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DARULAMAN

Perpustakaan Negara
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Asmah Haji Omar

DENGAN INGATAN IKHLAS

daripada PROFESSOR DATO HAJAH ASMAM HAJI OMAR

TIMBALAN NAIB-CANSELOR

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DARULAMAN

Essays on Linguistic, Cultural
and Socio-Economic Aspects
of the Malaysian State of Kedah

edited by
Asmah Haji Omar

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1979

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"Buku ini diterbitkan dengan sumbangan dari Persatuan Sejarah Malaysia Cawangan Kedah".

Semua hak terpelihara. Sebarang bahagian dalam buku ini tidak boleh diterbitkan semula, disimpan dalam cara yang boleh dipergunakan lagi, atau pun dipindahkan dalam sebarang bentuk atau dengan sebarang cara, baik dengan cara elektronik, mekanikal, penggambaran semula, perakaunan ataupun sebaliknya, tanpa izin terlebih dahulu dari Penerbit.

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*Darulaman,
putera bumi merakamkan
seberkas bunga kebenaran
yang mengukir perjalanan waktu
kata-kata dan budaya tersembunyi;
untuk kembali mengenal
hari-hari lewat yang perkasa
dan, namamu abadi.*

Yahya Hussin

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Preface

This book presents studies on Kedah conducted by specialists working on the area. The contents are multidisciplinary showing that the state has been a fruitful area of research for scholars of various types of academic skill and background.

The publication of this volume is most timely as Kedah is undergoing changes and developments not only in the socio-economic but in the cultural aspects as well.

This is due to the development programmes aimed to improve the lot of the Kedah people which may at the same time affect certain facets of their cultural life.

This volume should prove useful as a source of information on the life of the people of Kedah. It also provides facts which may be utilized in the planning of future cultural and socio-economic programmes for Kedah.

It gives me great pleasure to write this preface. I would also like to thank Persatuan Sejarah Malaysia Cawangan Kedah whose generosity has made this publication possible.

Dato' Seri Syed Nahar Shahabuddin
SSDK., DPMK., KMN.
MENTERI BESAR,
KEDAH.

Introduction

At its conception this volume appeared to have more material than the present one and these were to be divided into language, literature, culture and the socio-economic and political aspects of the State. Specialists in these fields and on various aspects of Kedah were invited to contribute.

Although not all the articles promised were delivered, those that finally came in proved to be very interesting with newly discovered facts as well as the application of new approaches to the subjects concerned. At the same time the bulk of the articles put together are sufficient material for a book.

Most of the fields which were proposed in the original planning of the book are represented in this volume except for literature and traditional technology. Further projects on Kedah should be able to take up these two fields for research.

The publication of this book by the University of Malaya Press has been made possible with the support of the Kedah Branch of the Malaysian Historical Society. Without the generosity of the Society, it is doubtful whether this volume can be published at this early date. As compiler and editor of this volume, I wish to record my gratitude to the Society for its assistance. I am also indebted to Dato' Seri Syed Nahar Shahabuddin, Menteri Besar, Kedah, for his moral support in making this publication possible.

Asmah Haji Omar
Editor

The Kedah Dialect: Its Distribution, Development and Role in the Kedah Speech Community

Asmah Haji Omar

Historical Background and Geographical Distribution

Like any other natural language the Malay language is characterized by dialects or, more specifically, varieties pertaining to particular regions. It is easy to notice the change which flows smoothly from one linguistic characteristic to another as one moves from one region to the next or at times even from district to district.

Quite often a dialect area coincides with a particular area of administration, or state, and hence it is not surprising that to Malaysians in general, there is the conception that each state has its own dialect which is distinct from that of any other state. As such, laymen always talk in terms of the Kedah dialect, the Penang dialect, the Perak dialect, the Kuala Lumpur dialect, the Johor dialect and so on. Such partitionings of dialects do not coincide with the isoglosses that linguists may eventually map out, which will show that several of the layman's "dialects" are in fact a conglomeration of a particular dialect, and vice versa.

My own study of the peninsular Malay dialects has induced me to divide these dialects into four groups:—¹

- (i) The North-Western group, viz. the Kedah-Perlis-Penang group which also covers North Perak.
- (ii) The North-Eastern group, viz. the Kelantan dialect.
- (iii) The Eastern group, viz. the Trengganu dialect.
- (iv) The Southern group, covering Johore, Melaka, Pahang, Selangor and Perak (Central and Southern).

I have not placed the Negeri Sembilan dialect in any of the four groups above, because this dialect seems to be characterized by an amalgamation of features of groups (i), (ii) and (iv), although in its geographical setting this group is enclosed in that of group (iv). This can be explained by the fact that the Negeri Sembilan dialect is immigrant to the peninsula. This dialect originated from Minangkabau in Sumatra and was brought by people of that area as indicated in the history of Negeri Sembilan itself. With the passage of time, this dialect had been able to supersede the local dialect that was in existence at the time of the arrival of the Sumatrans. As language or dialect distribution over a geographical area always occurs in a continuum unless interrupted by topographical features and natural happenings such as great floods and landslides which render communication impossible, it can be deduced that before the advent of the Minangkabau immigrants, the dialect spoken by the native Malays of Negeri Sembilan was a member of group (iv).

From this it can be seen that what are generally termed the Perlis, Kedah and Penang dialects, in fact, on the basis of the linguistic characteristics that they bear, are one single dialect. The phonological system of the Kedah dialect in general is closely

¹ Cf. Asmah Haji Omar, *The Phonological Diversity of the Malay Dialects*, Penerbitan Ilmiah No. 2, Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 1977, pp. 24–25.

affiliated to that of Penang as evidenced by the various studies made of the Malay language of Kedah and Penang, e.g. Noor Ein bt. Mohamad Noor's *Fonoloji Loghat Pulau Pinang* (1968), Abdullah Hassan's *Perbandingan Antara Dialek Kedah Dengan Dialek Perak* (1966), and Shuib Ismail's *Dialek Kedah Pesisiran: Satu Kumpulan Teks Serta Pembicaraan Linguistik* (1970/1971). There has not yet been any serious study on the Malay language of Perlis, but one does not have to wait for such a study to confirm the similarities existing between the so-called Perlis variety and that spoken by the Kedah people.

Likewise, the grammatical characteristics of these two varieties bear such close resemblances that there is no denying that these two "varieties" are truly one common variety. Attestations to this claim can be found by comparing the following studies: Noor Ein Mohamad Noor's *Morfologi Dialek Pulau Pinang* (1973), Ton binti Ibrahim's, *Morfologi Dialek Kedah* (1974) and Shuib Ismail's *Dialek Kedah Pesisiran etc* (1970/1971).

To serve the academic purpose, the Malay language of group (i) in my classification, can be termed *Kedah dialect*. The choice of this nomenclature has justifications which are geographical (or spatial) and historical in nature. From geographical or spatial considerations, the political-cum-administrative entity known as Kedah spreads over a larger expanse of space compared to Perlis or Penang or the two put together.

Linked to this geographical or spatial factor, evidence from history has shown that Perlis and Penang were once part of the Kingdom of Kedah. The Penang Island was leased to the English East India Company in 1786 while Seberang Prai, the mainland opposite the Island, underwent a similar fate a few years later.

Seberang Prai was defined in the treaty of 1800 between the Sultan of Kedah and Sir George Liest, the Lieutenant Governor of Penang, as that part of land on the Southern coast of Kedah between Kuala Sungai Muda and the bank of Sungai Krian. "... uleh kerja-an Kedah bri kepada East India Company tanah di-tepi laut Kedah sebelah selatan yaitu Seberang Prye antara tebing Sungai Kuala Muda dan tebing Sungai Krain ..."²

As for Perlis, it was a district of Kedah administered by a prince of the Kedah royal household until 1821, when Siam conquered Kedah and gave Perlis to Syed Hussin Jamalulil to rule over it, independent of the state of Kedah.³

As implied earlier, the bounds of language or dialect spread do not necessarily coincide with political or administrative boundaries. This rule also applies to the Kedah (encompassing Perlis and Penang) dialect which seems to spill over the Kedah-Perak boundary and the Malaysia-Thai international border. Explanations for this phenomenon can be obtained from the universal feature of dialect continuity over space as previously mentioned, as well as from historical happenings.

The *Salasilah Kedah* has recorded that Setol or Satul or Satun which now belongs to Thailand was once part of Kedah; so also the islands of the west coast of Southern Thailand. This district was taken forever from the Kedah Sultanate at the same time when Perlis became a state with its own ruler, and the party instrumental in this was Thailand.

² Cf. *Salasilah Atau Tarekh Kerja-an Kedah*, p. 7.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

"Adalah asal parenta-han Negeri Kedah ter-masok sekali Negeri Perlis Negeri Setul dan Pulau-Pulau sampai di perenggan Negeri. Ketika Siam sudah tawan Negeri itu dipecahkan jadi 4 bahagian. Negeri Setul di-beri kepada Tenku Bisnu menjadi Raja perenta-han yang asing-asing dan Negeri Perlis di-beri kepada Syed Hussin Jamalulil menjadi Raja dengan perentah-nya yang asing . . ."⁴

The relationship between the people of Kedah and Perak was more of the type which resulted from a two-way migration. This phenomenon can take place anywhere particularly between the people who settle on both sides of a political boundary. An influence of a linguistic nature by one speech community over that of the other may not be confined to one which is peaceful in nature, projected by friendly relationship and business transactions, but may also take its form as a result of war. War-time contacts between different speech communities may lead to friendly relations as well as marital bonds once fighting is over.

The histories of the states of Kedah and Perak relate the fact that in early nineteenth century, Kedah was twice compelled by the King of Siam to wage war on Perak, and that was in 1813 and 1818.⁵ The Kedah army overran the northern part of Perak bordering Kedah and went as far as Kota Lama Kiri, near the present-day Kuala Kangsar. Once peace became the order of the day, the Kedah people, specifically the army personnels, entered into matrimonial contracts with the women of Perak. Among those involved were the Kedah Minister of State and a member of the royal family known as Tengku Akil (Tengku Ya'akub), both of whom married Perak high-born ladies.⁶ Hence, it is no surprise to one who is acquainted with the social and political history of Kedah to accost affinities in the language varieties spoken in Kedah and Perak (from the border southward to Kuala Kangsar).

Contact between the present-day Kedah dialect area and the Malay dialect areas of Southern Thailand and Northern Perak can be traced to a period much earlier than the nineteenth century. The *Hikayat Merong Mahawangsa* which narrates the history of the founding of Kedah by Merong Mahawangsa up to the arrival of Islam (though shrouded in mythical details) provides an interesting episode on the annexation of places around Kedah which to the eyes of the comparative linguist are no other than subregions of the Kedah dialect. It tells how the son of Merong Mahawangsa, Raja Merong Mahapudisat, sent his children in search of new lands. One of the princes went north and founded a state known as Siam Lancang, probably the present-day Southern Thailand. Another went south-east (from Kuala Muda, the seat of royal power of that time) and pulled his silver arrow which landed in a place which was to become his colony. This place which he named *Perak* (silver), after his silver arrow, was probably the land covering Southern Kedah and Northern Perak. A daughter was seated on an elephant to wander around looking for rich lands to build a country. The elephant wandered at will eastward and arrived at a place now known as Petani.⁷

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Ibid* p. 8. See also Haji Buyong Adil, *Sejarah Perak*, Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 1972, p. 43.

⁶ Haji Buyong Adil, *Ibid.* p. 43-44.

⁷ Cf. Siti Hawa Saleh, *Hikayat Merong Mahawangsa*, University of Malaya Press, 1970, pp. 37-40. See also *Hikayat Merong Mahawangsa*, Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 1968, pp. 48-52.

The Malay language of Patani and that of Satun has encountered different types of fate. That of Patani seems to have thrived better than that of Satun as the Malays of Patani, viz. the area on the eastern side of the peninsula in southernmost Thailand, continue with using the language as a form of intergroup communication in day-to-day affairs. On the other hand, the Malays of Satun have abandoned their language for Thai. Christopher Court, a linguist working on the Thai language in the Southern Provinces of Thailand, has this to say.

"... the Malays on the western side, in Satun province, opposite the Malaysian state of Perlis, have largely abandoned the use of Malay as an active medium of communication and adopted Southern Thai instead. This has happened in spite of the fact that they constitute 85% of the population".⁸

According to Christopher Court, Satun Malay is a Malay dialect not very different from the dialects of Perlis and Kedah. This is of course further confirmation of the fact that the Kedah dialect area originally encompassed the Satun province as well, although the dialect in this province has now been overlaid by Thai elements.

The truth of the founding of Patani by a member of the Kedah royal household as told in *Hikayat Merong Mahawangsa* is yet to be verified and this is not the only tale of the origin of Patani. The *Patani Annals* or *Hikayat Patani* tells of the founding of the place by a king of Kota Maligai on meeting a man by the name of Encik Tani or Pak Tani.⁹

Whatever the origin of the place was, there remains the fact that the Patani dialect shares features which are also common to varieties spoken in certain parts of Kedah. This may not be due to any familial relationship between its early speakers or to any history of political conquest but, as said earlier, it could be due to the continuity of the geographical spread of dialects. The demarcation lines between dialects are fuzzy and they are noticeable due to the weakening of mutual influence and interaction between two different varieties of the same language.

Doubtlessly, the Kedah and Patani dialects have gone separately in their developments but continuous interaction between speakers of these two varieties has been one of the factors which have caused the retention of resemblances shared from the past.¹⁰ Extensive rice-farming in Kedah had, before the introduction of mechanization, brought into the state Patani workers by the thousands every year, particularly during the harvesting season. The possibility for such an interaction may have brought about not only the reinforcement of features already shared but also parallel developments of the systems so as to impress upon the dialects their well-known characteristics of "unity" and "uniformity".¹¹

⁸ Christopher Court, "The Segmental and Suprasegmental Representation of Malay Loanwords in Satun Thai: A Description with Historical Remarks", mimeograph.

⁹ Cf. A. Teeuw and D.K. Wyatt, *Hikayat Patani: The Story of Patani*, Bibliotheca Indonesia, Koninklijk Instituut Voor Taal-Land-en-Volkenkunde, 1970 p. 147.

¹⁰ Asmah Haji Omar "Kedah: Aspek Kebudayaannya Seperti Yang Terdapat Dalam Sejarah dan Bahasa", *Dewan Bahasa*, Jilid 22, Bil. 3, Mac 1978 p. 154.

¹¹ See Olga Akhmanova, 'Language' or 'Dialect', in Samir K. Ghosh, *Man, Language and Society*, Janua Lingarum, Mouton, Co. 1972, p. 21.

Apart from the Kedah dialect, there were also other Malay dialects of the peninsula that had been in contact with the Patani dialect and which had to some extent reinforced the retention of shared features and influenced the development of the latter dialect. *The Story of Patani* has recorded close relationship which included matrimonial alliances between members of the two royal households in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.¹² In addition to that, close proximity between Patani and Kelantan has been a sure way for the establishment of interaction between speakers of both areas, apart from the fact that there was a Kelantan dynasty in Patani in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.¹³ Linguistic features common to both Kelantan and Patani are within expectation.¹⁴

Subregions of the Kedah Dialect

What is meant by a *dialect area* is a region bound by bundles of isoglosses.¹⁵ This means that if one were to link single features of linguistic similarities (be they phonological, grammatical or lexical) in this region by a line known as isogloss, the result will take the form of isoglosses which run parallel to one another, indicating a "unity" of this region and separating it from another. In reality, not every feature can be mapped out neatly in parallel isoglosses because of diversity in a certain subsystem, but in general it can be said that a dialect area does have certain major characteristics peculiar to the region as a whole, and it is these characteristics that distinguish the dialect of this area from that of another.

A dialect area need not necessarily be uniform throughout. It is impossible to expect a space covering several thousand square miles to show a uniformity at any single level of the language system. There are bound to be differences at a lower level of the system, particularly at the level of phonology, between the speech of one district and that of another. These differences, though minor, serve to distinguish one district of the same region as different from that of another. As such, the dialect area is said to consist of *subregions*. Features which call for the establishment of subregions of the dialect area may have arisen due to developments peculiar to single subregions rather than to the area as a whole. The variety peculiar to a certain subregion is known as *subdialect*.

The subregions of the Kedah dialect area can be posited as follows:

- (i) The plains, running from Perlis in the north to Bandar Baharu in South Kedah, and from the coast towards inland as far east as the towns of Kuala Nerang, Sik and Baling.
- (ii) Pulau Langkawi.
- (iii) Pulau Pinang.
- (iv) The Bandar Baharu — Kuala Kangsar band.
- (v) The border area of the north from Padang Besar, southeastward to the districts of Padang Terap and Sik.

¹² Cf. Teeuw and Wyatt, *op. cit.*, pp. 248–259.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ For samples of Patani words, refer *Pattani Malay Dictionary*, Overseas Missionary Fellowship South Thailand Field, Yala (Thailand), 1962.

¹⁵ Cf. Hockett, *A Course In Modern Linguistics*, The MacMillan Company, 1959, p. 476.

The Plains subdialect comprises what is in general known as the "true" or standard Kedah dialect and this is the variety described by Shuib Ismail, Abdullah Hassan and Ton Ibrahim as mentioned previously. This is the prestige or High variety and is used in its spoken form in formal or public situations by speakers not only of the plains subregion but also of the other subregions. Speakers particularly of subregions (ii), (iv) and (v) have been observed to show great effort to conform to this variety.

The fact that the Plains subdialect has become the H-variety is again due to historical factors. The seats of government and royalty, if they can be equated to the focal areas of culture, had always been in the plains: Kuala Muda, Kuala Nerang, Seputeh, Perlis (even before the partition), Kuala Kedah and Anak Bukit. It goes without saying that the language of administration and high culture was the Plains variety.

As said earlier, the differences between the subdialect are mainly phonological. It is not the purpose of this paper to dwell in the details of the subdialectal differences. However, it is useful to mention here that the Pulau Langkawi subdialect differs slightly from that of the Plains in the nasalization of vowels¹⁶ and a few lexical items.

The Pulau Pinang subdialect especially that located around the Tanjung area is characterized by the presence of the alveolar trill /r/ in the prevocalic and intervocalic positions and this trill occurs in free variation with the uvular/R/ of the other subdialects. The subregion Bandar Baharu-Kuala Kangsar is considered distinct from the others in the sense that it bears, as well, elements from the dialects of other areas of Perak, notably that of Parit. As for subregion (v), it is distinct from the others due to the marked influence it gets from across the Malaysia-Thai border.

Subregion (v) signifies an overlaying of Southern Thai elements, for example, in the phonetic realizations of segmental phonemes. Besides that, it also shows traces of the superimposition of Thai tonal features which may not be functional in Malay either at the word or the phrase level. The variety spoken in this subregion has been erroneously named the Samsam dialect.¹⁷

The term "Samsam" is however misleading when used as a nomenclature for one of the semiotic systems of Kedah. When *Samsam* is used to refer to a person or a group of persons, it denotes a person or group of persons of Malay ethnic origin and Muslim in religion but whose first language is Thai. Corollary to this, the Thai dialect spoken by these people, is the "Samsam language". To these Samsam people, Malay is a second language and the variety they speak, as said earlier, exhibits a marked influence from Thai. The confusion as to the referent of *Samsam* is actually one of an interlingual nature.

In the Baling district, particularly the part bordering Perak and Kelantan, there is a semiotic system which is better known among the Kedah people as *Pelet Patani*, which means a dialect with the Patani accent. A description of this variety has been rendered by Abdul Karim Ismail (see previous footnote) who prefers to call it *Dialek Baling*.

¹⁶See James T. Collins, "Vokal Sengau Dalam Bahasa Melayu Kedah (Langkawi)", *Dewan Bahasa*, Jilid 20, Bilangan 1, Januari 1976, pp. 19-31.

¹⁷See Abdul Karim Ismail, *Dialek Baling: Sifat-sifat Umum Dan Kumpulan Teks*, unpublished academic exercise for the B.A. degree in Malay Studies, Department of Malay Studies, University of Malaya 1971/72, p. 4.

However, the nomenclature *Dialek Baling* can be misleading, because definitely the *Pelet Patani* of Baling is too far apart from the other subdialects of Kedah to merit it the status of a subdialect of the Kedah dialect, and Baling implies that it is part of Kedah. Hence, *Pelet Patani* should stay as it is to avoid further confusion. This Patani dialect has "settled" in the Baling district together with its speakers who came from east of the state in search of a living.

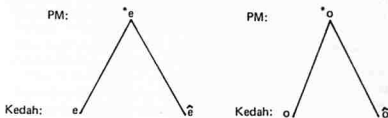
The Development of The Kedah Dialect

The Kedah dialect as the case is with the other Malay dialects of the Peninsula, is a descendent of an older form of Malay which I call Parent Malay (PM).¹⁸ It is very difficult to say when the various Malay dialects split from the parent language, but developments in the Kedah dialect particularly those affecting its phonological system indicate a greater time depth of the PM-Kedah dialect split than that of the PM-Johore dialect split.

By the method of reconstruction, we can see that the Kedah dialect has developed a great deal since it left Parent Malay. The eight-vowel system of the Kedah dialect is a clear attestation to the point made above.

Parent Malay has six vowels and these are *i, *e, *ē, *a, *u, *o. All these vowels are identical with those of the Southern and the Eastern groups of the Peninsula. The Kedah and the Kelantan dialects have eight vowels but the types of vowels of these two groups differ from one another.

The eight vowels of the Kedah dialect are: i, e, ē, ê, a, u, o, ô. Two vowels, the open ê and ô, are not present in the Southern and Eastern groups and neither are they in Parent Malay. They were formed by the splitting of Parent Malay *e and *o as shown below.¹⁹



These splittings indicate processes taking place in the Kedah speech community, which could have been motivated by a necessity for phonemic refinements as the need to comply with conceptual developments arose.

The consonant system of the Kedah dialect has reflected a development quite different from those of the other dialect groups. Whilst the developments of the Southern groups, the Trengganu and Kelantan dialects took the form of phonemic losses, those affecting the Kedah dialect materialized in splits, both allophonic as well as phonemic. That is to say while the other dialects suffered losses of certain phonemes or allophones which they inherited from Parent Malay, the Kedah dialect

¹⁸ See Asmah Haji Omar, *The Phonological Diversity of the Malay Dialects*, p. 26.

¹⁹ See Asmah Haji Omar, *Ibid.* p. 25.

retained not only the phonemic inventory of the Parent dialect but in addition to that, the splits undergone by certain phonemes have resulted in a re-organization of the distribution of the phonemes in the inventory, besides the addition of new variants.²⁰ To substantiate this point, one has to look at the Johor dialect and its co-members of the Southern group which have suffered the loss of the final *-r*. The same phenomenon occurs in the Kelantan dialect, regarding firstly the final *-s* and *-l*, and secondly the final nasals except when preceded by the front vowels *i* and *e*, where only the velar nasal *ŋ* is permitted. Likewise in the Trengganu dialect, the only nasal allowed in the word-final position is *ŋ*, which replaces all other nasals.

In the Kedah dialect *s*, *l* and *R* have different phonetic realizations in the prevocalic and intervocalic positions, as opposed to the final position. This is not a loss-phenomenon but rather one which indicates a splitting at the phonemic and allophonic levels, and hence affecting distributional features of phonemes, different from those of the Parent dialect.

The loss-phenomenon in *l* and *r* in the Kelantan dialect is a factor which has engendered a great number of homonyms in that dialect.

<i>Standard Malay</i>	<i>Kelantan</i>	<i>Kedah</i>
(ter)kapar	kapa	(ter) kapaR
kapal	kapa	kapay
bakar	baka	bakaR
bakal	baka	bakay

Furthermore, the loss-phenomenon on the nasal consonants that has affected the Kelantan and the Trengganu dialects has not affected the Kedah dialect. The following examples may serve to illustrate this point.

<i>Standard Malay/Kedah</i>	<i>Kelantan</i>	<i>Trengganu</i>
panjang	pajē ⁿ	penjang
dalam	dalē ⁿ	dalang
dalang	dalē ⁿ	dalang
malam	malē ⁿ	malang
malang	malē ⁿ	malang

The replacement and loss-phenomena undergone by the various Malay dialects of the peninsula are indicators of the developments undergone by those dialects. We can see that while the southern group was least affected by changes in its phonological system, the Kedah dialect underwent many changes but these changes did not in any way decrease its linguistic efficiency. In this case, the developments in the Kedah dialect differ from those of Kelantan and Trengganu which have allowed the changes in the phonological system to affect their linguistic efficiency.

In a synchronic treatment of the dialect, the phonemes *s* and *l* are said to have distributions in positions before vowels and in between vowels. They cannot occur

²⁰ For a detailed study of this, see Asmah Haji Omar, *op cit.* pp. 26-28.

before silence, viz. at the end of the word. However, in this particular position, each is replaced by another phoneme: *s* by *h* (affecting a diphthongization of the preceding vowel if the vowel is not *i* or *ə*) and *l* by *y*.

Examples:—

Standard Malay	Kedah Dialect
lēpas	lēpayh
tikus	tikuyh
habis	habeh
tēbal	tēbay
bakul	bakoy

In the Kelantan dialect, the words above take the following forms: *lepah*, *tikuh*, *habeh*, *teba* and *bako*, which indicate that with *l*, there is a loss-phenomenon in this dialect, specifically in the word-final position.

As for *r*, which is uvular fricative *R* in the Kedah dialect and a velar fricative in the other dialects, there is a replacement-phenomenon in the former and a loss-phenomenon in the latter, in the final position of the word.

Examples:—

Standard Malay	Kedah Dialect	Others
lapar	lapa <i>R</i>	lapa
tabur	tabô <i>R</i>	tabo
lēndir	lēndia <i>R</i>	lēnde

Diglossia in the Kedah Speech Community

Diglossia, a term popularized by Charles A. Ferguson from the French word *diglossie*, refers to a situation "where two varieties of a language exist side by side throughout the community, with each having a definite role to play".²¹

The Kedah speech community, besides having subregional varieties, is also characterized by social varieties which are defined by their separate roles. These social varieties are the Kedah dialect itself and the Standard Malay language.

Before going further into the Kedah diglossia, it is necessary to clarify here the concept "Standard Malay". In Malaysia as a whole, there are two varieties accepted as standard, and these are the *schwa-variety* and the *A-variety*. There are only two major differences between these two varieties and they are the pronunciation of the orthographic "r" and "a" both in the word-final position. In the *schwa-variety*, "r" is weakened or totally silenced and "a" takes the value of a *schwa*, while in the *A-variety* "r" is prominently an alveolar trill and "a" an open central vowel. These two varieties are spread over their own specific geographical areas: the *schwa-variety* in the southern half of the peninsula and the east coast while the *A-variety* in the Kedah dialect area as well as in Sabah and Sarawak.²²

²¹ Charles A. Ferguson, "Diglossia" in Dell Hymes (ed.) *Language in Culture And Society: A Reader in Linguistics And Anthropology*, A Harper International Edition, 1966, pp. 429-439.

²² Cf. Asmah Haji Omar, *op. cit.*, maps I and VI.

In the Kedah speech community, the standard A-variety (SAV) may be considered as a superposed variety as it is not the primary one used, and its acquisition is through school education. The stabilization of this variety has been engendered and reinforced by the written language where the near-phonemic spelling system dictates the pronunciation of the written words.²³

On the other hand, the Kedah dialect (KD) is "native" to the Kedah speaker, as it is the first variety in the semiotic system acquired by him. This variety does not find itself in written form. The only exceptions may in modern times occur in the form of dialogues in stories or plays which are given a Kedah milieu. However, there exists a romance, the *Hikayat Terong Pipit*, which is almost wholly written in the Kedah dialect. This romance was originally handed down orally until it was recorded in writing in 1929.

Departing from the conventional sociolinguistic demarcation into H and L varieties, I wish to view the Kedah dialect as the Primary (P) variety and the SAV as the superimposed (S) variety. Defining one as P and the other as S is based on the characteristics already mentioned, viz. non-school versus school language, and lacking or having a written form.

The conventional division of languages into H (high) and L (low) varieties suggests a sophistication-cum-finesse of H as opposed to the rusticity of L, and such a treatment is incongruous to the situation found in Kedah. The P-variety of Kedah (especially the Plains variety mentioned earlier on) has as much sophistication and finesse in terms of its local cultural setting. Except for a handful of lexical items which have royal correspondences in the palace dialect, the P-variety is the one used by the royalty inclusive of the ruling monarch. Certain expressions and manner of speaking in this code are found to reflect a high level of cultural refinement comparable to their counterparts in the S-variety. It should of course be borne in mind that the S-variety only came into being in the second half of this century with the effort to unite the various independent Malay States into a Federation. Prior to this period, the Kedah dialect was the language of administration in Kedah.²⁴

In determining the social dimension which may cause the selection of one variety over the other, the Kedah sociolinguistic situation does not offer us with a neat pattern of opposites such as formal versus informal, private versus public or intimate versus distance, such that the one chosen consists of two ends of a continuum. In the Kedah speech community, either the SAV or Kedah variety is used in informal and public situations, and each one may be used at any end of the continuum depending on various factors: cultural setting, characteristics of participants, ends in view, form and topics of discourse, tone or mood and so on.²⁵

²³Cf. Asmah Haji Omar, "Towards The Standardization of Malay" in T. Alisjalsbana (ed.), *The Modernization of Languages In Asia*, Kuala Lumpur 1970.

²⁴Cf. Asmah Haji Omar, *Language Planning for Unity And Efficiency*, University of Malaya Press, 1979, p. 11.

²⁵These factors are among those suggested by Dell Hymes in his article, "Sociolinguistics and the Ethnography of Speaking", in Edwin Ardener (ed), *Social Anthropology and Language*, Tavistock Publications, 1971, p. 66.

Situations which admit the use of the S-variety are those which bear a formal or/and public atmosphere and which show some degree of distance in the relationship between the participants of the discourse concerned. Hence the S-variety is used in teaching in the classroom, formal speeches, debates, formal discussions (e.g. in public forums and conferences) and in interviews for a particular purpose (e.g. for a job or a position in government departments or private enterprise or for a study grant). In addition to these, the S-variety is used in singing, including singing the national anthem.

The P-variety may be used in any of the following situation:—

- (i) formal public;
- (ii) formal private;
- (iii) informal public;
- (iv) informal private.

A formal situation is one in which there is some degree of social distance between the speakers, whereas the converse, viz. the informal situation, refers to a setting where the speakers exude some degree of intimacy between themselves in the course of their interaction. The notion "public" is taken to refer to the situation determined by the place-setting and topic of discourse rather than by degree of intimacy. As such, a private situation may not necessarily be confined to one that is informal but may also include one that is formal. The same applies to public situations.

An interaction between speakers in a closed room is a private one but may not necessarily be informal. A business transaction or the conduct of a closed-door meeting of a political or interest group which avoids the use of certain codes that indicate familiarity but which strictly follows a certain set of conference or transaction decorum, represents a formal setting. Hence, the style of speaking is private and formal.

An informal private situation may be represented by an interaction between speakers indicating a relationship which reflects familiarity or intimacy between them. Speech-acts between members of a family centering on topics which are not meant for a public audience can be said to be private and informal.

On the other side of the coin, a public situation is one which consists of participants, the majority of whom are listeners. The setting is in a public place and the topic of discourse is one of a general interest. Such a situation also indicates a mode or form of discourse different from the private one. In the private setting, the mode of discourse is often an interaction consisting of initiation, response, and follow-up²⁶ which in linguistic forms are embodied in questions, answers, commands, comments, exclamations, interpolations etc. In the public setting, the speech-acts traffic seems to be heavier on one side only, such that if there are reactions at all from the other side these take the form of interpolations. Public speeches, debates, discussions and forums are events taking place in the public setting. The variety chosen for any of these events again depends on the topics of discourse, the ends in view and the tone or mood, which are all interrelated with one another.

²⁶ See J. Sinclair & Malcolm Coulthard, *Towards An Analysis of Discourse: The English Used by Teachers And Pupils*, Oxford University Press, London 1975.

The ends in view in a political rally is different from that in a speech delivered by a salesman in a public place. An audience gathering around a medicine man, for instance, has to be enchanted into buying the wares thus advertised. They have to be convinced, and there is no surer means than to use the P-variety in an informal way. On the other hand, a politician in a public rally has to speak on a topic much more sophisticated than that of the medicine man. Besides that, he has got to impress his audience with his personality. An informal style may have an unfavourable effect on the audience he has set out to win. His use of codes which reflects familiarity may be misconstrued as a quality in want of etiquette or intellectual development.

Sermons in the mosque are given in the formal, public P-variety. Here, the solemnness of the whole situation does not give way to any slight degree of informality. As sermons are now prepared well before hand in writing and are not given in spontaneity as they used to be in the good old days, there are clear indications that the P-variety is slowly giving way to the S-variety in this particular use of the language.

The situations in which the P- and the S-varieties in Kedah are spoken can be divided into domains. By domain is meant the sphere of activity defined in terms of institutional contexts or socio-ecological co-occurrences.²⁷ Hence the following domains can be set up for the Kedah speech community, such as education, family, friendship, administration, religion, employment and entertainment.

In the education domain, the variety chosen is the S-variety, whereas in the family and friendship domains it is the P-variety. As for the other four domains, both the varieties can operate depending on factors relating to the participants, setting etc., as mentioned earlier. In administration, viz. in the government offices, the language of reports, correspondences, rules and regulations etc. it is certainly the S-variety. On the other hand, the actual code used in meetings and discussions, oral directives and so on may fluctuate from P to S. However, even with this free fluctuation, the P-variety appears to be the more dominant of the two. In religion and employment (other than government administration) a small degree of usage of the S-variety appears from time to time. As said earlier, the S-variety in religion comes in Friday sermons in the mosques due to the influence of the written language. In employment, the S-variety may come in very occasionally in big firms where English is the language among the bosses and the P-variety in other situations.

Entertainment is a sphere where a variety is chosen based on the genre or type of entertainment involved. Singing, other than folk-singing, is done in the S-variety. Folk-singing which is coloured by the local culture chooses the P-variety. Poems are declaimed only in the S-variety. In play performances, the choice of a variety depends on the types of plays involved. If it is a comedy, the code chosen cannot be any other than the P-variety. Conversely, the code deemed compatible with the mood of a tragedy is the S-variety. Short scenes of jokes and jests are always delivered in the P-variety. The *wayang kulit* and *hadrah* have never been performed in the S-variety.

²⁷ See J.A. Fishman, "The Relationship between Micro- and Macro-sociolinguistics in the Study of Who Speaks What Language to Whom and When", in J.B. Pride and J. Holmes, *Sociolinguistics*, Penguin Books, 1972, p. 19.

Conclusion

The Kedah dialect has its own definite functions in the Kedah speech community. In my own assessment, this dialect will continue to flourish despite the spread of Standard Malay. Being natural means behaving and speaking in the manner that befits the situation. And in the home, among one's family and close friends of the same dialectal background, there is no variety that sounds more sweet and natural than the one learned in one's infancy and shared by everyone else.

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Perception and Reality as Reflected in the Kedah Dialect

Asmah Haji Omar

It has been a long known and accepted fact that language is an index to culture. This means that language reflects the culture of its speakers — the way of life they lead as well their physical and social environments. Such a function is borne by the vocabulary of the language concerned.¹ As such the language of a people engaged in agriculture is expected to be rich in the vocabulary of agriculture. For instance, in this language there will be a range of terms to denote a particular grain based on its shape, colour and taste, as has been attested by the vocabulary of the Malay dialect of Kedah². Such a language may not have the terms for the different types of winds and waves in the sea as do those languages of peoples who are all the time involved with the sea.

In the same way, a language with a complex system of lexis on religion and beliefs does certainly indicate that its speakers are in possession of a religious system and sets of beliefs. The antithesis is a language which may not be as rich in such a vocabulary, as the society which upholds it may not have such a complex system of religion and beliefs.

The view that language reflects reality stems from the premise that language is the product of man's perception of his environment and of his understanding of it. From perception comes conceptualization, in which Man is able to make use of verbal symbols to record his thoughts and experiences. It is these two processes, perception and conceptualization, that have been responsible for the emergence of a language of one community that is different from that of another. That is to say a certain people perceives differently from another, and a group of people in a particular environment have their own type of perception, based on the environments around them and their experiences in life. Hence, as mentioned earlier a language with a rich treasury of rice-farming terms is certainly to be one that is spoken by people who are in the pursuit of this type of occupation. This shows that the speakers concerned, being involved as they are in rice-farming, are able to differentiate the realities in their rice-farming environment and type of life better than those people whose daily pursuits are more in the line of fishing.

Of the Malay speaking areas of the archipelago, Kedah has appeared to be one that has a highly established system of peasantry, practising wet-rice agriculture, which dates back to the very early centuries of the Christian era. Chinese voyagers of the tenth century A.D. did not fail to record the fact that the people of Kedah were already cultivating wet-rice and having their own system of irrigation besides having well-grown fruit gardens.³

¹ Cf. Edward Sapir, "Language and Environment", in David G. Mandelbaum, *Selected Writings of Edward Sapir in Language Culture and Personality*, University of California Press, 1963, pp. 94-95.

² Cf. Asmah Haji Omar, "Aspek Kebudayaannya Seperti Yang Terdapat Dalam Sejarah dan Bahasa", *Dewan Bahasa*, Jilid 22, Bilangan 3, Mac 1978, p. 150.

³ Slametmuljana, *Srivijaya*, Percetakan Arnoldus Ende-Flores, Nusa Tenggara Timur, p. 39.

Although the Kedah dialect is just one of the many dialects of Malay, the differences between the dialects are not as great as to imply basic differences in their grammatical systems and structures. A wider divergence may be imputed to their lexical items, but even in a single regional dialect, lexical items may differ from one language register to that of another. As an example, a dialect with two different sets of people, one a rice-growing group and the other a fishing-group, may reflect two different sets of lexical items in the speeches of these two groups of people. However, since the verbal systems concerned are in dialectal relationship with one another, the systems and structures are fundamentally the same. As such they may share a common world-view, diverging from one another only at certain points, perhaps in their perception of climatic conditions and such like experiences.

The discussions below will focus on various concepts which reflect the various ways the Kedah people perceive reality. These concepts are given under the following sub-headings.⁴

1. Space and time in action.
2. Perception of Physical Time.
3. Concepts of animateness versus inanimateness and human versus non-human.
4. Concept of male versus female.
5. Concepts of shape and size.
6. Colour terms.
7. Terms for tastes.
8. Classification of padi grains.

1. Space and Time In Action

Life exists in time and space and as such perception of life is very much linked to these two phenomena. Both space and time are reflected in all other concepts. Space, for instance, can be seen in the concepts of shape and size and in various actions. Time is seen not only in the temporal nomenclatures for the time of the day and so on, but also in actions and attributes.

Below are five sets of related actions which reflect the perception of the Kedah people of the reality around them in relation to space.

(a) "to throw"

- | | | | |
|-------|------------------|---|---|
| (i) | <i>tauk</i> | = | throw with arm moving forward |
| (ii) | <i>hempas</i> | = | throw down |
| (iii) | <i>baling</i> | = | throw with arm in full circle |
| (iv) | <i>punggai</i> | = | throw with arm raised upward in back to forward movement. |
| (v) | <i>tengalung</i> | = | throw with arm in full circle but with greater force than <i>baling</i> . |
| (v) | <i>buang</i> | = | throw away. |

⁴ For the purpose of this volume, grammatical structures and categories have been excluded. A discussion on them in relation to the world-view of the Kedah peasants is given in my paper, "Language and the World-View of the Malay Peasants," submitted to the World-View Project sponsored by the Faculty of Arts and the Social Sciences of the University of Malaya and the Ford Foundation.

The various words for "to throw" differ from one another in the various aspects of space itself. All the words above, with the exception of *buang* strictly bear the concept of physical distance, such that the degrees of distance can be seen in the following ascending order: *tauk*, *hempas*, *baling*, *punggal*, *tengalung*. Of these five actions, only *hempas* denotes the perpendicular movement downwards while the other four denote back to forward movements. Furthermore, all the five types of movement also involve the types of force that go with them.

The verb *buang* represents the merging of the physical and the psychological distance. The physical action of *buang* means not just the removal of something from one place to another but accompanying this action is the psychological removal of that something, and in this latter sense the word may be used metaphorically with the meaning of "disowning" or "expelling" (someone).

