.

56. Ibrahim Haji Yaacob, *Sekitar Malaya Merdeka*.

57. Kamaruddin, *Dr. Burhanuddin Al Helmy*, 34, 35, and 37.

58. Vladimir Lenin, "Letters from Afar," in *Zizek on Lenin: The 1917 Writings*, ed. Slavoj Zizek (New York: Verso, 2002), 49. Closer to the Malay world, Wan Zawawi Ibrahim depicts colonialism in a way comparable to Burhanuddin's when he writes: "Similar to other colonial expansions, the extension of formal British political control into Malaysia (then Malaya or what is now Peninsular Malaysia/West Malaysia) in the 19th century was spurred by its need to consolidate the raw materials (initially tin, and later rubber), required for industrial capitalism at home. The state (i.e. the colonial state) at this time became purely an instrument of colonial capitalism." See Wan Zawawi Ibrahim, "Globalization and National Identity," 120.

59. Kamaruddin, *Dr. Burhanuddin Al Helmy*, 34, 35, and 48.

60. Ibid., 34 and 35.

61. Ibid., 38.

62. Ibid., 34 and 35.

63. Ibid., 52.

64. Chatterjee, *Nationalist Thought*, 36–53.

65. Kamaruddin, *Dr. Burhanuddin Al Helmy*, 36.

66. Ibid., 34.

67. Ibid., 37.

68. Ibid., 34.

69. Alatas, *Myth of the Lazy Native*.

70. Kamaruddin, *Dr. Burhanuddin Al Helmy*, 37–38.

71. Césaire, *Discourse on Colonialism*, 24.

72. Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 129.

73. Kamaruddin, *Dr. Burhanuddin Al Helmy*, 35.

74. Ibid., 35 and 52. This postulation by Burhanuddin has been confirmed by the careful research of John Spores. According to Spores, there were more incidences of amok during the colonial period than in the times that preceded it, due in part to the rapid social, political, and economic changes that served to disrupt and threaten the Malay way of life. See Spores, *Running Amok*.

75. Kamaruddin, *Dr. Burhanuddin Al Helmy*, 41 and 43.

76. Ahmad Boestamam, *Merintis Jalan ke Puncak*, 55 and 187.

77. "Activities of the Organisation known as A. P. I.," CO 537/2151.

78. Bayly and Harper, *Forgotten Wars*, 123.

79. Abdul Majid Salleh, *Memoir Abdul Majid Salleh*, 40.

80. *Pelita Malaya,* 25 April 1946.

81. Ibid., 3 April 1946.

Chapter Five

1. For a serious and comprehensive study of Malay radicalism in Perak, see Ishak Saat, *Radikalisme Melayu Perak*.

2. For details of Abu Bakar's support for the Muslim and radicalist movement in the postwar period, see Nabir Haji Abdullah, "Ustaz Abu Bakar al-Baqir."

3. Nabir Haji Abdullah, *Maahad Il Ihya Assyariff*, 162.

4. *Utusan Melayu*, 5 May 1947, *Majlis*, 28 May 1947, and "Governor (Malayan Union) to Colonial Office," CO 537/2177.

5. *Majlis*, 7 March 1947.

6. "Riwayat bangun dan jatuhnya Raayat Trading Co Ltd oleh Mohd Isa Sulaiman," SP 89/99, Malaysian National Archives.

7. UMNO/SG 123/1950.

8. *Utusan Melayu*, 24 March 1948.

9. Ibid., 24 April 1948.

10. "Governor (Malayan Union) to Colonial Office," CO 537/2177.

11. *Utusan Melayu*, 25 July 1947.

12. Nabir Abdullah, *Maahad Il Ihya Assyariff*, 141–142.

13. Herbert Feith, *The Decline of Constitutional Democracy*, 151–152.

14. Barbara Andaya, Chie Ikeya, Eric Jones, and Trudy Jacobsen have made similar observations about the gendered (read masculinist) approach to sources in the writing of the history of early modern Southeast Asia. This has brought about the neglect of the vital contributions of women at all levels of society in the making of the region. See Andaya, *The Flaming Womb*; Ikeya, *Refiguring Women*; Jones, *Wives, Slaves, and Concubines*; and Jacobsen, *Lost Goddesses*.