(b) "to cut"

- | | | | |
|--------|----------------|---|---|
| (i) | <i>tebang</i> | = | cut down (a standing object e.g. tree) |
| (ii) | <i>cantas</i> | = | cut raised objects which are small in size and with rapidity. |
| (iii) | <i>cincang</i> | = | cut in very small pieces with rapid speed and the knife is wholly lifted perpendicularly. |
| (iv) | <i>hiris</i> | = | cut into thin pieces as in slicing meat. |
| (v) | <i>belah</i> | = | cut into two. |
| (vi) | <i>kerat</i> | = | cut into big pieces or chunks. |
| (vii) | <i>rincik</i> | = | cut into very thin pieces with rapid speed with the knife-point hardly leaving the cutting board. |
| (viii) | <i>tetas</i> | = | cut the seams (in sewing). |
| (ix) | <i>takok</i> | = | cut on the surface with the knife raised in perpendicular position but it does not go right through; chunks are taken out so that the result is a caved-in impression. |
| (x) | <i>kelar</i> | = | cut on the surface with the knife in perpendicular position but it does not go right through the object, such as cutting the surface of the body of the fish before seasoning it. |
| (xi) | <i>takek</i> | = | cut on the surface with the knife raised obliquely to the right or left, but it does not go right through; the effect is a caved-in impression. |
| (xii) | <i>tebas</i> | = | cut off low-lying objects with neutral speed. |
| (xiii) | <i>tebang</i> | = | cut off highly raised objects. |
| (xiv) | <i>tetak</i> | = | cut on the surface with force and without caved-in impression. |

The above paradigm for "to cut" can be divided into two subparadigms, one consisting of those verbs whose components show the action of cutting right through while the other consisting of the verbs whose components indicate the type of cutting which affects the surface only. Each of the subgroups above can be divided according to various criteria: texture and position of objects affected, speed of action, result of action and so on. One thing needs be mentioned here, that is that there is no general term in the Kedah dialect for "to cut". The verb *potong* has been a relatively recent addition from Standard Malay. This explains the use of the verb *motong* for tapping

rubber (which was introduced in late nineteenth century) rather than for the cutting of padi which is conveyed by *mengerat*.

(c) "to beat"; "to hit"

- (i) *pukul* = to beat (in general) animate or inanimate objects.
- (ii) *tibai* = to beat (a person) on the body with thin sticks such as sticks from coconut leaves.
- (iii) *balun* = to beat a person on the body with a stick of some size and hardness.
- (iv) *katok* = to hit a person on the head or an animal (or any part of its body) or a thing, with a piece of wood or such like objects.
- (v) *tabuh* = to hit a person on the back with the fist.
- (vi) *tumbuk* = (1) to hit a person, an animal or a thing with the fist;
(2) to pound.
- (vii) *puk* = to slap a baby gently.
- (viii) *sepak* (*sěpak*) = to slap on the face.
- (ix) *tampar* = to slap on any part of the body except the face and the head.]
- (x) *luku* = to hit the head with the knuckles.
- (xi) *jentik* = to hit with the forefinger moving from touching the thumb to the target object.
- (xii) *sepak* = to kick a person, an animal or a thing.
- (xiii) *tendang* = to kick a person, an animal or a thing with greater force than *sepak*.
- (xiv) *terajang* = to kick a person, an animal or a thing with greater force than *tendang*.
- (xv) *sigung* = to hit with the elbow.

The differentiations in the various actions belonging to the paradigm with the general meaning "to beat" or "to hit" result from various factors: *types of instrument, types of target and force*. Differentiation is made more refined by the details observed in the three factors mentioned above, particularly in the action executed with body-parts and the details of the target-members. All this goes to show the sharpness in the perception of reality among the speakers of the dialect under study.

(d) "to tread"

- (i) *pijak* = to tread on someone or something and keeping the foot or feet in position for a certain length of time.
- (ii) *hindik* = to tread on someone or something with one foot and lifting it up and down, as in pounding padi using the *lesung hindik* or *lesung kaki*.
- (iii) *hirik* = to tread on someone or something with one foot static and the other moving sideways, as in threshing padi with the feet.
- (iv) *keretam* = to stamp the feet in succession of one another repeatedly on the floor.

In this paradigm, the most significant correlation existing between the semantic components of the words is that of space and time. The spatial and temporal factors appear to be quite transparent in all the four verbs concerned.

(e) "to move"

- | | | | |
|--------|------------------------------------|---|----------------------------|
| (i) | <i>jalan</i> | = | to walk |
| (ii) | <i>lari</i> | = | to run |
| (iii) | <i>taktih</i> | = | to toddle |
| (iv) | <i>kesot</i> | = | to move on the buttock |
| (v) | <i>merangkak</i> | = | to move on all fours |
| (vi) | <i>serot</i> (s ^h erot) | = | to move backwards |
| (vii) | <i>lompat</i> | = | to jump up or down or both |
| (viii) | <i>terjun</i> | = | to jump down |

Again in this paradigm there is an obvious correlation between space and time. Space is not only implicit in the physical context of the action concerned but is also linked to two other factors: one, the direction of the movement be it forward, backward or sideways, up or down or both, and two, the manner the action is performed in relation to the body parts, viz. with the movement of the feet, the buttock, the hands or the knees.

The temporal factor is reflected in the speed of movement. The verbs *lari*, *lompat* and *terjun* may be said to have some degree of speed, while *jalan* may have a speed that may fluctuate between fast and slow. On the other hand, *taktih*, *kesot*, *merangkak* and *serot* are movements characterized by lack of speed.

2. Perception of Physical Time

The perception of time as seen in terms of the number of months in a year and so on is not indigenous to the Kedah speech community as well as to the Malay speech community in general. This mode of peceiving the passage of time is one brought from outside, through Islam and the Western influence.

In the Kedah dialect cyclicity of time is seen through the cyclicity of season. There are two seasons: *musim hujan* and *musim timur*. The former is identified with the rice-planting season while the latter with harvesting time. *Musim timur* means a season which is dry and windy, with the component *timur* referring to the northeast winds and it was those winds that made it possible for the farmers to winnow their rice. The completion of the cycle of the two seasons is known as *temekuap*, which is more or less equivalent to a calendrical year.

Within a single *temekuap* the passage of time is interpreted according to the sighting of the full moon. Here we have a computation of the time-span from one sighting of the full moon to the next. Hence the terms *bulan sudah* ("last month"), *bulan ini* ("this month") and *bulan timbul* ("next month"). The last mentioned term, *bulan timbul*, reflects an anticipation of the moon that is sure to rise after an expected length of time. In this connection it should be remembered that the concepts *awal bulan* ("beginning of the month") and *hujung bulan* ("end of the month") are recent additions from foreign influence, entering the dialect via Standard Malay.

The concept of the "week" as a span of time consisting of seven days is also an innovation in the life of the Kedah people and even of the Malays in general. Names of

the days of the week in the Malay language are Arabic and not indigenous. Though the word *bulan* is indigenous, the word *minggu* is not.

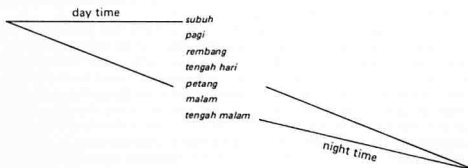
To the Kedah people, the counting of the days from one *bulan* to the other is not of much significance to the life they lead. It is the time that is immediate to the present that is important, be it before or after. This perception of time can be better seen in the following diagram, which shows that the cyclicity of time on a level below the cyclicity of the moon, is nine days (not seven).

Kemarin dulu balik sana	kemarin dulu	kemarin	hari ini	esok	lusa	tulat	tungging	tungging buyung
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An explanation to this longer range of time perceived by the Kedah people can be imputed to the peasant way of life that has dominated the Kedah speech community as a whole. Work in the fields has got to be properly planned according to the stages it has to be carried out. Hence, in the absence or in lieu of the names of the week, an understanding of the succession of time, forward and backward from the present, is considered extremely important.

At this juncture it is noteworthy to point out that the word *kemarin* or *kelmarin* in several other dialects of Malay means "some time ago". This departure in the semantics of *kemarin* between the Kedah dialect and the dialects of the other parts of the peninsula is attributed to the way of life they lead. To the peasants of Kedah temporality referring to a remote past time is not important, and hence they do not need a special word for its denotation. To them, it is the point of time that is in direct link with the present that proves significant in their lives.

Cyclicity of time is also seen according to the movement of the sun. In this context, time is divided into *siang* ("daylight") and *malam* ("night-time"). *Siang* refers to the span of time from the rising to the setting of the sun. This span is divided into *pagi* ("morning") *rembang* ("between 10.00 a.m. to 12.00 noon"), and *tengah hari* or *lohor* ("mid-day") when the sun is at its zenith. *Malam* is divided into *senja* ("twilight"), *malam* and *tengah malam* "midnight". The term *petang* in this dialect refers to the end of day as well as the beginning of night, embracing *senja*. The concept *senja* is, however, a foreign one, originating in Sanskrit *sandhyakala* "the time between day and night", just as the words *lohor* and *subuh* which are from Arabic.

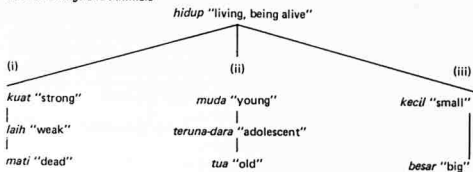


3. Concept of Animateness versus Inanimateness, and Human versus Non-Human:

The concept animate vs. inanimate is manifested in the use of the words which represent the stages of development in a life span. Human beings, animals, plants, and trees and their parts are considered living or animate objects. The human beings and the animals are placed in a subcategory different from the plants as recognized from the words they collocate with, which denote the stage of living or being alive.

The human beings and the animals are also viewed at from two other parameters: young vs. old and small vs. big.

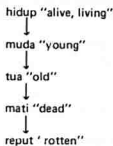
Human Beings and Animals



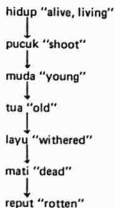
All the orders, (i) – (iii), indicate a temporal concept. In (i) this concept is tied with physical energy. In (ii), it is with the normal process of growth in line with a gain in time; here there is a slight differentiation between the male and the female subcategory as seen in the choice of words: *teruna* for the male and *dara* for the female. In (iii), there is a merging of the temporal and the spatial: what is small is young, and what is big is old.

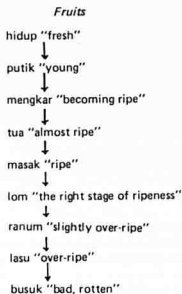
With the plants, perception of their temporal progress seems to denote a differentiation according to the parts that are affected: the wood; the leaves, the flowers and the fruits.

Wood



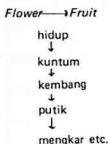
Leaves





The word *hidup* for flowers and fruits are generally used in the differentiation between the natural and the artificial ones. With the wood and the leaves, the differentiation is made at a more basic level viz. in recognizing whether the wood or the leaf is really "hidup" or otherwise, besides extending the differentiation to distinguishing the natural from the artificial. It is interesting to note here that the wood, the leaves and the fruits, are seen to have a temporal progress from "dead" to rotten". On the other hand, the flowers are like the human beings, as their final stage is "being dead". With the human being the word "reput" is applicable only when the remains are no longer identified with a person; they have then assumed the stage of being inanimate. As such, we do not have the collocation between *orang* "person" and *reput* but rather between *bangkai* "the remains of the dead" and *reput*.

Flowers do not go beyond the *mati* stage, presumably due to the fact that in the world-view of the peasants, flowers are supposed to produce fruits; and this means that the fruit is the natural sequence in the development of the flower. The schema below shows this development:



The differentiation between the animate and the inanimate, and the human and the non-human, is also seen in the use of numeral classifiers. The human noun uses the classifier *orang*, the non-human the classifier *ekor*, while the inanimate nouns are given classifiers determined by shapes and sizes.⁵

The stages of development in the padi grain as viewed by the Kedah peasants are undoubtedly based on the gain in time, but the differentiation is also linked to the shape and size as well as the colour of the padi grain itself.

The development starts from the stem of the padi being pregnant, *padi bunting*, followed by the flowers, *bunga padi*, which develop into *ringgi*. What is known as *ringgi* is the young padi grain which is green both at the husk as well as the content. The size of the grain is still very tiny. Then comes the *emping* stage which shows a development in the colour — more on the yellow side — and size of the grain. Then comes *padi masak* "ripe padi" which is ready for harvesting. Ripe padi grains which are stored for a considerable length of time are known as *padi usang* "old padi" as opposed to *padi baru* "newly harvested padi".



The treatment of plants especially padi plants as animate, just like human beings, is not only evident from linguistic data but also from the behaviour of the peasants towards the plants. It has been an age-old practice among the Kedah peasants to handle plants and trees with care, because in their world-view the plants and trees are living things and as such they have senses like the human beings. People are encouraged to talk to trees and plants so that these living objects will flourish with flowers and fruits. Trees whose capacity to bear fruit seems to be arrested for some reason or other are not only talked to but get "punished" by suffering from small scars or dents made on their trunks or branches. If the trees get the message, they will bear fruit the following season.

The padi plant is treated with more "reverence" than any other plant. The padi, inclusive of the grains, is said to have a soul or *semangat* which has to be "cared for"

⁵ For a more detailed study of this, See Asmah Haji Omar "Numeral Classifiers In Malay and Iban", in Asmah Haji Omar, *Essays On Malaysian Linguistics*, Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 1975, pp. 24- 255.

all the time. Any crudity in the handling of the padi plants or grains may drive the *semangat* away. This explains the succession of rituals that the padi farmer has to conduct and the taboos that he has to observe from the moment the seeds are sown to the time the padi grains are stored away. But "reverence" for the rice continues to the kitchen and the dining place. Rice has to be handled with care even before being put to the pot and not a single grain should be found lying around on the floor to be trampled by unknowing feet.

Left-over rice also has its share of reverence. However bad and smelly it has become it cannot be thrown away like any other trash. If it is not given as food to the cat, the chicken or the bird, it is washed clean and dried out in the sun, and this dehydrated product is turned into either human or chicken feed. The consequence of a rough handling of rice is God's retribution in the form of poverty. Rice is said to be capable of weeping like human beings, and it will appear as sand to the person who is in need of it but who had mishandled it at one point in his life.

4. Concept of Male versus Female

The concepts of male and female exist in the language of the peasants as manifested in the words *jantan* and *betina/perempuan*, which are used in collocation with certain nouns: human, non-human and inanimate.

The human beings are differentiated according to their sexes: *jantan* (male) and *perempuan* (female). Here the word *jantan* rather than the Standard Malay *laki-laki*, is used.

<i>anak jantan</i>	=	male child viz. son.
<i>anak perempuan</i>	=	female child, viz. daughter.
<i>cucu jantan</i>	=	grandson
<i>cucu perempuan</i>	=	grandchild

In kinship, most of the ranks have their own terms, in which the male or female feature is inherent. That is to say, the overt gender markers in the form of *jantan* and *perempuan* are not used.

Examples:

<i>tok</i>	=	grandmother
<i>tok wan, wan</i>	=	grandfather
<i>kak</i>	=	elder female sibling
<i>abang</i>	=	elder male sibling
<i>mak</i>	=	mother
<i>pak</i>	=	father

With the non-human nouns the overt markers are *jantan* (male) and *betina* (female).

<i>kerbau jantan</i>	=	male buffalo
<i>kerbau betina</i>	=	female buffalo

The kinship terms that are used in collocation with animal names are only *ibu* "mother" and *anak* "offspring".

<i>ibu kerbau</i>	=	mother buffalo
<i>anak kerbau</i>	=	young or baby buffalo

Here we see that although *ibu* and *anak* are kinship terms, their usage with names of animals does not show a kinship connection; rather this usage identifies the old from the young. Here it is the physical rather than the cultural time that proves significant.

With the plants, the concept of male versus female is identical to that applied to the animals.

<i>pokok jantan</i>	=	male tree
<i>pokok betina</i>	=	female tree
<i>petik jantan</i>	=	male papaya
<i>petik betina</i>	=	female papaya

However, while there is *anak petik* "young papaya plant", *anak padi* "young padi plant", the concepts of "mother papaya" and "mother padi" do not exist in the speech system under consideration.

The concept of male versus female in inanimate objects is applied to certain objects only.

Examples:

<i>ketupat jantan</i>	=	male ketupat
<i>ketupat betina</i>	=	female ketupat
<i>pongsu jantan</i>	=	male ant-hill
<i>pongsu betina</i>	=	female ant-hill

The paradigm with *ketupat* refers to the shapes of the *ketupat* concerned. In this connection it is best to be reminded that the Kedah *ketupat* is a type of food made from glutinous rice cooked in coconut milk and wrapped in triangular shape in the *palas* leaves. The male *ketupat* differs slightly from the female counterpart; the latter is not liked by housewives because its shape is not as attractive as the former.

The paradigm with *pongsu* also refers to size and shape. The male *pongsu* is bigger and more pointed than the female one.

The world-view that plants are either male or female seems to reflect the attitude of the peasants in their farming practice. As such, however small their padi land is, the peasant finds it imperative to include the glutinous padi or *pulut*. This is due to the belief that *pulut* is the male while ordinary padi is the female. Without *pulut*, the harvest may not bring about a favourable yield.

5. Concepts of Shape and Size

Shape and size are spatial concepts. In their perception of the life around them, the Kedah peasants either treat shape and size together or separately. The cases of *pongsu jantan* dan *pongsu betina* as well as the stages of the development of the padi grain

exemplify the amalgamation of shape and size, whereas that of the *ketupat jantan* versus *ketupat betina* indicates that shape can be separated from size.

Artefacts used by the peasants provide a wealth of examples of the treatment of shape and size, together or separately. The winnowing tray to the Kedah peasant may be represented by the *nyiru* which is triangular, the *badang* which is circular or the *pengayak* which is circular but perforated. In this paradigm, size is not important.

A similar case of shape is seen in the perception of the padi storage place, which is a permanent structure of timber or bamboo. The one made of timber is a replica of a small house, square in shape and with a sloping roof. This is known as *jelapang*. However, if the structure is circular and has a flat cover on top, then it is known as *kepok* (*kəpok*). The *jelapang* is identified with wealth while the *kepok* is not; hence the nomenclature *jelapang padi Malaysia* given to Kedah, and not *kepok padi Malaysia*.

On the other hand, shape and size are inseparable in paradigms for objects like padi containers, cutting instruments and so on. Padi containers are usually made of *mengkau* "pandanus leaves". These containers are given below in an ascending order of size.

<i>kecung</i>	=	container with tapered top
<i>bakul</i>	=	container with wide top

Cutting instruments are differentiated according to both shape and size, for example *pisau* "small knife", *pisau belati* "knife bigger than the ordinary one but with a curved handle", *parang* "cleaver", *kapak* "axe", *badek* "dagger", *lembing* "spear".

The importance of size as divorced from shape is seen in the perception of the padi husks, husked padi grains, and measure terms. Padi husks and padi grains are dichotomized into "bigness" and "minuteness". Hence, the padi husks are either *sekam* (big in size as a result of little grinding or pounding) or *dedak* (minute in size as a result of intensive pounding.), while the husked padi grains are *beras* consisting of whole grains, or *temukut* consisting of small broken grains.

Measure words that I wish to deal with here are those used in measuring padi and land. The Kedah peasants have their own system of measuring padi, starting from the smallest unit *jemput* to the largest unit *kunca*.

(i) <i>jemput</i>	=	quantity contained in the space formed when the five fingers are merged together.
(ii) <i>genggam</i>	=	a handful
(iii) <i>kepoi</i>	=	the capacity of half of a small coconut.
(iv) <i>kai</i>	=	consisting of two <i>kepoi</i>
(v) <i>cupak</i>	=	four <i>kepoi</i> or two <i>kai</i>
(vi) <i>gantang</i>	=	four <i>cupak</i>
(vii) <i>nalih</i>	=	sixteen <i>gantang</i>
(viii) <i>kunca</i>	=	ten <i>nalih</i>

In measuring land, the system consists of the following:

(i) <i>depa</i>	=	an arm's length
(ii) <i>jemba</i>	=	eight <i>depa</i>
(iii) <i>rantai</i>	=	four <i>jemba</i>

- (iv) *penjuru* = two *rantai*
 (v) *relung* = four *penjuru*

More examples of the concepts of shape and size can be seen in the numeral classifiers, particularly the classifiers for inanimate nouns. In such cases, the shape and size, separately or otherwise, determine the classifiers that are permissible.⁶

6. Colour Terms

There are seven main colour terms in the Kedah dialect and these are *putih* "white", *hitam* "black", *merah* "red", *kuning* "yellow", *hijau* "green", *biru* "blue" and *kelabu* "grey". Of these, four may be considered to be basic, and these are the colours white, black, red, and green.

The main colours are those which are perceived by the Kedah people in general. Each colour term has various modifications relating to the flora and fauna and objects of nature to signify its various shades, some of which may have specific terms in other Malay dialects.

- (i) *putih* "white"
putih melepak "extremely white"; *lepak* is an obsolete term for white, cf. *nalopak* (Batak) = "white")
- (ii) *hitam* "black"
 (a) *hitam legam* "jet black" (*legam* may represent an obsolete term for "black").
 (b) *hitam manis* (literally "black sweet") viz. the brown colour of the Malay skin.
- (iii) *merah* "red"
 (a) *merah darah* "blood red"
 (b) *merah hati* "liver red".
 (c) *merah jambu* "guava red", viz. bright red.
 (d) *merah tua* "dark red"
 (e) *merah muda* "pink"
- (iv) *kuning* "yellow"
 (a) *kuning air* "water yellow", viz. beige
 (b) *kuning langsung* "langsap yellow" viz. the colour of the *langsap* fruit.
 (c) *kuning kunyit* "turmeric yellow"
- (v) *hijau* "green"
 (a) *hijau telur itik* "the colour of the shell of duck's egg."
 (b) *hijau daun* "leaf green" viz. deep green.
 (c) *hijau pucuk pisang*, "the colour of the banana shoot," viz. "light green".
 (d) *hijau tua* "dark green".
 (e) *hijau muda* "light green".

⁶ See Asmah Haji Omar, "Numerical Classifiers in Malay and Iban", *op. cit.*

⁷ Harley Harris Bartlett "Color Nomenclature in Batak and Malay", reprinted from *Papers of the Michigan Academy of Science, Arts and Letters*, Vol. X, 1928, p. 20.

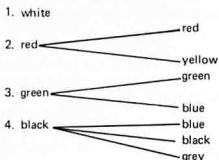
- (vi) *biru* "blue"
 (a) *biru tua* "dark blue".
 (b) *biru muda* "light blue".
 (vii) *kelabu* "grey".
kelabu asap "smoke grey"

Besides those seven main colours and their "derivations", there are other references to colour which do not make use of any colour word, but instead relate the concepts directly to particular objects which are characterized by the colours concerned.

Examples:

- (i) *biji remia*, "dark purple", literally "seed of the *remia* fruit" which is dark purple in colour.
 (ii) *bunga keduduk* "light purple", literally, "*keduduk* flower", which is light purple in colour.
 (iii) *biji asam* "dark brown", literally, "seed of the tamarind" which is dark brown in colour.
 (iv) *kulit manggis* "dark red", literally "skin of the mangosteen", which is dark red in colour.

The four basic colours of white, red, green and black are postulated, due to the overlapping of certain sets of colours in the actual language usage of the peasants and speakers in remote villages. Hence, *red* refers to both red and yellow, *green* to green and blue, *black* to blue, black and grey.



As seen in the above diagrammes, *red* encompasses the actual red colour (together with its various derivations) and yellow. To the peasants, the colour of the ripe padi is *merah*, not *kuning*; so is the colour of gold and the sun. The term *kuning* can be said to exist in the speech of those people already in very close contact with speakers of other dialects and of Standard Malay.

There is no word for "brown" in Malay, as the case is with "purple". Besides the reference to *biji asam*, "brown" is generally referred to as red. Mothers are known to categorize their children as "black-eyed" or "red-eyed".

As the case is with *kuning*, the words *biru*, "blue" could have been an innovation due to contacts with speakers outside the Kedah dialect area. Previous to this, the Kedah peasants used to refer to the colour of the sky as *hijau*, or to be more specific *hijau langit* "sky green". However, deep blue or blue black is *hitam* "black". So is the colour of the bruised skin.

The four basic colours indicate two pairs of polarization: *black* and *white* on the one side, and *red* and *green* on the other. These contrasts relate to the experience of the peasants in their own temporal and spatial milieu. The black-and-white contrast is related to the contrast between night and day and it influences their way of looking at life in general: whatever is good is white, whilst the opposite is black. This also reflects the Malay preference for light-skinned girls, although at the same time the *hitam-manis* colour is said to be sweeter than *putih kuning* when attributed to the skin. In historical romances, princesses and ladies of high rank are described as having light-coloured skin; those of the middle ranks as *hitam manis*, while those at the bottom of the social or moral ladder as *hitam* or *hitam legam*. This latter colour expression is also attributed to the ghost as in the simile *hitam legam seperti hantu*, "extremely black like the ghost".

The *merah-hijau* "red-green" pair also has its origin in the visual contrasts of nature, most probably in the contrast between the redness of the ripening padi and the green colour of its leaves and the surrounding world. Bearing in mind that *brown* is also *merah*, the milieu that provides the contrast is complete, viz. the Malaysian scenery rich with growths and undergrowths of green and red in freshness.

It was most unlikely for the early speakers of the dialect to produce the *kuning-hijau* contrast, because yellow is a constituent of green, besides being a constituent of red. Whether the people are aware of the physical properties of the colour, the facts show that the contrast *hijau-kuning* or *merah-kuning* does not exist in this dialect. The presence of *merah-hijau* contrast in the semiotic system of the Kedah people has influenced the weltanschauung of these people such that they perceive *merah* and *hijau* not as contrasts but as complements. That is to say, both colours symbolize the good things in life. Malay wedding ceremonies, for example, are occasions for joy and celebration, and the colours that abound in such occasions are those of the red and the green matrices.

It can be concluded from this study that the Kedah dialect started off with a four-colour system and developed into a seven-colour one. This study also shows that the dialect makes direct references to objects for their colours and this is an indication of the way concepts of colours develop in languages in general.

The main and basic colour ranges occurring in the dialect indicate that certain colours have multiplicity of meanings. This goes to show that the minimal differences in the colours and hence the properties of things described are not perceived by the speakers concerned. However, the range which associates colours or various shades of colours to the colour properties of specific objects such as *water yellow* and *banana shoot green* do on the other hand show that perception and differentiation are made possible by a comparison with concrete objects. This colour terminology is another reflection of the way the Kedah people perceive space.

However, the terms occurring in the paradigm with *muda* and *tua* such as *merah muda*, *hijau muda*, *merah tua*, *hijau tua* and so on are indications of temporal perception in the dialect concerned. This is so because the adjectives *muda* "young" and *tua* "old" are temporal words indicating the passage of time affecting the properties of objects. This perception may have originated from observations of the local flora which are characterized by the changing of colours into deeper shades with progress in time.

Colour terms, then, offer us an insight into the conception as well as the perception of space and time in the Kedah dialect. Perception is defined as "becoming aware of an impression called forth by the action of an external stimulus on a sensory analyzer".⁸ On the other hand, conception is the act of conceiving idea. The result of this act is a concept, which is defined as "one of the fundamental components of the thinking process; a mental grasp of the essential features of objects or phenomena, the mental equivalent of a name".⁹

7. Terms for tastes

There are eleven main terms describing taste in the Kedah dialect and these are: *tawar* "tasteless", *pahit* "bitter" and *kelat* "astringent" which usually refers to the taste of the unripe fruit, *masam* "sour", *manis* "sweet", *pedas* "chilli-hot", *masin* "salty", *payaw*, a taste that is slightly sour, such as the taste of river-water, and *hayai* a taste between tastelessness and sweetness, such as the taste of an over-ripe fruit, *lemak*, the taste of milk or coconut-milk and *pedar* the taste of lemon rind.

Of these terms, only seven can be considered as referring to basic tastes. There are *tawar*, *pahit*, *masam*, *manis*, *masin*, *pedas* and *lemak*.

The taste referred to by the term *kelat* reflects a merging of two types of taste *pahit*, "bitter" and *masam* "sour". Likewise, *payaw* indicates a development from tastelessness to *masin* combined with *kelat*, and *hayai* from sweetness to tastelessness.

Pedar, on the other hand, is a combination of *kelat* and *masam*.

<i>pahit + masam</i>	=	<i>kelat</i>
<i>tawar + masin + kelat</i>	=	<i>payaw</i>
<i>manis + tawar</i>	=	<i>hayai</i>
<i>kelat + masam</i>	=	<i>pedar</i>

The degrees of intensity of these adjectives may not only be conveyed by the patterns already mentioned but also by collocations with other lexical items, as given below:

- (i) *masam cuak* (the latter component is pronounced as [cuã?] "extremely salty."
- (ii) *manis melecaih* = extremely sweet.
- (iii) *pa(h)it bedengung* = "extremely bitter".
- (iv) *masin pa(h)it* = extremely salty.
- (v) *tawar heber* = really tasteless.

Pedas, *kelat*, *hayai*, *payaw*, *pedar* and *lemak* do not have collocations parallel to those given in the examples above. Now let's examine the above phrases one by one.

In *masam cuak*, the component *cuak* is presumably an onomatopoeia of a noise produced when the tastebuds are in contact with sourness. It has no specific meaning on its own and is never used except in the context of *masam*. The word *melecaih* in *manis*

⁸ Witold Doroszewski, *Elements of Lexicology and Semiotics*, Mouton, The Hague 1973. p. 80.

⁹ *Ibid.*

melecaih is, morphologically speaking, a verb but it does not seem to occur by itself with its own specific meaning. That is to say, *melecaih* only exists in the collocation with *manis*, giving the concept "intensity" to the phrase. Phonetically, the word may also be said to be an onomatopoeia referring to the noise made by the tongue in the mouth when involved in extreme sweetness of taste. The word *heber* in *tawar heber* may stand in its own right referring to people who like to talk without thinking. It can then be deduced that *heber* originally meant the constant opening of the mouth, and this coincides with the action that comes naturally to a person when something tasteless touches his tastebud.

In *pahit berdengung*, the modifying component *berdengung* is a known verb meaning "having resonance" or "resonant", as *dengung* means "resonance". Hence, the phrase *pahit berdengung* literally refers to "the bitter taste which echoes in the ears." Again if one looks closely at the word *dengung* it also has its origin in sound symbolism.

Conversely, sound symbolism is not apparent in *masin pahit*. Here is a case of expressing an extremity of a particular taste by making use of another taste-word to modify it. In terms of physical reality, extreme saltiness borders on bitterness of taste.

In their perception of taste, then, the peasants do not resort to similes originating in the flora and fauna of their physical environment; rather they differentiate the various categories by employing sound symbolism and onomatopoeia that are closely linked to the noises or actions made by the tongue or the lips, as well as by juxtaposing two different tastes. It can also be reminded here that the speakers have an awareness of "derived" tastes that result from combinations of different basic tastes as seen in the cases of *kelat* and *payaw*. Besides that they are also able to perceive the changing process from one taste to another as evidenced by *hayai* and *pahit berdengung*.

8. Classification of Padi Grains

There are two main divisions of padi: *padi jawi* and *padi pulut*. The former is the non-glutinous type that has become the staple food of the Malays, while the latter is the glutinous type which is used for the making of secondary dishes and cakes. It is therefore clear that the division between *jawi* and *pulut* is based on two matrices: glutinous and staple.

Each of these two categories may be subdivided according to the characteristics pertaining to any or some or all of these characteristics: texture, shape, size, taste and colour of the husk. It is such diagnostic components that give rise to the various nomenclatures for both *padi jawi* and *padi pulut*.

Padi jawi, for instance, have varieties such as the following: *padi didik*, *padi mayang sesat*, *padi mayang tok semai*, *padi mayang ikal*, *padi mayang pendek*, *padi mayang pulau*, *padi ranggung*, *padi muda Cik Ali*, *padi rami hitam*, *padi jarum emas*, *padi radin*, *padi pahit hitam*, *padi sembilan tangkai*, *padi mayang bilah*, *padi pot*, *padi sesat tok Piah* and so on.

The varieties of *padi pulut*, to quote a few, are *pulut bunga melung*, *pulut bunga tebu*, *pulut sutera*, *pulut kuku burung* and *pulut sutera minyak*.

It can also be seen that the assigning of nomenclatures to the various grains employs the comparative instrument besides taking note of the diagnostic components already

mentioned. The comparison of the characteristics of the grains to other objects of nature reflects an aspect of the perception of the progenitors of those nomenclatures of the world around them. The *pulut* is realized as being soft of texture, viz. glutinous, and as such this softness is likened to the delicateness of the flowers *bunga melung* (flower of the crinum plant) and *bunga tebu* (sugar cane flower) or the softness of silk. It is also a fact that there are varieties of the *pulut* which are rather hard of texture as exemplified by *pulut kuku burung* (*kuku burung* = bird's claws). Besides reflecting the progenitors' perception, those names are able to influence the behaviour of their users in their attitude towards the choice of their grains and their expectancy of their harvest.

As for the *jawi* varieties, some of them get their labels not only from the features of their grains but also from the characteristics of the stalks that uphold those grains as evidenced by the nomenclatures *padi mayang ikal*, *padi rami hitam*, *padi sembilan tangkai*, *padi mayang bilah* and so on. The concept of time is also interwoven in some of those names, specifically those which incorporate personal names which in all probability refer to persons of yore, who were involved in the cultivation of those varieties, for example, the nomenclatures *padi mayang tok semai*, *padi muda Cik Ali*, *padi radin* and *padi sesat tok Piah*.

In present-day rice farming in Malaysia, specifically in Kedah, most of the varieties of *padi jawi* and *padi pulut* mentioned above are no longer popular breeds for the fact that they are not adaptable to the short span of time allowed in the annual double-cropping scheme recommended by the government. As such, in terms of economic value they do not promise prosperity to the farmers although they signal tastiness to the gourmet. In their place are new grains such as *Malinja*, *Mahsuri* and *A1* which were first conceived in the laboratories and these are the grains that promise more cash for the farmers.

Conclusion

The discussions above provide a number of aspects pertaining to the world-view of the Malay (Kedah) peasants and their perception of reality.

The peasants appear to possess a sharpness of perception of the reality around them. Conceptualization of actions and attributes and the naming of objects take into account all details perceivable in terms of time, space, direction, shape, size and so on. An in-depth study of the peasants' conception of space may give an insight into the development of the concept of space from the earlier stages of Malay civilization. To quote Cassirer, "... primitive tribes usually are gifted with an extraordinarily sharp perception of space. A native of these tribes has an eye for all the nicest details of his environment. He is extremely sensitive to every change in the position of the common objects of his surroundings".¹⁰

¹⁰ Ernst Cassirer, *An Essay On Man*, Yale University Press, 1964, p. 45.

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Kedah Performing Art

Rahmah Bujang

Introduction:

In the performing art tradition in Peninsular Malaysia, Kedah claims to have one of the richest variety of 'lakon'¹, dance and song types. When one also considers the fact that Penang, Province Wellesley and Perlis were once part and parcel of the greater kingdom of Kedah, the performing art variety certainly tends to increase in significance. The performing art of Kedah (excluding those of the state of Perlis and the mainland Penang state of Province Wellesley) is perhaps rivalled by none in the Malay Peninsula in terms of numerical availability of its types. In terms of intensity of performances of types in the state, it is, however, perhaps rivalled only by Kelantan.

Types of Performing Art in Kedah:

In my fieldwork on the performing art carried out in the state of Kedah, Perlis and Penang in 1973 and 1974, and a refresher trip made during March to May of 1978 to Kedah and Perlis, I found that there were three categories of activities. The first included the extinct traditional types like the *bangsawan*; the second, those traditional types that are still active, revived and popularized, like the *wayang kulit* and *tarian terinai*; and the third, those that have managed to remain popular and current, like the *joget*. The types falling into first category are taken into consideration due to the availability of informants who were also once active participants of such types.

An attempt at reordering the categorized types in its individual order of presence proves highly conjectural. Next to basing their occurrence on religious influences within Kedah, any other attempt at their historical placement is but a priori knowledge. It is also difficult to attempt placing them in any order of preference simply because in the opinion of the active participants, players and audience of each type, for instance, the ones that they are most involved in were also the best and the most important.

An indiscriminate listing of the performing art to types in Kedah include *hadrah*, *dikir maulud*, *dikir berendoi*, *wayang kulit*, *seni mek mulung*, *menora*, *menora Siam*, *mak yong*, *jike*, *joget*, *noge*, *nora*, *tarian terinai*, *tarian cinta sayang*, *canggung*, *tarian lilin*, *gendang keling*, *bangsawan*, *ghazal*, *zapin*, *tarian inang*, *tarian jong jong inai*, *awang batil* or *awang belanga*, *nobat* and *more*. There are also other types unaccounted for here, for there are also those types from neighbouring states that have found their way into the consciousness of the Kedah public. Such a one is Kedah's exposure, of late, to other typically regional and dialectal performing art types like the *dikir barat* of Kelantan. There is also the long time exposure of the Chinese residents of Kedah to the *Chinese opera*, and the *lion dance*. There are also those types mentioned and included in the list of Kedah performing art that are by virtue of their especial popularity not confined to Kedah alone, but are actually types synonymous to those of other states in West Malaysia.

¹'lakon': I have kept the Malay term because it best describes the traditional Malay drama types. The *lakon* includes one or more such activities like skits, acts, story manipulation or rendition, puppetry, jokes and clowns, song, dance or even an incorporation of suchlike activities into its repertoire.

In order to produce a more selective list, certain types would have to be reconsidered in the context of their significance to Kedah. Tangibility of types to Kedah is my main mode of selection. Hence, those types that can be included as contemporary ones are found to be active also in practically all the states of Malaysia. They are thus less identifiable to one state only, but have by virtue of their national acceptance become Malaysian. Such types include *drama*, *joget*, *sandiwara*, *purbawara*, *zapin*, popular Malay songs, *bangsawan* and *nobat*. The *bangsawan* was, in its day, very popular throughout the country. As for the *nobat*, it has remained a court music for occasions in the royal court in the sultanates of West Malaysia.

Exposure to types is also not considered in ascribing a performing art type to Kedah especially when it carries no characteristics that can be associated with Kedah participants. Then there is also the final problem of whether in considering the performing art one should also include those belonging to or originating from Perlis, like *canggung* and *awang batil*; or from mainland Penang State, like the *boria*. This problem, however, can be quickly resolved by eliminating from Kedah the performing art types whose performers do not go as far as the second or third kindred relationship in terms of their residence in Kedah.

When all is said and done, there is still the final reordering of whatever types that are Kedah ones. I have already mentioned earlier that the only plausible method is to divide the types according to the influence affecting them. To my knowledge there are three belief systems that have influenced the Kedah performing art: the animistic, the Thai-Buddhistic and the Malay-Islamic systems. A discriminatory selection as such would break the types of Kedah performing art into three prevailing groups (see Table 1). An alternative listing by types can also be made by grouping the various types according to their genres. Thus we have a list divided into the *lakon* genre, the dance genre and the music and song genre (see Table 2 below).

Table 1:

Diagram showing the Discrimination of the Kedah Performing Art by Belief Influence.²

Influence	Types
animistic influence	i) seni mek mulung
	ii) mak yong
	iii) wayang kulit
	iv) tarian terinai
	v) tarian cinta sayang
	vi) dikir berendoi
	vii) beduan
	viii) menora/nora
	ix) tarian lilin
	x) gendang keling

² Although the diagram demarcates the types into special categories or belief influence, these categories may also overlap with any of the three categories. The compartmentalization is based on the popular belief of their origin. In terms of their activity and co-existence they can be as much Malay as Sam-Sam, or, in almost all cases, have been reshaped and revived in the context of Malay-Islamic belief.

Thai Buddhistic	i) jike
	ii) menora Siam
	iii) wayang Siam
Malay-Islamic influence	i) hadrah/noge
	ii) dikir maulud
	iii) boria
	iv) ghazal
	v) bangsawan
	vi) zapin
	vii) nobat

*Table 2:
Diagram showing the Discrimination of the Kedah
Performing Art by Genre.*

lakon genre	dance genre	music & song genre
i) seni mek mulung	i) tarian terinai	i) dikir berendoi
ii) mak yong	ii) tarian cinta sayang	ii) beduan
iii) wayang kulit	iii) tarian lilin	iii) gendang keling
iv) menora/nora	iv) zapin	iv) dikir maulud
v) jike		v) ghazal
vi) menora Siam		vi) nobat
vii) wayang Siam		
viii) hadrah/noge		
ix) boria		
x) bangsawan		

The Types in Perspective

Having identified the types ascribed to Kedah, I shall expound on and highlight the salient points in a general description of some of the types. The materials are mainly derived from interviews with active participants themselves. Since the types influenced by animistic and Malay-Islamic beliefs were found to overlap with one another in terms of activity, I shall look first into the types with a predominantly Sam-Sam³ (Thai-Buddhistic) influence.

³Sam-Sam are Malaysian people of mixed Thai-Malay origin who as a group are quite dominant in the border regions between Thailand and Malaysia. For further details of the Sam-Sam people see:

- a. Archaimbault, C., 'A Preliminary Investigation of the Sam-Sam of Kedah and Perlis' in *Journal of the Malayan Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*; Vol. 30, pt. 1, 1957, 75-92.
- b. Azman Wan Chik, *Dialek Sam-Sam*: an unpublished academic exercise in partial requirement to the B.A. Degree, Dept. of Malay Studies University of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, 1968. In it the author gives an interesting study of the Sam-Sam dialect.

Thai-Buddhistic types:

i) *The Lakon Jike*:

Jike is a lakon art type found today in Kedah and Perlis. In the places where it is found it is closely associated with the Sam-Sam and Thai Malays. Based on this group's active participation, one would consider the *jike* to have its origin in Thailand, but a substantial article by Micheal Smithies⁴ has given rise to controversies on its origin. His research on the form in Thailand reveals that the Thais regarded *likay*, *yeekay* or *dikay* (which denote different ways of pronouncing the same type in Thai) as actually originating in Malaysia.⁵ His article has brought out at least two interesting derivations. First, assuming that the Thais tend to pronounce the last syllable of '*jike*' with a strong stress and that there is a confusion between the Malay art forms of *jike* and *dikir* (be it one or any of the three types – *dikir barat*, *dikir berendoi* or *dikir maulud*), on the one hand, and *likay* of Thailand (as suggested by Smithies) on the other, it is inevitable that a motley of associations and comparison is the result.

Smithies' main sources were Montri Tramoj, Prince Damrong and W. Chayangkul. According to these sources, the *likay* of Thailand is said to originate from Malaysia, and this seems to point to the Malaysian *dikir* (which in the Kedah dialect becomes *dikia*). The *jike* of Kedah and Perlis bears close resemblance to *likay* as described by Montri Tramoj.⁶

Although I have all along been of the opinion that *jike* originates from Thailand, many Thai specialists have already ascribed its origin to Malaysia. Assuming that the *likay* form Smithies learnt from Prince Damrong and W. Chayangkul were confused with the Malaysian *dikir* forms, there is still that bit of information provided by Montri Tramoj to account for the origin of *jike*. Supposing that the *likay* as described by Montri Tramoj actually originated in northern Malaysia viz. Kedah and Perlis, the addition of the Thai *lakon* to the original form, as already seen by Smithies, certainly makes it distinctly Thai. This means that the form as seen in northern Malaysia today is then an adapted version of the Thai form. This view would probably explain why the *jike* form as seen in Kedah and Perlis has somehow remained a type whose active participation is confined only to Sam-Sam and other Malaysians of Thai origin. There is also the realization that in the olden days the main locus of government was the king's palace and the peripheral areas were peopled by immigrant tribes who became assimilated with the local ones. The *jike* was a folk type *lakon* art which underwent an inevitable change in line with the nature of its participant group. In this way certain features are attributed to one place of origin while others are said to come from some other place.

A local informant, a former police clerk who at the time of the interview was about 88 years old, reported that the *jike* and the *gendang keling* originated in a place called *Setol*, near Kuala Perlis. *Setol* was a settlement of a river estuary, which became the landing place for incoming Siamese and Indian settlers and traders in the early days.

⁴ Micheal Smithies, 'Likay: A Note on the Origin, Form and Future of Siamese Folk Opera'; in *Journal of Siam Society*; Vol. 59, pt. 1, January 1971, 33–63.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 35.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 36.

They came via the river in boats. His story has it that the Siamese immigrants were the first to come — by way of Sungai Berembang and Kuala Perlis into the mainland of Kedah, Perlis and Perak. Some went on to Langkawi. When the Indians arrived, the Siamese were already there. My informant said that the Indians brought cows with them into the country. The animals seemed to be the butt of Siamese jokes directed at the Indian immigrants; a sort of tomfoolery that later developed into the *gendang keling* and *jike*.

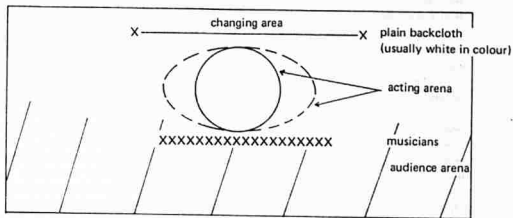
The form as known and seen in Kedah and Perlis is quite 'Malay' in character. It is a folk type entertainment enjoyed by the Sam-Sam and the Malays alike. The *jike* normally graces the festivals of Thai-Buddhist temples (*wat*) with its shows. The *jike* show is observed to be divisible into five parts — opening ceremony, drum-calling, comic skit, and the *lakon* which carries an interlude of dance by a transvestite⁷ and intermission.

a) *Opening Ceremony*: This part of *jike* is necessarily ritualistic and involves the *jike* troupe members. The troupe leader assumes the *bomoh* role in the ritual. The opening ceremony is a rite carried out just before a show. In the shows that saw, put up by two troupes (one in Perlis and one in Langkawi), the rite was conducted in a clearing that soon proved to be the acting arena of the *jike* show. The opening ceremony was carried out within clear view of the audience. Briefly the opening rite was thus: in the clearing were placed musical instruments, props and other paraphernalia connected with the rite. They were composed of musical instruments comprising 6 or 7 *rebana*, 2 or 3 pairs of *kecerek*, and a *serunai*; props like masks, headdress, split bamboo cane and wooden weaponry, like *parang* and knives (see illustration in pictures 1 & 2). The *bomoh* then led his performers into the arena for a blessing ceremony. The player seated themselves in a circle around the instruments. In the opening rites this "blessing" involved the use of *kapur* (lime), lighted candles, a concoction of *sirih* (betel leaf spiced with a dash of lime and betel nut pieces), a jug of drinking water, prepared incense burner and a *pengeras* (usually in the form of a plate containing money given by a knowledgeable sponsor or spectator). The blessing ceremony included sprinkling on the *rebana* with lime and *sirih* juices as well as carrying the lighted candle around the instruments. The players were blessed with *sirih* spittle from the *bomoh*. In the blessing ceremony involving the *seri panggung* (main actress role) the procedures described above were followed by a ceremonious touch on her face by the *bomoh*, while he breathed incantations upon her forehead. The acting arena was also blessed and cleansed of evil spirits.

b) *Drum-Calling*: This is a follow-up of the opening rite in the *jike* show. It involves the beating of the *rebana* by the musicians. This part of the show is, as I see it, yet another ritual; for indeed it gives a ritualistic nuance to the show. In this section, the musicians are already in possession of their instruments and are seated on a mat on the frontal part of the arena (see diagram). They proceed to beat the *rebana*. The beating of the *rebana* with the *kecerek* and *serunai* accompaniment give it a characteristic insistence of tone and timing. It can be heard for miles on a clear and quiet night. This beat can last for as long as a half hour or more and carries a 'haunting' message of

⁷ My definitive exposition of the *jike* act was first published in the weekly newspaper *Berita Minggu* Nov. 6, 1977.

calling. It is a somewhat traditional version of the poster-stickers or radio forecast that aids in announcing a happening. The drum-calling broadcasts to the villagers and announces the start of the show to its prospective audience.



The Participation Square in a Dike Show

c) *The Comic Skit*: The act proper launches off with a comic skit. The cue is a tantalizing shake of the backcloth by a player who utters a sing-song parley with his audience or troupe members in a peculiar gibberish. The opening words of the song sounds thus: *terna wana* (spoken by the layers behind the cloth screen), *torbet torbet* (spoken by the audience or troupe members).

This kind of parley is kept on in the process of the player's tantalization of the audience. It is a play on the actor's uncertainty as to which side of the cloth to come out from — the left or the right. This is done by poking the face out first at the right corner of the backcloth and after a lot of shaking the backcloth, again to appear at the left corner and so on. While so doing the player sings the words *terna wana* and as he pokes his face out someone would respond with *torbet torbet*. The words probably refer to the action: those spoken by the player may refer to himself *terna wana* — (I am here) while the response may be a call to him to come out, as the sound of *torbet* sounds like a corruption of the word *terbit* meaning "to come forth" in Malay. The player's movements reminded me of those of a Malay game called *aci lut* (which literally means now you see me, now you don't), a game common to Kedah and usually provides entertainment and laughter between the mother and her fondling.

When the player finally makes up his mind to come out, he does so with a flourish, revealing an 'Indian' character. Moving about in a wild manner he dances and steps around like a caged animal inside the arena, and he reports his presence in an admixture of dialects — presumably Sam-Sam, Malay and Thai. In the performance that I saw, this player was an Indian who had come by boat onto the foreign land, and there made his home. No sooner had he made up his mind to stay, in came another character (presumably Chinese or more appropriately Thai), who confronted him and questioned his right of landing. He told the first player that he had been staying there a long time and therefore the place belonged to him. They soon got involved in a quick repartee of wits which boiled down to each trying to disprove the other's right to the

place. However, before they could come to real blows a 'Malay' character came forth to claim his right. The argument started all over again. There was a lull in their argument, and at this cue the Malay man's daughter emerged and dance-stepped demurely round the arena. Her appearance made the foreigners fall in love with her. Both voiced their wish to win the girl's hand in marriage much to the dismay of the father. An argument again ensued, this time with each trying to outwit the other. Finally the father suggested that they all seek the advice of the king of the land in that matter.

d) *The Lakon*: The *lakon* part is supposed to be the longest part of the *jike* show. According to my informants this was so especially in those days when performances started from 8 o'clock at night and did not last until the early hours of dawn. But lately the show would pack up by 12 or 1.00 midnight at the latest. The *lakon* opens with a king character, symbolized as king by his headdress; he comes out of the changing area behind the backcloth and stands erect in the acting area just in front of the centre part of the backcloth. With a handkerchief in one hand, he narrates his story, all the while doing the dance movements with his hands in aid of his narration. The king character tells of his kingdom, his family and his story in a sort of synopsis. When he has done so, he calls upon his wife and from here the sequence takes the form of clowning. The three characters in the comic skit then come in to present their case to the king. The solution to the problem in the shows I have seen was the marriage of one of heroes to the Malay man's daughter while the other was wedded to some other girl in the kampung. The plot is always the same — that is the king decides to go hunting. While on one of his hunting trips he meets a woman and marries her. She becomes his second wife. But the King does not tell her that he is already married. He has also forgotten his first wife in his preoccupation with the second one. The queen, the first wife, thinks her husband has met with some harm. She calls her servants (the clown characters are supposed to be with the king on his journey) to bring her to her husband. But the servants, knowing the real situation, are of course reluctant to do that. After much cajoling and hitting which they get from the queen, the clowns at last reveal the truth to her. Her anger knows no bounds and in her wrath the clowns received more flogging for not telling her earlier. Then she decides to dress up as a man (in one show it was as a common villager) and goes to spy on her husband. The outcome is a fight between the first and the second wife — the fighting action is actually a rapid dance-step done in a circle around the arena, and there are imaginary hits with the cane prop or actual hittings of the clown characters, though the two women do not hit one another. The fighting ends when the king finally succeeds in pacifying them and bringing them together in a truce.

e) *The Intermission*: In the *lakon* act there is the hunting episode of the king. The hunting episode includes a dance number which is supposed to be an intermission. In all the shows seen the dance number was performed by a tranvestite who used the dance to portray soft lithe movements which were not only very sexy but which alluded to the king's activities, for when the dance was completed and the *lakon* resumed, the king had married another woman, whom he met while he was on a hunting tour.

ii) *The Wayang Kulit/Wayang Kulit Siam*:

The *wayang kulit* or *wayang kulit Siam* as it is more popularly known in Kedah, is a puppet *lakon* type already described at great length by Amin Sweeney in his book.⁸ It suffices me to say here that the *wayang kulit* as seen in Kedah has two tendencies — that of the traditional *wayang Siam* shows with *dalangs* like Pak Noh Siam, and the modernized adapted version by younger *dalangs* like that of Boom Fa's at Canglun.

iii) *The Menora/Nora/Menora Siam*:

The *menora Siam* or *menora* or just *nora*, as it is more popularly known in Kedah, is undoubtedly Thai in origin. It is a *lakon* dance type found in the states of Kedah and Kelantan. The *menora* must have been an offshoot or derivative of the Thai *lakon jatri*.⁹ In Kedah, had it not been for the efforts of three active *menora* participants,¹⁰ the form would almost be extinct.

Like the Thai *lakon jatri* of 'Menohra' and the Malaysian *jike*, the *menora* of Kedah is performed nowadays for festive occasions, ranging from Buddhist festivals centred round the *wat* or *candi* to state organized shows. It is, like the *jike*, performed in a clearing or arena with a cloth backdrop which is the only form of setting to the show. Any inference as to time, place of action and setting is left very much to the imagination of the audience. The characters narrate information on their role in terms of background, name and status. But two factors, the Samsam and Thai-Malay admixture of dialogue and the sing-song quality of rendition seem to place the effect of story-telling, (in my opinion), on the rhythm of the song rather than on its meaning. The main attraction to the audience is the dance movement as portrayed.

Menora is indeed a dance *lakon*. Hence, the emphasis is more on its dance movements for which there are special terms to describe them. Some examples of special movements are *rabam*, for dances in general, *hom chang wa*, for dances performed by gods and goddesses, and *chui-chai*, for the alphabet dance. *Menora* even incorporates some *mudra* dance movements of Indian origin. The *menora* dance pose is very characteristic of the drama that unfolds, such that a dance *lakon* portraying the love of a man and a woman, for example, is performed in movements not only done in unison but also with gentle motions of romance. The dance *lakon* mood in *menora* is largely aided by certain musical instruments. For example, the animal hunt dance in the *lakon* is accompanied by the noisy *gendang* and cymbal (*dung-ce*).

The *menora* of Kedah when performed is rendered with an admixture of Thai songs, while the Malay and Samsam dialects form the main modes of dialogue repartee. *Menora* is also a story repertoire in the Thai *lakon jatri*. Thus in the Malaysian equivalent, the 'real' *menora* would be one that performs the *menora* story. Like any traditional story-building, the mode is episodic. In short, the story tells of 7

⁸ For a full description of its form see P.L. Amin Sweeney, *The Ramayana and the Malay Shadow-Play*; (Kuala Lumpur: National University of Malaya Press, 1972).

⁹ For further information on *lakon jatri* see Chua Sariman, 'Traditional Dance Drama in Thailand' in Taib Osman (ed) *Traditional Drama and Music of Southeast Asia*, (Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa and Pustaka, 1974, 165-171).

¹⁰ See Appendix attached at the end of this treatise for a list of the names of Kedah performing art informants.

princesses from a land in the heavens (clouds?) supposedly situated some where in the Himalayas. One day, they decided to come down to earth to bathe in a pond. While they were bathing and making merry, a prince named Prince Sudhon, who was hunting, passed by and espied them. He fell in love with the youngest of them, the one named Menora, and decided to marry her. He proceeded to steal her *baju layang* (cloak used to aid her on her flight to and from her homeland) and when she resisted him he tied her up with a snake. When Menora finally agreed to marry him he let her go. He then wooed and married her, and they soon became very much in love. But one person in Prince Sudhon's kingdom was not happy of the union. This was the palace priest whose prestige had very much been overshadowed by the celestial presence of Menora. For a long time he harboured hatred for her. Then one day an opportunity came his way. Prince Sudhon had to leave his wife to fight enemies of the kingdom. He left Menora in the care of his parents, the King and Queen. While he was away, the priest began his plot to kill Menora. He told the king that he had an omen that the king would die unless a sacrifice of a celestial being was offered. Finally, for love of his life, the King assented to making Menora the sacrificial offering by burning her — Menora was allowed one last request which was to be able to don her *baju layang*. With this, Menora was able to fly away from the fire and back to her father's kingdom in the heavens. Prince Sudhon came back victorious, but found out the truth about Menora's plight and was very sad and angry at the injustice done to his wife. He vowed to find her even if he had to go to the very end of the earth. Finally, after much hardship and adventure Sudhon reached his wife's kingdom. The fact that he arrived at all was enough to impress his parents-in-laws. But they made him undergo one last test. They dressed Menora and her six sisters alike and presented them before him with the condition that only if he picked his wife could he take her home. This, of course, was easily done and upon returning to earth together they lived happily ever after.

The *menora* dance *lakon* of Kedah is performed by three players — the hero, the heroine, and a third player who would be switching roles from clown to ogre to beast as the case demands. The performance is motivated for reasons that is ascribed only to entertainment.

Animistic and Malay-Islamic Lakon Types:

I shall consider together those types bearing animistic and Malay-Islamic influences, because it is very difficult to differentiate in quantitative terms the occurrence of each type of influence as seen in the *lakon* types themselves. The belief influences in those types are found to overlap. It is also felt that the use of the term Malay-Islamic is more appropriate here because the orthodox frowns on any kind of sensual showmanship. Also the Islamic teachings that reached the Malay Peninsula came via Persia and India bringing with them Persian and Hinduistic influences that were admixed to the animistic beliefs of the indigenous people in the Malay Peninsula itself.

(i) The Mak Yong:

The *mak yong* dance *lakon* in Kedah is not as actively performed as in Kelantan. But there are two elderly Kedah Malays knowledgeable in the art, who ascribe the form to being a tradition of Kedah as it is of Kelantan. Indeed the form is of a type that was once actively performed in the northern Malaysian Peninsular states of Kedah, (including

Perlis), Kelantan and Trengganu.¹¹ The type, being Malay in participation, and ascribed as it is to the northern part of West Malaysia, generally fits the local belief as to its origin. Mohd. Affandi Ismail has listed three such beliefs¹² which indicate the desire of the villagers to understand and accord with their immediate surroundings. Their past-time came to the attention of the king who saw and liked it to the extent that he adopted the form as court entertainment. Others even performed it to invigorate tired souls; this function of the performance soon developed into a medicinal ritual to cure illnesses. The advent of Islam gave the form an Islamic character for some and a curbing for others. Hypothetically speaking, the court's acceptance resulted in preserving the type in certain areas and its disappearance in favour of orthodox Islamic teaching in others.

The form as kept alive in Kelantan has maintained much of the traditionally accepted repertoire and sophisticated costumery of the *mak yong*,¹³ which the Kedah *mak yong* informants also accept as similar to theirs.

ii) *The Hadrah*:

Hadrah is an admixture of the *lakon*, dance and song art, so typical of traditional Malay performing types. As a form, it is prevalent in Kedah, Perlis, and Perak, and previously Penang. A similar version under a different name is found in Trengganu and is called *rodak*. From my informants and from research work done,¹⁴ I have been able to deduce that *hadrah* is very closely associated with Islam and religiousness. Conjectures on the origin of *hadrah* are hard to prove. But all the same, they are honest attempts at piecing together the *hadrah* puzzle of origin. There is, however the general consensus that *hadrah* originated in the Middle Eastern Islamic countries. Incidentally, in Fatimah Ali's research¹⁵ she mentioned two sayings in the *Hadith*¹⁶ that points to the permissibility of heraldry by use of drums and voice (in the form of singing?) in praise of the wedded couple in a wedding ceremony. *Hadrah* as performed locally is very much a feature of Malay-Islamic wedding in Kedah.

In a *hadrah* performance the music of the *gendang* is the liveliest compared to the other types already mentioned in this treatise. The beat is also catchy as to induce some kind of physical response from the more extrovert Malay audience. The *hadrah* is affectionately called '*cak nogo*' by those familiar with the art form in the area.

My informants, who happened to be quite religiously inclined persons, were quite adamant of the fact that the early *hadrah* was probably just a song-and-music

¹¹ The *mak yong* as seen in Kelantan and Trengganu was mainly found around Tumpat, Kota Bahru, Bacuk and Pasir Mas and Besut area in Trengganu. See Mohd. Affandi Ismail, *Mak Yong: Sebuah Tinjauan dari Sudut Persembahan*; Dept. of Malay Studies University of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, 1973/74, p. 12.

¹² *Ibid.*, 14-24.

¹³ *Ibid.*, pages 47-102 contain a full description of the *mak yong* technique in Kelantan.

¹⁴ See pages 11-28 of Fatimah Ali's, *Hadrah sebagai Satu Seni Tradisional*; an unpublished academic exercise in partial requirement for the B.A. Degree, Dept. of Malay Studies University of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, 1973/74.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 34.

¹⁶ Hadith: It is a name of a book of sayings of the Prophet Muhammad.

rendition. The dance act was said to be a later development. I readily acquiesced with their opinion, although my argument tended to develop more from the very catchiness of the tune as to create the extra effect of the short dance act. As a form of performing art, the dance does give the *hadrah* a better whole, for in the dance act what really happens is that four female impersonators (transvestite dancers) dance demurely in a square formation around the musicians. Then in comes a *rasuk* (male dancer) who tries to dance in such a way as to get the girls out of formation. His aim is to disturb them so that he can get all of them confused in their dance-stepping and harmonious movements. This he fails to do and so he dances away in defeat, while the four dancers continue their dance to the end.

iii) *The Boria*:

I shall not give a lengthy description of the *boria* as I have already done so elsewhere.¹⁷ The form is also more associated with Penang than with Kedah, because it first came with the Indian Muslim Muharram festivals to Penang. It came as a holiday activity of the Indian soldiers stationed in Penang during British rule. It was also in Penang that the form was developed by its participants into the popular type that is known today.

The current popular structure of the *boria* type is broken up into two sequential parts: the comic sketch and the song-and-dance choral routine. In the comic sketch, 4 or 5 players exchange witticism on stage, usually keeping their arguments on one or two themes, for example, the theme of the conservative mother versus the modern mother, and so on. This lasts for about a half hour or more. The comic sketch is followed immediately with a song and dance by a choral group of ten or twelve with a leader called the *tukang karang* to lead the singing. The song refers to the same theme performed in the sketch. Although belonging to Penang, the form has become as much a feature of Kedah festivals as of Penang. It is of late certainly a popular *lakon* for extracurricular activities in Kedah schools. Suffice it to say here that the *boria* is of Shi'ite Islamic origin. The early form it took in Penang was one with Shi'ite Indian Muslim characteristics.¹⁸ It is one form of performing art that has survived the full process of transformation from a ritual which is based on religion to a secular one and on to the popular form of today that is in harmony with its persuasive rendition of themes.¹⁹

iv) *The Lakon Bangsawan*:

This is an almost extinct *lakon* type once very popular not only in Kedah but all over pre-war and post-war Malaysia including Singapore. The *bangsawan's* heyday was between 1930–1940, just before the advent of the film industry on a big scale into

¹⁷ See Rahmah Bujang, *The Boria: A Study of a Malay Theatre in its Socio-Cultural Context*; an unpublished Thesis for the Doctor of Philosophy Degree, University of Hull, Hull England, 1977.

See also Rahmah Bujang, *The Boria Traditions in Retrospect*, Kertas Data, Dept. of Malay Studies University of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, No. 20, 1978.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, Thesis p. Kertas Data, p. 2.

¹⁹ Perhaps the latest use of the *boria* song style for persuasion was the 1978 general elections campaign songs, heard on radio, calling for the people to come out to vote.

post-war Malaysia. In Kedah there still exist informants who had at some time in their youth been actively involved in *bangsawan* troupes. In its day, the *bangsawan* must have been more well known than *boria*. This was because the *bangsawan* started as a popular type entertainment, while the *boria* was still very much a group type secular rite associated with the Muharram celebrations of the Shi'ite Muslims. It was also the first popular type of performing art that concentrated on a lavish display of theater setting and props, rendering it a spectacular presentation and thus making it very appealing to the mainly illiterate Malaysian public of the pre-war and post-war periods.

v) *Seni Mek Mulung*:

The *seni mek mulung* is perhaps the most intriguing performing art type of Kedah, especially when seen in terms of its origin and function.

As a form of performing art it is a *lakon* type brought down from one ancestral family to the next, a knowledge which was not learnt from outside but was strongly believed to be inherited. I have been told by my informants that at any single period of time only one person in the family tree can perform a certain role required in the *lakon mek mulung*. The role will only be relinquished by the player on his death upon which his role will then be inherited by another member of the family. It was a *lakon* type first performed by an immigrant family of Thai-Malay origin using musical instruments of their own creation and performing a dance and song story routine to the accompaniment of the musical instruments. It was obviously liked and accepted by the ruling class, for at some time in its early activity it was reported to be taken into the folds of the performing art brought into the *istana*. It must have its special attraction then to benefit the princely audience that was accorded it.

It has been said that *mek mulung* came at the same time as the *lakon mak yong* of Kelantan and that they were indeed rivals. Apparently the two forms had existed side by side some time during the height of their popularity, as information given by my informants seems to point to a rivalry between the two types for a better audience rating. There was the rather interesting mention of a rivalry that could have burst into a serious fight among the players of the *mek mulung* and the *mak yong* show.²⁰ A reflection of the rivalry has been brought down by *mek mulung* players into their *mek mulung* repertoire, for any *mek mulung* show must include the sequence called *ajuk mak yong*, wherein the clown character (*peran*) calls for the act of *ajuk mak yong* upon which the transvestite dancers would, on the cue of the beat of the drums (*rebana*), commence to stage a parody of the *mak yong* show.

The show is now but a ritual of the type in the past. Being a heritage it is as a form struggling on in the wake of Malay-Islamic belief. There are many reasons for this activity. One reason is that the players are old such that they have the enthusiasm but not the energy to do it. Secondly, they are Muslims, and the teachings of Islam may not favour these performances. This brings us to the third reason, which is the ritualistic nature of the *seni mek mulung* itself. Although previously a popular type art, by virtue of it being kept within the players'

²⁰ See also Rahmah Bujang, 'Seni Mek Mulung - Seni Teater atau Istiadat Penyembahan?' *Berita Minggu* July 23 1978.

circle of family members, the form has acquired features very much akin to a ritual of spirit totemism. This could be regarded as a sort of family blessing or a curse depending on how the family members view it. Pak Taib, its present chosen leader, told me that the form must be kept alive if only to be performed at least once a year, that is during the *upacara puja guru* (rite of ancestral worship). During this rite the *mek mulung* founders, consisting of seven originators of the *lakon* form of whom six were men and one a woman, are feted with a *kenduri selamat* (thanks giving) and are coaxed spiritually back into their midst by staging a chosen *seni mek mulung* repertoire. This performance would culminate in a rite of spirit invocation. During this rite of ancestral worship, which takes place three to four days in the month of May, family members would gather together in readiness for the festive atmosphere anticipated of the third and last days when the most important part of the *mek mulung* show is performed. Indeed the first two nights of the show turn out to be rehearsal nights, so that none may make a mistake on the important night of the third day.

At this juncture it would be best to give a structural description of the *mek mulung* performance. Its *lakon* part is somewhat similar to other traditional *lakon* types like the *jike* or the *wayang kulit*, to mention but two, and commences with an initiation into the spirit of the show by an opening ceremony. This is a blessing procedure carried out on the musical instruments and the *bangsal* which is a type of shelter comprising a special leaf roofing that slopes to the left and right of the main roof beam supported from the ground by rounded long poles, similar in kind to the roof beam and is attached to the four lower corners of the leaf roofing. Some more poles are tied to strengthen the framework. The shelter is devoid of any wall, and this gives it an open-air look.

As for the players themselves their initiation into the performance is symbolized by the partaking of a *sirih* (betel leaf) concoction already prepared. This *sirih* concoction is placed on the *para* (a raised platform on the far end of the narrower length of the *bangsal*) alongside other offerings of foodstuffs, consisting of two platters of rice and roasted whole chicken on top of the rice, 12 plates of an assortment of traditional Malay cakes which include a plate of popcorn, and 7 earthenware pitchers of water. Other than the *sirih* chewing, the players also pay homage to a main supporting pole (*tiang seri*) in the mid-frontal section of the *para* in the *bangsal*, supposedly to appease the spirits guarding the *bangsal* and the grounds around it.

The opening ceremony is followed by a sequence of drum beating and the playing of other musical instruments — 4 *rebana* (drums), a *serunai* (flute), a gong and *mong* (black copper drums in two sizes) and 4 pairs of *kecerek* (bamboo clappers). Like the *jike* type, this sequence takes the role of the prelude to the show and gives time for the prospective audience to come forth from their homes to watch the show. The musical prelude takes about half an hour or more of the total time schedule of the *mek mulung lakon*. The total time taken by present-day shows averages four hours per performance, as the opening starts at eight and the *lakon*, whether completed or not, closes at twelve midnight. In the musical prelude the sitting position of the players is semi-circular and so is that of the audience in the *bangsal* facing the players such that a circular space is made in the middle area of the *bangsal* for the dance *lakon* and clown acts. The musicians are seated in the area in front of the *para* (platform) while some in the audience mingle with the *lakon* players and are seated facing the musicians.

In the show seen in May 1978 the real *lakon* commenced with four role players who, upon entering the *clearing*, seated themselves in a row on the ground, each facing the *tiang seri* in front of the *para*. They paid homage to the *tiang seri* by slightly bending forward, said some prayers and completed the act by wiping their faces with their hands. Still seated they began to sing. The song was sung by both musicians and role-players, and appeared to be a sort of oral chronology of the *mek mulung* ancestral lineage. In the song, inference was also made to some spiritual forces governing the *mek mulung* group of people, and their permission was sought to stage the performance. Presumably, the food offering on the *para* was part of the players' way of appeasing the spirits.

After the song, the four players began their dance *lakon*. The story that year was *Puteri Cahaya Bulan*. In short the story was about a princess whose plight was to suffer in her maidenhood days, but like in any other traditional stories this princess eventually met her prince charming and so lived happily ever after. The *lakon* unfolded with a dance act depicting a journey made by the banished princess, Puteri Cahaya Bulan, and her three maids. As I see it, there were five dance movements repeated to symbolize travelling episode. Soon the dancers came upon a river where they bathed and refreshed themselves. Meanwhile a king had espied them and had fallen in love with the Princess's beauty. His love was reciprocated and the betrothal scene was followed by a dance which was symbolic of togetherness.

The next episode largely concerned some clowning acts by the *peran* (clowns). The *peran*'s acts were woven into the main story by the king, who referred to them as his faithful manservants. His sing-song dialogue with the *peran* characters confirmed that the *peran*'s father and father's father had served in the royal household. He called upon them to show off his new wife and queen. Then he requested his queen to entertain him, for he was sleepy and wanted to sleep in one of his seven-bedroomed castle. The *peran* characters were also called upon to do their bit. From here on, the rest of the *mek mulung* repertoire was taken up by the performance of the *peran* characters, who performed all the other performing art types known to them. In all the three nights of the show, six types of performing art were effected and poked fun at. They were imitations of the *canggung*, *hadrah*, and the *ronggeng* dance-step, a parody of the *makyong*, *lakon wayang kulit* and the *lakon jike*. The imitation acts of the *peran* characters lasted till midnight when it became necessary to stop the show. The actual repertoire of *Puteri Cahaya Bulan* story was never acted.

There was a certain procedure to end the performance, just as there were certain rules each player had to abide by prior to their entry into the acting arena. In the case of individual entry, each player had to face the *tiang seri* and say a prayer in obeisance before getting into the act. They had to do likewise when they left the arena. The whole performance also ended on a similar note akin to the one in the opening ceremony wherein the dance players gathered and sang their wish to stop. They then rounded off with a note of thanks addressed more to the *tiang seri*, or symbol of the guiding spirit, than to the audience.

According to Bang Leman (Sulaiman who played the role of the king), the story was not important. In his own way he gave three reasons for not completing the story. First, it was the time limit which could not exceed twelve midnight. If they played on, they would have taken up all night till the early hours of dawn, because this

period of time had been allocated for the more important spirit invocation ritual. Second, the *mek mulung* family members knew the story and according to him that was good enough reason for not bothering with the completion of the *lakon*. Lastly, the aim was to entertain their ancestral spirits, especially the seven founders, six men and a woman of the *seni mek mulung*. Hence, the story became less important in comparison with the stress laid on the show of ability among the players to do their part to brighten the evening. Hence, the emphasis on the *peran* acts. As I see it, the *lakon* itself was just a prelude to the more important aspect of the *seni mek mulung* in the show, and that was the rite of *puja guru*.

The rite was indeed the climax of the show and was carried out after a two-hour rest, wherein the *mek mulung* family members socialized with one another exchanging jokes, family confidences and problems. During this time the outsiders in the audience would leave for home.

In this rite the four *mek mulung* dance role-players, who in the story was the princess and her three maids, once again seated themselves in a row facing the *tiang seri*. They sat bent forward, so that they almost touched the ground. Two people then held a *batik* cloth at each end of the row of players. The players began to sing a song of meditation, invoking the spirits of the seven founders. The song was rendered in a pleading yet very sad tone of voice that carried a note of sincere appeal, for it invoked the spirits of the founders to come and occupy the bodies of the members of their group. The invocation appeared to have been answered when a youthful member of the *mek mulung* family began to start and jerk as if in a trance. At this juncture, the invocation stopped and the players, knowing that their request was granted, retired to their side of the *bangsal* to let things take their own course. The youth concerned began to prance and kick about and in this state of trance he was known as *Dewa Muda*.

Soon there were six *mek mulung* family members possessed, and all of them were males. The whole affair of invocation and possession pointed to a kind of spirit totemism; and in this case it concerned the spirits of the seven original founders of *seni mek mulung*. The rite was obviously animistic with some Hinduistic undertones, since those possessed felt no pain and seemed to acquire supernatural powers not possible under normal circumstances. If the Hindu rite of penance or *kavadi* in Kuala Lumpur is annually carried to a destination of the holy shrine at the Batu Caves, the *mek mulung* rite of *puja guru* was carried out in the holy shrine of the *bangsal*. An interesting development in the person of those possessed was their acrobatic prowess. This was demonstrated by walking and running on the elevated roof edge of the *bangsal*, or levitating precariously by lying on the back on a pole raised some two feet or more from the ground. It is during this state of possession by the spirits of their forefathers that they are believed to have extraordinary powers of curing and blessing; a belief that must still be strong in the minds of family members judging by the number of medicinal and spiritual cure-seekers. Babies not yet blessed were also brought into the *bangsal* by parents to be blessed by the spirit of their forefathers. Indeed, the aim of the rite was to procure physical and spiritual rejuvenation as well as to bless babies.

The rite continued till about five in the morning. While under possession by the spirits of their forefathers some kind of dialogue were communicated between those possessed with those unpossessed. For example, in an admixture of Thai and Malay,

those possessed stressed the need for the group to continue with the *seni mek mulung* performance with the threat that the death of the *mek mulung* would also mean the death of their family alliance. They pointed out and blessed²¹ those whom they prophesied as having the potential as a *mek mulung* player. They even went as far as to give a demonstration of how *mek mulung* movements should be executed, and one thing led to another and soon those picked out among the unpossessed had to join them in a sort of practical class session. Finally the spirits are ready to leave the bodies of their ancestors. One by one, the men became exorcised. They fell prostrate on the ground, and this was followed by some jerky movements of their limbs, as though these were the contractions caused by the spirit leaving their bodies. They would then be brought back to their senses by a sprinkling of water, taken from the *balang* on the *para*, or by wiping their faces with the water. These acts were followed by some *mantera*. Soon all the six possessed men returned to their senses.

It would be interesting to note that there are some family members bestowed with the ability to perform a certain role in *mek mulung*, who have actually disassociated themselves with the art. They have gone out of Wang Tepus, the sub-district where the form is found, and some have left the state of Kedah for the purpose of staying in other places in Malaysia. Presumably, keeping the distance is a safe way of immunizing family members burdened with some role responsibility to the *mek mulung*. According to its present leader, Pak Yit (*Yit* being the short form for the name *Taib*), one who dares poke fun at or slight the *seni mek mulung* will encounter misfortune. Thus to immunize us against the curse, our group was cautioned against making any recording of the rite proper, which took place from two o'clock onwards. We were also cautioned against any form of looking at the *mek mulung* performance with malicious intent. This was vividly demonstrated with an example in a person in the audience in one of the performances of a previous year, who had poked fun at the proceedings, and for that received his retribution, for the next day while walking on a hill slope, he slipped and fell and broke his leg. Pak Yit himself reported on how he missed a year's performance of the *puja guru* and because of this he was afflicted with acute pain from his abdomen downwards for the rest of the year. The pain got healed only in the following year when he complied with the rule by putting on the *puja guru* rite with the *lakon mek mulung*.

All in all, this process of keeping the curse alive through dire warnings, threats and citing incidents related to the *seni mek mulung* has served to keep the form very much alive.

Animistic and Malay-Islamic Song and Music Types:

Of the song and music types of Kedah the *dikir berendoi* and *dikir maulud* are perhaps the two song types most peculiar to the Kedah Malays. They are song types sung without any accompaniment to the music. On the other hand the *beduan* and *ghazal* are both song and music types whose rendition complements its special kind of music. The *beduan* and *ghazal* are types more affiliated to other states — the *beduan* to

²¹ The blessing action of those possessed in the *mek mulung* ritual is done by three slight taps with a hand prop — a bamboo cane about 1½ feet long with one end split into four — the tapping of which starts from the head to the shoulders and down to the body and legs of the one blessed.

Perlis and the *ghazal* to Johor. Then there is the *gendang keling*, which could have been a later adaptation of the *beduan*. Besides, there is a pure music type called *nobat* which belongs to the royal family and is played only for occasions held within the royal household. It would be interesting to note here that the *nobat* is the only pure music form in Malaysia, and is associated only with royal ceremonies. Such types as those belonging to the people like the *dikir berendoi* and *dikir maulud* are, for example, song types minus any form of musical accompaniment. The more conventional mode, however, is to have the songs and musical instruments. Let us look at the types mentioned in order to get a clearer picture of their characteristics.

i) *Dikir Berendoi* and *Dikir Maulud*:

The *dikir berendoi* or cradle song is the earlier of the two *dikir* song types mentioned. The former is the animistic song type while the latter is the Malay-Islamic version of the former. Both types are still active and they co-exist as song types which are popular at wedding times, as well as in *naik buai*,²² or *naik endoi* as known in the Kedah dialect, when the young baby is feted. The performance of either type is usually done by one and the same troupe. In the *dikir berendoi* there is the main singer who sits near the cradle with the baby inside it, and his verses will be chorussed by a row of male backers seated in a crescent-shaped row facing him and the baby. The song of the *dikir berendoi* can range between 12 and 20 or more verses. According to my informant the number of verses sung depends on the host or hostess, as the length is his or her prerogative. In the *dikir berendoi* the song begins with an introduction to the child's family background. From there the song takes the form of a lullaby cautioning the baby to be respectful to his mother and father. The contents of the song almost certainly refer to the baby's parents as the baby's up-bringer, as the blood-and-life-giver through their provision of milk and food to their child. It carries the message of filiality to parents and thus re-affirms parental power over the children. It mentions the heavy responsibility of a good child towards his parents.

The *dikir berendoi* is an institutional rite with Kedah and Perlis Malay families. The better-off the family the more is the necessity felt to proclaim the arrival of its new born by feting it. If this is not done, it means that the family for some reason or other, is ashamed of its new born.

The *dikir maulud* is rendered in the same tune as the *dikir berendoi* but the wordings are taken from extracts of a book called *Kitab Maulud* which is actually a book of praise of Prophet Muhammad. This *dikir* has a total of 22 songs of praise, though not all are sung at a single occasion. The rule with singers, who incidentally are also all male, is that their troupe must start off with the first song which is entitled *Assala-mualaika*. As the performance of *dikir maulud* of nowadays takes only two to three hours at the most, no one troupe can actually sing all twenty-two songs at one sitting. The performance of *dikir maulud* has actually been frowned upon by religious teachers. Basically this censure has to do with the Arabic words being mispronounced

²² Rite of *naik buai*: It is a rite to mark a baby's first entry into the cradle. It also acts as a proclamation of the baby for the family concerned, as it marks the first time the baby is officially shown to the public or to village members. In the southern states of Malaysia, like Johor, the first proclamation of a baby is marked by a feast of a type of dish called *bubur putih bubur merah* (brown/and white porridge).

by the style of rendition. It is quite all-right to prolong a Malay syllable, as with the *dikir berendoi*, because the meaning of the words would not change. But to sing the *dikir maulud* in a style similar to *dikir berendoi* would definitely create new or unintelligible meanings to the Arabic words used in the song. This error in vocalization is thus caused by the wholesale adaptation of the *dikir berendoi* song for *dikir maulud*, a factor which has made me conclude that the *dikir berendoi* is the earlier of the two.