15. Manderson, *Women, Politics and Change*; and Dancz, *Women and Party Politics*.

16. Comaroff and Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution*, 22.

17. Firth, *Housekeeping Among Malay Peasants*, 190; Caroline Rose Gerhold, "Educational Opportunity for Women," 48.

18. *A Report on the 1947 Census*; Superintendent of Census, *Population Census 1957*.

19. Cooper, "Urbanization in Malaya," 122; and Hirschman, "Demographic Trends," 118–120.

20. Stivens, "Religion, Nation and Mother-love."

21. *The Straits Times*, 25 May 1946.

22. *Parliamentary Debates (Hansard)*, 9 July 1946, vol. 425, 237–352.

23. *Malay Peasant*, 102–106.

24. Ibid.

25. Jayawardena, *Feminism and Nationalism*, 9.

26. Roff, "Review of Government and Politics," 928.

27. Pannu, "Production and Transmission of Knowledge"; Shamsul A. B., "A History of an Identity"; Wieringa, "Introduction," 17. Some parallels can be drawn with the case of the British and the Bengalis in India. See, for example, Sinha, *Colonial Masculinity*.

28. *Report on the 1947 Census*, 59.

29. Cheah Boon Kheng, *Red Star over Malaya*, 298.

30. Connell, "Globalization, Imperialism and Masculinities," 76.

31. Blackburn, *Women and the State*, 68.

32. Ahmad Boestamam, *Memoir Ahmad Boestamam*, 167.

33. These two groups were led by Aziz Ishak and A. Samad Ismail.

34. See Ileto, *Pasyon and Revolution*.

35. *Suluh Malaya*, 25 May 1946.

36. "Malayan Security Service, Political Intelligence Journal, No. 16/1946," MS Ind Ocn S. 251.

37. Ibrahim Chik, *Memoir Ibrahim Chik*, 64.

38. Muhammad Ikmal Said, "Ethnic Perspectives of the Left."

39. Halinah Bamadhaj, "Impact of the Japanese Occupation," 39; Paul H. Kratoska, *Japanese Occupation of Malaya*, 107, 179, 189, and 282; Makmor Tumin, *Wanita di Malaysia*, 11.

40. This quote is my own translation from the Malay text. See Aishah Ghani, *Memoir Seorang Pejuang*, 16–17.

41. "AWAS Members Marching after a Congress Held in Malacca on 22 December 1946," Arkib Negara Malaysia, Accession number: 2007–0025818.

42. "Malayan Security Service, Political Intelligence Journal, No. 16/1946," MS Ind Ocn S. 251.

43. Harper, *End of Empire*; Ramlah Adam, *Gerakan Radikalisme di Malaysia*, 226; and Ahmad Fauzi Abdul Hamid, "Malay Anti-Colonialism," 388.

44. One of the high-profile personalities whom British intelligence sought to recruit, albeit to no avail, was none other than the leader of the API, Ahmad Boestamam. See Leon Comber, *Malaya's Secret Police*, 25–58, for lucid details on the workings of British Intelligence in Malaya.

45. "Malayan Security Service, Political Intelligence Journal, No. 15/1946," MS Ind Ocn S. 251.

46. "Malayan Security Service, Political Intelligence Journal, No. 7/1946," MS Ind Ocn S. 251.