The 22 songs of praise in the *dikir maulud*, as provided by my informants, are as follows:

- | | |
|-------------------|----------------------|
| 1. Assalamualaika | 12. Fallamma |
| 2. Khairuman | 13. Habibun |
| 3. Bisyahri | 14. Waazati Halimatu |
| 4. Tanaqalta | 15. Taam Maliyannahu |
| 5. Wulida | 16. Man Mislahu |
| 6. Alfasalluafa | 17. Ya Maulidan |
| 7. Fi Misli | 18. Salallahu |
| 8. Sallaalaika | 19. Taalu Ibna |
| 9. Baddaatana | 20. Saibun |
| 10. Marhaban | 21. Fishu Sidinna |
| 11. Ya Nabi Salam | 22. Illahi Temis |

ii) *Beduan* and *Gendang Keling*:

The *beduan* and *gendang keling* are song types rendered to the accompaniment of music from a percussion-type instrument called *rebana*. *Beduan* is named after the singer-players whose collective identification is simply *beduan* (performers). It is like the *gendang keling*, a once very popular form of entertainment among village people to celebrate happy occasions like weddings and thanksgiving feasts. There are about five or more players in the *beduan* troupe. This performing art has a singing style very much its own. In the performance the players sit with their faces submerged in the hollow end of the *rebana* and they sing into it while they beat its other end with their hands. This produces a muffled humming sound which makes the song more unintelligible. According to some informants, the song of the *beduan* actually include requests for coffee and refreshments. It is the task of the host to station someone within hearing distance to catch the words so that the host can then comply with their requests. Woe betide the host who fails to do this for the song may turn against him in its insinuations. The *gendang keling* is similar to the *beduan* except that the single-players do not hide their faces inside the *rebana*.

Some of the songs of *beduan* and *gendang keling* are given below. The *beduan* songs are:

- | | |
|--------------------|-------------------|
| 1. Mula Pasang | 8. Intan Landak |
| 2. Alang Alang | 9. Lumat |
| 3. Orang Kaya | 10. Lutong Mawa |
| 4. Tok Sheh Bandar | 11. Rambai Padang |
| 5. Muda | 12. Tebuk Tebang |
| 6. Cempa | 13. Seren. |
| 7. Rebang | |

Each *beduan* song consists of four lined verses. As an example, the first song goes thus,

'Mula Padi
Mula tiga perdu
Mula menyanyi
Mula tiga lagu'²³

This means that there will be only three songs sung at the performance. The *gendang keling* songs are as follows:

- | | |
|--------------------|------------------|
| 1. Mula Pasang | 7. Tari Inai Tua |
| 2. Alih-Alih | 8. Bonda |
| 3. Mati Cang | 9. Gong Tiga |
| 4. Cang Digong | 10. Raja Beradu |
| 5. Pungut Siput | 11. Gong Dua |
| 6. Kambing Berlaga | |

Animistic and Malay-Islamic Dance Types:

In this group of dance types are the traditional *tarian terinai* and *cinta sayang*. The *cinta sayang* dance is believed to develop from another traditional dance type called *zikir rahmat* once danced by fishermen of North-Western Malaysia. Like the *zikir rahmat*, *cinta sayang* is a dance symbolizing the love and concern among members of fishermen families. In the dance, the male dancers depict fishermen going to sea to catch fish and putting up a prayer of safety for their wives and children. The female dancers depict the wives wishing their husbands farewell and safe return. *Tarian Terinai* was once a court dance type and consisted of various intricacies of movement, which were sophisticated and artistic. Both dance forms have been revived and adapted, under the auspices of the Ministry of Culture and its department in the State of Kedah. Then there is the *canggung*, a dance type that has become more associated with Perlis. *Canggung* is a Thai word for dance and its name points to its origin. The dance form itself is essentially for entertainment and it symbolizes a happy and carefree people. Its performance which is done after a padi harvest makes the form very suitable for relaxation. The form as known now is an adapted one and has lost much of its originality. Most of the performing art described are types attributed to pastimes or ritualistic activities of villagers who are mainly padi planters or fishermen. In the old days the occupation of the villages depended very much on seasonal weather changes like rainfall and wind movements such that in a single year the people could not carry out their farming of fishing and time was given to entertainment. The forms of presentation of the types of their performing art are therefore highly reflective of their mode of living.

Recent development within the country in the way of scientific and technological advancement, have left little for the performing art to flourish. Entertainment is provided by sophisticated media such as the radio, the television and the cinema.

²³ The song 'Mula Pasang' recorded in the text in the Malay language, refers to an announcement that they will sing three (*tiga*) songs in the *beduan* repertoire, thus making four songs sung with *mula pasang* itself.

(a)

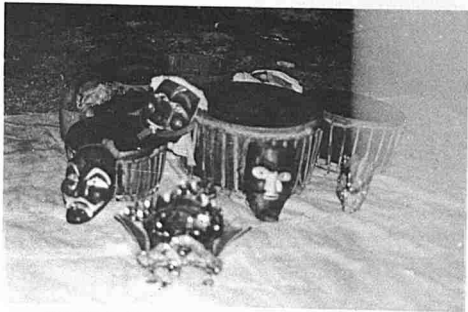
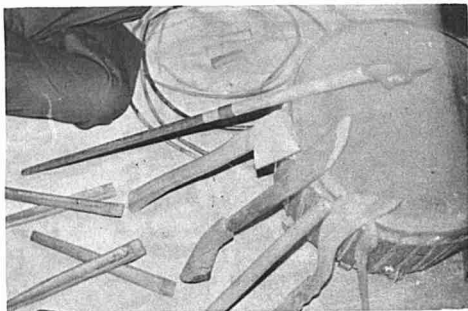


Illustration 1 (a) }
(b) } *Jike musical & theatrical ensemble*
& (c) }

(b)



(c)

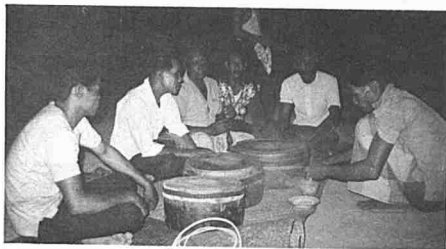


- Illustration 2* (a) i) }
ii) } *The Opening Ceremony as seen with Langkawi Jike.*
iii) }
- (b) i) }
ii) } *The Opening Ceremony as seen with Perlis Jike.*
iii) }

2 (a) (i)



(ii)



(iii)



2 (b) (i)



(ii)



(iii)



Illustration 3: The Comic Skit in the Jike.
(ref. p. 8)

(a) Langkawi version of 'Keling' character.



*Both characters use fast dance stepping movements, with an opening dialogue that goes, "terna wana torbet torbet ..."

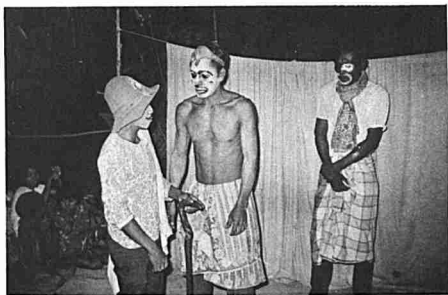


(b) Perlis version of 'Gendang Keling'.

Illustration 4: The Comic Skit in the Jike. (Continued). (ref. p. 9).



The demure Malay Man's daughter (travestite player).



The haggling over the hands of the daughter in marriage.

The King role in the Langkawi Jike.



The King & Queen role in the Perlis Jike.
Illustration 5: The Lakon part of the Jike Show.



A Frontal view of the transvestite dancer – behind the scenes & while waiting for 'her' cue – Langkawi Jike.

APPENDIX:
List of Informants

(by courtesy of the Ministry of Culture, Youth & Sports)

Kedah Informants:

District	Art Type	Informant's name	Address
Padang Terap	Mak yong	Khamis Jaafar	Bt. 20, Kpg. Bendang, Kuala Nerang.
	—do—	Ibrahim Md. Noor	Bt. 27½, Lubok Merbau, Pedu.
	Hadrah	Rejab Shafie	Kurung Hitam, Nami.
	Menora	Din Cheang	Kg. Tanjung, Mukim Pedu.
	Wayang Kulit	Hashim Latiff	Kg. Baru, Seladang Rebah, Pedu.
	—do—	Ibau Isa	Kg. Nawa, Kuala Nerang.
	Gendang Keling	Baharom A. Bakar	Kg. Bagan, Naka.
	Jike	Baharom A. Bakar	Kg. Baru Trolak, Padang Terap.
	—do—	Long	Kg. Tanjung Piring, Nami.
	Menora	Cikgu Yang	c/o Sek. Kebang. Naka.
Kubang Pasu	Wayang Kulit	Mohd. Noh Hj. Mahmud	Kg. Kunlung, Anson, Jitra.
	Gendang Keling	—do—	—do—
	—do—	Ku Kassim	Kg. Ketoi, Mk. Tunjang.
	Mek Mulung	Taib Latiff/Salleh Mahmud	Kg. Wang Tepus.
	Boria	Cikgu Hashim	c/o Sek. Kebang. Padang Sera.
	Jike	Tok Adam Abdullah	Padang Sera, K. Pasu.
Langkawi	Hadrah	Shaari Saad	Kg. Nawar, Mukim Malau, Jitra.
	Awang Belanga	Tuan Hj. Fadzil Ahmad	Kg. Ulu Melaka.
Yan/Sik	Jike	Ismail Hanafiah	Kg. Temoyong.
	Dikir Barat	Mohd. Yusuf Din	Kg. Sik Dalam, Sik.
	Wayang Kulit	Selimin Tahir	—do—
	Mak Yong	Ali Awang Kecil	Kg. Paya Terendam.
	Awang Selampit	—do—	—do—
Pendang	Dikir Maulud	Lebai Hashim Shafie	Kg. Sik Dalam, Sik.
	Menora	En. Din Tiang	Kg. Wat Siam, Padang Peliang.
	Menora	Din Cheng (Din Pitt)	98, Banggul Lada, Baling.
Baling	Wayang Kulit	Din Kerai (Din Perim)	Jln. Kroh, Simpang Empat.
	Tarian Sewang (orang asli)	Itam Daran	Perkampungan Orang Asli, Lubok Legong.

Alor Setar	Gendang Keling	Mihat Md. Noor	Kg. Jabi, Alor Setar.
	Dikir Maulud/ Berendoi	Tuan Hj. Zakaria Hj. Ahmad	Kg. Kubang Rotan.
	Hadrah	Ahmad Ibrahim	Bt. 7½, Kg. Gunong Keriang.

Perlis Informants:

Types	Name of Informants	Name of Informants
Awang Batil	Ismail Hassan	Kg. Wang Bintang.
-do-	Mahmud Wahid	Kg. Pokok Sena, Luping.
Beduan	Junid Ali	Kg. Kurong Batang, Utan Aji.
Ganggung	YB Syed Darus Syed Hashim	B Undangang Negeri Perlis.
Dikir	Tuan Hj. Omar	Sg. Baru, Simpang Empat.
Dikir Maulud/Berendoi	Tuan Hj. Othman Ismail	Sg. Baru Simpang Empat.
Gendang Keling	Mahmud Wahid	Kg. Pokok Sena, Luping.
-do-	Mat Cik Chat	Kg. Datuk, Bekar Lateh.
Gendang Keling	Mohd. Noor Abd. Rahman	B 30-A, Padang Melangit.
-do-	Omar Endut	Kg. Behor Temah.
-do-	Oman Man	Abi Padang Melangit.
Ghazal Party	Mat Man	Kg. Simpang Empat.
Tarian Terinai	Ismail Hassan	Kg. Kurong Batang, Utan Aji.
Tumbuk Lesong	Syed Dom Syed Hashim	-do-
Hadrah	Ahmad Ismail	Kg. Kubang Paya, Arau.
-do-	Ahmad Jaya	Kg. Titi Besi, Arau.
-do-	Ali Ahmad	Bt. 1½, Jln. Baru, Behor Temak, Kangar.
-do-	Husain Mat	Labuh Besar, Ngulang.
-do-	Lebai Tapa Hj. Nawi	Bt. 2½, Jln. Santan, Kangar.
-do-	Mahmud Darus	Hujung Bukit, Nisam.
-do-	Nyan Ahmad	Bt. 8½, Jln. Kaki Bukit, Perlis.
-do-	Osman Salleh	Batas Lintang, Simpang Empat.
-do-	Razak Ariffin	Kg. Padang Besar, Kurong Anai, Arau.

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Musical Ensembles of Northern Kedah

Ku Zam Zam bt. Ku Idris

This article is based on a research done in Kedah for the purpose of writing a thesis for a Master's degree in Malay Studies. The area of research is Northern Kedah, specifically the district of Kubang Pasu where most of the traditional musical ensembles are found. The ensembles selected are those of the *Perkumpulan Wayang Kulit Sri Asun* found in Kampung Kun Luang situated about eight miles from the town of Jitra (the major town for the district of Kubang Pasu), *Perkumpulan Mek Mulung Sri Kedah* found in Kampung Wang Tepus (also in the district of Kubang Pasu) and the *Perkumpulan Gendang Keling Kampung Wang*, a village situated in the vicinity of Padang Sera, a town ten miles from Jitra.

1. Wayang Kulit Ensemble of Sri Asun

Jacques Brunet, who has studied the shadow-play, believes that the development of the shadow-play (*wayang kulit*) is related to the development of Hindu culture in India where the art is associated with Brahmanic rituals and beliefs.¹ From India, this performing art spread to the Middle East such as Turkey and also to Indonesia. Brunet also believes that once established in Indonesia, the shadow-play was later introduced to Thailand, Cambodia and other parts of South East Asia absorbing local forms. In Malaysia, especially in Kedah and Kelantan, the most popular type of the shadow-play or *wayang kulit* is the *Wayang Kulit Siam* which is popular in Thailand. W.H. Rassers, an authority on the Javanese *Panji*, agrees with Brunet that the shadow-play especially the Javanese one has its origin in India. Through the process of cultural diffusion, the art is introduced into the Javanese culture and later it spread to neighbouring countries.

The *wayang kulit* ensemble which I have studied in Northern Kedah is called *Wayang Kulit Sri Asun*, and it is very much influenced by the *Wayang Kulit Siam*, especially in the names of the court jesters who are called Din Kiau and Din Tong. This influence is made possible by the short physical distance between Asun (the place where the *wayang kulit* is to be found) and the border of Thailand where the border-town called Changloon is located. Furthermore, the Thai language is the means of communication among musicians of this area. These factors help facilitate the influence.

The musicians of *Wayang Kulit Sri Asun* consist of a puppeteer (*dalang*), a flutist (*juruserunai*), a gong-cum-*kerincing* player, and a *gedombak*-cum-*geduk* player. Thus, the instruments used are made up of a flute (*serunai*), a *geduk* (double-headed drum), a *gedombak* (single-headed drum), a gong and *kerincing* (cymbal). At the beginning of each performance, the *dalang* recites the *mantras* in Thai, invoking all the spirits connected with the performance.

¹Jacques Brunet, "Attempt At A Historical Outline of The Shadow-Theatres" in Mohd. Taib Osman (ed.) *Traditional Drama and Music of South-East Asia*, 1974, pp. 127-129.

Mode of Performance

a) *The Stage*: The *dalang* believes that in order to have a proper performance, the erection of the *wayang kulit* stage should comply with certain measurements. According to him, the stage should be built at least five feet above the ground and the distance between the floor and the roof should be eight feet. Wooden walls are erected on either side of the stage while the front part is left open for the screen (*kelir*) to be fixed. A small space is opened at the back to enable the musicians to go up the stage. The screen is fixed by tightening its four ends with strings. With a well-stretched screen, the *dalang* is able to project a good clear image of the puppets.

During the performance, a lamp is hung from the roof and it is situated between the *dalang* and the screen. The puppets are arranged on banana stems in three rows — those on the right of the *dalang* represent the good characters, those on the left the bad ones and those situated in front of him are the puppets which actively take part in the performance for the night.

b) *The Performance*: A *wayang kulit* performance commences with the *dalang* conducting 'the opening of stage' ceremony (*upacara buka bangsal*). In this ceremony, three pieces of candles, *bekas pinang*² and *duit pengeras*³ are used. These articles are prepared by the party who play host to the ensemble. The ceremony begins with the *dalang* lighting the candles and reciting the *mantras* with the purpose of appeasing the local spirits, so that they will not trouble the musicians. After the recital of the *mantras*, a practice known as *jampi buka bangsal*, the *dalang* will recite another *mantra* to protect himself and the place of performance. This *mantra* is also important in the sense that it has the power to attract the audience to come and watch the performance. The presence of a good audience will determine the popularity of the ensemble and will be a deciding factor for the community in choosing ensembles to perform at their ceremonies.

After the *mantras* are recited, the *dalang* will continue with the actual performance. All instruments in the ensemble are used and a repertoire of three pieces of music called *lagu-lagu pembukaan* are played. The melody of this repertoire is handed down from generation to generation, and has been in existence for quite a long time. The *dalang* will address the audience once the opening music is over and this is followed by the screening of three important puppets, namely:—

- i) The puppet of an old man called *Mahaguru*. The screening of this puppet will be followed by some *mantras*.
- ii) The puppet of a deity called *Dewa Panah*. His spirit is invoked to descend to the earth and enter the puppets to give 'life' to them during the performance. The *mantra* is also recited during this particular screening.
- iii) The puppet which represents the *dalang* himself. The screening of this puppet is followed by songs sung by the *dalang* with the accompaniment of the music of the gong and the *kerincing*.

² A rectangular container made of metal where ingredients such as betel leaves, gambier, sliced betel nut and lime (*kapur*) are placed.

³ Money is given to the *dalang* as a token of gift to signify that he has accepted the party's invitation to participate in a ceremony.

The displaying of the puppets of two court jesters who give a synopsis of the story to be performed for the night indicates that the play has begun. The *dalang* will then display all the puppets participating in the performance with the accompaniment of the music from the whole ensemble. The music of the gong and the *kerincing* is rather monotonous and is played to accompany the *dalang* in all his dialogues throughout the performance.

2. The Ensemble of Mek Mulung Sri Kedah

This ensemble is found in a small remote village called Kampung Wang Tepus, about twelve miles from Jitra. Mek Mulung, another form of traditional musical ensemble, is rather unique in the sense that it is the only ensemble of its kind found in Malaysia. The legendary origin of this ensemble dates back to the historical period when the Thais overran and ruled Kedah. According to the legend, Mek Mulung originated in Legor (Ligor), a small district in Southern Thailand. In this place, long ago, lived a poor childless couple who earned a living doing odd jobs. The couple was blessed with a daughter whom they named Mek Jelung and it was believed that she possessed supernatural powers. During her childhood days, Mek Jelung cried often and her father, in order to cheer her up, made drums to accompany his singing whenever he had to babysit her. When Mek Jelung grew up, she gathered all her friends and together they formed a performing group under the guidance of her father. Besides singing and dancing, this group also took part in acting and performing for the local people stories from various *hikayat* which they picked up from other types of performing art like Mak Yong and Menora. The instruments used by this group had also increased with the introduction of the *serunai* (flute), the gong and *mong*, and the *kecerak* (bamboo clappers), besides drums which were made by Mek Jelung's father. The ensemble was named Mek Mulung after the daughter's name. If this story holds true the word *Jelung* has undergone a change to *Mulung*. No reason has been found for this change.

When the time came for Mek Jelung to be married, there were two suitors; one was a prince from Kedah and the other a young man whose father was from the Siamese royalty. This young man was Mek Jelung's acting partner in the group. A fight followed between the parties of the two suitors, but finally Mek Jelung married the prince of Kedah who was called Cahaya Bulan. Later, the story of the struggle of Cahaya Bulan to win his bride became one of the principal stories in the Mek Mulung performance. Cahaya Bulan with his consort and family fled from Siam and took refuge in a place called Kampung Perik in Kuala Nerang, Kedah. At present, there is a place called Belukar Mulung in Kampung Perik which is believed to be the area where Cahaya Bulan and his wife stayed after their escape from Siam.

The legend of the origin of Mek Mulung has a great impact on the selection of musicians and performers for the group. It is widely believed that only those who are descendants of Mek Jelung are able to join the group. Those who do not belong to this category find great difficulty in learning the arts of the performance including its music, regardless of the effort and time they put in. Thus, Mek Mulung is considered as an inherited art, belonging to one particular family (that of Mek Jelung and her descendants) and is handed down from one generation to another through oral traditions.

The inheritance factor has also perpetuated the existence of Mek Mulung, though the interest in its performance shown by the community has declined. The failure of

the new generation to continue performing this art will bring mishap to the whole family. In this way its continued existence is ensured. The musicians of Mek Mulung believe that Mek Jelung occupies the twelfth level in a hierarchy consisting of 11 deities before her, as given below:—

1. Guru Tua
2. Guru Muda
3. Peran Tua
4. Peran Muda
5. Peran Bun
6. Peran Kiau
7. Dewa Ketujuh
8. Dewa Kesuma
9. Dewa Kesakti
10. Tok Busu Rabbit
11. Tok Emek
12. Mek Jelung.

Method of performance

Mek Mulung is performed by a group consisting of at least twelve characters: Pak Mulung as the hero, two princesses, two court jesters called *peran*, and seven musicians comprising four drum players, a gong-and-*mong* player and a *kecerek* (bamboo clapper) player. With this minimum group size, the performance is rather taxing because the performers have not much time to rest as there is no one to replace any of them. Usually eighteen people are needed in the performance to assure a good uninterrupted show.

As in other traditional performing arts, the performance of *Mek Mulung* starts with the leader of the ensemble conducting the 'opening of stage' ceremony. Like in *wayang kulit* the party that invites the ensemble has to prepare the necessary requirements for the ceremony which include candles, *bekas pinang*, *duit pengeras* and a little bit of oil. These ingredients are put in small plates and placed on a tray. The incense is burnt and all the instruments are placed over the smoke followed by the chanting of the *mantera*. A repertoire of instrumental music called *lagu-lagu bertabik* is played following the opening of stage ceremony, and these pieces of music are also inherited. After the instrumental music, the musicians continue with singing the *lagu-lagu bertabik* accompanied by their instruments, viz. gong and *mong*, the drums and the *kecerek*. The *serunai*, however, is left out because its shrill pitch will drown the voice of the singers. There are three numbers in the repertoire of *lagu-lagu bertabik*, and the first one named *lagu kecik milik* is sung by the leader of the musicians, that is the drum player. The singing of the *versus* is later accompanied by the musicians in chorus. This song is sung in praise of the spirits of the earth begging them to help protect the performers from ill-luck. This song is followed by two other songs of the same tune sung by the princess (*tuan puteri*) and the Pak Mulung (the king) respectively. The melody of the *bertabik* repertoire is also inherited from the time of Mek Jelung.

The princesses then perform a dance called *tarian mabuk* which consists of five variations, viz.

- i) Tarian Puteri Mabuk or Tarian Puteri Lambat
- ii) Tarian Puteri Tikam
- iii) Tarian Puteri Duduk
- iv) Tarian Puteri Gambang or Tarian Puteri Berjalan Selalu.
- v) Tarian Puteri Anjung Istana

Because of the difficulty of learning the various movements of these dances, the performers of Mek Mulung only stick to two or three dances at a time. As my informant was the Pak Mulung himself, I was able to record the verses of his *bertabik* song which he sang during the interview.

Pak Mulung's Bertabik Song

'Hei telah sudah hamba memakanlah yang pinang
Hamba duduk melengung di soranglah sendiri
Hamba ayah dah tidur lagi emak eh bonda yang tidur
Hamba berek dah ngecik lagi bersiaplah eh bersimpan
Hamba siap bersimpan lagi pakaian eh badan
Hamba ambil seluar lagi cik saruk eh ke kaki
Ceraai di kaki lagi cermin eh di pinggang
Hamba ambil dah baju lagi cik saruklah eh ke badan
Baju bergelar lagi Ratnalah eh Kesuma
Baju melesap di kulittlah eh yang manis
Hamba ambil dah kain lagi cik dibubuh ke pinggang
Kain yang bergelar eh kelongsonglah eh yang berat
Hamba ambil tengkolok lagi cik tanjak eh kepala
Hamba ambil lagi dah keris cik sisip ke pinggang
Amboi keris di kiri pedang eh di kanan
Cukup dah genap pakaian eh yang badan
Langkah diturun di ladang balai
Jalan nak tuju ke biliklah eh yang ketujuh
Sini dah tempat lagi nak panggillah eh yang Awang.

After having sung the *bertabik* song, Pak Mulung then performs a dance accompanied by the music of the whole ensemble of Mek Mulung. The completion of the dance marks the real beginning of the play whereby Pak Mulung will call upon the court jester, Awang. Because there is an element of improvisation in the dialogue, the characters in the play are expected to understand and memorize the outline of the story they are going to perform. The main problem and also weakness of the ensemble of Mek Mulung which I have studied is that only Pak Mulung knows the story well while the others are still unsure of their movements and dialogue.

3. The Gendang Keling Ensemble of Kampung Wang, Kedah

In Kedah, besides the *nobat* which is considered as the royal orchestra symbolizing the greatness of the Sultan, *gendang keling* is another instrumental ensemble. This is due

to the fact that the performance of *Gendang Keling* includes a series of instrumental music without any singing, dancing or acting as in other performing arts. The musical instruments of *gendang keling* consists of two drums called *gendang ibu* and *gendang penganak*, a pair of gongs called *gong jantan* and *gong betina* and a flute (*serunai*). The repertoire of instrumental music played by this ensemble is also handed down from generation to generation and, if collected, the pieces will be quite a number. The collection will also be useful in introducing and teaching this musical ensemble to the new generation.

Two legendary tales have been narrated which can be a source of information on the origin of *gendang keling*. One of the legends traces the origin of this ensemble to the circumcision ceremony conducted by members of a Malay village. It is believed that in this ceremony, the young boys who were to be circumcised, were first carried round the village on elephants' backs. They were also accompanied by the music of *gendang keling*. Walter William Skeat in his book, *Malay Magic*, mentions the presence of music in this ceremony when he states,

"The performance of the ceremony is always made the occasion for a banquet, together with music and dancing of the kind in which Malays take so much delight".⁴

After circling the village, the procession later returned to the house where the ceremony was supposed to take place. There, the young boys were placed on a raised platform, and the ensemble which had accompanied them continued to play their music, circling the platform where the boys were seated. The head of the village then called for suggestions for the name to be given to the ensemble which had played for the ceremony. The villagers unanimously agreed that since the musicians used drums and that they performed by circling around the boys, the name *gendang keliling* should be given to them (*gendang* refers to the drums, and *keliling* to the circling movement). By a process of phonetic change, the word *keliling* became *keling* (Indian) and has contributed to the misunderstanding of the origin of *gendang keling*.

Even though *gendang keling* is different from *wayang kulit* and *Mek Mulung* in the sense that it is not a form of performing art, yet the musicians still perform the rituals during the opening ceremony. This ensemble does not require a stage to perform. Whenever they are invited to participate in a ceremony, the musicians will take their seats together with the audience on the *balai*.⁵ The opening ceremony is conducted by the leader of the ensemble with the same aim of appeasing the spirits. After the ceremony, the musicians play their repertoire, selecting those pieces which they think are suitable for the occasion. The *gendang keling* ensemble which I have studied has a whole set of melodies which include:

- (i) Lagu anak rusa
- (ii) Lagu arak-arak
- (iii) Lagu anak punai

⁴Walter William Skeat, *Malay Magic*, p. 361.

⁵A platform erected during a wedding or circumcision ceremony. It is attached to the main house where the ceremony proper takes place. This *balai* helps to house guests who cannot possibly be accommodated in the main house..

- (iv) Lagu dodoi
- (v) Lagu minta pinang
- (vi) Lagu perak salang
- (vii) Lagu tani kebun
- (viii) Lagu tari inai muda
- (ix) Lagu tari inai tua
- (x) Lagu timang wailo
- (xi) Lagu sila inang
- (xii) Lagu mak inang Jawa

As stated above, not all the pieces in the repertoire are played in one ceremony, but the musicians select those which they think are suitable, for instance, in a circumcision ceremony, *lagu arak-arak* is played because its music is meant to accompany a procession. *Gendang keling* is one of the traditional musical ensembles which perform more frequently in formal ceremonies, like wedding and circumcision, then in entertainment activities.

Musical Instruments Found in the Ensembles Wayang Kulit, Mek Mulung and Gendang Keling.

In general musical instruments are classified into three groups, namely the stringed instruments, the wind instruments and the percussion instruments. However, the failure to use the same principle in classifying the instruments has exposed this system of classification to criticisms. Earlier researchers argued that the string instruments are classified based on the type of strings used to produce the sound, but the same principle is not applied to wind and percussion instruments. In these categories, the criteria used for classification is the manner in which the instruments are played viz. by blowing for the wind instruments and beating against each other for the percussion instruments. A new system of classification was introduced by Curt Sachs and Erich M. Von Hornbostel in 1914, according to which all musical instruments are classified into four groups, namely:—

- (i) Idiophones — self-vibrating instruments such as gongs, xylophones etc.
- (ii) Aerophones — instruments whose sound is produced through a vacuum. Examples are the flute, the trumpet, the clarinet etc.
- (iii) Membranophones — instruments whose sound is produced by stretched membranes. Examples are the drums.
- (iv) Chordophones — instruments whose sound is produced by a stretched chord or string. Examples are the *rebab*, guitar, *koto*, violin etc.

In the ensembles of *wayang kulit*, *Mek Mulung* and *gendang keling*, the musical instruments used can also be classified according to the system used by Von Hornbostel and Curt Sachs. The membranophones of these ensembles include the *geduk* (double-headed drum) and the *gedombak* (single-headed drum) of *wayang kulit*, the four drums of *Mek Mulung* and the *gendang ibu* and *gendang anak* of *gendang keling*. Only one aerophone instrument is found in all the three ensembles viz. the *serunai*, and there is no chordophone instrument. The idiophone includes the gong from *wayang kulit*, the gong, *mong* and *kecerak* from *Mek Mulung* and also the gong from the *gendang keling*.

Drums (Gendang)

The drum used in Malay traditional ensembles is divided into three parts:—

- (i) The membranes which form the faces of the drum.
- (ii) The body called *baluh*.
- (iii) The beaters which are used to beat the drums.

The faces of the drums are made of animal skin, and it is usually that of the goat or the cow. Prior to the making of the drums, the membranes are soaked in water for two or three days and is later pounded for softening. These membranes are dried before they are fixed to the body of the drum. Rattans are used to keep them in place. The body or the *baluh* is made from various types of wood found in the Malaysian forests such as the *temak* (*Shorea Cochinchinensis*) and the jackfruit. The trunk of the tree is sawn into pieces, and these are carved into various shapes of the drum, such as the barrel shape for the *geduk* of the *wayang kulit*. The membranes must be frequently tightened before use so that the drum will not be out of tune when played. The beaters are carved out of wood or made from rattan. In *Mek Mulung*, the players only use their hands to beat the drums.

The Gongs

There are two types of gongs used by traditional Malay ensembles: one type is made of a kind of metal, yellow in colour, while the other is made from black metal. The yellow gong had a deep rim and small in size compared to the black one, and is placed in a wooden box lined with strings. This type of gong is used in *wayang kulit* performances because its clear, shrill tone is more suitable in the composition of *wayang kulit* music. Both *Mek Mulung* and *gendang keling* use the black gong which is larger in size and which has a shallow rim. The tone of this gong is deeper and more pronounced.

The manner in which the two gongs mentioned above are played also varies from one to the other. The black gong is tied to a string through a hole in its rim and this string is hung from the roof of the stage. With other gongs, the string is tied to a wooden stand fixed with a handle. The main purpose is to ensure that the gong is not leaning against any object to enable it to produce sound. In this situation, the gong is then beaten by its player. In the case of the yellow gong, it is also lifted from the floor by strings tied through its rims.

The Serunai

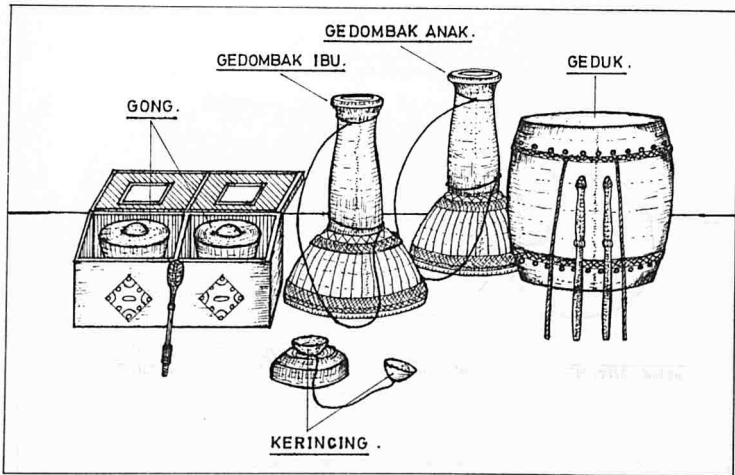
The *serunai* is one of the main instruments in most traditional ensembles. The structure of the *serunai* consists of the body together with the mouthpiece and the lower part called the *serombong* which is shaped like a bell. As with the drums, the body is made of wood while the mouthpiece is made from a kind of reed called *tai* (*borassus fiabellifera*). The reed is important in producing the sound for the *serunai*. The leaves of the reed are cut, boiled and dried in the sun. They are then folded in a zig-zag form and the ends are cut and tied with strings. These reeds are fixed to the mouthpiece and are used by the *serunai* blower when he plays the *serunai*.

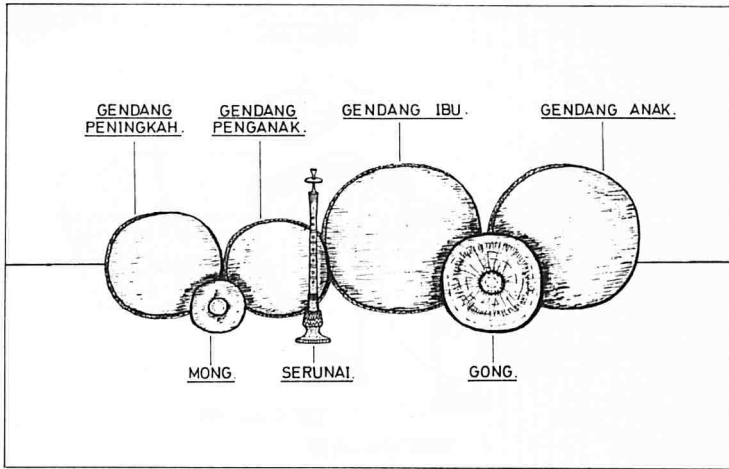
Anthony Baines has noted the various stages of making the flute-mouthpiece from a kind of reed-cane in Western countries. He stated that the cane is split into thin strips which are later cut and trimmed into the right sizes for making reeds. The inside of the strip is smoothened and its centre is marked and is slightly cut. This strip is then

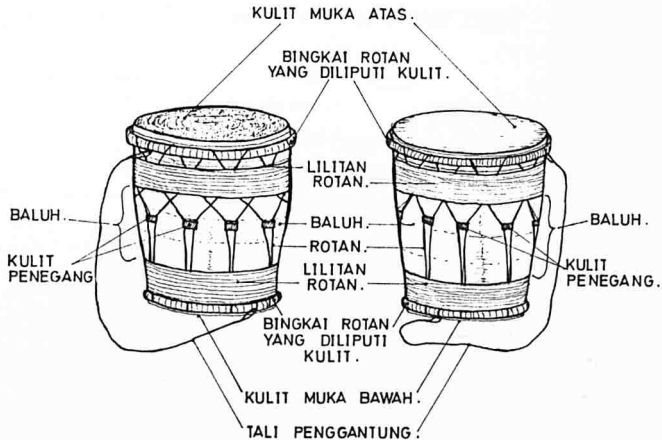
bent by bringing its two ends together, with its barks (viz. the sides not smoothened) on the outside. The folded centre part of the reed is cut cross-wise after it is tied to a metal staple.

The body of the *serunai* is carved from branches of trees such as the jackfruit. There are seven stops (holes) made on the body of the *serunai* and the player manipulates these stops with his fingers to produce music. Each stop is tuned to a certain note and the person playing the *serunai* has to memorize these notes. Most of the traditional ensembles found in Kedah and other parts of Malaysia use the *serunai* in their musical performances.

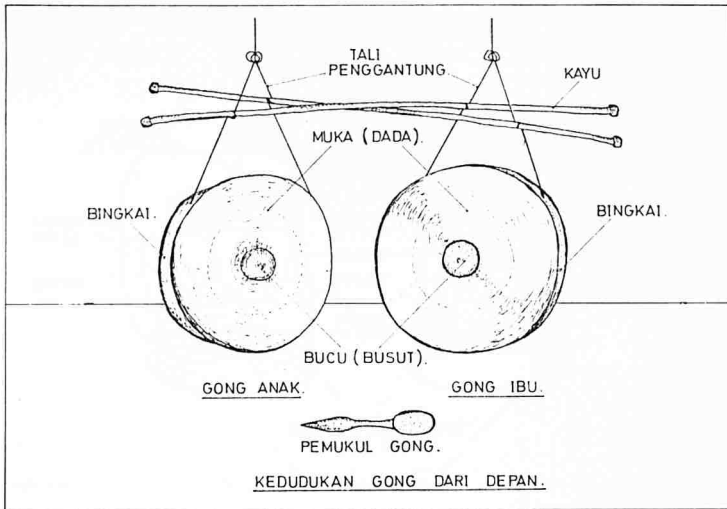
Kedah is one of the states of Malaysia where traditional musical groups still flourish and their performances are appreciated by the audience. Besides the three ensembles mentioned, there are others like *jike*, *hadrah*, *mak yong* and *menora*. The current problem facing the existence of these performing arts is the decline in interest especially among the youths to participate in these performances. Various steps have been taken by the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sport to remedy the situation by organizing competitions for these traditional musical groups and opening classes for youths interested in learning these arts.







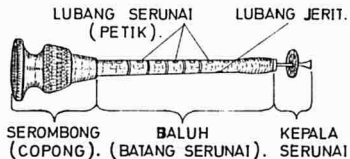
GENDANG IBU DAN GENDANG ANAK.



RAJAH I.



RAJAH II.



BULUH



KECEREK :

PANJANG — $13\frac{1}{4}$

LEBAR — $1\frac{1}{4}$

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Traditional Practices and Modern Medicine: A study of the Development of Maternal and Child Health Services in Kedah

Siti Hasmah bt. Hj. Mohd. Ali

Introduction

Kedah has been, till of late, one of the less urbanized states in the Malaysian Peninsula. Situated in the northwestern part of the Peninsula, Kedah comprises of 3648 square miles, including the many islands of Langkawi. It borders the State of Perlis and Thailand in the north and northeast and Seberang Perai (Province Wellesley) and Perak in the south.

Kedah is blessed with the largest coastal plain in its northwestern region, making it the traditional rice bowl of Malaysia. Together with Perlis, 90% of the coastal plain comes under the gigantic Muda Irrigation Project which started in 1970. Since then Kedah has progressively become the major rice production area of Malaysia. The Muda Irrigation Project which has now been completed and which cost MS245 million is largely responsible for the rapid development of the capital town of Alor Setar and the improvement of the farmers' income by double-cropping.¹

Further inland, low hills and ravines make up the central and southern regions of the State. Many rivers and streams traverse the State and form the main sources of water supply for both the urban and rural areas.

The climate in Kedah is tropical, influenced by the southwest monsoon in May to October and the northeast monsoon in November to March. 88% of the annual rainfall occurs in the months of May to November which traditionally is the rice growing season. Dry periods occur in the wet and dry seasons and may last up to 10 to 30 days respectively.

At the time of writing, Kedah is going through one of its bad drought seasons which began in November 1977 and which has dried up the padi fields and most of the streams and rivers, upsetting the double-cropping schedule.

Kedah has always been the fourth most populous state in the Peninsula with a natural rate of increase of 37.7% over the 1911-1921 Census decade and 26.9% in the 1921-1931 decade. Since then the population has been increasing at an average rate of 25 per thousand although it is lower than other states in the Peninsula. In 1976, the Natural Rate of Increase for Kedah was 21.9 per thousand as compared to 25.5 per thousand of the Peninsula and 29.9 per thousand of Trengganu which is the highest.²

In 1821, at the time of the Siamese invasion and occupation of Kedah, the population was 180,000. Within the first 6 years of tyrannical rule of Raja Ligor, the population was reduced to only 600 by mass export of people as slaves, and many more fled the country.³ It was only in 1843 when the Siamese were driven out that

¹P.W. Whitford (IBRD), R.H. Slade (FAO), P. Judd (Consultant), (1975), Malaysia Loan 434-MA: *Muda Irrigation Project Completion Report No. 795-MA*, June 15, 1975.

²Source: *Vital Statistics Peninsular Malaysia, 1976*, Department of Statistics, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

³G.C. Hart, *The Administrative Report of the State of Kedah, 1323 A.H.* (Sept. 1905 - Aug. 1906).

peace eventually returned to Kedah although it was still under Siamese sovereignty. In 1906 (1324 A.H.) the population was estimated to be 219,000.