47. Abdullah C. D., *Memoir Abdullah C. D.*, 227.

48. Milner, *The Malays*, 75–144.

49. Aishah Ghani, *Memoir Seorang Pejuang*, 32.

50. Khoo, *Life as the River Flows*, 12.

51. Chin, *The Communist Party of Malaya*, 34.

52. Shamsiah Fakeh, *Memoir Shamsiah Fakeh*, 18–45.

53. Khoo, *Life as the River Flows*, 36.
54. *The Singapore Free Press*, 27 October 1947.
55. Jones, "Trends in Marriage."
56. Mohd Fo'ad Sakdan, *Pengetahuan Asas Politik Malaysia*, 9.
57. Joel S. Kahn, *Other Malays*, 30.
58. Ibrahim Chik, *Memoir Ibrahim Chik*, 37.
59. *Dewan Masyarakat* 29, no. 3 (1991): 27.
60. Crinis, "Women and Work," 35–41.
61. Khoo, *Life as the River Flows*, 208.
62. Mahani Musa, "Women in the Malayan Communist Party," 228.
63. *The Singapore Free Press*, 4 December 1947.
64. Ibid., and *Utusan Melayu*, 4 December 1947.
65. "Malayan Security Service, Political Intelligence Journal, No. 16/1946," MS Ind Ocn S. 251.
66. Bayly and Harper, *Forgotten Wars*, 352.
67. "Angkatan Pemuda Insaf, 24 July 1947," CO 537/2151.
68. "Malayan Security Service, Political Intelligence Journal No. 2/1948," MS Ind Ocn S. 251.
69. Stockwell, *British Policy and Malay Politics*, 142.
70. Manderson, "Shaping of the Kaum Ibu," 220.
71. Ahmad Boestamam, *Carving the Path*, 61–62.
72. "Malayan Security Service, Political Intelligence Journal No. 18/1947," MS Ind Ocn S. 251; *Malayan Tribune*, 26 July 1948; and Kahin, *Rebellion to Integration*, 40–41.
73. "Malayan Security Service, Political Intelligence Journal No. 18/1947," MS Ind Ocn S. 251.
74. James Ongkili, *Nation-building in Malaysia*, 62.
75. Connell and Messerschmidt, "Hegemonic Masculinity," 853.
76. See, for example, Alatas, *Myth of the Lazy Native*.
77. "Malayan Union Secret Despatch No. 29, 1 July 1947," CO537/2151.
78. "Angkatan Pemuda Insaf, 24 July 1947," CO 537/2151; "Malayan Security Service, Political Intelligence Journal No. 10/1948," MS Ind Ocn S. 251.
79. "Malayan Security Service, Political Intelligence Journal No. 20/1947," MS Ind Ocn S. 251.
80. "Malayan Security Service, Political Intelligence Journal No. 2/1948," MS Ind Ocn S. 251.
81. "Malayan Security Service, Political Intelligence Journal No. 4/1948," MS Ind Ocn S. 251.
82. "Malayan Security Service, Political Intelligence Journal No. 1/1948," MS Ind Ocn S. 251; "Malayan Security Service, Political Intelligence Journal No. 2/1948," MS Ind Ocn S. 251; and "Malayan Security Service, Political Intelligence Journal No. 4/1948," MS Ind Ocn S. 251.
83. "Malayan Security Service, Political Intelligence Journal No. 1/1948," MS Ind Ocn S. 251.
84. "Malayan Security Service, Political Intelligence Journal No. 10/1948," MS Ind Ocn S. 251.
85. Lanzona, *Amazons of the Huk Rebellion*, 12.

86. Rashid Maidin, *Memoir Rashid Maidin*, 37; Ibrahim Chik, *Memoir Ibrahim Chik*, 68.
87. "Malayan Security Service, Political Intelligence Journal No. 7/1948," MS Ind Ocn S. 251.
88. "Malayan Security Service, Political Intelligence Journal No. 10/1948," MS Ind Ocn S. 251.
89. "Malayan Security Service, Political Intelligence Journal No. 15/1948," MS Ind Ocn S. 251.
90. Andaya and Andaya, *History of Malaysia*, 271.
91. Hack, "Long March to Peace," 195.
92. *Utusan Melayu*, 23 September 1952.

Chapter Six

1. Shamsiah Fakeh, *Memoir Shamsiah Fakeh*, 16.
2. Abdullah C. D., Rashid Maidin, and Abu Samah, *Islam Melayu Komunis*, 100.
3. *Utusan Melayu*, 1 August 1951.
4. "Extract from Pan-Malayan Review, No. 8 dated 14th April, 1949," CO 537/4742.
5. "Extract from Pan-Malayan Review, No. 12 dated 27/12/1950," CO 537/7302.
6. "Political Summary August 1950—Part III—Colonial Territories—Federation of Malaya," CO 537/6087.
7. "The Westerling Case: Extradition Treaty of 1898 with the Netherlands; possible surrender of Capt. Westerling to Indonesia from Singapore," FO 371/83778.
8. "Transmitting the General Conditions Report for the Singapore and Kuala Lumpur Consular Districts for the Period August 1–15, 1950, 24 August 1950," RG 59, 797.00/8–2450, National Archives, College Park, Maryland (NACPM); and "William A. Langdon (American Consul General in Singapore) to Department of State, 15 December 1950," RG 59, 746F.00/12–1550, NACPM.
9. For a more comprehensive study of the riots, see my book *Colonialism, Violence and Muslims*.
10. Firdaus Abdullah, *Radical Malay Politics*, 117–118.
11. *Antara*, 13 December 1950, and "Riot Enquiry Commission, Singapore, Summary of the Principal Incidents, as Assistant Superintendent of Police, 11–13 Dec 1950, with 86 photographs," Andrew Howat Frew Papers.
12. A longish book by Ramlah Adam on Malay radicalism in Malaya makes no mention whatsoever of the prison experiences of these activists. See Ramlah Adam, *Gerakan Radikalisme di Malaysia*.
13. Peter Zinoman's sophisticated and pathbreaking book, *The Colonial Bastille*, unravels the ways in which the organization and disorganization of colonial prisons in Vietnam had a profound impact on the growth and expansion of nationalist movements in that country.
14. Erving Goffman made similar observations about changes in emotions and sensibilities in his study of asylums. See *Asylums*, 181.
15. Ahmad Boestamam, *Tujuh Tahun Malam Memanjang*.
16. Cheah Boon Kheng, *The Masked Comrades*, 63. Noel Barber estimated the total number of detainees from 1948 to 1954 to be 29,828. See Barber, *War of the Running Dogs*, 199.