In 1976, the population of Kedah stood at 1,103,382 with 71% Malays, 19% Chinese, 8% Indians and 2% of other communities including Malaysian Thais. More than 80% of the total population are located in the rural areas where the Malays predominate. In the Muda Irrigation Project area alone, 88% are rural with predominant Malay population and less than 20% Chinese, Indian and Malaysian Thais.

Rice cultivation is the main occupation followed by rubber tapping, fishing and small business in the towns. The Malays are traditionally padi planters with only 4% of them found in the estates and mines. The Chinese as immigrants to work the mines are found mostly in Central and South Kedah and in the urban areas. Although rice cultivation is the monopoly of the Malays, the rice mills are mostly owned by the Chinese who employ Chinese labourers. Only 10% of them dwell in the rural areas and work as shopkeepers. The immigrant Indians work in the estates and are found in equal numbers in estates, villages and towns.⁴

The involvement of womenfolk in the main occupation is very significant. The Malay women traditionally work in the padi fields during seeding, planting and harvesting. It was reported in the 1931 Census Report that 92.8% of the female population were engaged in agricultural pursuits. They played a major role in forcing the British medical and health authorities in Kedah to appoint a Lady Medical Officer so that "much medical work may be done among the Malay women in the state and that much may be accomplished to lower the Infant Mortality Rate among the Malay peasantry who are the food producing part of the population and the most valuable asset to the state".⁵

The significance of Maternal and Child Health (MCH) care as an important factor in developing an economically healthy state was recognized. Sixty-four percent of the total population consisted of expectant mothers, lactating mothers, infants and children under 12 years old and other females between 15-45 years old. They form the groups "at risk". In addition to the normal exposures to risks which this group will encounter throughout the different periods of their lives, socio-economic deprivation found in rural areas makes the risks even more dangerous.

In the 19th and early 20th centuries, Kedah had been miserably poor and unhealthy with financial crises and series of epidemics which took a heavy toll in the lives of the people. The general environmental sanitation in the early 1900s was deplorable. Water supply was confined to certain areas in the towns, forcing the larger part of the population to use the polluted rivers, streams and insanitary wells which invariably dried up during the prolonged drought seasons. Human night soil in the towns were disposed off by Chinese contractors who made no attempt to remove them carefully. The Alor Setar Hospital in 1904, initially situated next to the Alor Setar Outdoor Dispensary, was a raised attap shed with an "accumulation of sewage beneath"⁶

⁴ J.D. Hall, *Annual Report of the Social & Economic Progress of the People of the State of Kedah, 1936 A.D.*

⁵ A.S. Haynes, *Administrative Report of the State of Kedah, 1343 A.H. (Aug. 2nd 1924 - July 21st, 1925).*

⁶ G.C. Hart, *op. cit.*

In the rural areas, free use of the rivers and the privacy of the bushes and undergrowth as latrines were the normal practice.

Attempts to dispose wet and dry rubbish properly and maintenance of the compound underneath and around each house were very minimal. The rearing of buffaloes, cows and fowl beneath a *kampung* house was common.

It is therefore not surprising that cholera, dysenteries, typhoid, heavy worm infestation and malaria became the common killers in those days. Cholera invariably follows every prolonged drought season as it is to this very day. The rivers, shallow well-water and clay sub-soil seemed to provide a favourable medium for the growth of cholera bacilli, especially the water from Wan Mat Saman canals which traversed from Alor Setar to the south. In certain areas in Kedah, there seemed also to be natural reservoirs of virus.⁷

Malaria was the number one killer. It took its toll predominantly from the estate population. The Indian labourers were said to harbour the malignant type of malaria, and deaths among Indian infants became the highest in the State. Curiously, an attack of malaria among the people was taken for granted because almost everyone had malaria at one time or another. Spleen enlargement due to malaria is not only common and accepted but also recognized by the rural dwellers as a susceptible organ for physical attack on an opponent during a fight to cause its rupture and eventual death of the person.

The serious and damaging effects of malaria contributed to the high mortality rates in women and children. The resultant anaemia exposed them to infection very easily. With additional poor nutrition, they invariably succumb or remain in chronic ill-health. Pregnant mothers with malaria lost their pregnancies during the first 3 months or had premature births or still births. Those who carried the pregnancy to full term ran the risk of having severe bleeding after the delivery with eventual death.

Infant mortality caused the greatest concern. Fifty percent were from infants below the age of one month. In 1927, the Infant Mortality Rate (I.M.R.) was 158.66 per thousand with deaths of Tamil infants 3 times higher than either the Malays or the Chinese. Figures of I.M.R. from 1925 to 1931 showed the worst figures among the Indians which ranged from 485 per thousand to 237 per thousand. The Chinese I.M.R. was 166 and 144 while the Malay I.M.R. was 142.9 and 98.55 during the same period.⁸

Killer diseases among infants and children were fevers of unknown origin, convulsions, premature births, respiratory infection including tuberculosis, malaria, worm infection and wrong feeding.

The Medical Services in Kedah

Changes in the economic situation in the State of Kedah at different periods of its history contributed much to the lack of organization and continuity of services.

⁷W.G. Maxwell, *Annual Administrative Report of the State of Kedah, 1330 A.H.* (Dec. 22, 1911 – Dec. 10, 1912).

⁸Various Annual Administrative Reports of the State of Kedah.

1821–1909 (1237–1327 A.H.)

During Siamese suzerainty, there was very little medical service reported. There was a 10-bedded attap shed hospital in the centre of Alor Setar town and 3 District Hospitals in Kulim, Kuala Muda and Bagan Semak Krian. The hospitals were managed by Dressers who also did outdoor work because most of the patients were treated at home. The Malays in particular found "institutional treatment objectionable, necessary discipline irksome and avoided it, although they did not have an aversion to western medicine".⁹

In 1907, the new Alor Setar Hospital was completed in its present site of 35 acres at Bakar Bata, and had 130 beds, of which 110 beds were for "natives" and 20 for female patients. Each of the District Hospitals had 30 beds in a long ward, divided by partitions to form separate wards and dispensary. In Alor Setar again, an Outdoor Dispensary provided minor curative services to the public and still does today with additional services for mothers and children.

The most noticeable feature during this era was the complete absence of female staff, European or local. The Medical Officers were Europeans and worked in the General Hospital while Indian and Malay Dressers worked in the District Hospitals and Outdoor Dispensary.

1910–1920 (1328–1339 A.H.)

The first hint of concern over maternal care was reported in 1912 when the State Council decided to attach a qualified midwife to the Alor Setar Hospital for conducting deliveries in the homes and for the training of Malay *bidan* (midwives), but the post fell vacant until very much later.

When World War I broke out in 1914, several of the European Medical Officers were recruited into war services causing shortage of staff in Kedah. In 1916, a Health Branch of the Medical Department was formed with special tasks to inspect schools and provide treatment to school children. Skin diseases, lice and worm infection, dental caries and poor personal hygiene were the major problems.

At the end of 1920, there were already 8 hospitals with a total of 835 beds, 4 Outdoor Dispensaries and travelling dispensaries serving the public in the towns. The response to hospital treatment and outdoor treatment were on the increase but low admission of Malay patients were noticeable.

1921–1930 (1340–1349 A.H.)

Despite the world wide trade depression in 1921, this period augured well for mothers and children. There was also the beginning of appointments of a European Nursing Staff and the first European Health Officer. He was responsible for visiting both the European owned and non-European owned estates, inspect schools, organizing town sanitation and anti-malarial work.¹⁰

⁹ M.S.H. McArthur, *Administrative Report of the State of Kedah, 1339 A.H.* (Sept. 15, 1920 – Sept. 3, 1921).

¹⁰ M.S.H. McArthur, *Administrative Report of the State of Kedah, 1337 A.H.* (Nov. 7, 1918 – Sept. 25, 1919).

For the first time in the history of medical services in Kedah, two "Asiatics" were appointed. Dr. S.K. Kelkar reported in May 1928 and Dr. Mustapha Osman in October 1930 as the first Pathologist.

1931-1940 (1350-1359 A.H.)

The Health Branch in the Medical Department became more organized as more emphases were made on health services. At State level, a Deputy State Surgeon was appointed to assist the State Surgeon, in health matters. Health Officers took charge of Health Districts into which Kedah was first divided:

- North Kedah : Districts of Kota Star, Yen, Padang Terap, Kubang Pasu and Langkawi.
- Central Kedah : Kuala Muda and Sik.
- South Kedah : Kulim, Bandar Baru and Baling.

Staff was short because of the retrenchment of Medical Officers and Nursing Personnel as a result of the economic depression.

Despite this, four more Outdoor Dispensaries were opened for curative services in Kuala Nerang (1933), Jitra (1935), Padang Matsirat, Langkawi (1935) and a special Malay Women and Children Dispensary at Bakar Bata, Alor Setar in 1936.

Generally, health conditions were improving although malaria still formed the highest percentage in the causes of death. Various epidemics occurred at different periods in various parts of Kedah, notably, smallpox, measles and beri-beri. Incidence of water-borne diseases in at least the town areas and its immediate vicinity were expected to decline rapidly when the new waterworks for Alor Setar in Bukit Pinang costing M\$80,000 was officially opened in 1931.

Since the beginning of the 20th Century, it was noticeable that "the urban and estate population had received attention — the latter to a considerable extent. Yet little knowledge appeared to be available in connection with our real rural communities".¹¹ The urgent need to know more of the uncontrolled and under-served communities in the rural areas before health plans and expenditure were proposed, led to the Government's approval of the sum M\$20,000 for a general health survey and a special malarial investigation in the State of Kedah. This genuine effort to investigate the actual conditions of the rural community was conducted by the Senior Health Officer, Dr. W.J. Vickers and Dr. J.H. Strahan in 1935-1936. This was the first health survey conducted in Malaya. Their findings revealed the urgency of implementing practical solutions to the three most important problems that faced the community — nutrition, malaria and drinking water.

Subsequent to the survey, a Kampung Sanitation Improvement Scheme was carried out by the Health Office of North Kedah in 1938. The main aims were "to counter bush latrines and its evils, to improve the health of mothers and children and to establish general environmental cleanliness".^{12,13}

¹¹ W.J. Vickers and J.H. Strahan, *A Health Survey of the State of Kedah, 1935-1936*.

¹² J.D. Hall, *Administrative Report of the State of Kedah, 1938*.

¹³ Dr. J.C. Carson, *Annual Report of the Medical and Health Dept, Kedah/Perlis, 1938*.



Town Dispensary, Alor Setar.



During a Maternal and Child Health Session at the Town Dispensary, Alor Setar.

World War II broke out in the Pacific on December 8, 1941 with the bombing of Pearl Harbour, Kota Baharu, Pulau Pinang, Sungai Petani and Singapore. A few days later, the Japanese army occupied Kedah, coming through Thailand. The medical and health services disrupted with the withdrawal of the British who took with them all available drugs, equipments and vehicles. Some of the staff withdrew to as far as Kulim in the south of Kedah and disbanded as the Japanese followed them.

The medical services were back to minimal civilian services when a Japanese Medical Director brought in a few staff and took over the medical administration from Dr. Mustapha Osman who reorganized it initially, on the directives of the Japanese army. Local doctors were ordered to report back for duty and worked in the hospitals till the end of the Japanese occupation.

Kedah was handed back to Thailand in 1943, and Dr. Mustapha Osman became the Head of the Medical Department. A big outbreak of cholera occurred in Kuala Kedah the same year but with strict quarantine measures, reporting and control of the cases detected in the area, Kuala Kedah became free from cholera by the time the Japanese surrendered in September 1945.

Postwar Period of 1946-1954

Post war Kedah saw the real beginning of rehabilitation and rapid development and progress of medical and health services. Change of administrative heads from British Military Chief Medical Officers in 1946 to the return of European State Surgeons in 1947 and the eventual upgrading of local senior officers to State Surgeons, contributed enormously to the progress of the medical and health services in Kedah. Dr. Mustapha Osman who reverted to his post as Pathologist of pre-war days, became the first Malay doctor in the Peninsula to be upgraded in 1949.

As State Surgeon¹⁴ from 1949 to 1954, Dr. Mustapha Osman gained a lot of respect and affection of all doctors and staff who had worked with him during the war periods. To quote the words of Senator Datuk Dr. C. Sinnadurai who worked very closely with Dr. Mustapha Osman, he wrote: "Some improvements were noted during the pre-war period when the late Dr. J. Portelly was the State Surgeon, but it was the late Dr. Mustapha Osman during the war years and after, who implemented many health projects, besides making lots of improvements in the hospitals and supplying expensive instruments, including an E.C.G. machine to the General Hospital. The E.C.G. machine was a novelty in those days and there was only one in the whole of Malaya then! Dr. Mustapha Osman administered so well and ably. He was very much interested in the Rural Health Services and had Mobile Units with trained Health Nurses visiting the kampungs. Thus he introduced and brought western medicine to their very door steps at great cost. He was able to do all these because he was not only motivated that way to do service to the poor sick but also he was able to obtain the necessary funds because his elder brother the late Sir Haji Mohd. Shariff was then the Secretary to the Government of Kedah."

¹⁴State Surgeons were Administrative Heads of the Medical & Health Departments. Also known as Chief Medical & Health Officers, they are now correctly designated as Directors of Medical & Health Services in the State.



Administrative Block, General Hospital, Alor Setar, 1906.



Administrative Block cum Outpatient Polyclinic, General Hospital, Alor, Setar, 1976.

It should be mentioned here that until January 1st, 1958, the administration and executive authority of medical and health services became the responsibility of the individual States in the Peninsula. Financially autonomous, the medical and health services depended entirely upon the socio-economic conditions of the State. There was therefore uneven distribution and inadequate development of the services in many rural areas. The State of Kedah on the west coast and the east coast States of Kelantan, Trengganu and Pahang were categorized as those States with very poor medical and health development.

As the Federal Government assumed authority and responsibility throughout the Country, Kedah started to show steady progress. Much of the development and success was due to the response of the population, especially of those who, in the past, were unreachable, neglected and impossible to teach to live healthily, to have healthy babies and to live in healthy surroundings.

As recognition of "health begins at home" and of the woman as "the important initial target", took place, further development and expansion of the general health services must invariably give priority to maternal and child health services. Kedah today is very fortunate to be one of the States in Independent Malaysia to have the benefits of a well developed Rural Health Service Scheme incorporated into the Country's Five-year Development Plans.

Maternal and Child Care.

It has been clearly seen that the development of the Maternal and Child Health (MCH) Services in Kedah evolved around the Malay population. This had to be because of few basic facts which were identified and recognized as vital by the Medical and Health authorities in their motivation and expansion programmes.

Firstly, basically rural, the Malays lived under the most simple conditions in small wooden attap huts raised from the ground to provide shelter for the goats and buffaloes. Living on their meagre staple food of rice and very little meat and, occasionally, vegetables, the diet was just sufficient to keep them alive. The surroundings were unhealthy. There were neither latrines nor proper water supply. Rivers and streams were used for both purposes.

Poverty, ignorance, ill-health and apathy — the four evils of rural areas — were rife, each one almost inseparable from the other. Eradication of only one of them provided no solution to the many problems nor did it contribute to the many efforts made to improve the lives of the people. Poverty alone prevented the rural dwellers from obtaining sufficient food, seeking medical aid and providing education for themselves and their many children. Ignorance deterred them again from understanding the meaning of good health, the causes of diseases and personal hygiene. A combination of both poverty and ignorance must undoubtedly result in ill-health and apathy towards self-improvement and healthful living. Lack of communication in the pre-Independent era isolated the people further from the services which existed only in the urban areas.

Secondly, the resultant high mortality derived from the above conditions made Kedah one of the States that have a high mortality index, superseded by two other essentially "Malay" States of Kelantan and Trengganu. (Fig. 1).

Fig. 1:

Vital Statistics of Peninsular by States: 1976

State	Population	CRNI	CBR	CDR	IMR	MMR	NMR	TMR	SBR
	(a) 1,499,599								
Johore	(b) 1,520,568 (3)	27.4 (4)	32.9 (5)	5.6 (11)	28.76 (8)	0.51 (8)	17.60 (8)	2.15 (6)	15.53 (8)
	1,103,382	21.9 (10)	28.2 (10)	6.3 (6)	33.69 (3)	1.54 (1)	21.38 (2)	3.09 (3)	21.82 (2)
Kedah	1,116,360 (4)								
	813,958								
Kelantan	825,205 (6)	28.6 (2)	35.8 (2)	7.2 (8)	38.68 (1)	1.23 (3)	19.79 (5)	4.01 (2)	20.39 (3)
	467,141								
Melaka	472,938 (10)	23.6 (7)	29.7 (8)	6.1 (7)	26.55 (11)	0.36 (11)	15.58 (11)	1.81 (8)	16.46 (6)
	555,195								
Negeri Sembilan	561,863 (8)	23.9 (6)	29.8 (7)	6.0 (9)	27.22 (9)	0.54 (6)	16.42 (10)	2.03 (7)	15.22 (9)
	596,022								
Pahang	605,033 (7)	28.6 (3)	34.7 (3)	6.1 (8)	31.84 (4)	1.45 (2)	17.52 (9)	3.01 (4)	16.00 (7)
	876,637								
Pulau Pinang	886,702 (5)	22.0 (9)	28.8 (9)	6.8 (2)	26.72 (10)	0.51 (9)	18.29 (7)	1.38 (11)	13.90 (10)
	1,810,999								
Perak	1,832,516 (2)	23.5 (8)	29.9 (6)	6.4 (5)	30.59 (6)	0.72 (5)	19.12 (6)	2.82 (5)	16.79 (5)
	481,833								
Trengganu	488,061 (9)	29.9 (1)	36.7 (1)	6.8 (3)	36.01 (2)	1.07 (4)	20.7 (3)	4.59 (1)	23.84 (1)
	136,159								
Perlis	137,691 (11)	21.5 (11)	28.3 (11)	6.7 (4)	31.19 (5)	0.52 (7)	25.21 (1)	1.52 (10)	18.62 (4)
	1,901,467								
Selangor	1,929,802 (1)	27.3 (5)	33.1 (4)	5.8 (10)	28.87 (7)	0.41 (10)	20.38 (4)	1.76 (9)	13.73 (11)
	10,242,352								
Peninsular Malaysia	10,376,739	25.5	31.7	6.2	30.74	0.78	19.08	2.56	16.86

(a) Mid-Year Population. (b) December Population

(1) Numericals in brackets denote position.

Source: Dept. of Statistics, Malaysia.

The main causes of deaths have been mentioned earlier but it is relevant to state that most of the causes of death were preventable if only the community were courageous and knowledgeable enough to seek early assistance.

Thirdly, the biggest and most important factor is the socio-cultural factors that are associated with pregnancy, child-birth and the puerperal period and the presence of the incumbent traditional birth attendants (TBAs) who influenced the lives of the Malay womenfolk in the rural areas. This will be described later in this chapter.

Early medical annuals in Kedah have frequently reported the "strong prejudices against competent medical assistance", of "natives, especially the Malays, being nervous of calling a doctor," of "natives not liking changes in their old customs" and "of early marriages and ignorant native midwives that caused maternal deaths".

That the traditional way of life of the Malays played a very important role in their slow acceptance of modern medicine made health planners change their strategies of planning rural health services. Consideration had to be made first of the concepts, attitudes and various customs and beliefs that make up the lives of the Malays in order to successfully promote good health and to guarantee its continuity to permanency in their way of life.

The Early Development of MCH Services in Kedah

Very little attention was given to Maternal and Child Welfare (MCW) services (as it was known then) before 1910. One would only assume that with high mortality rates occurring among the population from malaria, waterborne diseases, tuberculosis, beriberi and hookworm infection, the women and children would also have died from such diseases.

Hospital services and outdoor dispensaries did not attract many of the Malay womenfolk for obvious reasons. The staff were males. Dressers had more patients by visiting them at home than in their static dispensaries. In 1912, the State Council agreed to engage a qualified midwife to provide domiciliary services though based in the General Hospital, Alor Setar. Unfortunately, it was not until 1923 that the pioneer midwife was employed.

As few more Malay midwives were trained and engaged, it became imperative to have a Lady Medical Officer (LMO) to supervise them and to organize services for mothers and children, in addition to medicare in the General Hospital. In 1925, Dr. (Miss) H.M. Garlick reported for duty as the first LMO in Alor Setar. Based in the General Hospital, and with a skeletal staff of 2 European Nursing Sisters, 2 Malay midwives and 3 *ayah*, Dr. Garlick performed her duties beyond the rooms of the maternity wards to rooms in Police Stations and Outdoor Dispensaries in the outlying districts of Yan, Padang Terap and Pendang.

The first MCW Report¹⁵ incorporated in the *Annual Medical and Health Report*, 1925, was written by Dr. Garlick. She mentioned the encouraging and increasing attendances of the Malays in outpatient clinics as compared to the very low attendances and admissions in the hospitals. There was hope for increasing maternity work for the future of the womenfolk. Stress was made of the great advantage of using old

¹⁵ D. Bridges, *Annual Report of Medical and Health Dept., Kedah, 1344 A.H.* (July 22, 1925 – July 11, 1926).

customs to further ante-natal and postal-natal work, for example, engaging a midwife at 7 months pregnancy as is done traditionally by all Malay mothers with a first pregnancy.

Unfortunately the resignation of Dr. Garlick in 1926 and subsequent changes of European LMOs prevented the MCW work from progressing further. Transfers, resignations, language difficulties of new LMOs and ill-health among them added to the problem. However, the work continued with midwives and two "Asiatic" Nurses who were engaged in 1927 for the first time. There was still no definite preventive care for mothers and infants and the mortality rates among them continued to be very high.

Thus was the situation when "Mem Brodie" arrived in Alor Setar in November 1929. To write about MCW services in the 1930-1940 decade is equivalent to writing about the pioneer midwives and of Dr. (Mrs.) Mabel G. Brodie, Medical Officer, who dedicated themselves to working for and working with mothers and children in Alor Setar and the surrounding kampungs. Buang bt. Mohd. Isa, the pioneer qualified midwife shares the same honour as Dr. Mabel Brodie as both are legends in Kedah and deserve special tribute.

Midwife Buang binti Mohd. Isa

Tok Bidan Buang or Mak Buang, as she is popularly known in Alor Setar, originated from Selangor and is about 91 years old at the time of writing. She is staying with her daughter Piah (from her second husband) in a neat home in Kuala Kedah. She is doubly bent but very mobile with the help of a stool. She has lost much of her eyesight but not her humour and mental acuity for her training to be neat and clean in appearance. She wore a white *baju kurung* with *kain pelikat*, a traditional "costume" of kampung midwives, for this interview. Still very vociferous, she needed no prompting as soon as she grasped the purpose of the writer's visit.

Mak Buang, as a young widow with 2 children, was trained as a midwife in General Hospital, Kuala Lumpur, at the time when Dr. (Miss) Ahearne (later Lady Winstedt) initiated the training of local girls in the early 1920s. At the completion of one year's training, Mak Buang did not immediately start work because "people did not like young people, especially widows, to work in the towns in those days". However, she requested for a job outside Kuala Lumpur and accepted employment in Alor Setar 5 months later. Dr. D. Bridges who knew Mak Buang as a trainee midwife in the General Hospital, Kuala Lumpur, was then the new State Surgeon for Kedah and Perlis.

Despite feeling slightly sceptical of how she would manage her new job and family in a new place, Mak Buang left for Alor Setar, leaving her 2 children behind. Her train fare was paid for and she was promised a monthly salary of \$40/- per month. Full of courage and undoubtedly adventurous, she soon settled herself in her new job, brought her family over to stay with her after a year and never regretted since.

She recalled Alor Setar in those days as having no lights or good roads. Functioning as a hospital midwife and also doing outdoor midwifery, she used to walk for miles visiting homes as part of her duties. In 1930, when Dr. Brodie became her superior officer, Mak Buang was specially assigned to the royal household and for this, a rickshaw was specially chartered for her use. Care of both mother and child after delivery required her to be with the royal mother for days. There were occasions

when she worked so late in the evenings that the rickshaw-puller refused to take her home for fear of meeting *harimau akar* crossing Jalan Kancut! Her family learnt to accept the return of the rickshaw loaded with groceries to mean the absence of Mak Buang from home for at least 2–3 days.

Mak Buang retired in 1940 with a pension of \$11.90 but worked for a short while during the Japanese occupation. She recalled how she had to not only do midwifery but also douche and "treat disease and comfort women". Delivering babies during the later part of the Japanese occupation was not easy. As does usually happen, babies tend to arrive at unearthly hours of the night or morning. Mak Buang remembered having to carry a royal mother to the balcony of the Istana for delivery by the light of the moon because of the black-out imposed during an air-raid!

Mak Buang endeared herself to the general public and especially to the royal families of Kedah because of her gentleness, superb patience and dedication. Most important was her remarkable ability to combine traditional rituals with modern midwifery for which reasons she is respectfully consulted and invited to organize. Her participation in the *melenggang perut* of the Sultanah of Kedah in 1966 is described later.

It was not at all surprising that Mak Buang's daughter (by her first late husband) followed her footsteps in becoming a midwife. Mah binti Haniff was only 12 years old when she joined her mother in Alor Setar. Like her mother, it was only after she was married and had two children that she enrolled herself in the first training course for midwives in the Sungai Petani and Alor Setar Hospitals under the Kampung Midwives Service Scheme. She worked from 1937 until 1959 with the Government and then opened a private Maternity Home of her own at Mentalon, Alor Setar, until 1976. Unlike her mother, Mak Mah was not able to bring herself to combining the old and new concepts of midwifery. Being a disciple of Dr. Brodie, she was very methodical and meticulous in her ways making it somewhat difficult for her staff in the private maternity home to abide constantly by her rules and regulations. Nevertheless, Mak Mah now 67 years old and a retired and jovial woman like her mother, is loved by everyone who knew her through her services in the hospital and her private enterprise.

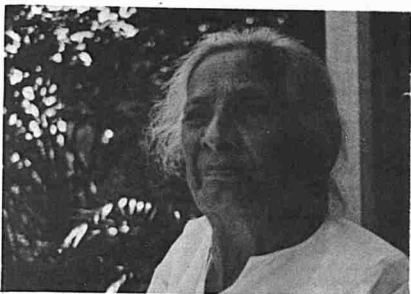
Dr. Mabel Garland Brodie (1890–1954)

Everyone who knew "Mem Brodie" and was asked to give their impression of her would stress on two outstanding features of her personality: terribly temperamental but very dedicated.

Born in Scotland in 1890, Dr. Mabel Brodie worked in the old Ministry of Health in London and various Maternal and Child Welfare Clinics in England before moving with her husband to Penang in 1928. Her husband and only daughter, Alison, and her son-in-law were also in the medical profession. They shared the same fond attachments towards Malaya having worked here for a very long time after the war.¹⁶

In November 1929, Dr. Mabel Brodie came to Alor Setar as a replacement of a sick LMO and soon took charge of Maternal and Child Welfare (MCW) in the hospital until her resignation in 1931. Retrenchment of staff resulting in an acute shortage of them

¹⁶ Source from Dr. Alison Read, Scotland.



Pioneer Bidan in Alor Setar, Buang binti Mohd. Isa, worked from 1923–1940, as Hospital and Domiciliary Midwife. Now aged 91 years old and residing with her daughter in Kuala Kedah.



Che Mah binti Mohd. Haniff, daughter of Buang, was a trainee midwife in the first batch to be trained in Alor Setar and Sungai Petani Hospitals. Worked as midwife from 1937 to 1959.



Dr. Mabel Garland Brodie, Lady Medical Officer, Maternal and Child Welfare, North Kedah. Born 1890 in Scotland and died in Port Dickson, Negeri Sembilan in 1954. Was interred in Pulau Pinang.

found Dr. Mabel Brodie back in employment in 1933 until just before the Japanese invasion. Dr. Mabel Brodie and her husband were sent to England on leave. During the war years, she worked in London and returned to Kedah in 1947 with the British Military Forces. In 1952, she joined the Medical Unit of the Malay Regiment in Port Dickson and served them until 21st April 1954 when she died of coronary thrombosis at the age of 65. Dr. Mabel Brodie was given, most appropriately, her lasting resting place in Penang.

Much of the development of the MCW Services of pre-war Kedah owed itself to the untiring efforts of Dr. Mabel Brodie. Harrassed by the lack of attention given by the British Administrators towards preventive measures, poor midwifery services and the increasing mortality rates among mothers and children, Dr. Brodie took the opportunity of making herself heard by presenting a paper on "The Health of Women and Children in Malaya" at the Health Congress in Birmingham in 1937. She complained against the British Advisers for being indifferent and indicated her impatience regarding the progress of the MCW Services. She was strongly criticised by her male colleagues for being "pessimistic and unnecessarily impatient".¹⁷

Dr. Mabel Brodie tend to fall slightly out of favour with the European community in Kedah. She did not devote her time to their health because she felt that they could easily avail themselves of the many facilities in the hospital, where as Government servants, care and treatment were given free. Accessibility to specialists' services in the bigger town posed no problems to the European community. What she said she would rather have them do was to organize their lives by having open-air activities to keep their minds and bodies active, and to counteract the neuroses which were common among the European women in those days.

On the other hand, Dr. Brodie spent most of her time and energy working for the betterment of the health of Malay women and children. She saw the need to have organized MCW Services, the need to have preventive midwifery extended to the rural areas simultaneously with proper control, and the training of midwives so that maternal and infant deaths could be drastically reduced.

The drive towards better services materialized when Dr. Brodie became the LMO in charge of MCW Services, North Kedah. A new MCW Clinic was opened at Bakar Bata exclusively for Malays. To lessen traditional barriers, a Child Welfare Centre was opened at the Billiard Room in the compounds of the Istana Anak Bukit, and Mak Buang was assigned to attend to the deliveries of members of the royal family.

In 1936, the Kampung Midwives Service Scheme training programme was started whereby Malay women were recruited to be trained in the art of modern midwifery, including the concepts of antenatal care, safe deliveries and proper postnatal care of both mother and child. The objective was to make these midwives the forerunners of home-visitors in rural areas where the need was greatest.

Cik Mah Haniff, Mak Buang's daughter, was in this first batch of trainees. Proudly exhibiting the official "Midwife's Certificate" that authorized her to practice as a "Kampung Midwife", Mak Mah explained that the one-year training was very practical with the minimum of theory. The skill of proper midwifery was taught with

¹⁷Mabel Brodie, "The Health of Women & Children in Malaya" in the *Journal of The Royal Sanitary Institute*, London, Vol. LVIII No. 5. Issued November 1937.

many practical demonstrations and actual practice in the labour room under the strict and close supervision of Dr. Brodie. Avoidance of perineal tears during the delivery process was stressed. Mothers do not favour Government midwives because of their frequent use of the scissors during the delayed delivery of the baby's head. Untrained *bidan kampung* excel in the art of guarding the perineum from tearing, though their method may not be acceptable as proper or hygienic. Nevertheless, the kampung mother preferred them and forced the Government midwife to strive very hard to compete with the *bidan kampung* in this aspect.

As more and more Government subsidised midwives were posted to the rural areas, the kampung people began to appreciate their good intentions and services. In many instances, they showed their appreciation by providing and maintaining a house for the Government midwife in that area. Response to the midwives' motivation and advice for proper antenatal and child care were evident in the increase of Malay women and children attendances in the MCW Clinics.¹⁸

Unfortunately, the health authorities and the Government midwives confronted two obstacles. One was the increase of private midwives in the urban Sanitary Board areas of Alor Setar, Sungai Petani and Kulim. They were mostly Chinese midwives trained in Penang who found work in Kedah very lucrative. Uncontrolled and unsupervised, their performances became dubious with tendencies to become unsafe for mothers. The passing of the new Midwives Enactment No: 1 of 1356 A.H. by the State Council in 1936 made it compulsory for qualified and certified midwives to be registered. Aimed at controlling the practice of such midwives in certain defined areas mainly by establishing a system of registration and organized supervision, the Enactment became one of the remedial actions taken by the Government to remove the cause of ill-health among mothers and infants.

The second obstacle and the most important occurred in the rural areas itself. The Government Subsidised Midwife known to the people as *bidan raja-raja*, not only had to breach the conservatism of the Malay mothers and their suspicion of modern midwifery but also had to combat the strong opposition and wrath of the incumbent untrained *bidan kampung*. That the *bidan raja-raja* had invaded her territory and tried to oust her and deprived her of her legitimate trade, made the *bidan kampung* very antagonistic towards the Government Midwives to this day. A new Midwives (Registration) Regulations under the Midwives Act 1966, was published in the Government Gazette No: P.U. (A) 161 in 1971, requiring all trained and untrained midwives to register with the Midwives Board for the same purpose of controlling and supervising their activities in their operational area.

Health education played an enormous part in combating traditional prejudices, conservatism and antagonism of the Malays. With the help of District Officers and co-operation from the *Penghulus* of Mukims towards the Kampung Midwives Service Scheme, Dr. Mabel Brodie was able to happily report the immediate results of the Scheme in her Annual Report of the Women's Department which was incorporated in the *Annual Report of the Medical and Health Department Kedah*, in 1938.

¹⁸ J. Portelly, *Annual Report of the Medical & Health Dept., Kedah, 1937.*

Fig. 2:

<i>Attendances of Mothers & Children, 1934-1938.</i>						
<i>Alor Setar:</i>	<i>1934</i>	<i>1935</i>	<i>1936</i>	<i>1937</i>	<i>1938</i>	<i>Average</i>
Town Dispensary	3814	4132	5514	3716	6600	301.7 p.m.
General Hospital	1400	1371	1051	1652	3615	328.0 p.m.

The increase attendance was encouraging, especially when 50% of the total were Malays and exceeding the number of Chinese patients. More expectant mothers were motivated to attend antenatal clinics and to have their deliveries in hospital.

Up to 1940, the fight against ill-health amongst women and children was assisted by health education talks in the clinics and in the homes. Anaemia due to worm infection and an imbalanced diet were common. Breast-feeding was emphasised so that dirty long-tube feeders and sweetened condensed milk were not given to infants by ignorant mothers. Dr. Brodie's campaigns against dummy comforters and long-tube feeders made mothers fear her when they take their infants to the Clinics or when Dr. Brodie visited their homes. Mothers hid these items on such occasions for otherwise, apart from the reprimands they got from Dr. Brodie, the dummies were destroyed on the spot or confiscated with other items such as the long-tube feeders, unsuitable clothing and dressing material. These were exhibited in a small museum in the Clinic so as to act as a warning to mothers.

In those days, infants and children used a long tube attached to the boat-shaped milk bottle for sucking the milk. Understandably, these 18" tubes cannot be cleansed properly and abdominal upsets and diarrhoeas frequently resulted among them.

Early marriages and repeated intra-family marriages between relatives were mentioned by Dr. Brodie as contributory factors to the physical and mental incapacities of the young mothers to bear healthy live children and to look after them. Gonorrhoeal infection were common among the young married girls, having caught the infection from their own husbands. It was recommended and advised that parents should refuse marriage of their daughters to infected men. How this was to be achieved and its subsequent success, however, were not reported.

Despite the temperamental characteristics of Dr. Brodie, the local staff and mothers in Alor Setar respected "Mem Brodie" and talked of her with affection. Her dedication towards the Malays and genuine concern over their welfare readily made them forgive her weaknesses. She knew the Malay language well enough to make herself understood and be welcomed in the homes to taste the spicy foods which she loved. She shared their happiness and their sorrows. One who is ever grateful to Dr. Brodie for bringing her out of her sorrows and forced solitude is Tunku Baharum ibni Almarhum Sultan Abdul Hamid, younger sister of Tunku Abdul Rahman Putra al-Haj. Tunku Baharum, known as "Tunku Om" by everyone in Kedah, lost her husband at the beginning of the war in Singapore.

When the Kampung Midwives Service Scheme was initiated Dr. Brodie saw in Tunku Om the potential capabilities of a social welfare worker. She literally forced Tunku Om to attend the training classes, took her home-visiting, taught her the elements of health education and also to be fearless of opposition. Basically a shy and soft-spoken lady yet extremely sympathetic and sensitive to people's feelings and

problems, Tunku Om took to her new role with remarkable efficiency and became the first "social welfare officer" in the hospital. Coming from the Royal family of Kedah and not speaking the English language, Tunku Om proved a shining example to the Malay womenfolk. An official letter from the Medical Department authorized all hospitals in Kedah to allow Tunku Om to visit the wards at any time so that she could perform her duties among the Malay women patients, particularly to give them the moral and psychological support they needed and to relieve them of the fears of the hospital. Unfortunately, many hospital staff misunderstood Tunku Om, were unappreciative of her genuine and good intentions and did not realize that her hospital visits did help in preventing mothers and children from absconding from the hospitals.

At the time of writing, Tunku Om, aged 74 years, lay in a hospital bed with a fractured thigh and scapula as a result of a car accident in Langgar which killed her elder sister Tunku Aminah. The people's love and concern for her speedy recovery were evident in the hundreds of visitors from all walks of life and rank who came to see her in pain just as she once did to them, to give her comfort and prayers for a speedy recovery. In better times, Tunku Om continued with her welfare work, extending help to include stray youths, separated or divorced wives and orphans by giving them temporary shelter and advice in her own home.

Maternal and Child Health Services in the Pre-Independent Era.

That Kedah was similarly affected by the War in 1941-1945 as in other parts of the country was seen by the number of malnutrition and beri-beri cases found among mothers and children after the war. The first Health Nurse employed in 1941 to start home-visiting of mothers and newborns discharged from hospitals was not re-employed during the war and so the MCW services stood still except for a few midwives who worked unsupervised and uncontrolled.

After the War, attempts were made to restore the MCW services, mostly to treat the diseases found among the mothers and children. Milk, vitamins and food supplements were distributed.

The National Emergency in June 1948 affected the growth of rural services by the enforcement of security areas. MCW work was confined to established centres in urban areas and to resettlement villages in defined areas. Together with the Red Cross and St. John's Ambulance Brigade which did exemplary work, the MCW and Dental Services provided basic medico-health and dental care in the rural areas acting as the forerunner of the present rural health services.

The need for Health Nursing Personnel to organize and supervise the pioneer health team initiated the employment of Health Nurses again. Kedah had to rely much on neighbouring States for applications. Health Nurses had to be trained in Public Health in England until 1954 when Malaya established her own Public Health Nursing Training School in Penang.

The first Health Nurse to be employed was the late Che Puteh Manikram in 1946 who came from Penang. She was sent to London for the PHN Course and returned in 1951 as the first Public Health Sister and later became the first Malay Health Matron in Kedah in 1955.

In the meantime, Health Staff Nurses were sent to Kuala Nerang, Sungai Petani, Kulim and Jitra to open MCH Centres and to manage them. For the first time,

organized preventive health for mothers and children were available in these areas. Those slightly away from these towns were served from Subsidiary Clinics, which operated from rented homes of midwives, shophouses, under the *Penghulu's* house or any suitable building borrowed by the visiting health team on special days for the purpose.

The greater part of the State, however, remained without service. Combined with the very poor social conditions, the Infant Deaths in the rural areas showed no decline and the rate was twice as high as those found in the urban areas.

The establishment of the Rural Health Training School (RHTS), in Jitra in Kubang Pasu District as the World Health Organization's first health project in the Peninsula in 1954, marked the determination of the Federal Government to prepare the country with trained frontline workers in the promotion of health in rural areas. This was done in step with plans for a Rural Health Scheme which became a major component in Malaya's first Five-Year Socio-Economic Development Plan.

That Jitra was specially chosen as the site for the first RHTS provided trainees with ample atmosphere and situation of rurality. Having had the basic training previously in the Hospitals and Health Offices, the trainees which comprised of Assistant Nurses (ANs), Public Health Overseers (PHOs) and Midwives, collectively known as Auxiliaries, were orientated to Public Health work, the concepts of teamwork and most important of all, of community living and community health.

Simultaneously, the Rural Health Training Centre (RHTC), Jitra, was built to act as a practical training service centre for the trainees. MCH services which were started in Jitra town in 1951 from the Outdoor Dispensary, moved into the new building in 1955. Both the RHTS and the RHTC acted as catalysts for the development of rural health services in the district of Kubang Pasu especially and of the State. Kampunges were chosen as training areas for the PHOs to promote and practise environmental sanitation campaigns. New Health Sub-Centres (HSC) and Midwives Clinics-cum-Quarters (MCQ) were built in towns and kampunges for practical training for the Assistant Nurses and Midwives.