17. Bayly and Harper, *Forgotten Wars*, 434.
18. See *Report on the Prisons*.
19. Hack, "The Malayan Emergency," 404.
20. Mandela, *Long Walk to Freedom*, 173.
21. Ahmad Boestamam, *Memoir Ahmad Boestamam*, 261–262.
22. In Malay: "Sampai mati pun saya tak boleh lupa." Quoted in Ishak Haji Muhammad, *Memoir Pak Sako*, 195.
23. Khatijah Sidek, *Memoir Khatijah Sidek*, 97–98.
24. Abdul Majid Salleh, *Memoir Abdul Majid Salleh*, 145; and Comber, *Malaya's Secret Police*, 34.
25. Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 135–169.
26. Ishak Haji Muhammad, *Memoir Pak Sako*, 197.
27. *Singapore Free Press*, 13 April 1950; *The Straits Times*, 27 July 1958; and A. Samad Ismail, *Memoir A. Samad Ismail*, 176.
28. Rashid Maidin, *Memoir Rashid Maidin*, 39, and Abdul Majid Salleh, *Memoir Abdul Majid Salleh*, 147.
29. A. Samad Ismail, *Memoir A. Samad Ismail*, 175–177.
30. Ishak Haji Muhammad, *Memoir Pak Sako*, 204.
31. "An Uneasy Citizen," *The Straits Times*, 26 September 1950, and "Detention is Abuse of Power," *The Straits Times*, 7 July 1953.
32. *The Straits Times*, 1 October 1950; "Death of Prisoners & Detainees—Report of 1948 & 1949," 1957/0305268, Malaysian National Archives.
33. *The Straits Times*, 10 July 1949, and *Annual Report: Singapore Prisons Department*.
34. *Majalah Penjara*, 1 (1959), 8, and Singh, *Political Prisoners in India*, 162.
35. *Report on the Prisons*, 3.
36. *Annual Reports: Singapore Prisons Department*.
37. Ahmad Boestamam, *Memoir Ahmad Boestamam*, 293.
38. *The Straits Times*, 16 July 1949; Khatijah Sidek, *Memoir Khatijah Sidek*, 103; and Arnold, "The Colonial Prison," 158.
39. "Supplies of cigarettes and other necessities to Malay Detainees in Detention Camp, Seremban," 1957/0297412, Malaysian National Archives; "Haji Said, a detainee in the Detention Camp, Seremban: Arrangement for the supply of biscuit & cigarettes," 1957/0461750, Malaysian National Archives; and Ahmad Boestamam, *Memoir Ahmad Boestamam*, 331.
40. "Malay Rehabilitation Centre for Malay Detainees," CO 1022/151.
41. Brown, "South East Asia," 223.
42. Ishak Haji Muhammad, *Memoir Pak Sako*, 207; and Ahmad Boestamam, *Memoir Ahmad Boestamam*, 325.
43. *Report on the Prisons of the Federation of Malaya 1951 & 1952*, 17.
44. See Michael Salman, "Nothing without Labor: Penology, Discipline and Independence in the Philippines under the United States Rule," 113–132; and Salvatore and Aguirre, eds., *Birth of the Penitentiary*.
45. Ahmad Boestamam, *Memoir Ahmad Boestamam*, 327 and 344.
46. Rashid Maidin, *Memoir Rashid Maidin*, 45; Ahmad Boestamam, *Memoir Ahmad Boestamam*, 305; and Ishak Haji Muhammad, *Memoir Pak Sako*, 212.
47. Ahmad Boestamam, *Memoir Ahmad Boestamam*, 308–309 and 323.
48. "Sufferings of Malay detainees," 1957/0299178, Malaysian National Archives; Abdul Majid Salleh, *Memoir Abdul Majid Salleh*, 147.

49. "Detainees' Advisory Committee," 1957/0473507, Malaysian National Archives.
50. *Singapore Free Press*, 23 November 1949.
51. *The Straits Times*, 14 June 1955.
52. A. Samad Ismail, *Memoir A. Samad Ismail*, 159; Ishak Haji Muhammad, *Memoir Pak Sako*, 208; and *Annual Report: Singapore Prisons Department, 1956* (Singapore: Government Printing Office, 1957), 4.
53. *Report on the Prisons of the Federation of Malaya 1953 & 1954*, 60. On 20 January 1956, for example, a riot broke out in the Seremban prison that left three prison officials severely injured. *Singapore Free Press*, 20 January 1956.
54. Buntman, *Robben Island*, 4–5.
55. *Report on the Prisons of the Federation of Malaya 1953 & 1954*, 62.
56. "Three Fail in Attempt to Escape," *The Straits Times*, 15 February 1952.
57. Rashid Maidin, *Memoir Rashid Maidin*, 44.
58. Ibid., 48–53.
59. Keris Mas, *30 Tahun Sekitar Sastera*, 131.
60. Ibid., 131. See also ASAS 50, *Memoranda Angkatan Sasterawan 50* (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1961).
61. Abdullah Hussain, *Memoranda Angkatan Sasterawan 50*, 3–53.
62. *Annual Report: Education 1951*, 79.
63. *Utusan Melayu*, 13 August 1954.
64. *Singapore Free Press*, 11 February 1957.
65. Ghazali Shafie, *Ghazali Shafie's Memoir*, 16.

Conclusion

1. Sukarno, "Sukarno Speaks at Bandung, 1955," 351.
2. The best and most detailed analysis of the Bandung Conference is found in Kahin, *The Asian-African Conference*.
3. Means, *Malaysian Politics*, 155.
4. "Kongres Pemuda Melayu Se Malaya, 8–10 April 1955," 2007/0025717, Malaysian National Archives.
5. Khong Kim Hoong, *Merdeka!*, 195.
6. *Utusan Melayu*, 5 May 1955.
7. Ibid., 29 June 1955.
8. Syed Husin Ali, *The Malays: Their Problems and Future*, 23.
9. "Per. Dr. Burhanuddin Al-Helmi: Pelopor Kebangkitan Semangat oleh Alias Hj. Zaidi," SP 89/86, Malaysian National Archives.
10. Farish Noor, *The Annexe Lectures*, 226–227.
11. *The Straits Times*, 18 February 1957 and 12 March 1957.
12. *Utusan Melayu*, 29 March 1957.
13. *The Straits Times*, 14 May 1957.
14. *The Singapore Free Press*, 31 August 1957.
15. The most comprehensive works on PAS are by Clive Kessler and Farish Noor. See Kessler, *Islam and Politics*, and Farish Noor, *Islam Embedded*.
16. Said Zahari, *Dark Clouds at Dawn*.
17. Ramlah Adam, *Gerakan Radikalisme di Malaysia*, and Mohamed Noordin, *Malayan Union to Singapore Separation*.

18. Roff, *The Origins of Malay Nationalism,* 224–225, and Firdaus Abdullah, *Radical Malay Politics.*

19. Means, *Malaysian Politics*, 88; Stockwell, *British Policy and Malay Politics*, 129–145; Cheah Boon Kheng, *Red Star over Malaya*, 101–123; and Khong Kim Hoong, *Merdeka*, 23. An exception to this rule is Rustam Sani, who gives primacy to endogenous factors, which gave rise to what he calls the "Malay left." Rustam, however, ignores the role of global contexts in shaping the radicalist program of action. See Rustam Sani, *Social Roots of the Malay Left.*

20. Alatas, *Intellectuals in Developing Societies*, 7.

21. Muhaimin Sulam has compiled the debates over Mat Indera in a well-researched book. See *Mat Indera.*

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CO 717 Colonial Office: Federated Malay States: Original Correspondence, 1945–1951.
CO 1022 Colonial Office: South East Asia Department: Original Correspondence, 1950–1952.
FO 371 Foreign Office: Political Departments: General Correspondence, 1948–1955.
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"A study of debate, mobilizing concepts, disappointment, and ideological residue—a fresh analysis of Malay radicalism, written with passion and style, that will give a boost to the 'history of ideas' in Southeast Asia."

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"The story of the Malay radicals has never been told so fully and so vividly; the author has pieced together a fascinating history which he tells with considerable compassion. Though the history of the Malay radicals may, as the author suggests, be seen as a history of losers, if we never know about those who lost, we may never have a proper appreciation of those who won. . . . The prose is exceedingly readable (and often almost lyrical)."

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Radicals tells the story of a group of radical Malay men and women who chose to oppose foreign rule of their homeland, knowing full well that by doing so, they risked imprisonment or death. They formed, led, and contributed to the founding of political parties, grassroots organizations, unions, publications, and schools that spread their ideas across the country in the aftermath of the Great Depression, when colonialism was at its height and evident in all areas of life in their country. But when their efforts to uproot foreign dominance faltered in the face of state-imposed sanctions, some of these radicals chose to take up arms, while others engaged in aggressive protests and acts of civil disobedience to uphold their rights. Some died fighting and hundreds were incarcerated, yet many lived to resist colonialism until their country attained its independence in August 1957.

Syed Muhd Khairudin Aljunied's innovative study brings to light the less charted and unanalyzed terrain of the radical experience—becoming and being radical. He argues that the experiences and histories of radicals in colonial Malaya can be elucidated in a more nuanced way, by interrogating them alongside evolving local and global circumstances and by analyzing them through the lenses of overarching and interconnected mobilizing concepts—a set of ideas, visions, and notions that the radicals used to reason and justify their advent and to sustain their activism. These concepts were al their weapons and armor, employed to organize, strategize, protect, and consolidate themselves when menaced by the tentacles of the colonial state as they embarked upon the agonizing path towards independence.

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ISBN 978-0-87580-492-7 | $35.00

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Southeast Asian Studies