As physical facilities began to grow in Kubang Pasu, a few more Health Staff trained as Public Health Nurses (PHNs) in Penang and Public Health Inspectors (PHIs) from their Training School in Kuala Lumpur, arrived to take up appointments. Together with the Auxiliaries from the RHTS, Jitra, they constituted the nucleus of the Rural Health Units throughout the Country as part of the first Five-Year Social and Economic Development Plan of 1955-1960. Each Rural Health Unit serves a rural population of 50,000 and provides basic health services, more essentially preventive than curative. Led by a Medical and Health Officer (M. & H.O.), 65% of the Staff comprised Nursing Personnel, due to the fact that one of the major components of Rural Health Services is MCH. (Fig. 3).

By 1957, there were 7 MCH Centres, 64 Subsidiary Clinics, 1 RHTC and 1 MCQ in Kedah. The third Rural Health Team was undergoing training in the RHTS, Jitra, while 30 pupil midwives were recruited for basic training in midwifery in the hospitals. Unlike the trainee midwives of the 1920-1930 decade, these pupil midwives, as they are today, are single girls with minimum Std. VI Primary education. Their training comprises 18 months' training in the hospital and 6 months of rural domiciliary midwifery where they practise in the homes of mothers. On graduation, most of them are

taken into the Rural Health Services while a few remain in the Maternity Units of the hospitals. The importance of having a trained and efficient midwife for rural work is strongly emphasised knowing that she will be the sole health worker and the first to be contacted in times of emergencies in the rural areas.

Appreciation of the MCH Services, Dental Work and School Health inspection, on the people's part slowly increased, as shown in the number of attendances in the Outdoor Clinics and admissions into hospitals.

MCH Services after Independence.

The development of MCH Services after Independence was achieved in 1957 and the establishment of Malaysia in 1963 was rapid and extensive. Aided by the termination of the Emergency in 1960, the MCH Programmes in the Rural Health Schemes became more organized and determined to meet the needs of the people. When formerly there was inequitable distribution of services and staff between urban and rural areas, there is now a more balanced arrangements for all mothers and children to obtain medical and health assistance. It was through the Government's Five-Year Development Plans that this was made possible.

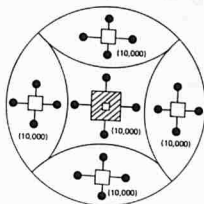
While the bigger towns in Kedah have hospitals and outdoor dispensaries, the smaller towns had the MCH Centres either as part of the Health Office or the Outdoor Dispensary. Beyond the environs of these small towns, the rural population were served by the system of Rural Health Units mentioned earlier. The smallest Unit in this 3 - tiered system was the MCQ which housed the midwives.

Since 1973, efforts were made to strengthen the physical facilities and improved the services to the people. When formerly there was the 3 - tiered system of Main Health Centres (MHC), Health Sub-Centres (HSC) and Midwife Clinic-cum-Quarters (MCQ), there is now a 2 - tiered system whereby all HSCs are upgraded to MHCs with more space for the expanded MCH services. (Fig. 4). The MCQs have also been converted to Rural Community Clinics (to be called *Klinik Desa* - K.D.) consequent to the establishment of a multi-purpose *Jururawat Desa* (JD) or Community Nurse who replaced the single-purpose midwife. With midwifery and care of the post-natal mother and newborn being still her priority, the JD can also care for infants and pre-school children and provide treatment for minor ailments. At present, the JDs are recruited from existing government midwives who are given an extra 6 months of training in the RHTSs in Jitra and Rembau (built in 1966). Obviously, with the improvement of physical facilities and staff, more health advice and services reach the people through the JDs.

Better roads and communication helped in the expansion of the health services. Where it is not yet possible to provide static health facilities in the remoter areas, Mobile Rural Health Teams (MRHT) visit the area fortnightly until permanent facilities are made available. The MRHT plays an important role in keeping the isolated rural people in contact with modern concepts of healthful living from the health education, advice and treatment afforded to them by the visiting team.

It has always been the Government's policy to eliminate or reduce the obstacles that will prevent the rural population from utilizing the health services. All rural health services are provided for free, except for dental treatment for adult males and non-pregnant females. Even so, the charges are very small.

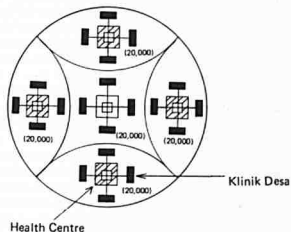
Fig. 3.
SET-UP OF A RURAL HEALTH UNIT FOR A 50,000
RURAL POPULATION (THREE-TIER SYSTEM)



Key:

- Midwife Clinic cum Quarters (MCQ) for 2,000 persons.
 - Health Sub-Centre (HSC) for 10,000 persons.
 - ▨ Main Health Centre (MHC) for 50,000 persons.
- (Note: Three-tier system of MHC, HSC and MCQ)

Fig. 4.
REORGANIZATION OF RURAL HEALTH UNITS FROM A THREE-TIER
TO A TWO-TIER SYSTEM, FOR A 100,000 RURAL POPULATION.



Note:

- a. Upgrading of Health Sub-Centres to Main Health Centres Covering a 20,000 Population.
- b. Upgrading of MCQ to Klinik Desa (functional Health centre) Covering a 4,000 Population.

Complete care of the mother in the clinics and in the home from the first visit to the end of her postnatal period is rendered free. In addition, she is given toiletries for herself and her new-born as well as necessary medicines and oral contraceptives if requested, all for free.

Care of the infants begins during the antenatal period through the various stages of infancy, toddler stage, pre-school and school. In some areas where there is a School Health Team, the child is followed up to adolescence for booster immunization before she or he leaves the school. Immunization against former killer diseases of children are carried out and include protection against tuberculosis, diphtheria, whooping cough, tetanus, poliomyelitis and smallpox.

Dental treatment for children and expectant mothers is a priority and is free. To combat malnutrition through wrong feeding and an unbalanced diet, nutrition talks and cooking demonstrations are given in all Health Centres as part of a regular health education programme.

Personal and good relationship between Staff and the mother and her family is very important. Rural work demands it. Home-visiting becomes an essential service performed by all Health Personnel, especially the Midwife and the JD. Mothers and children have now come to recognize and accept the coming of the white-uniformed *missy* or *bidan* and the blue-checked uniformed JD. They come walking, on bicycles or motor-cycles or in health vans. In Langkawi, for example, the JDs and the MCH Team from Kuah visit the nearby islands by boat and are often caught in storms in the sea.

Much credit has to be given to the government midwives and the JDs who work single-handed in the rural areas. Often single at the time of graduation, they either stay by themselves with a helper or bring along an older relative to accompany them. Trained to be on call for 24 hours, their duty of taking calls in the night expose them to the risks of being molested, robbed and threatened by unscrupulous people, who invariably are outsiders of the kampung. *Penghulus* and *Ketua Kampung*s have been asked to be partly responsible for the safety and welfare of new *bidans* or JD's posted in their area. The arrival of a new member of staff is always received with a small reception of tea and cakes organized by the kampung people to whom the Public Health Sister will formally introduce her new staff.

Plans have not stopped to improve and expand further into the rural areas. Problematic areas with mothers and children at very high risks to diseases and deaths will be identified and their needs served. The Rural Health Scheme can only provide complete coverage to the rural population by 1990. In the interim period, and as a temporary measure, the unserved and the under-served areas in the rural areas will also be identified so that primary health care can be provided, utilizing community resources as much as possible.¹⁹ Surveys of these areas in Kedah have already started.

Two of the most important community resources identified as possible assistants in implementing these primary health services are the traditional healers and the traditional birth attendants (TBAs), better known as the *bomoh*, the *mudin* and the *bidan kampung*. Upon them lie the duties of perpetuating traditional beliefs and

¹⁹Raja Ahmad Noordin and E.J. Martinez, *Our Health in the Seventies*. Ministry of Health, Malaysia 1977.

practices. Should the Government utilize them in this new project known as Community Health Movement (CHM) the chances of good health and its value being perpetuated and maintained in the rural areas will be greatly enhanced.

The Bidan Kampung or Traditional Birth Attendants (TBAs)

Traditional healers are found in most countries in the world. One of their most outstanding members is the TBA, known as *bidan kampung*, in Malaysia.²⁰ Wherever they are, their existence and their activities were initially ignored by health authorities and a negative attitude was adopted towards their contribution in maternal and community health.

The attitude of the community towards modern health services, the existence of cultural practices and the effects of uncontrolled activities of the *bidan kampung* have slowly made its impact on the government, health agencies and specialists. Malaysia and its neighbours have for the past few years initiated a study of their TBAs and their activities in a more positive attitude. TBAs are studied in their own rural setting, viewed as individuals with desires and good intentions of doing good to rural mothers and children. They are also viewed as respected and influential members of the community. They have made their presence felt and, undoubtedly, can no longer be avoided, ignored or easily eradicated in the present system of organized Family Health services.

Of late, together with other traditional healers, the *bomoh* and the *mudin*, the *bidan kampung* have founded an Association of Traditional Healers in Kuala Lumpur, with members throughout the country. Though the objectives and responsibilities of the Association are not clear, it is certain that they would seek recognition of their "profession" in the treatment of patients together with modern and scientific medicine.

Expansion of the general health services has made a real impact on the health status and health consciousness of the people, as depicted in the decline of the mortality rate. By the end of 1977, the State of Kedah had already had 7 MCCs, 27 HSCs, 21 *Klinik Desa*, 121 MCQs, 4 MCH Centres, 85 Subsidiary Clinics and 5 MRHTs functioning.²¹ As the Community Health Movement (CHM) is initiated, the need for existing *bidan kampung* to play positive roles in Family Health becomes all the more important. Apart from being of use in the remote areas inaccessible to government midwives, and as a relief for them when they are on leave, sick, or attending to another delivery call, tradition alone makes the *bidan kampung* a necessity in rural areas. Despite figures which state that deliveries of mothers in Malaysia to be 70% safe deliveries conducted by professional midwives in urban and rural areas, the percentage could be very much in the reverse in districts and areas where there are many *bidan kampung*.

There are three categories of women practising midwifery in the rural areas:

- I. The trained midwives, who are professionals, and who consist of the government midwives and the JDs.

²⁰ Siti Hasmah M. Ali, "The Role of TBAs in Family Health", 1975. (Unpublished).

²¹ Source: Office of the Director of Medical & Health Services, Kedah.

- II. The partially trained midwives who are *bidan kampung*, who received orientation courses in midwifery and family health organized by the Ministry of Health and National Family Planning Board (NFPB).
- III. The Untrained Midwives who are also *bidan kampung*, who form the bulk of the TBAs in the country.

As it became necessary to control and supervise all women practising midwifery, the Midwives (Registration) Regulation 1971, under the Midwives Act of 1966, requires all persons functioning as midwives to register themselves with the Midwives Board in the Ministry of Health. This includes all government staff midwives (Div. I), the auxiliary midwives (Div. II) and "any person untrained in the practice of midwifery who within 4 years of the commencement of the Midwives Act, (before 1st August, 1972) satisfies the Registrar that such person has during the period of two years, . . . attended to women during child-birth . . ."

Initially, the *bidan kampung* assumed a negative attitude towards the Regulation, thinking that it would not benefit them and were afraid of it. As information spread and as explanation and assistance by the Health Staff were given to assist them in their registration, many responded and applied for registration. Those who waited to see the effects of Registration on their colleagues, applied later only to find themselves too late for registration.

At December, 1977, a total of 3043 the *bidan kampung* throughout the Peninsula were registered with the Midwives Board. The majority were from Kelantan (646), Kedah (468), Johor (454) and Perak (415) while Melaka had only three²².

An analysis of the *bidan kampung* in Kedah has revealed an original figure of 476, but 5 died and 3 stopped functioning in 1977. The remaining 468 are women (3 male *bidan* were registered in Johore and Kelantan): 455 are Malays, 12 Malaysian Thais and 1 Chinese. According to age-groups, 83% of them are now between 45 to 69 years of age. (Fig. 5).

Fig. 5:

Bidan Kampung in Kedah by Age Groups, 1977:

Age Group:	15-44	45-49	50-54	55-59	60-64	65-69	70-99
(years)							
Total :	30	50	88	103	73	74	50
% :	6	11	19	22	15	16	11

Comparing them with government midwives and the JDs, the age range of the *bidan kampung* extend beyond the 70 age group: 22% of them are in the 55-59 age group and will remain active in midwifery for another 10-15 years during which time the government midwives and JDs would have retired for a more relaxing life. The very old *bidan kampung* like Mak Buang can no longer practise because of physical disabilities and ill-health. Thirty-six percent of them are below 54 years of age

²²Source: Nursing Division, Ministry of Health, Malaysia.

and would probably be the best potential candidates for the CHM programme as they are expected to remain active and interested for many more years.

The total number of government midwives and JDs in Kedah in 1977 was 179 midwives and 50 JDs, making the ratio of Government Division II midwives to *bidan kampung* as 1:2. By geographical distribution, the *bidan kampung* are mobile and are found in the operational areas of Health services as well as in the remote areas.

A survey of the *bidan kampung* in 1972 showed that 80% of them were illiterate with only 1% having had 6-7 years of education. This observation is important in the planning of training courses for *bidan kampung*.

While modern Auxiliaries take 2 years of regulated training to become midwives, the *bidan kampung* relies merely on apprenticeship and practice. She becomes a midwife unmotivated by salary schemes and overtime allowances. She becomes a midwife by heredity, by apprenticeship to an older *bidan*, by psychic attraction, by dreams and various factors beyond the imagination. Some have said that they were forced to assist during an emergency. When successful, they become motivated into taking another delivery. Practice and sheer experience through trial and error gave the *bidan kampung* the confidence to become a midwife permanently. A complication, such as one resulting in a maternal death, will not deter her from fulfilling her aspirations. When confronted with a difficult delivery case, she would try all possible primitive means before condescending to call for assistance.

In an observation of maternal deaths in Kedah in 1973,²³ out of the 37 reported and investigated cases, 78.4% were Malay mothers, most of whom those who had more than 5 pregnancies and within the age group of 30-40 years. The *bidan kampung* was called first in such cases but as the mothers' condition worsened, the government midwife was called. By the time the patients arrived at the hospitals, they were either dying or dead on arrival at the admission room. A total 27.8% died at home while 11.1% died during transit.

Severe bleeding after delivery due to retained placenta or an exhausted uterus and injury, head the list of causes of maternal deaths. Fits occurring among pregnant mothers have been taken very lightly by kampung mothers and *bidan kampung*. Assumed to be the cause of evil spirits, this condition known as eclampsia has taken second place in the cause of maternal deaths, especially among first pregnancies and multi-pregnancies. Fortunately, eclampsia can be prevented if midwives are able to detect the signs and symptoms early in the mothers for treatment to be started immediately. The pride and fatalistic attitude of the *bidan kampung* often prevent mothers from getting medical aid with the loss of both mother and foetus.

The status and influence of the *bidan kampung* over the kampung womenfolk are strong. Married and having large families themselves (a sound qualification for midwifery and family planning practice), the *bidan kampung* participates in every kampung activity that involves the womenfolk. Her close and intimate contact with the family and her versatility make her a respected member of the community.

The *bidan kampung* is consulted to confirm the character and respectability of a prospective bride and bridegroom and often becomes the match-maker in marriage

²³Siti Hasmah M. Ali, "Observations on Maternal Deaths in the State of Kedah in 1973". 1974 (Unpublished).

arrangements. During marriage ceremonies, she performs the *andam* rituals on the girl as a test of compatibility and virginity. She accompanies the young bride to the groom's house and sometimes sleep with her for the first 3 nights to prevent the young couple from having sexual intercourse as this was considered unbecoming for newly weds.

During the first pregnancy, the *bidan kampung* is called to confirm the "lump in the abdomen". Once it is confirmed, she is formally booked for the conduct of the delivery at 7 months' pregnancy in a traditional ceremony. During the antenatal period, the *bidan kampung* does not advocate any ante-natal care per se, except to advise and instruct the mother about food and behaviour taboos to ensure a safe delivery of a normal child.

Unlike the busy and sometimes officious government midwife, the *bidan kampung* is available at will. In most cases she stays for hours and often sleeps the night with the mother and attends to her needs and to the family. When labour begins, she conducts the delivery after which she cares for both mother and child. The *bidan kampung* does additional duties such as washing the soiled clothes of the mother and help in the cooking of the meals if no other help is available in the house.

Outside her midwifery functions, the *bidan kampung* is secretly an abortionist, though many will deny of being one. Frequently, desperate and exhausted women seek her help in order to terminate an unwanted pregnancy. The crude and primitive techniques used are not only deplorable but highly dangerous by any standard at all.

Dirty grass roots, stems and various foreign bodies are used for insertion into the woman's womb. Massaging of the abdomen with the hands and heel have been reported. In one instance, a pregnancy outside the uterus ruptured after such massage and almost cost the life of the client. All these primitive methods though successful sometimes in terminating a pregnancy, carry with it unnecessary sufferings, heavy bleeding from the womb, serious infection, notably tetanus, and untimely death. At the time of writing, Kedah and Kelantan have been reported in the local press for being those places where such crude and dangerous abortions are being practised by the *bidan kampung*.

The National Family Planning Board (NFPB), in conjunction with the Ministry of Health, have started orientation courses for the *bidan kampung*, to enable them to understand the basic concepts of good and clean midwifery, to recognize the abnormal conditions in the mother quickly so that she can refer or take the mother herself to the hospital. In addition, she is made knowledgeable of preventive measures in attaining good family health including family planning. Selected and reliable *bidan kampung* attend both the 3-week orientation courses and a 3-day special course that will enable them to become motivators and suppliers of oral contraceptives in their own kampungs.

It is the earnest hope of the NFPB and the government that the function of the *bidan kampung* as abortionist will be eradicated and replaced with a safer role as health promoter and adviser to mothers, especially in the proper care of a pregnancy and in the prevention of an unwanted one.

Circumcision and ear-piercing of girls are done by the *bidan kampung*. Unlike the elaborate ceremonies for boys, circumcision for girls takes place quietly at the age of 3 to 5 years together with the piercing of the ears.

Most *bidan kampung* are experts in preparing the dead female bodies for burial. She is called at the time of death to make arrangements for bathing and the laying of the deceased, assisted by members of the family.

The *bidan kampung* is paid for her duties in various ways. She receives the traditional gifts of a plate of betel leaves and condiments that go with eating them, raw thread, rice-grains, products from the home-garden and money. Most of her income comes from her midwifery practices. She charges \$15/- for conducting first deliveries and less for subsequent ones. In addition, she is paid \$1/- per day for postnatal care. The *bidan kampung* rarely demands fees knowing the financial straits of her clients and readily accepts anything offered to her.

That the *bidan kampung* resents the posting of the trained government midwife must be appreciated. Since the inception of the orientation courses, a number of *bidan kampung* have become more reliable and responsible. The Health Staff are encouraging *kampung* mothers to take the *bidan kampung* for longer postnatal care instead of midwifery, so that the *bidan kampung* can be compensated for the loss of earnings from the midwifery function itself.

The *bidan kampung* today are no longer elusive or non-recognizable. When before they lack personal hygiene and oral cleanliness because of the traditional chewing and sucking of betel leaves and tobacco, they are now cleaner and better in their personal appearances. To compete with the white-uniformed government staff, the *bidan kampung* are neat in their white *baju kurung* and *kain pelikat*. There has been much unhappiness among the government midwives, when the *bidan kampung* sport their registration badges on their *baju* in the same way as their counterparts. The badges unfortunately are similar in appearance in its front part but at the back of it there is either the "A" or the "B" which differentiates the government midwives from the *bidan kampung*. But who bothers to look at the badge on reverse!

The midwife bag used by the *bidan kampung* of olden days were indescribable. Dr. M. Brodie had of times confiscated and exhibited dirty midwife kits in her museum. That tetanus and other infections occurred from the unclean bags of *bidan kampung* are real. The writer once confiscated a "midwife bag" made from a rusty rectangular torchlight container complete with its contents: rusty razor blades, dirty threads (to tie the cord presumably), pieces of cloth (for the dressing of the cord) mixed with tobacco, cigarettes and match-sticks. It was apparent that the container was not only a midwife's bag but also a handy box for odds and ends. The majority of the *bidan kampung* have small rattan bags in a poor state of cleanliness.

Contact with the Health Staff and strict supervision has done good to the *bidan kampung*. They have been made to understand that personal hygiene and cleanliness are essential to good midwifery. Those who attended the orientation courses were issued with UNICEF midwifery kits free, complete with the essential instruments for midwifery, for use in the *kampungs*. Unfortunately, the Health Staff have often complained of the *bidan kampung* presenting clean and untouched UNICEF bags for their monthly inspection in the Health Centres while using their own bags during the course of their work. Stricter control and sometimes mild threats to confiscate the UNICEF bags, if unused, have made them eventually use the kits properly. Those who have to have their own have come forward for advice as to the type of bag required and of the instruments to be used.

The *bidan kampung* are instructed to report to the nearest Health Centre every month for bag inspection, and for the checking and recording of their birth returns and for advice and health talks. In return, they are given fresh supplies of antiseptics, cotton wool and gauze. Those who are in the Bidan Kampung Family Planning Project receive their monthly allowances and bonuses.

The *bidan kampung*, who by tradition is an antagonist to modern concepts of health and family planning has indeed progressed in a very positive direction to help the government, as a valuable health agent and propagator of health. By registering formally with the Midwives' Board, her status in the Kampung is enhanced. Close contact and good human relationship between the government midwife and *bidan kampung* is encouraged in preventing conflicts and unhealthy competition. The utilization of the *bidan kampung* in any health programme cannot achieve support and success if they are made to feel unacceptable as members of a health team. They do not know nor do they need to know the meaning of "targets" which Health authorities try to achieve with the help of TBAs. Just as their performance in Family Health will be evaluated by Health Authorities, so will the TBAs evaluate the Health Authorities from the manner they are approached and persuaded to join forces with them.

Presently and thus far, the *bidan kampung* have shown no strong opposition to Health programmes in Kedah. In some places, those who are reliable and have good records of their performance, have stood as second calls for government midwives or JDs. In other areas where there is very close rapport, they work in coalition with the government midwife who attends to the professional midwifery while the *bidan kampung* attends to the psychological needs of the mother by chanting religious recitations and by her mere presence.

The future augurs well for the *bidan kampung*. Although their numbers will eventually decrease and their role in the community lessen in terms of providing midwifery services, the *bidan kampung* will continue to be perpetrators of traditional customs, beliefs and practices. Fortunately, those who have had orientation courses have slowly relaxed in perpetuating the harmful ones and it is hoped that more and more of the untrained ones would adopt the same attitude.²⁴

Traditional Practices associated with Pregnancy, Childbirth and Puerperium among the Malays²⁵

Customs and beliefs are strongly adhered among the Malays. Fear of reprisals from the elders should anything go wrong forces the Malay to continue to practise traditional rituals, some of which may seem obnoxious and dangerous to medical practitioners while others are reasonably harmless.

Total elimination of traditional practices may perhaps be impossible, even in the cities and towns. With increasing problems of getting domestic help, the city and town dwellers constantly have an elderly relative staying with them. The career woman has

²⁴P.C.Y. Chen, *The Midwifery Services in a Rural Malay Community*, M.D. Thesis, submitted to the University of Malaya, 1975.

²⁵Siti Hasmah M. Ali, "Traditional Practices associated with Pregnancy, Childbirth and Puerperium among the Malays", 1976. (Unpublished).

no other choice but to persuade her mother or in-law to help either temporarily or permanently to look after the children. The young couple therefore feels obliged to follow certain practices, if not completely but modified, as a compromise so as to avoid offending the elders.

Traditional Practices during Pregnancy

Reasons for the various rituals practised during pregnancy are mainly to ensure that the health of the mother is good, the foetus is normal and healthy and that the mother would have a safe delivery at full term.

Traditionally, there is no antenatal care. What seems to be essential is the confirmation of the pregnancy by a *bidan kampung* when the mother stops menstruating. The absence of proper antenatal care among Malay kampung mothers prevent early detection and management of abnormalities. Until today, cases of pre-eclamptic toxæmia and eclampsia²⁶ among Malay mothers occur resulting in loss of lives.

Belief in evil spirits that will enter the body of the pregnant mother and cause fits and illnesses, controls the activities of the mother. She is not allowed outside the house at midday or twilight when evil spirits are said to roam. She carries a metallic object inside her clothing to ward off such evil spirits. Husbands are discouraged from hunting and injuring animals for fear that the foetus be similarly injured and/or born deformed. Though food is restricted during the first 3 months of pregnancy, the mother is careful to avoid over-eating for fear of having a big foetus and a difficult labour later. It is customary for the first born to be delivered in the maternal parents' house just as it is customary to call in the *bidan kampung* for the delivery.

The *melenggang perut* ceremony at 7 months of the first pregnancy is a traditional practice. It provides good opportunities for relatives and friends to convey their wishes and prayers to the mother for a safe and successful delivery. This provides ample psychological support for the mother-to-be. Arrangements may range from extravagant decorations of the whole house to a simple ceremony of booking the midwife followed by a small feast. In certain kampungs, the young husband is also made to sit with his wife on a decorated dias just as they once did on their wedding day.

The main parts of the *melenggang perut* ceremony are:

- a. *Melenggang perut* — the pelvic rocking.
- b. *Menempah bidan* — booking of the traditional midwife.
- c. *Memandi tian* — "bathing" of the foetus.
- d. Determination of the sex of the foetus.
- e. Prayers and *kenduri* (feasting).

The *melenggang perut* ceremony in a royal household in which the writer was present is described here.

Three *bidan kampung* and three government midwives were specially selected. They were led by Mak Buang who was then well past 70 years old with failing eyesight and health, but well alert to direct and supervise the ceremony.

²⁶ An abnormal condition in pregnancy characterized by a raised blood pressure, swelling of the feet and albumin in the urine. If not controlled, it will lead to fits with serious consequences to mother and foetus.

The Royal mother was first bathed with *tepung tawar*, lime-water and rose-water contained in seven silver bowls. She wore only a sarong to cover herself — *berkemban*. A raw egg was rolled over her abdomen to draw out the evil spirits into the egg and then allowed to fall to the floor. As the egg fell, it was quickly stepped upon by the Royal mother to signify eradication of the evil spirits.

After bathing she was then dressed in beautiful clothes and led into a chamber where her immediate relatives and family were present. No male was allowed in such ceremonies. A beautifully decorated mattress with seven layers of rich material placed on it was ready for the Royal mother to lie down. In other simple ceremonies, the long batik sarongs are used instead.

The seven midwives took position on either side of the mother with Mak Buang seated on the right. She then solemnly said a few words of prayer and then took up the first layer of the material and simulated the tying of a knot over the mother's abdomen. The first layer is then removed from the right side. The same procedure is repeated for every layer of material, removing them from alternate sides.

Done very deftly by Mak Buang, the procedure involved movements of the mother's spine and pelvis. As the material is knotted over the mother's abdomen, the *bidan* lifts the mother's body, rocking it gently before removing the material. It seemed impossible for the mother not to turn her body a little to each side and lift her hips for easy removal of the material. Thus, unknowingly, she does the "pelvic rock" and "spinal twist" which seemed to be the only occasion where some form of ante-natal exercises were performed. The "pelvic rocking" is a known practice in modern midwifery to loosen the pelvic joints. Unfortunately, tradition permits the *melenggang perut* only once in the life time of a married woman. In addition to that, modern Malay couples have deleted the most useful part of the ceremony and confined themselves to only the bathing and feasting.

After the *melenggang perut*, Mak Buang picked three well-polished coconuts for the ceremony of determining the sex of the foetus. Usually only one coconut is used but in royal occasions three were used, of which the first one is important. The coconut is rolled over the mother's abdomen three times and then allowed to roll freely towards the feet until it stops. The position of the coconut's eyes determines the sex of the foetus: and upward position for the boys and downwards for girls. Mak Buang did not have an answer should the eyes turned to either side!

The two remaining coconuts were rolled similarly but were insignificant. The first coconut is usually made into coconut oil for use as a lubricant during the delivery.

At the completion of the ceremony, the Royal mother sat up for Mak Buang to perform the final rituals of throwing yellow rice grains, and toasted rice grains on either side of her. To indicate that she was free for safe delivery, a knotted coconut leaf was separated in front of her. She then paid respects to her mother and elders and left the chamber to change for the prayers and feast.

Mak Buang and each of the participating midwives were given the traditional gifts of "booking fees", *tepak sirih*, raw yarn and candles, rice, coconut and a piece of material. The ceremony ended with all invited male and female guests participating in prayers and feasting.

Traditional Practices during Childbirth

Although it is traditional to call the *bidan kampung* for deliveries, there is no restriction for the expectant mother to change *bidan* or take a government midwife when labour begins. Preventive measures against interference of evil spirits begin immediately.

Mengkuang leaves are hung at the doorstep and windows in the delivery room. A *kacip* — an instrument used to slice areca nuts — is placed near the head of the mother. All doors and windows in the delivery room and of cupboards, are kept open. The mother is placed on the floor in a position parallel to any stream so that delivery is facilitated. Her hair is let loose. One notices the belief that closed passages or knots signify obstruction and therefore must be opened or loosened to allow free passage.

To determine the progress of labour, the *bidan kampung* soaks a dried and crumpled flower called *bunga siti fatimah* in a bowl of water, at the start of labour pains. The time this flower takes to completely open up in the water indicates the progress of the opening of the birth passages. The water is given to the mother to drink and is also applied over the abdomen to soothe the pains.

Often the *bidan kampung* ties a band above the abdomen to ensure that the "baby does not go upwards". In cases of obstructed or delayed labour, pressure is exerted over the uterus — *menolak perut* — to assist in the expulsion of the foetus. This is a very harmful practice as it can cause rupture or impending rupture of the uterus, jeopardizing the lives of mother and child.

During the delivery of the new-born, lubrication of the perineum with coconut oil is done to avoid tears. *Bidan kampung* take great pride over their techniques of preventing perineal tears although their methods, using coconut husks pads and/or heel, are never accepted by health authorities as clean and aesthetic.

It has been said that *bidan kampung* who use the bamboo sliver to cut the cord also splits the perineum during difficult labour. When this happens, she treats the wound with *manjikani* paste, a paste made from the *manjikani* seed scraped on a rough surface to obtain the powder. Application of this paste over the wound prevents exposure and helps the cut surfaces to appose and heal.

Expulsion of the afterbirth or placenta is hastened by pressure on the uterus after the birth of the infant. Often this is done too early, resulting in retained placenta and bleeding.

The umbilical cord of the infant is cut only after the expulsion of the placenta. According to *bidan kampung*, the bamboo sliver used for cutting the cord is prepared fresh and used only once for that delivery, after which it is broken into halves and buried with the placenta.

Fortunately, the bamboo sliver has given way to the scissors. One could foresee the problem of *bidan kampung* with arthritic fingers and poor vision using these instruments. Teaching them to maintain clean and sterile scissors after each delivery has always been a problem to the Health Staff. The fear of tetanus in new-born infants occurring from the use of unsterile instruments happens regardless of the type of midwife who is called to attend to the delivery.²⁷ Definite steps have been taken by

²⁷ P. C. Y. Chen, *ibid.*

the Ministry of Health to prevent tetanus neonatorum and puerperal tetanus occurring by antitetanus toxoid immunization programmes for antenatal mothers in rural areas.

Placental disposal is carried out by the *bidan kampung*. The placenta is thoroughly cleaned and placed in a new earthen pot with a nail and covered with salt and tamarind. Burial is the usual method of disposal and is done privately and respectfully for fear of reprisals or untoward reactions against the new-born. To Muslims, the disposal of the placenta is akin to the burial of a dead body. Hence, most Malay mothers who deliver in hospitals would request for the placenta to be returned to a relative for proper burial in the kampung.

Traditional Practices in the Puerperal Period

The puerperal period of a Malay mother is 44 days. It is a period of rest to enable her to regain her health and figure as well as to care and breast feed her baby. Unfortunately, certain traditional practices within this period act against the restoration of health.

Domestic work is assisted by the *bidan kampung* with additional compensatory fees for washing the mother's soiled clothes. The postnatal mother rests in a corner of a well-ventilated room, near an area where the wooden flooring is spaced out so that soiled water and urine could be easily drained. By detecting a water-logged area or damp earth beneath a house, excluding the kitchen area, a government midwife is able to visit a postnatal mother or an ill person who wishes to remain secretive.

Ritual baths of warm herbal water is given to the mother after delivery each day, unlike those practised by other communities. The typical Malay mother during the *pantang* period is always pictured as lying on a mattress on the floor, with her hair combed high on her head, her feet covered with a pair of knee-length stockings, pale looking and smelling of garlic!

Warmth is important and every effort is made to achieve this during the *pantang* period. For three consecutive days the *bidan kampung* will traditionally bathe the mother and massage her to restore circulation of the blood and muscle tone. The mother is put through regulated exercises as she lies down and sits up. Massaging or *mengurut* is one of the traditional practices which is strongly encouraged by Health Staff so that both the mother and *bidan kampung* can benefit from it. Unfortunately, it is limited to only three days and are rarely extended unless the mother demands for it and the *bidan kampung* could be persuaded to do so.

The application of hot bricks or iron on the abdomen, — *menungku* — is supposed to help reduce the fatty tissues on the abdomen and to speed up the involution of the uterus. Many mothers believe this to the extent of allowing their abdominal skin to be burnt black and be parched as thin as paper. The bad effect of this is when the muscles are damaged during repeated practice and can no longer hold the abdominal contents resulting in abdominal hernia in the mother.

Bersalai and *berdiang* have fortunately ceased to be practised by most mothers as a source for warmth and as a method to hasten the drying of vaginal discharges as well as involution of the uterus. Described as "firebaths" by Dr. Brodie, *bersalai* and *berdiang* require a pot of burning fire to be placed near the mother or underneath a stool on which she sits. The purpose apparently is to encourage perspiration. P.C.Y. Chen (1975) found that those who abandoned this practice did so because its preparation

was inconvenient; it used more fuel and was also a poor source of sustained heat. With traditional restriction of fluids to just a glass of water each day, further loss of fluids from perspiration may cause dehydration in the mother with serious effects on her health.

To provide internal warmth, mothers are given *rempah seratus* which is a preparation consisting of various spices mixed with eggs and honey to form a paste known as *makjun*. Obtainable in capsule form nowadays, *makjun* is taken freely by women to ensure good health and regular menstrual periods.

As an effective abdominal support to the lax muscles, the mother's abdomen is tied with either a many-tailed bandage or bound with 5–6 yards of material which stretched from beneath her breasts to her thighs. This gives sufficient support and confidence for the mother to be ambulant early.

Religious and traditional rituals after the 44 days free the mother from her taboos and allow her to say her prayers, visits the mosques and relatives. With the new infant in her arms after a bath of *mandi tolak bala* (to avoid danger) the mother sits in front of the *bidan kampung* who recites a prayer and then passes a loop of raw yarn over the mother's head and infant down to their feet. This ritual, which also depicts the end of the *bidan kampung's* responsibilities, ends with a prayer of gratefulness to Allah and a *kenduri* in which relatives and close friends are invited.

Traditional Food Taboos

For reasons unknown, except for it to be just an *adat orang tua*, food taboos are religiously practised by kampung mothers. It is not a religious requirement; in fact it is contrary to the teachings of Islam. However, it has been found that only those who are traditionally orientated and those who booked the untrained *bidan kampung* for their delivery still practise it.²⁸

Restriction on the diet to a plate of rice, salted fish, pepper and a glass of water, has caused severe ill-effects in those mothers who lived in sub-standard conditions and who have repeated pregnancies accompanied by repeated food taboos. Repeated maternal exhaustion and depletion of nutrients essential for the restoration of health and repeated pregnancies are familiar combinations that result eventually in the crippling of the mother's health and eventual maternal death. It is very difficult to understand how a paralysed mother due to the lack of Vitamin B1 and other nutrients in her postnatal diet, would come to the hospital for treatment and advice and then would return home well, only to appear again at the hospital the following year with the same complaint. In 1956–1960, one half of the Female Medical Ward in the General Hospital, Alor Setar, was filled with mothers suffering from peripheral neuritis. They had to be given Injection Vitamin B1 daily, supported by nutritious diet and physiotherapy so that their leg muscles were able to regain their tone and function to enable the mother to walk again.

Efforts put in by the Health Staff to combat this harmful food practice have been continuous and its ill-effects are stressed especially upon the *bidan kampung* when they attend their monthly classes at Health Centres and also to the mothers at each Clinic session and home visit.

²⁸ P.C.Y. Chen, *Ibid.*

Belief in "heaty", "cooling", and "windy" foods perpetuate food taboos even among educated mothers. Food restrictions discourage milk production, and affects the quality of the milk as well. Mothers return to their full diet only after the *mandi tolak bala* has taken place.

Infant Care

The new-born is looked after by the *bidan kampung* until the stump of the umbilical cord falls off.

Soon after birth, the new-born infant is wrapped up in a piece of cloth while the mother is being attended to. After the first warm bath, the cord of the infant is dusted with a mixture of pepper, tumeric powder, crushed garlic or *celak*²⁹ and dressed in a piece of cloth. The infant's abdomen is then bandaged with a many-tailed bandage and hot fomentation applied gently on the abdomen to prevent "wind". The body of the new-born is then wrapped in a big piece of cloth with its arms inside to ensure that it would not be startled when asleep. It is then handed to the father to proclaim over the infant the Greatness of Allah and that Muhammad is the Prophet, in accordance with Islamic practice.

Normally, breast-feeding is the traditional practice among the Malay mothers. They believe that breast-feeding not only provides food for their infants but also helps the uterus to involute and prevent another pregnancy from starting too soon. The Health Staff find no difficulty in persuading mothers to breast-feed their infants but have difficulty in encouraging them to eat better food so that the breast milk would be more in amount and of better quality. When breast milk becomes insufficient for the infant, kampung mothers give sweetened condensed milk instead while those who can afford start with powdered milk. The hazards of bottle-feeding in the rural areas are obvious. Ignorance and insanitary conditions in the home contribute to the abdominal upsets among infants leading to severe diarrhoea and vomiting with acute dehydration and death as an eventual outcome.

Head shaving is traditional after the umbilical stump falls off. It is believed that hair which originates from birth is "dirty" and therefore should be completely removed. The infant's scalp is shaved with a barber's razor blade and in certain cases, repeated every time the hair begins to grow again. Trauma to the delicate scalp and improper care of the head lead to infection at an early age of the infant resulting in an unhappy and irritable infant through no fault of its own.

Traditional practices have been classified into four categories by Jelliffe:

- a. The beneficial, which should be strongly encouraged.
- b. The harmful, which are best be avoided.
- c. The harmless, which should be modified.
- d. The uncertain, which requires more investigation and study.

As a guide to the Health Staff and Health Educators, this simple classification avoids unnecessary resentment from mothers and unnecessary change of practices when they are found to be harmless. It becomes obvious that contact with the communities help to lift many barriers and correct many misconceptions about health. Patience, sympathy and understanding of the individual problems create good relationship between the Health Staff and the community.

²⁹ Antimony powder used as mascara.

Socio-economic development has influenced many young couples to modify, and to a certain extent, abandon harmful traditional practices. P.C.Y. Chen has observed that this happens when both parents are educated. Although the changes for improvement among Malay mothers are slower than among other communities, the trend towards better health for both mother and child is evident. The willingness for the young and educated Malay couple to change augurs well for the future generation of the Malays, as generally by tradition, Malays are very reluctant to part with tradition as seen in the Malay proverb *biar mati anak, jangan mati adat* — let the child die but not the customs.

Fifty Years of Maternal and Child Health Services in Kedah

The woman and child in Kedah today live in a healthier environment and almost free from killer diseases of the early century. They owe this opportunity to live healthier and longer lives to various factors. The socio-economic development from after Independence made it easier for the people to understand and accept changes that must occur. Education played a vital role in this positive direction. Educated parents and educated grandparents are now more knowledgeable of the urgency of making decisions and for taking action.

Remedial actions taken by the government to correct past major deficiencies in the State paved the way for Malays in particular to accept new concepts of modern medicine and good healthful living. Previously, the Malay mother shunned physical examination even by an L.M.O., but now she is sufficiently courageous and sensible to seek a doctor for treatment and is less particular of the sex of the doctor during emergencies.

Unjustly labelled as an *ulu* State reeked with conservatism and tradition, Kedah has had the honour of producing the first Malay L.M.O. in the Country — an achievement she can be very proud of.

Salma Ismail was born and educated in Kedah and was one of the Malay students who was sent to the King Edward VII, College of Medicine, Singapore³⁰ to study medicine. Being the only Malay woman on record to have broken tradition in Kedah to go for further studies before the War, Salma Ismail studied in Singapore in 1936 until the bombs forced her to return to Alor Setar. Sufficiently experienced in clinical medicine then, she worked in the General Hospital, Alor Setar, as a student doctor, dodging and hiding behind doors every time the Japanese came into the wards!

In 1946, she returned to Singapore as soon as the College re-opened and graduated as a full-pledged Medical Officer in December 1947. Datin Dr. Salma Ismail, as she is known now, reported for duty at the General Hospital, Alor Setar in 1948 at the time when Kedah was in the greatest need for L.M.Os to "instil modern medicine into suspicious womenfolk". This was apparently her top priority as she worked in the various wards in the General Hospital and in the outlying MCH Centres in Yan, Pendang and Kuala Nerang. Being a Malay and a woman like one of them, mothers found it easier to disclose their intimate problems to Dr. Salma and language no longer became a barrier.

³⁰ Also known as Faculty of Medicine, University of Malaya in Singapore, when it was upgraded in 1949. Now it is known as University of Singapore.

Unfortunately, Datin Dr. Salma left Alor Setar in 1960 on a transfer to Kuala Lumpur with her husband, Datuk Dr. Abu Bakar Ibrahim, and retired there. Presently, both Datin Dr. Salma and her husband have established their own private practice to continue to serve the people in Kuala Lumpur.

A review of the mortality indices throughout the 50 years of MCH Services indicates the dramatic effect of an organized and well-managed system of preventive health which Kedah and Malaysia as a whole take much pride in.

Except for a few diehards, the acceptance of the trained government midwife has helped to reduce maternal deaths, through her skill in conducting safe deliveries, her ability to recognize priority cases early and her quick action in times of emergencies.

The Maternal Mortality Rates in Kedah declined from 10.8 per thousand live-births in 1947, to 4.04 in 1957, and a rapid drop to 1.54 in 1976, in step with similar but more dramatic decline in the Peninsular rates of 7.00, 2.83 and 0.78 for 1947, 1957 and 1976 respectively.³¹ There is now far less ruptured uterus and tetanus among postnatal mothers but of the few deaths that still occur today, Malay mothers still head the list, while severe bleeding and eclampsia are the major causes of death.

The deplorable conditions of environment in early 1900 took their toll among infants who by nature are extremely sensitive to environmental changes. In 1921, the Infant Mortality Rate (I.M.R.) in Kedah was 194.98 per thousand live births. It fell to 119.2 in 1947 and to 79.0 in 1957. With the launching of National Control Programmes against killer diseases such as Tuberculosis (1961), Malaria (1968), Poliomyelitis (1971) and improvement of the environment by a National Environment Sanitation Programme in 1975, the I.M.R. has further dropped to 21.38 in 1976. Mothers who are now healthier and relieved from frequent pregnancies through organized and integrated Family Planning Services in the Rural Health Services, are able to give more needed attention to their newborn infants and children especially to their nutrition requirements, immunization schedules and general health.

Unfortunately, Toddler Mortality Rates (T.M.R.), Still Birth Rates (S.B.R.) and Neonatal Mortality Rates (N.M.R.) do not decline just as rapidly. As an indicator of the extent of malnutrition existing in the State, the T.M.R. in Kedah was 34.11 in 1947. Padang Terap, Baling and Bandar Baru Districts had very high rates.

In 1975, the Ministry of Health launched the Applied Food and Nutrition Programme in Padang Terap as an attempt to improve the nutritional status of the people, especially of the vulnerable groups. Toddlers who have, in the past, been neglected in the home because of mothers' ignorance and because of the arrival of a new-born, are now top priority groups. Mothers are taught to prepare food for different age groups of children in terms of quality and amount, and economic budgetting. The effect of this programme is shown in the decline of the T.M.R. in Kedah, even though it was not dramatic. In 1976, T.M.R. in Kedah was 3.09 as compared to 2.56 for Peninsular Malaysia.

It was common to see a red entry in the Antenatal Card of Malay mothers indicating an unsuccessful pregnancy either in the early stages of pregnancy or at full term. A stillbirth reflects the lack of efforts and understanding of the value of achieving a successful live and healthy infant. It also is related to the extent of care and proper

³¹ Sources: i. Vital Statistics from the Statistics Dept., Malaysia.

VITAL STATISTICS OF KEDAH AND PENINSULAR MALAYSIA: 1911-1976

Year	1911 Census	1921 Census	1931 Census	1941 ^a	1947 Census	1955	1957 Census	1960	1965	1970 Census	1975	1976
Peninsular Malaysia	2,339,051	2,906,691	3,789,758	4,775,957	4,908,086	6,056,317	6,278,758	6,836,731 ^b	7,816,321 ^b	8,809,557	9,997,252 ^b	10,242,352 ^b
Kedah	245,986	338,558	429,691	525,332	564,441	682,949	701,964	760,308 ^b	858,025 ^b	954,947	1,080,223	1,103,382
								789,328 ^c	867,373 ^c	8,890,028 ^c	1,091,526	1,116,360
Peninsular Malaysia	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	16.5 Incomplete ^a	23.6	31.6	33.7	31.4	29.6	26.6	24.9	25.5
Kedah	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	18.2	16.6	31.4	30.4	26.8	28.1	26.2	23.3	21.9
Peninsular Malaysia	19.41 ^{**}	27.2 ^{**}	33.3 ^{**}	29.8 Incomplete ^a	43.0	43.0	46.2	41.4	37.8	33.9	31.4	31.7
Kedah	13.48	29.99 [§]	36.34 [§]	37.2	41.0	44.4	44.4	38.1	37.5	33.5	29.8	28.2
Peninsular Malaysia	39.11 ^{**}	28.5 ^{**}	19.1 ^{**}	13.3 ^a Incomplete	19.4	11.5	12.4	9.6	8.2	7.3	6.4	6.2
Kedah	17.50	25.75 [§]	21.24 [§]	19.0	24.4	13.0	14.0	11.4	9.5	7.3	6.6	6.3
Peninsular Malaysia	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	102.25	78.40	75.49	68.86	50.02	40.79	33.22	30.74
Kedah	N.A.	194.98 [§]	122.12 [§]	131.33 N.A.*	119.2	84.0	79.0	87.5	58.74	42.30	40.29	33.69
Peninsular Malaysia	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	7.00	3.75	2.82	2.42	2.03	1.48	0.83	0.78
Kedah	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	6.53 N.A.*	10.8	5.57	4.04	4.24	3.23	2.48	1.09	1.54
Peninsular Malaysia	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	40.16	29.53	29.58	30.08	26.47	22.99	20.63	19.08
Kedah	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	53.03	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	29.90	25.09	25.30	21.38
Peninsular Malaysia	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	24.83	11.07	10.65	7.97	5.82	4.20	3.07	2.56
Kedah	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	34.11	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	4.61	3.66	3.09
Peninsular Malaysia	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	22.64	21.89	17.12	16.86
Kedah	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	31.83	29.24	17.00	21.82
SBR	TMR	B	NMR	MNR	IMR	CDR	CBR	CRNI	Population			

* Includes Population Estimates for 1940 and 1941.

** Federated Malay States only.

^a Incomplete registration (partly due to war)

^b Census figures

^c Mid-year estimate

^d End-year estimate

N.A. = Not Available

^e - From Incomplete Report 1941, Medical & Health Dept., Kedah.

[§] - From Journal of Royal Sanitary Institute, LONDON, Vol. K VIII - No. 5, Pg. 317.

Source: Dept. of Statistics, Malaysia.

management of the mother during the pregnancy and at the time of delivery. The fatalistic attitude of the Malays towards obstetric emergencies contributed to the causes of maternal and infant deaths: a maternal death is akin to the death of a martyr and mothers who lose their new-borns at delivery are consoled by the belief that they will be waited for and helped to cross in to Heaven later.

Newly married couples, being more knowledgeable than their older relatives, have freely sought admission into hospitals for the delivery of their first born. The S.B.R. in Kedah was 31.83 per thousand livebirths in 1965 and 21.82 in 1976.

Causes of deaths among newborns below the age of one month are also very much related to antenatal care and midwifery service but tetanus infection among these neonates after birth has always been the concern of Health authorities. Cutting the cord with unclean instruments and application of various powders on the cord stump have contributed to tetanus neonatorum. Again, the Ministry of Health has embarked on a special immunization programme for pregnant mothers whereby they are given antitetanus immunization for protection and prevention against tetanus infection in themselves as well as in their babes after delivery. This programme, was started in 1974 in Kedah. The N.M.R. for Kedah in 1965 and 1976 are 29.90 and 21.38 respectively as compared with 26.47 and 19.08 for Peninsular Malaysia for the same period.

The Government will continue to improve, strengthen and expand to MCH Services as the people become aware of their needs and demand the Services. The future health status of the Malay woman and child will be bright so long as the Malay mother thrives towards education and progress, towards the betterment of her life, aspire to be a useful member of her community, while being healthy and concerned with the care of her family. Thus far, the traditional Malay woman in Kedah has successfully rose to the level of her sisters in other "advanced" States in the Peninsula, and there is every hope that if "the Abode of Peace" — Darulaman — remains to enjoy good physical, mental and social health, she will progress even further for herself, her family and her country.

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The Evolution of Population and Settlement in the State of Kedah

Zaharah binti Haji Mahmud

Any study on the State of Kedah that refers to its human geography is bound to be more productive than a similar study on other peninsular States especially those to the south. This is because in the context of the evolution and development of human settlements in the peninsula, Kedah is one of the earliest and most continuously settled area. The relative abundance of archaeological information is more than sufficient to attest to a long and active span of human occupancy and, in geographical language, one of the earliest scenes of interaction between man and the environment. In a deterministic sense, if one were to look at the physical environmental characteristics such as the topography, natural drainage, soils and climate in addition to the locational peculiarities of the State in relation to mainland Southeast Asia and the historical routes of Asia, such an early and continuous development of human settlement becomes quite easy to understand.

The topographic environment, for example, makes it one of the most attractive areas for settlement throughout the ages — it is a natural process that environments that are congenial to survival and this among other things would mean, the existence of fairly extensive valleys with well developed basins so that the availability of suitable land is coupled with good natural drainage, which in turn make for flood free conditions as well as facilitating mobility within and between valleys, will attract settlement irrespective of the economic basis of settlement. In Kedah, these topographical assets are further augmented by a climate with a relatively marked dry and wet season which in turn established a marked rhythm of plant productivity. Such environmental attributes have proved to be consistently attractive to settlement.

Historically, the development of region has been such that the State has always been, in every instance, consistent with the requirements of the moment. Take, for example, the development of wet rice agriculture which subsequently became the backbone of the traditional economies of Asia. The topographic, edaphic and climatic attributes that are found in the State made for one of the most ideal sets of conditions for the development of this activity. The subsequent growth of the State into one of the most viable politico-economic entities long before the glamour of the Melaka Sultanate is not unrelated to this fact.¹ Thus the association of natural resource, in this instance of land resource, and the appropriate technology for developing this resource, have provided continuous opportunity for settlement in the State. This has operated from the period of traditional technology to that of the machine age. The MADA project, for example, is one of giants among the wet rice authorities of Asia.

Part I: The Traditional Population and the Period of Traditional Settlement

It is much more difficult to confine this phase within a specific time period than to recognize its main features. This is because changes in the various aspects of traditional

¹Zaharah bt Hj. Mahmud, The Nature and Period of Traditional Settlement, *JMBRAS*, Vol. 23, Pt. 2, 1970.

life occurred at different times and at different rates. Generally, it should be confined to those centuries when the Malays of Kedah lived very much on their own and in very much the same way as they had done since the beginning of Malay settlement. During this phase contacts with the outside world were minimal and insufficient to alter the traditional arrangement. As such, the phase of traditional settlement covers the entire period of settled Malay communities in Kedah until the middle of the nineteenth century when the forces of modernization began moving into the State.

The study of the human geography of the State during this phase of development is, therefore, a study of rural settlement and population and of a traditional subsistence economy. In many respects this stage of geographical "evolution" resembled the rural and agrarian landscapes of medieval Europe.

Basic Features of Traditional Settlement:

Until the penetration of modern forms of transport, communication and the features associated with industrialization, the distribution of man and his settlement was largely influenced by the physical environment. And, until the penetration of immigrants into Kedah with differing ideas on the utilization of the environment, the personality of the landscape was the product of interaction of the Malay population with the physical geography of the State.

The influence of the natural environment at this period, was both positive and negative. As a positive determinant of settlement, the river had always acted as a singularly influential force. This was true in all the traditional kingdoms of the Peninsula and in other areas of traditional settlement in Southeast Asia. The core of development of the traditional Malay State was invariably a river basin. Often, a State was,

"... the basin of a large river or (less often) of a group of adjacent rivers, forming a block of land extending from the coast inland to the central watershed. The capital of the state was the point at which the main river ran into the sea".²

Subsidiary administrative divisions that is the *daerah* and their sub-divisions, the *mukim*, have also been divided according to natural waterways. In Kedah, the three coastal Districts of Kota Setar, Kuala Muda and Yan are all located in the basins of three major rivers systems. The District of Kota Setar is located in the valley of the main river of the State, the Kedah River; the Kuala Muda District is located in the valley of the Muda and the Yan in the valley of the Yan.

Accordingly, the Districts of Baling and Sik are located in the upper valleys of the Muda and the Districts of Kubang Pasu and Padang Terap, in the two large tributary valleys of the Kedah River. The location of the Kulim and Bandar Baharu Districts in the northern basin of the Kerian river, however, appears to be a contradiction of the traditional scheme of delimiting territorial units.³ In traditional States such as Kedah

² Gullick, J.M., *Indigenous Political Systems of the Western Malay States of the Malay Peninsula*, London, 1958, p. 21.

³ There was a great deal of controversy in the early nineteenth century over the boundary between Kedah and Perak in the south. The traditional administrators and the general population of Kedah felt that the whole of the Kerian basin, and not the northern half only, rightfully belonged to

where more than one major river basin exist, political viability during the traditional period was only possible because communication by sea and river was easy.

The settlement geography of Kedah persisted within its traditional framework until the early twentieth century, and in the very remote parts, the pattern has never quite changed. Over the whole area of the State that was populated by man, the patterns and contents of settlements were homogeneous. River valleys were the preferred locations and within these valleys the population concentrated in kampungs along the river banks; the clusters increasing in size and frequency towards the mouth of the rivers. J.R. Logan, an English traveller, made a journey up the Kedah River in the mid-nineteenth century. He recorded the names of all the villages he encountered en route. In total he named twenty seven kampungs on the left bank and twenty three kampungs on the right. One of the first kampungs he encountered was called Seberang Nyonya. It contained fifteen houses. Further up the river near Gunung Keriang, approximately eleven miles from the mouth of the Kedah, he noted a settlement of six houses called Kampung Bendahara and further up the river in the tributary valley of the Kubang Rotan he cited a kampung with a "few houses" only.⁴

The rivercentric tendency of traditional settlements was the result of the advantages offered by riverine locations. Such locations offered an unlimited supply of domestic water; a most convenient means of communication and, of course, the availability of alluvial land for the cultivation of wet rice is always associated with river valley sites. For the traditional administrators, rivers offered the only means of effective control on the movement of peoples within their territories. In times of political disturbance the river simplified the task of defence. Most important from the point of view of the traditional administrators, however, was the fact that rivers offered them a most efficient means of collecting duties on the movement of goods within and through their territories. Forts and toll gates were, therefore, common features along rivers. The fort at Kuala Kedah, at the entry into the Kota Setar District, for example, was built for this express purpose. In the eighteenth century it was mentioned that,

"this fort (at Qualla Queda) commands the entrance into the river so that not a canoe can pass without being seen. All persons are obliged to stop and deliver their goods".⁵

Kedah. The British in Penang, on the other hand recognized the valley and not the river as the boundary between the two States. This is a European concept of territorial extent. Thus, in the early years of the previous century when the Sultan Kedah invaded northern Perak in an attempt to reclaim the southern basin, the British saw this as a clear act of aggression and promptly answered Perak's plea for aid against Kedah. The basis of the British stand is open to question. Malay kingdoms had always been agglomerations of river settlements and until the coming of the European, no example of a river district politically divided by a river, existed in the peninsula. One Michael Topping wrote of the products of the Kerian in 1971, based mainly on information given him by Francis Light. It was evident that in his description, Topping was referring to the products of the Kerian valley and not to the northern half alone. He wrote that,

"Krian produces rattan and canes; this is the southern extremity of Kedah and hence begins Perak".

in Topping M., "Some Accounts of Kedah", (1791), *J.I.A.*, Vol. 4, 1850, p. 44.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ Topping, M., *op. cit.*

The tendency for kampungs to increase in size and frequency towards the estuary is, therefore, partly accounted for by the practice of collecting toll fees at the entry of every new territory. The further up-river the destination was, the more territorial units had to be passed, and by the time the goods reached the up-country dweller their value would be considerably enhanced. A more important consideration was, of course, the availability of alluvial land both quantitatively and qualitatively. The supply of such land invariably increases down-river.

Suitable land for the construction of houses was generally to be found along the whole length of the river except where waterlogged swamps occur. But the tendency for traditional settlements was not so much to straggle along the banks in a continuous line as to be grouped into infrequent clusters. From the point of view of the traditional population, the grouping into clusters provided a number of advantages.

In the first place, the cultivation of wet rice under traditional conditions was only feasible on a group basis. The Malays, for example, were noted for their

"... gift for water control so that dams and canals are a common feature of the smaller padi growing areas..."⁶

Necessities such as these could only be undertaken and maintained by a group. Apart from this, the necessity of protecting themselves and their crops from wild animals and other forms of hostility, common under primitive conditions, required co-operative effort. Lastly, planting and harvesting of padi was an established group responsibility.

Apart from the *rakyat*, the ruling members of the community too found great advantage in organizing their subjects into compact groups. From the point of view of the territorial chiefs, the *penghulu* and the *penggawa*, the organization of their charges into compact units greatly helped the exercise of control over them and in Kedah — this greatly facilitated the enforcement of *kerah* or compulsory labour. Also, for purposes of defence, the grouping of settlements offered a number of advantages. Most settlements were surrounded by stockades, generally called *kota*, in the midst of which was sited the residence of the chief. In times of great lawlessness and frequent intergroup hostilities which characterized the greater part of the traditional period, the security offered by living together in protected settlements was enormous.

The settlement geography during the traditional period, was dominated by kampung and village settlements and in entirety presented a rural panorama. The subsistence economy based on the cultivation of wet rice further intensified the rural and agrarian character of the settlement landscape. Furthermore, it discouraged the development of alternative forms of settlement.

The town of Alor Setar, capital of the traditional kingdom, and its main and only urban centre during this phase, was still a mere village in the mid-nineteenth century. J.R. Logan on his arrival at the settlement at about this time, commented that,

"The houses prove to be the village of Alor Setar, the usual residence of the chiefs ... I walked through the long narrow muddy lane, with dirty slovenly attap houses on each side in several of which clothes have been piled up while most exhibit the rural Malay commodities."⁷

⁶Grist D.H., *An Outline of Malayan Agriculture*, London, 1950, p. 121.

⁷Logan J.R., "Notes at Kidah and Pinang", *J.I.A.*, Vol. V, 1851, p. 54.

The Report of the Intelligence Division of the Great Britain War Office indicated that the town in the 1890s was, "... the chief place of the state; it is, however, but a mere village".⁸

The small population left vast areas of the State unsettled. Even the people areas presented an undersettled panorama. The rural appearance was accentuated by the continually pushing frontiers of agricultural settlement and by occasional political disturbances which devastated the countryside, from time to time. The mobility of population in response to political and factional hostilities, were common in feudal situations. The Norman invasions of the English countryside during the middle ages might be equated with the Siamese forays into the villages of Kedah during the traditional period. A few decades after the conclusion of one of the most atrocious Siamese invasions of the State, one visitor was moved to comment that,

"It is much to be regretted that this magnificent plain [the Kedah plain] which is capable of supporting a large population and at no distant date numbered 100,000 inhabitants should remain in its present condition a great wild than a cultivated land"⁹

Basic Demographic Features:

Quantitative data whether they are on population, acreages or distances are difficult to come by for the traditional period. The state's administrators became census conscious only in the closing decades of the traditional period when the continued expansion of settlement and population increased the complexities of administration. Normally, each territorial chief would possess a fair idea of the number of inhabitants within his domain but no attempt at co-ordinating their information in time and space was undertaken. What is more to be regretted is the fact that at no level were any records kept. C.W.S. Kynnersley on his visit to the State in 1900, was informed that,

"A census has lately been taken and we were shown the figures which, however, are still incomplete for some of the up-country mukims"¹⁰

Despite certain inherent inaccuracies, this census provides valuable information regarding the population of the State just prior to the influx of immigrants. It is to be regretted, however, that data on this census have to be gleaned from writings contemporary to the period of the census, since no part of it exists today. Other sources of information include historical comments on the Siamese invasion of Kedah in 1821 in which a major exodus of Malays from Kedah took place. Such information provides useful if not always reliable information on the population in the early years of the nineteenth century.

From the references that exist, one basic fact is evident and that is, as a result of the Siamese invasion of Kedah in 1821, the population was halved. The quotation of specific examples at this stage is deliberately avoided. A number of examples do exist but the information they contain vary in proportion to the number of references.

⁸ Great Britain War Office, Intelligence Division, *Precise Information Concerning the Straits Settlements and the Native States of the Malay Peninsula*, London, 1882, p. 163.

⁹ Logan, J.R., *op. cit.*, 57.

¹⁰ Kynnersley C.W.S., "Notes of a Tour Through the Siamese Malay States on the West Coast of Malaya 1900", *J.S.B.R.A.S.*, Vol. 35-36, 1901, p. 50.

Some quantitative conclusions, however, can be inferred from the study of the Malay population of Province Wellesley during the same period. Most of the people who left Kedah in the 1820's and the 1830's made their way to the British protected territory of Province Wellesley which was part of Kedah until 1800. The drastic fall in the population of Kedah in the 1820s and early 1930s contrasted with the meteoric rise of the Malay population of Province Wellesley for the same period (cf. Table 1).

Table 1:
Growth of the Malay Population of
Province Wellesley 1812-1860

Year	Number of Persons
1812	3,350
1820	5,399
1827	17,805
1833	41,702
1844	44,271
1851	53,010
1860	52,836

Source: Braddell T.S., *Statistics on British Possessions in the Straits of Malacca, Penang, 1861*.

A number of documentary references exist to indicate that the Kedah Malays were indeed moving into Province Wellesley during these years. Braddell remarked that,

"The rapid increase in Province Wellesley after the census of 1820 is to be attributed to the large influx of Malays from Kedah in consequence of the Siamese disturbances of 1821".¹¹

A less direct comment was made by John Cameron when he wrote that,

"In about the year 1826 many tracts of low-lying swamps but rich lands . . . small considered distinctively but expansive in aggregate . . . passed into the hands of Malay smallholders upon very easy terms. . .".¹²

It is reasonable to assume that many of these smallholders were, in fact, Malay peasants from Kedah who, being padi farmers at home, found no other occupation more attractive than padi farming. The attraction to Province Wellesley was not merely the result of contiguity. Kedah Malays had kith-and-kin ties with the Malays of Province Wellesley.

Between 1820 and 1827 the Malay population of Province Wellesley increased by 12,406 persons or by 229.8 per cent. This increase can hardly be attributed to a seven-year natural increase over a base population of 5,399 persons. The Malays of Province Wellesley recorded a further increase of 23,897 persons at the end of 1833. Thus, between 1820 and 1833 the Malay population of the Province increased by 36,303 persons. Clearly, the bulk of the increase consisted of Malay emigrants from Kedah.

¹¹ Braddell T.S., *Statistics on British Possessions in the Straits of Malacca, Penang, 1861*, p. 2.

¹² Cameron, J., *Our Tropical Possessions in Malayan India*, London, 1865, p. 322.

Taking into account the rate of increase of the domiciled Malay population of Province Wellesley (which includes increases through excess of births over deaths as well as through normal immigration of Malays born outside the area), it is estimated that about 30,000¹³ Malays must have moved from Kedah to the Province during the one and half decades following the Siamese invasion of 1821. This makes reasonable a late nineteenth century estimate of the population of the State before and after the invasion. According to the Report of the Intelligence Division of the Great Britain War Office,

"Before the Siamese invasion and conquest of 1821, the country is believed to have had a population of 50,000 which in 1839 was reduced to 21,000, the rest having either been killed in action, perished by disease and famine or taken refuge within British territory".¹⁴

¹³This estimate of 30,000 persons is arrived at by taking the average increase of the Malay population of Province Wellesley over a period of 8-9 years to be 61%. The estimate of 61% increase every 8 years is in fact the percentage increase of the Malay population of the territory between 1812-1820, when the Malay population was yet to be affected by the immigration of Malays from Kedah. This rate of increase is therefore assumed as the normal rate of increase of the Malay population every 8 years in the absence of drastic changes in the patterns of population growth. This estimate is then used to obtain the "assumed" population at the end of every 8 years. From it, it is easy to estimate the "surplus" in the population increase for the same period. Using this method the "surplus" in the increase in the Malay population of the Province is added for two seven-year intervals between 1820 and 1833 when the emigration of Kedah Malays was at its maximum. The results are tabled below.

Period	Numerical Increase	Percentage Increase	Assumed Pop. End of Prd.	Actual Pop. End of Prd.	Surplus
1820-27	12,406	229.8	9,690	17,805	8,115
1827-33	23,897	134.2	10,860	41,702	13,037
1820-33	36,303	-	20,550	59,507	21,152

Although the total surplus for the thirteen years recorded above is 21,152, the estimate of 30,000 is still taken because the census of 1833 was taken after the period of peak immigration of Kedah Malays had passed. After 1830 the immigrants were already beginning to return to Kedah as conditions in their home districts were locally improving.

¹⁴Newbold gives the following information on the total population of Province Wellesley between 1830-1836. These figures are of the total population of the territory but they help to illustrate the fact that the fall in the population of the colony as a result of the homeward bound Malays of Kedah set in by the late 1830's when the years of abnormal increase in population finally ended. The data is tabled as follows:

Years	Number of Persons
1830-31	26,000
1831-32	41,000
1832-33	45,000
1833-34	45,593
1834-35	46,000
1835-36	47,555

These estimates indicate a discrepancy of some 29,000 inhabitants who had either perished in the war or moved out of the State in the 1820s and early 1830s. This coincides more or less with the assumed surplus in the Malay population of Province Wellesley for the same period.

After the first few years of vengeance, peace gradually returned to the state. The flow of Malays back to Kedah began in the mid-1830s. The movement gathered momentum towards the 1840s when conditions resembling those of pre-invasion days were almost completely restored. The Sultan was finally restored to his throne in 1843 although his territory was considerably reduced.

The return of Kedah Malays to their State in the late 1830s and early 1840s was again reflected in the growth patterns of the Malay population of Province Wellesley.¹⁵ The twelve-year period between 1832 and 1844 witnessed an increase of 2,569 persons in the Malay population of this area or an increase of 6.61 per cent. Natural increase over a population base of 41,702 alone could have accounted for more. This is a definite indication of the out-migration of Malays from Province Wellesley, presumably the return of the Kedah Malays to Kedah. J.R. Logan made a remark similar to that made by Cameron on the difficulty of persuading the Malays of Province Wellesley to sell their padi holdings for conversion into sugar lands. But at one place, he noted, the Malays were actually selling out. He wrote that

"Those at Sungei Susat were selling out, in order to return to their native country, Kedah, at ten to twenty dollars per orlong".¹⁶

He further observed that the value of land rents in the territory had fallen considerably as a result of the

"... old Malayan chiefs having being allowed by the Siamese to return to Kedah, whence they were expelled under circumstances of great treachery and diabolical cruelty in 1821."¹⁷

It is reasonable to assume that by the late 1840s and the early 1850s the population of the State would have regained a great measure of its former strength although cultivated areas were still to be completely reclaimed. There is evidence to indicate, however, that not all the Malays who left the State during the political turmoil returned after the restoration of peace. It was indicated that

¹⁵ Source: Newbold T.S., *op. cit.*, p. 56.

On page 105 of the account, Newbold remarked that

"The population in 1824 amounted to 14,000, in 1831 to 25,000 and in 1833 to 45,953 and in 1836 to 47,555 of whom about 43,000 were Malays".

Braddell's estimate of the Malay population of the Province in 1844 was 44,271. When this is compared with Newbold's estimate for 1836 it appears that the Malays increased only by 1,200 persons over a period of nine years; indeed an unusually small increase.

¹⁶ Logan J.R., "Journal of an Excursion from Singapore to Malacca and Pinang", *Journal of the Royal Geographical Society*, Vol. XVI, 304-24. Also appeared in *Miscellaneous Papers Relating to Indochina and Indian Archipelago*, Second Series, Vol. I, London, 1887, p. 18.

¹⁷ Logan, J.R., *Journal of an Excursion from Singapore to Malacca and Pinang, op. cit.*, p. 19.

"When the Malay chiefs returned even in their reduced state a number of their old inhabitants followed them but a large proportion of the Malays who have obtained lands in Province Wellesley or emigrated elsewhere to more distant places and those who had grown to manhood since the Siamese invasion preferred to remain in their adopted homes."¹⁸

The population of Kedah in the 1860s was probably in the region of 140,000 inhabitants. This is credible in the light of the fact that the population of the State in 1900 numbered some 219,000 inhabitants according to a census conducted some time at this date.

Spatial Distribution of Settlement and Population:

Archaeological evidence indicate the existence of settlements in the valleys of the Muda and the Merbok rivers in the early centuries of the Christian era. Documentary sources several centuries later, indicate the existence of large and thriving settlements in these areas and in the valley of the Kedah in the north. Casual references also indicate that during the traditional period, settlements were present in the valleys of the Yan and Krian Rivers. No mention of settlement and cultivation, however, existed for the interior regions of the State.

The maps of the Malay Peninsula produced by the Royal Asiatic Society, Straits Branch in 1887, 1898 and 1911 contain but sparse information on the distribution of settlements in Kedah. Only the settlements in the Kedah valley and at the estuary of the Muda River were plotted in with some degree of detail. The remainder of the State area was left blank. Since these form the earliest examples of distribution maps for Kedah, the nature of their information indicates a number of factors with regards to the distribution of population at this period. In the first place, it could be that information pertaining to the distribution of population in Kedah at these dates was not made available to the compilers of the map with sufficient detail save for the areas of major settlement. More reasonable, however, is the assumption that the apparent insignificance of settlements in the areas left blank was the only reason for them being overlooked.

The nodes of settlement during the traditional period were clearly the Kedah, Muda and Merbok Valleys. Apart from these, indications point to the existence of settlements of indigenous Malays in the valley of the Yan River, a small coastal district of the State. These settlements, however, were of no great size and large areas at the foot of the Kedah Peak, the northern foothills of which dominate the District of Yan, consisted of the *dusun* lands of the well-to-do members of the traditional community. Topping remarked that at

"... Yen (sic) they have the best fruits; the principal natives have gardens at this place, to which they frequently resort (an excursion of six to seven leagues) to feast on durians and mangosteens".¹⁹

The existence of settlements in the southernmost District of Bandar Baharu in the northern basin of the Krian river was also indicated in the maps concerned. Apart from

¹⁸ Logan, J.R., "Notes at Pinang and Kidah", *op. cit.*, p. 58.

¹⁹ Topping, *op. cit.*, p. 43.

these there was little settlement in the interior areas of the State. The area that lay between the valley of the Muda in the north and the Krian in the south was one of the least populated areas of the State during the traditional period, although it proved to be a point of major attraction for immigrants during the post-traditional period. This general area lacked a well-defined river basin and sufficient alluvial lowlands to attract traditional settlers. Although it forms the western edge of the State, it is geographically an interior region and its negative nature was further emphasized by its comparatively hilly character. As late as the mid-nineteenth century Penghulu Sme of the Krian remarked that

"... there are few inhabitants within these bounds save on the Krian; the country north of it as far as the Muda being jungle".²⁰

The penetration of the interior was both undesired and unnecessary for the pressure on available land resources was not great, and the coastal swamp country provided sufficient suitable conditions for pioneering, and thus delayed considerably the penetration of the interior.

The history of the overall distribution of settlement in Kedah is marked by a changing balance between the southern and northern halves of the State. During the early centuries of the Christian era the focus of settlement lay in the south. Several centuries after these settlements had fallen into obscurity, sedentary Malay communities grew up around this ancient core, and for a number of centuries the south continued to be the centre of the Sultanate of the traditional period. Early in the eighteenth century, however, the south lost its prominence to the area centred in the basin of the Kedah River.

The last three centuries of the traditional period, therefore, witnessed the rise of a second node of settlement in the valleys of the Kedah and its tributaries. This very soon developed into the new centre of the traditional kingdom replacing the earlier centre at the Muda and Merbok estuaries. By the end of the eighteenth century, the northern basin had truly become the primary region of the State. Its expansion was associated with a corresponding decline in the importance of settlements in the south. Kuala Bahang, later known as Kuala Kedah, became to the State what Kuala Muda and Kuala Merbok were to pre-eighteenth century Kedah. Topping commented that "The principal seaport [is] called Keda by strangers but Kuala Batrang by the natives. . .".²¹

The balance in the favour of the northern half of the State was finally tilted with the transference of the royal court to Alor Setar and of the royal residence to the small township of Anak Bukit. During the reign of Sultan Mohammad Jiwa Zainolabidin (1710-1760), definite steps were taken for the transfer of the traditional "nerve-centre" to the northern basin. In 1710 a fort was built at Anak Bukit for the installation of the *Raja Muda*, the Crown Prince. Ten years later another fort was built at the town of Alor Setar and from henceforth it developed into the capital of the traditional kingdom.

The decline of the Muda District in the south after the transference was well indicated by the early nineteenth century. Logan observed that

²⁰ Logan J.R., Notes at Pinang and Kidah, *op. cit.*, p. 62.

²¹ Topping M., *op. cit.*, p. 42.

"The districts of north Province Wellesley lying along the Muda and the Kreh comprising of lands held by me and lands held by the Malays are without police stations and for the most part without roads. Over large portions of this area the population is scattered in hamlets far apart from each other."²²

The expansion of settlement and population in the north was closely associated with the expansion of wet-rice agriculture. The Kedah Valley which was broad, wide and low-lying for the greater part of its course and served by large tributaries with considerable valleys of their own, offered unlimited resources for agricultural pioneering of the type most preferred by traditional agriculturists. The attraction of the northern padi lands cannot be under-estimated in an area where no other form of occupation was practised or desired. The Muda and Merbok valleys, on the other hand, lacked the hinterlands to accommodate increases in the traditional population. The lack of physically favourable hinterlands in the form of large tributary valleys and lowlands greatly enhanced the attractions of the north. The concentration of agricultural pioneering in the northern lowlands eventually resulted in the neglect of the southern half of the State and as early as the late eighteenth century it was found that

"The country southward of Kedah river as far as Qualla Muda (about ten leagues) is less cultivated than more northward".²³

A number of other factors too accounted for the change in the focus of settlements from the south to the north. Geographically, the rapid and continued silting of the Muda and Merbok estuaries decreased and eventually ended their importance as ports of call for merchant vessels. Economically, this meant the termination of the lucrative commerce of several centuries standing. With the establishment of the British settlement at Penang, ships ceased totally to call at these ports. The *raison d'être* of the settlements in the south was taken away. The traditional aristocracy which was the main beneficiary of the activity, turned to the development of agriculture in the north. The movement of the aristocracy to the north took away the last vestiges of importance from the south.

The Composition of Population

Similar to the forms of settlements, the concepts of traditional settlements were also homogeneous. The homogeneity in the composition of the population, however, was broken down at the fringes by a number of variations within the indigenous population.

The population was largely made up of Malays. In terms of ethnic stock, the lowland Malays who are sometimes known as Deutro or coastal Malays, are the descendants of the Proto-Malays plus many foreign strains derived from intermarriages, with the variety of Asian communities that pass through this part of the world. The lowland Malays were responsible for the development of sedentary settlement in the State and it is for this reason that they, and not the aborigines, are regarded as being the traditional peoples of the area.

²² Logan J.R., Plans for a Volunteer Police Force in the Muda District, *J.S.B.R.A.S.*, Vol. 16, 1885, p. 173.

²³ Topping M., *op. cit.*, p. 44.

The Malay population at this period carried a number of groups with varying degrees of homogeneity. It is true that the Malay population itself has been the result of intensive intermixing but these peoples were very recent mixtures. Most notable or these groups were the *Jawi Pekan*, or *Mestizo Telingas*²⁴. Numerically small and difficult to define this section of the community was an influential commercial group during the traditional period. They were generally regarded as half-breeds or *Jawi Peranakan* by the local Malays. These *Jawi Pekan* were the issues of intermarriages between Indian Muslims, natural or converted, and local Malays. There have very often been matrimonial associations between Malay women and Indian men. The association itself would place the couple within the *Jawi Pekan* community.

At no time, however, was the "half-breed" characteristic of the community attached to any form of social prejudice. In fact, the *Jawi Pekan* was a more privileged class than the *rakyat*. The traditional aristocracy found it much easier to treat as a social equal a descendant of a person of foreign extraction whose social background was unknown than a common member of the local community.

The early Indians were possibly members of the South Indian population called Chulias who, according to historical evidence, had been long established in the State. The Chulias were different from the later type of south Indian immigrants who came into Kedah after the establishment of the British Protectorate. In the eighteenth century Francis Light wrote that

"The Chulians are people from the several ports on the coast of Coramandel. The greater part of these have long been residents of Quedah and some of them are born here".²⁵

The famous Malay (*Jawi Pekan*) chronicler, Abdullah Munshi, wrote in his biography that

"My mother's father was an Indian from Kedah who has embraced the Muslim faith and moved to Malacca where my mother whose name was Salamah was born".²⁶

His mother was married to his father in the year 1785.

In contrast to the local Malays who in part were their blood relations, the *Jawi Pekan*, were urban orientated. In the late eighteenth century an important Chulia settlement was located at Limbun near Alor Setar and was described by Topping and follows:

"Limbun on the bank of the river is about four miles from Allester; this town is chiefly inhabited by Chulians".²⁷

Another important minority in the traditional population was the *Samsam*. These were the culturally, though not religiously, Siamese oriented Malays. These peoples were mainly to be found in ten upper valleys of the Kedah and its tributaries

²⁴ *Mestizo Telingas*: the term is taken from Skinner A.M., (ed.), *A Geography of the Malay Peninsula and Singapore*, Singapore, 1884.

²⁵ Extract from last letter written by Francis Light, dated 1794, in Logan J.R. (ed.), *Notices at Pinang*, J.I.A., Vol. 5, 1851, p. 9.

²⁶ Hill A.H., *Annotated Translation of Hikayat Abdullah*, J.M.B.R.A.S., Vol. 28, Part 3, June 1956, p. 36.

²⁷ Topping M., *op. cit.*, p. 43.

especially those bordering Thailand. These people were mainly extensions of the Malays inhabiting the Thai States of Chenak, Raman, Tiba, Patani and Setul. The regions of special concentration of the *Samsam* in Kedah have been the upper valleys of the Kubang Pasu, Padang Terap and Baling Districts and Sik. All these are continuous at one point or another with the Kedai-Thai frontier. Apart from these natural occurrences of Siamese-Malay settlements, evidence seems to suggest that occasionally, during the traditional period, immigrants of Malays from Thailand into Kedah had taken place. Movement was unrestricted because Kedah was virtually a part of Thai territory. Topping reported that in 1971,

"Great numbers of Patani (*sic*) have emigrated and moved down to Qualla Muda (it is supposed nearly 15,000). If these people settle here, they will greatly increase the cultivation to the benefit of Pinang".²⁸

The seasonal migrations of the Patani Malays to Kedah at times of the rice harvest, however, have been a feature of the state's geography that has never changed even up to the present days.

It has always been difficult to distinguish the *Samsam* from the Malays especially in the areas where the local Malays and the *Samsam* settle together. In census reports of various kinds the more Siamese orientated *Samsam* have been recorded as outright Siamese and the less Siamese oriented that have either been entered as *Samsam* or merely as Malays. At least this was the premise upon which the first comprehensive population count of any of the State was taken in 1911.

The *Samsam* population of Kedah was greatly reduced in the 1840s when Thailand withdrew the State's northern provinces from the Sultan's jurisdiction. These areas had contained a large proportion of the State's *Samsam* population.

The traditional population was, therefore, homogeneous in composition; the *Samsam* and the *Jawi Pekan* were but variations of the local Malay community. To the foreigner the differences are not apparent. Unlike the Chinese and the Indians of a later date, these minority groups both in type and in number did not contrast or challenge with the local populace. They all exercise similar settlement habits, as well as similar economic and cultural characteristics. Most unifying of all they shared a common faith in Islam.

By the late years of the nineteenth century, the population was beginning to be affected by immigration of peoples of differing ethnic and cultural stocks. Demographically, as in all other aspects of life, this marked the close of the phase of traditional settlement.

Part II: The Evolution of the Modern Population and Settlement

Demographic Expansion:

The increase in the number of inhabitants was the most important change that took place during the post-traditional or early modern period. It was the most direct form of change and it became the cause and the basis of many other changes in the population geography of the State.

²⁸Topping M., *op. cit.*, p. 44.

Population increase in Kedah during the post-traditional period was the result of both natural increase with immigration contributing the larger share. Natural increase within the traditional population was a significant feature of the period but despite its continued expansion, the increases indicated by the immigrant population greatly dwarfed the numerical gains of the domiciled population.

It is estimated that the population of the State during the first two decades of the nineteenth century was about 50,000 inhabitants (See Part I). At the beginning of the twentieth century, a local census placed the population at 219,000²⁹ inhabitants. This gain of 169,000 over a period of eighty years reflected in the main the increase in the local Malay population, because in the turn of the new century the population was still predominantly Malay.³⁰ When projected over the duration of eight decades the population is estimated to have risen at the rate of 1½ to 2 percent per annum. This can be considered a fairly reasonable rate of increase. Indeed, when such factors as high mortality rates and short life expectancy are considered this is, in fact, a relatively high rate of increase.

The total population of the State in 1911 was 245,986 persons.³¹ This indicates an increase of 27,000 persons in ten years or 10.9 per cent. When compared with the increase that was to take place in the following intercensal decade of 1911–1921 this was small. The reasons for this can be traced to a number of factors. In the first place, it is necessary to bear in mind the inherent inaccuracies of the census held in those days. In the second place, the immigrants in Kedah during these early years were characterized by high mobility rates. The census held at the close of the traditional period did not break the data into ethnic components. It is, therefore, difficult to determine whether the non-indigenous component of the population in 1911 was the accumulation of immigrants from the period of the earlier census or of an entirely fresh group of immigrants who had moved into Kedah immediately before and after the establishment of British administration in 1909. Thirdly, the overall increase in the domiciled Malay population was expectedly small; the total being small.

The most spectacular period of population growth in the State was the intercensal decade of 1911–1921. The population almost doubled (See Table 1). This decade recorded the highest percentage increase ever experienced in the demographic history of Kedah. It is apparent that a great part of this increase was the result of immigration. At this date only the domiciled Malays were able to increase naturally and the inability of this very sector to do so to any significant degree, indicates that a large proportion of the surplus were made up by immigrants. (See Table 2).

²⁹This estimate of the population is obtained from a census conducted in Kedah under the traditional administration in 1900. In 1909 it was reported that,

"In 1905 the Raja numbered [the population] 139,000 but Mr. Hart [the British Consul] states that a native census places the number at 219,000".

Anon, *The New British Protected Malay States*, *Geographical Journal*, Vol. 333, 1909, 484.

³⁰Estimates of the non-indigenous members of the population were still vague even at the beginning of the present century which reflect that there were few immigrants in the population. In 1891, the Intelligence Division of the Great Britain War Office estimated that the population at the date was about 34,000 of whom 25,000 were Malays. This is a gross under-estimation, of course, but the proportion indicated is quite representative of the true situation.

³¹Cavendish, *Report on the Census of Population of Kedah and Perlis, 1911*, Penang, 1911.

Table 2:
Increase of Population in Kedah 1911–1921

Population in 1911	245,986 persons
Population in 1921	338,558 persons
Gain in Numbers	92,572 persons
Percentage Gain	37.7 Per cent
<hr/>	
Average National (Malaya) increase	25.0 per cent

Source: Censuses of Population, 1911 & 1921.

The percentage gain of 37.7% although large in itself obscures the actual extent of population gain through immigration. A further breakdown of the rates of increase of the indigenous and the non-indigenous sectors of the population (taking the Malays as being representative of the former and the Indians and the Chinese of the latter) gives a truer picture of the increases in the domiciled and immigrant sectors. The Chinese and the Indian communities together were responsible for 41.42 per cent of the increase in the population for this intercensal decade (see Table 2). Even within the Malay community itself increase was not entirely the result of natural causes. A fraction of the gain in numbers recorded by the Malay community during this intercensal decade, was made up by the immigration of peninsular Malays from the adjoining territories of Penang, Perak and Province Wellesley.³²

It is no more coincidence that this decade of the great "leap" in population growth coincided with the first decade of British administration. The establishment of Colonial Administration in the native States of the Malay Peninsula in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, resulted in massive movements of immigrants into these areas. This situation was especially true with regards to the more wealthy west coast States.

The following years of population growth in Kedah indicated less spectacular rates of increase. In fact, the succeeding intercensal decade of 1921–1931 recorded the lowest increase for the post-traditional period. The margin of increase was, in fact, smaller than the one recorded in the decade 1911–1921 (See Table 3).

The recession in the rate and in the margin of increase recorded for the inter-censal decade of 1921–1931 was the result of adverse economic conditions in Kedah and in the peninsula as a whole. Immigrants, especially of the types that came into the States of the peninsula in the nineteenth century and early twentieth century were extremely sensitive to economic changes. A local explanation lies in the fact that Kedah, unlike the other west coast States of Selangor and Perak, offered limited opportunities for the immigrants. It has little to offer the industrial immigrant in the form of a mining economy and the developments associated with such an economy were likewise non-existent. A major employer of immigrant labour was thus absent. On the other hand, unlike the southern State of Johor, Kedah did not offer unlimited opportunities for

³²The returns of the Malay population by birthplace in 1911 indicated that 14,674 of the Malays enumerated were born outside the State mainly in Perak, Penang and Province Wellesley. Similar returns for the 1921 census indicated that there were 17,794 such Malays in Kedah.

Table 3:
Population Increase in Kedah by Community 1911-1921

Total Population Years	Indigenous Malays	Non-Indigenous		State
		Chinese	Indians	
Population 1911	195,411	33,746	6,074	245,986
Population 1921	237,490	59,403	26,390	338,558
Numerical Inc.	42,079	25,657	20,856	92,572
Percentage Inc.	21.53%	77.4%	343.4%	37.7%
Percentage of Total Increase	42.41%	25.86%	21.03%	100.00%

Source: Censuses of Population, 1911 & 1921

Table 4:
Population Growth in Kedah 1911-1947

Period	Total Population	Numerical Inc.	Percentage Inc.
1911	245,986	—	—
1921	338,588	92,572	37.7
1931	429,691	91,133	26.9
1947	554,441	124,750	29.0

Source: Censuses of Population 1911, 1921, 1931 & 1947.

the development of commercial agriculture to compensate for her lack of mining activity.

The trend of decline in the sphere of immigration in total population growth was complemented by the cumulative effects of local births among settled immigrants. This was indicated by a pattern of a steadily increasing population balanced by a steadily decreasing immigration.

The rationalization of the rates of increase after the first intercensal decade, belie a number of demographic changes. Population gain after 1921 was increasingly through natural increase. Again the steady gain in the excess of births over deaths was symptomatic of several economic and social developments. The expansion of the Malay population, for example, was the result of improved living conditions in the rural areas coupled with a sense of political security. On the part of the immigrants, the increase in the number of local births indicated that the pioneering stage of immigrant settlement was coming to an end.

Another type of population change brought about by the post-traditional period apart from the increase in numbers, was the expansion in the variety of the population. The result of the era of immigration was, on the one hand, a tremendous increase in the number of inhabitants and, on the other, the implantation of large numbers of non-indigenous peoples in the area (See Table 5).

Table 5:
Population of Kedah by Community 1911-1947

	1911	1921	1931	1947
Malays	195,411	234,141	279,897	374,190
Other Malays	2,386	3,359	6,365	2,885
Chinese	33,746	59,403	78,415	115,928
Siamese	32,852	—	—	—
Others	2,620		14,260	10,091
Total	245,986	338,588	429,691	554,441

Source: Censuses of Population, 1911, 1921, 1931 & 1947.

The expansion in the composition of population changed the basis of differentiations within the population of Kedah. In the census of 1911, the population, although already affected by the immigration of Chinese, Indians and Indonesians, still possessed the characteristics of the traditional period. The indigenous community was meticulously divided into the various subgroups, for example, the *Samsam* and the *Jawi Pekan* and the local Malays.

The *Samsam* group disappeared from the census of the following periods. Most of the *Samsam* were recorded as Malays whilst the very Siamese orientated ones were recorded as Siamese. The *Jawi Pekan* too failed to be identified in subsequent reports as differentiations between them and the general Malay population ceased to exist.

It is interesting to note the important part played by religion in assimilation within the Muslim community. Inter-marriages between members of the *Samsam* and Indonesian communities with the local Malays were easy because they were all Malays and Muslims. The ready acceptance, however, of Indian Muslims reflects the importance of religion in the process of assimilation. In most cases first generation offsprings of Indian and Malay marriages regarded themselves, and were regarded, as members of the local community.

These reminders of the patterns of the traditional period disappeared by the early 1920s. Differentiations in the population of Kedah were no longer based on the divisions within the traditional community but on ethnic lines which divide the population according to indigenous and non-indigenous groups.

Thus, the four decades of demographic activity changed the composition of the population and established a new basis for the subsequent patterns of demographic change. The relative importance of the non-indigenous communities in shaping and modifying the human landscape increased in proportion to the increase in their numerical strength.

The balance between traditional and non-traditional sectors of the population partly accounts for the position of the State as a transition zone between east and west coast States in terms of demographic content and economic development. Unlike the States of the west coast, there has always been an indigenous superiority in the population of Kedah; but sufficient intrusions by immigrants have modified the balance that had in favour of the local Malays that exists in the east coast States.

The Malay community in Kedah remained in the fore throughout the post-traditional period. Until the first half of the present century, the Malays comprised more than half of the total population (Table 5). In Perak and Selangor, for example, the Chinese had already outnumbered the Malays by 1930. In all the west coast States, with the exception of Kedah, the expansion of the immigrants was at the expense of the traditional community. Thus, in Perak and Selangor where the immigration of Chinese and Indians was of longer duration, the pattern of Malay dominance in the population was lost early in the century. These States owed their economic development to entirely non-traditional investment. Immigrant employments were given the fullest encouragement from the mid-nineteenth century onwards. Subsequently, the expansion of immigrant settlements corresponded with the recession of indigenous settlements into the remote parts of these States which were still commensurate with their aptitudes, and a number found their way into other States.

In Kedah, the immigration of non-indigenous communities was of shorter duration and of less intensity, nor was their economic participation so overwhelming so as to discourage the expansion of the traditional population. A long established traditional economy based on the cultivation of wet rice was responsible for establishing an enduring local activity. This was fortified by the fact that when the immigrants came in, they did not take up occupations that were contradictory to the continued importance of this activity, for example, tin mining. For the immigrants, there was sufficient economic employment in the cultivation of cash crops, commerce, trade in rice and a host of other activities associated with Chinese and Indian immigrants apart from mining. Thus, the economic opportunities during the years of immigrant pioneering were not that overwhelming and attractive to immigrant participation as was the case in the other west coast States. The proportion of immigrants was, therefore, kept in a compatible balance with the local community. In the east coast States, on the other hand, economic opportunities offered to the immigrant were extremely small and thus accounts for the predominance of the traditional population and traditional activity.

Thus, the State of Kedah, although part of the "culture-world" of the northern States of the peninsula, rapidly lost its identification with the northeastern States. On the other hand, it did not exactly acquire the characteristics of the south and west coast States. In its demography as in its social and economic life, Kedah remained the zone of transition between the modernized west coast States and the still backward east coast States.

Growth of the Non-Indigenous Components of The State's Population

The Chinese:

Of all the communities that emigrated to Kedah, the Chinese provide the sharpest contrast to the local Malays. In the first place, they comprise the largest single group of immigrants. Secondly, unlike the Indians, the Chinese had never featured in the early history of the State. The Chulia and the Jawi Pekan peoples had familiarized the local community with peoples from India, although; the later type of Indian immigrants differed in many respects from these early examples.

It is quite difficult to determine the earliest instance of Chinese immigration into the State. Most of the estimates made of the numerical strength of the Chinese popu-

lation during the closing years of the traditional period were based on personal observations. It is obvious from the vagueness of existing references that the population of Kedah until the beginning of the twentieth century, was little affected by the immigration of Chinese. References to the existence of the Chinese in Kedah were still vague even in the early years of the twentieth century. It can be taken as an indirect reflection of the small numerical strength of this community. In 1905,

"... the raja numbered 139,000 [inhabitants] but Mr. Hart states that a native census places the number at 219,000. For the most part of the population consists of Malays but there is a considerable sprinkling of Chinese in the mining districts."³³

The first *Administrative Report of Kedah* also referred to the "... considerable Chinese elements in the mining districts."³⁴

In 1911, hardly a decade after such comments were made, the Chinese numbered 33,746 persons. This indicates that the bulk of the Chinese in Kedah first found their way into the State during the early years of the twentieth century.

The earliest recorded reference to Chinese immigrants in the State dates to the period of the foundation of the British settlement in Penang, in 1736.

"On the 17th. July Lieutenant Gray, who commanded 'one hundred native Bengal marines' embarked at Point Penaga. On the next day, a Kapitan China and some Indian Christians from Kedah came to Penang and presented Captain Light with a fishing net..."³⁵

It was also recorded that at Kota Muda in 1807, there existed a settlement of such affluence that it saw

"... wealthy Chinese from Penang and Malay aristocrats from Alor Star, rubbing shoulders with commoners at the wheel of fortune. At night the entire neighbourhood was brilliantly illuminated, turning the Kota into a small Monte Carlo of the east."³⁶

The presence of Chinese at these two places at these dates is credulous. Point Penaga, a coastal town, about one minute north of the coastal strip facing the island of Penang, became part of the British territory Province Wellesley in 1800. Point Penaga, by virtue of its coastal location became one of the points of entry of Chinese immigrants into the mainland. The Kapitan China alluded to in the first reference was technically an immigrant into Kedah. The second reference to the presence of a Chinese-style gambling settlement in the town of Kota Kuala Muda in early 1800, is probably a slightly over enthusiastic account. Nevertheless, the presence of Chinese in this place at this date is again not surprising. Kota Kuala Muda was separated from the British territory of Province Wellesley by a mere width of water and was within daily commutance with the settlement in Penang even at this early date.

³³ Anon, *Geographical Journal*, *op. cit.*, p. 484.

³⁴ Hart G.C., *Kedah Annual Report*, August 1905 – September 1906, p. 5.

³⁵ Wong C.S., *A Gallery of Chinese Kapitans*, Singapore, 1963, p. 47.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 50.

All records, local and otherwise, bear testimony to the fact that significant intrusions of Chinese into Kedah proper, is a phenomenon of the post-1860s. From the 1850s onwards, it

"... is believed that about 2,500 to 3,000 Chinese land annually at Penang and spread from there to Province Wellesley and the Siamese Malay territories".³⁷

But the number that eventually found their way into Kedah must have been small.

There is also evidence to suggest that a number of Chinese immigrants found their way into Kedah from the other areas of the peninsula where active immigration was already of some years' standing. A report of a robbery made by a Chinese man in Kedah in 1306 A.H. (1888 A.D.) by the name of Ah See, included information regarding his stay in the State up to the date of the complaint. In translation this reads,

"I am a China born man, aged thirty nine years. I have lived in Singapore for three years and in Penang for two years. After coming to Kedah for one year I opened a mine at Sungai Ria, Mukim Temin [Kubang Pasu District]. I have worked the mine nine years since".³⁸

Clearly he entered Kedah in the late 1870s.

Large influxes of Chinese immigrants, however, had to await the turn of the twentieth century and the establishment of the British Protectorate. The largest influx of Chinese immigrants into Kedah came during the first two and a half decades of the twentieth century. The increase in the Chinese population through immigration is clearly reflected by the fact that of the 33,746 Chinese enumerated in Kedah in 1911, only 3,843 were local born. Of these 1,895 persons were under twelve years of age and 1,235 of these belonged to the 0-5 years age group. The period of maximum immigration of the Chinese into the State was, therefore, between 1900 and 1925. Increases in the State's Chinese population for the later decades were largely the results of natural increase.

The most spectacular period of growth of the Chinese population was expectedly the intercensal decade of 1911-1921, when the overall population of the State experienced its period of maximum increase in terms of percentage gain. The abrupt fall in the rate of increase of the Chinese population in the intercensal decade of 1921-1931 was the immediate result of a decline in the number of

Table 6:
The Growth of the Chinese Population in Kedah 1911-1947

Year	Population	Numerical Increase	Percentage Increase
1911	33,746	—	—
1921	59,403	25,657	77.4
1931	78,415	19,012	31.27
1947	115,928	37,513	47.8

Source: Censuses of Population, 1911, 1921, 1931 and 1947.

³⁷ Jackson R.N., *Immigrant Labour and the Development of Malaya*, Malaya, 1961, p. 43.

³⁸ Translation of a letter from the Siamese governor of Saiburi to the Raja of Singgora 1888 A.D., Bound Volumes of *Malay Documents*, Book 2.

immigrants indicating that the Chinese population of Kedah at this date still depended on immigration to increase its numbers. The population base was still small and the disparity between the sexes within the community still considerable. It was still too early, therefore, for losses in the margin of increase to be made good by a high incidence of local births. The slightly inflated rate of increase for the intercensal decade of 1931–1947, however, was partly the result of the longer period it covered.

Despite the circumstantial peculiarities, the rates of increase of the Chinese population after the mid-1920s were more or less rationalized when compared with the increase experienced over the decade, 1911–1921. The outbreak of the Second World War brought immigration to a halt. But beginning from the late 1920s, the trend of decline in the number of fresh immigrants had set in. The oldest local born Chinese in Kedah in 1947 should be forty years or so. In 1947 the total Chinese population numbered 115,928 persons. Of these 48,570 belonged to the 15–44 year age group and 46,329 belonged to the 0–15 year age group. Thus, 94,899 of the 115,928 Chinese in Kedah in 1947 or 82.06 per cent were below 44 years of age. A large proportion of these was, therefore, local born Chinese.

The Chinese Dialect Groups:

In Kedah, the Teochews have formed the largest single dialect group since the early days of Chinese immigration into the State. Its relative position within the total community, however, gradually decreased in time with the expansion of other dialect groups. The predominance of the Teochews in the total Chinese population is a characteristic shared only by two areas of the peninsula, namely, Kedah and Province Wellesley. This peculiarity may be attributed to two factors. A hypothetical explanation is to be found in the fact that the Teochews in the early years of Chinese immigration to the Malay Peninsula, were frequently linked with agricultural pioneering. The economic employments that Kedah offered the immigrants were more agricultural than industrial, unlike the States of Perak and Selangor which attracted immigrants through mining. Thus, it is alleged that the partiality of the Teochew for agricultural pioneering was responsible for their participation in the agricultural development of Singapore, Johor and Province Wellesley and explains, therefore, their predominance in Kedah. This can be supported by the fact that the other dialect groups, notably the Hokkien and the Cantonese, began to increase only in the later years of the post-traditional period. The economic development that had since taken place created thousands of males. The Hokkiens and the Cantonese, on the other hand, who were later immigrants, showed less disparities in their sex distribution (See Table 7).

The disparity in the sex distribution of the total Chinese community from the middle years of the post-traditional period lessened steadily from year to year. In 1931 the ratio was 458 females to a thousand males and in 1947 it stood at 772 females per thousand males. The progress towards demographic equilibrium was directly the result of the increased immigration of females, and indirectly the result of the steadily increasing number of local births. By the 1940s there was no longer a sex imbalance among the Chinese who belonged to the forty years and under age groups although the disparity within the forty years and above age group still persisted. In the early 1940s, the first group made up four-fifths of the total Chinese community, thus indicating that conditions were more suitable with the aptitudes of these later groups.

Table 7:
Sex Distributions of Selected Chinese Groups
1911 and 1921

Group	1911: Females per 1,000 males	1921: Females per 1,000 males
Hokkiens	281	374
Cantonese	230	325
Khehs (Hakkas)	194	267
Tiechius	72	143
Total Chinese	112	252

Source: Censuses of Population, 1911 and 1921.

It is not always realistic, however, to employ considerations of this type in explaining the patterns of Chinese settlement in the Malay Peninsula. It is more reasonable to believe that the location of certain dialect groups in certain areas of the peninsula was as much the result of historical coincidence as of occupational preferences. Even occupational preference is related to economic factors rather than inherited skills. It is more understandable for a new immigrant to make his way to the area of his own dialect group and men from his own village, district or province. Accidents of this kind are well illustrated by the concentration of certain dialect groups in certain areas of the peninsula without any apparent economic explanation, for example, the predominance of the Hainanese in the State of Trengganu, the Hockchius in Singapore and the Dindings and the Kwangsai's preference for Kuala Kangsar and Bentong and, of course, the Teochews for Kedah and Province Wellesley.

A more reasonable explanation of the predominance of the Teochews in Kedah during the early years of Chinese immigration is the simple fact that the State is contiguous with the British settlement of Province Wellesley. The Province carried a large colony of Teochews and was separated from Kedah by an arbitrary land boundary. It formed the closest point of entry for Chinese immigrants once conditions were suitable. It would take a time lag of several years, perhaps, for other groups occupied elsewhere to start moving into the State. Proof of this explanation lies in the fact that all Chinese dialect groups during the pioneering years in Kedah were engaged in agricultural occupations.

The Indians

The Indian community is the only other non-indigenous group to have provided contrasts with the local community. Unlike the Chinese, however, the Indians were not entirely new to the traditional community. Indeed, one of the earliest known settlements in Kedah is believed to have been "Indianized". Apart from this there was an established Southern Indian community in traditional Kedah, namely, the Chulia community mentioned earlier. The *Jawi Pekan* people who were the issues of inter-marriages between local Malays and Indian Muslims also helped to familiarize the local Malays with immigrants from India. Although the Indians who emigrated to Kedah during the early modern period were in several ways different from these early

Table 8:
Chinese Population of Kedah by Dialect Groups 1911-1947

Group	1911	1921	1931	1947
Cantonese	6,412	11,647	13,037	24,640
Hailams	1,980	2,768	2,761	3,325
Hockchians	202	646	1,284	190
Hokkiens	8,720	15,491	21,784	31,432
Khehs	6,836	12,455	13,718	16,400
Teochew	9,494	16,065	23,045	33,319
Others	102	246	—	—
Total	33,746	59,403	78,415	115,928

Table 9:
Proportion of Each Dialect Group within the
Total Community 1911-1947

Group	1911	1921	1931	1947
Cantonese	19.6%	19.8%	16.67%	21.0%
Hailams	4.6	1.9	3.6	2.86
Hockchins	—	—	1.5	1.8
Hokkiens	26.0	26.1	33.33	37.11
Khehs	20.9	20.0	22.03	14.15
Teochew	28.7	27.04	30.04	28.73
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%

examples, the penpicpal appearance of immigrants from India were not as foreign to the local peoples as were the Chinese when they first came to the State.

The difference between the new and the old examples of Indian settlers, however, became more marked with time. Unlike the early Indian settlers the new immigrants were exclusively Hindu and belonged to the labour class. Unlike the earlier settlers again, the contacts between the new immigrants and the local Malays were socially and spatially restricted. While the early settlers from India formed an integrated part of the local Malay community, the new immigrants formed a distinctive and separate entity. Their numbers eventually increased beyond the number of Indians in previous periods, and their impact on the human landscape by virtue of their size and their distinctiveness, was extremely significant.

Similar to the immigration of the Chinese, Indian immigration into Kedah was closely associated with the establishment of British administration. In fact, the immigration of Indians into the States of the Malay Peninsula was more dependent on the British than were the Chinese. In most cases the immigration of the Indians was closely associated with the establishment of European investment in agriculture, most notably in rubber. Kedah came into the colonial fold in 1909. The intercensal decade of 1911-1921 recorded an increase of 387.7 per cent in the Tamil population of Kedah. This was the highest recorded increase for the Tamils during that decade. The

States of Selangor and Perak, for example, experienced similar rates of increase during the intercensal decades of 1891–1901 which in their case were the first few decades of British administration.³⁹

Expectedly, the immigration of Indians into Kedah came slightly later than that of other immigrant communities, mainly the Chinese. The Chinese, for example, came immediately before and after the establishment of the new administration. The Indians, on the other hand, had to await the beginnings of development before the need for them was created. In other respects, too, the immigration of the Indians into Kedah differed from that of the Chinese.

In fact, prior to 22nd. April 1910, the government of the Straits Settlements strongly prohibited the immigration of Indians into Kedah. After this date, the restriction on Indian labour moving into the state was lifted. It is estimated that between April and December of 1910 some 6,000 Indians moved into the State. Indian immigration was brought to an end by the outbreak of the Second World War.

Table 10:
The Growth of the Indian Population of Kedah 1911–1947

	Total	Increase (Number)	Increase (Per cent)
1911	6,074	—	—
1921	33,004	26,930	343.4
1931	50,808	17,820	35.05
1947	51,347	9,461	1.06

Source: Censuses of Population 1911, 1921, 1931 and 1947.

Basically, the difference between the immigration of Chinese and Indians into the Malay States lay in the fact that the Chinese were, for the most part, "free" immigrants; they left China of their own accord and once in the peninsula were able to pursue whichever employment appealed to them or whichever type of work they were able to obtain. There was no limit to the numbers that could emigrate or on the numbers that could come to the peninsula. The immigration of the Indians, on the other hand, was "controlled" both by the government of India and by the demand for Indian labour in the peninsula. Most of the Indian labourers were recruited by representatives of would-be-employers in the peninsula; their numbers depending on the need. The main employers of Indian labour were initially the plantation industries

³⁹The expansion of the Tamil populations of Selangor and Perak during the early decades of British rule is tabulated below:

Year	Selangor	Perak
1891	3,592	14,885
1901	16,847	34,760
Percentage Inc.	369.0%	133.5%

Source: Censuses of Population, Federation Malay States, 1891 and 1901.

and later the Public Works Departments of the various States of the peninsula. Once in Malaya they had little choice in the types of economic employment. In the late 1920s there was an increasing number of Indian immigrants from the professional class. They were free immigrants, but their number was small in comparison with immigrants from the labour class.

Within the Indian community of Kedah, the Tamils formed the largest single group. Tamils from Madras and adjoining areas formed the bulk of the estate population of the Malay Peninsula. Although the later years witnessed the immigration of Indians of the professional class and from a variety of places on the Indian mainland, these later immigrants were not able to overcome the superiority of the Tamils in terms of number.

Table 11:
Proportion of Tamils within the Total Indian
Population of Kedah 1911-1947

Year	Total Indians	Tamils	Percentage Tamils
1911	6,074	5,477	90.18
1921	33,004	26,716	80.97
1931	50,808	43,007	84.63
1947	51,347	39,995	77.98

Source: Censuses of Population, 1911, 1921, 1931 and 1947.

Indonesian Immigrants

The immigration of Indonesians, frequently described as non-indigenous Malaysians, into Kedah is unique in several ways. For obvious reasons it differed from the immigration of the Chinese and the Indians. But the movement of Indonesians into Kedah was also different from the movement of Indonesians into the other States of the peninsula.

The implantation of Chinese and Indian communities into the demography resulted in sharply differentiated ethnic and cultural characteristics. The movement of Indonesians into the Malay States, on the other hand, affected the content of the indigenous Malay community. Similarly, the movement of Chinese and Indians from China and India into the Malay Peninsula represented an exceptional phenomenon. The movement of Malays within the realm of the Malay world, on the other hand, was common since time immemorial. However, the movement of Malays within the Malay Archipelago never assumed the magnitude experienced in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the States of western Malaya to the south of Kedah experienced large influxes of Indonesian immigrants. The immigrants came mainly from the Minangkabau area, Jambi and Palembang in Sumatra, from the island of Java, Bawean, Banjarmasin and Sulawesi. There was another Indonesian group, however, which did not feature significantly in the Indonesian migration to these States but featured most prominently in Kedah, Province Wellesley and the northwestern part of Perak. They were the Achense. During the period of large-scale Indonesian immigration into the peninsula, Kedah was avoided by most of the Indonesian groups but it became a major point of attraction for the Achense.

The Achenese formed the largest single Indonesian group in Kedah until the end of the second decade when the Javanese became the largest group in the total Indonesian community of the State. The immigration of the Achenese into Kedah was unique not only in the light of their regional concentration in the peninsula but also in the fact that the characteristics of their movement from their homeland were also different from those of other immigrants to the peninsula including the other Indonesian groups.

In 1911, the Achenese made up 50.78 per cent of the total Indonesian population in the State. This lead was soon lost to the Javanese who formed 58.34 per cent of the Indonesian population at the end of 1921. Clearly, the immigration of the Achenese into Kedah was more significant before 1911. The truth is borne out by the fact that whilst other Indonesian groups started to expand only after the first decade of the present century, the Achenese started to decline after 1911.

This difference in the period of maximum immigration into Kedah as compared with other immigrant group is one of the peculiarities of the Achehnese immigration. The most significant period of Achenese immigration into the State was between the 1860s and 1900. Although it coincided with the early years of the era of immigration in the peninsula, it was several decades ahead of the period of active immigration into this particular State. Since the earliest reliable record of the number of non-indigenous communities in Kedah first became available in 1911, the peak period of Achenese immigration into the State was missed by several decades. The exact number of this community at the height of their influx is, therefore, difficult to determine.

The period of the emigration of the Achenese from their homeland is a direct reflection of the motives behind the Achenese movement. The period of their emigration coincided with the years of Dutch military campaigns in Aceh. Their immigration was mainly motivated by political persecution. The Achenese were famed as a proud and independent people. After having resisted the Dutch for several decades it became unbearable, for some of them at least, to continue living under Dutch domination. Dissatisfied members of the population who had reason to fear persecution from the Dutch, moved away from their places of settlement. For most of them, it meant moving to more remote parts of Aceh where Dutch rule was less immediate. For some, the answer was emigration to other parts of the Malay Archipelago.

The number of Indonesians who left Indonesia as political refugees was small but this group constituted the entirety of the Achenese population in the Malay Peninsula in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The motive behind the immigration of the Achenese was reflected in the "family" immigration that took place. Unlike the Chinese, Indians and the Javanese, for example, the Achenese were in search of a home and not so much of a fortune.

Simultaneous with the decline in the size of the Achenese community in the years of the post-traditional period, was the expansion of the other Indonesian groups, most notably the Javanese. The expansion of these other groups was sufficiently great so as to make good the losses sustained by the Achenese community.

By the end of the 1920s, the Javanese took the place of the Achenese as the largest single Indonesian group in Kedah. The expansion in the total number of Indonesians and the increase in the ranks of the groups other than the Achenese

indicated the extent of economic development that had since taken place in Kedah. As conditions had become suitably attractive to the usual type of immigrants, Indonesian as well as others, who were seekers of economic prosperity and whose movements were prompted by economic hardships and overcrowding in their own homeland.

The integration and assimilation of peoples of similar cultural and ethnic affinities after a period of close residence is inevitable. The rate of the process, however, depends on the willingness of the communities concerned to integrate. Assimilation between the indigenous Malays and the non-indigenous Malaysians and the various Indonesian groups themselves, was eventually an accomplished fact. Yet the process could have been completed at a much earlier period had there been no initial obstacles. Among the various Indonesian groups in Kedah, the Acheneese had shown the greatest unwillingness to assimilate with others in the early years of their immigration.

One of the major obstacles to assimilation in the early years was the location of settlements. Very often the immigrant Indonesians settled in localities peopled only by members of their own communal group. The Acheneese, for example, were located at several points in the Districts of Yan and Kuala Muda. In all cases their kampungs were separated from those settled by the local Malays by stretches of jungle or *belukar* (secondary forests). In time, with the expansion of settlements and cultivation the isolation was broken down. Initially, too, the physical isolation of settlements was augmented by differences in economic occupations; the Acheneese, for example, were pepper planters before they turned to rubber smallholders, while the Javanese were originally engaged as rubber tappers or general labourers. The local Malays being self-contained and self-sufficient in their padi economy found much less reason for contact.

The expansion of settlements, the diversification of economic activity and the movement of young Indonesians away from their ancestral kampungs in pursuit of education and employment or as a result of marriage or enlistment in the armed forces soon brought down the obstacles. Integration between the Malay-Indonesian communities in Kedah was almost complete by the early 1940s. This was reflected in the growth patterns of the Indonesian population in 1947. In a pattern as indicated by the Table referred to the Chinese or Indians, the only possible explanation was that a mass exodus of such peoples had taken place. With the Indonesian community, the explanation lies in the fact that large numbers of the descendants of the Indonesian immigrants failed to be recorded as such. Even the Javanese, always the slowest group to be assimilated, indicated a decline.

Table 12:
The Indonesian Population 1931-1947

Group	Population 1947	Inc./Dec. 1931-1947
Acheneese	656	- 258
Other Sumatrans	1,167	- 2,194
Banjarese	611	+ 31
Javanese	1,287	- 40
	3,885	- 2,297

The census held in 1947 was the last to differentiate between Malaysians (Malays) and other Malaysians (Indonesians). The census held a decade later included within the Malaysian group all persons of Malay, Indonesian and aboriginal origins.

The Evolution of Modern Patterns of Settlement and Land-Use:

The sum total of the expansion of population discussed earlier was the implantation of the State's landscape of a varying intensity and variety of settlement forms. Some were modifications and extensions of traditional types; others were entirely new. The early modern period established the main areas and the main types of settlement of modern Kedah, and laid down the basis and directions for subsequent developments.

The most significant development in the settlement geography of the State was the emergence of a differentiation between rural and urban settlements. The development of the urban-type settlement was no doubt significant because it is a symbol of modern era. Rural settlements, however, have always been an important feature of the settlement landscape, and where Kedah was concerned it never really stopped being such. The development of urban settlements in Kedah was never at the expense of rural settlements as was the case in other areas of the west coast. In Kedah, the increase in population was shared by both rural and urban areas, with the former in fact absorbing the greater part of the share. Consequently, while the growth of urban settlements constituted a significant development, it was the rural areas that was the scene of the greatest amount of settlement change.

The expansion of settlements in the rural areas was basically of two types. In the first place, it was modification within the existing Malay settlements, and in the second place, it was the development of non-indigenous rural settlements. With regards to the indigenous Malay settlements, this period witnessed a re-orientation in the site characteristics of settlements. This took place in all areas of the State, but most markedly in the District of Kota Setar and in the adjoining areas where the local Malays predominated. The substitution of the artificial waterway for the river, for example, began in late traditional times. But large-scale drainage and irrigation schemes carried out in the early to the middle decades of the 20th century, was responsible for the large-scale development of the now famous linear and rectilinear settlements landscape.

Further away from these lines of artificial drainage, the tendency for Malay settlements to group themselves into clusters is still apparent. The occurrence of kampungs became more frequent and less restricted to riverside and canalside locations, a reflection that the number and density of traditional settlements had visibly increased.

The construction of roads and railways provided further substitutes for the river as the basis of rural Malay settlements. This proves that the motivating forces behind the rivercentric tendency of traditional settlements were as much the ease of communication as the traditional consideration of water and soil. Hardly were the roads completed, several Malay huts would immediately crop up along their sides. When canals and roads ran alongside each other the forces of attraction were considerably enhanced. This was clearly evident along the Wan Mat Saman Canal which was first constructed in late 19th century and recognized as a feat of local engineering in relation to the times and circumstances of its construction.

The development of settlements along the Wan Mat Saman Canal provides an extremely interesting case study and deserves special mention. Constructed in late traditional times this primary waterway initially attracted a number of Malay canalside settlements which steadily increased as more and more lands along its banks were brought under the plough. By the beginnings of the twentieth century, the linear canalside settlements had become a major feature of the State's settlement geography as much as the canal itself had become a major artery of movement. Immediately after the establishment of the British Administration in 1909, plans were laid down for the construction of a trunk road linking Alor Setar town with south Kedah. The route chosen was alongside the Wan Mat Saman Canal. The road was completed in 1913 and joined the heart of Alor Setar town with Sungai Patani. For twenty two miles of this 36-mile route, the road followed the banks of the canal.

The earth for the construction of the road was obtained by digging another canal parallel to the existing one on the eastern side of the road. Where before there was a canal flanked on both banks by Malay settlements, there were now two canals separated by a road running right through the centre. The traditional settlements on the west bank of the original canal remained undisturbed by the construction of the road, but the road and the complementary canal constructed on the east bank can be associated with a number of significant changes.

While traditional settlements along the west bank of the old canal remained intact, the Malay settlements along the east bank, forced to move by the construction of the road and the new canal, gradually disappeared from their former locations. The sites of their old settlements were replaced by those of Chinese smallholders; the construction of the road and the new canal coincided with the period of maximum immigration of the Chinese into the State. In the following years, the number of Chinese settlements along the canal increased. Malay settlements along the new bank appeared at infrequent intervals but as rule, most of them were relocated in the padi fields on the inside of the Chinese settlements. The construction of cultural units in the form of schools and temples along the east bank of the road as the number of Chinese settlements grew, turned this side of the canal into an essentially non-indigenous area, in contrast with the west bank which persisted as an area of traditional settlement. Nowhere else in the State has there been such a remarkable example of an immediate confrontation between traditional and non-traditional features of settlement.

Apart from these modifications, a major development in Malay settlements during the post-traditional period was the inception of the Malay fishing settlement. Fresh-water fishing has formed part of the traditional activity. But marine fishing, as a full-time occupation, did not exist until the beginning of the present century. The growth of such settlements was directly the result of an increase in the number of non-subsistence population especially urban dwellers. The movement of rural Malays into fishing, on the other hand, was greatly encouraged by increasing problems symptomatic of a maturing feudal agrarian situation. The Malay peasantry of this period was progressively harassed by declining production, uneconomic holdings and agricultural debt. From the beginning of the century onwards, Malay fishing settlements constituted an important feature of coastal settlements in Kedah. These settlements congregated in clusters of some hundreds of houses in the major fishing ports of Kuala Kedah, Kuala Muda and Tanjung Dawai and in a large number of smaller

concentrations in the coastal *mukims* of the Districts of Kota Setar, Kuala Muda, Bandar Baharu, Kubang Pasu, Yan and Langkawi.

During modern period, these settlements account for the entire coastal settlement of the Malays. Most of these settlements, however, never acquired a strong communal bias for the Chinese middlemen, retailers and even fishermen from integral elements of these villages. The typical pattern of a Malay fishing settlement eventually became one that centred around a Chinese fishing concern. Most of the Malay fishermen eventually discovered that it was far more rewarding to work for a wage rather than to undertake fishing on their own. Thus, fishing settlements became one of the few types of rural settlement which traditional and non-traditional communities had evolved together.

In the rural context, the early modern period also witnessed the development of a number of new settlement types that were directly associated with immigrant communities. Most significant was the development of Chinese agricultural settlements. There is no physical evidence to suggest that Chinese agricultural holdings in the countryside showed tendencies to concentrate in certain localities only. Chinese agricultural settlements occurred interspersed among the settlements of the local Malays. There was, however, an areal differentiation between types of Chinese agricultural settlements. In the southern districts, for example, in the Districts of Bandar Baharu, Kulim and Kuala Muda, Chinese rural settlements were right from the start predominantly engaged in smallholding rubber and to a slight extent in other forms of cash crop agriculture. Apart from smallholding settlements, Chinese estate settlement was also a feature of these southern districts. In these districts such settlements accounted for the greater part of the countryside.

In the northern districts where the traditional population had always predominated in the countryside, the development of Chinese agricultural settlements in their midst, though restricted, provided many examples of contrast. Chinese padi farmers, for instance, while employing the same methods of cultivation as the Malay farmers, inhabit settlements that differ in physical appearance from those of their Malay counterparts. In the first place, Chinese padi holdings have never been as strictly mono-cropped as the Malays'. Chinese padi planters, whenever conditions permit, are also engaged in small scale cash crop cultivation and livestock farming. In the second place, Chinese homesteads in the rural areas stand out, and have continued to do so, from the surrounding countryside. Their houses often stand directly on the ground, unlike the houses of the Malay peasants which usually stand on stilts. Despite the obvious advantages of stilted houses especially in the swamp country of the north, the thatched hut with the mud floor have remained an unmodified communal characteristic.

Another type of Chinese rural settlement also developed in association with padi. These are the milling settlements. Rice mills were usually built along lines of communication in the midst of padi growing areas. In most cases these mills had provided for the development of urban and semi-urban centres in the middle of the rural areas. An excellent example is provided by the small township of Tokai in the Kota Setar District. A rice mill was built in this village some time in the early 1920s. A small country town developed, centered around the rice mill. The settlement eventually attracted a colony of Chinese shopkeepers, retailers, petty financiers etc. They formed an island of

Chinese in the midst of a vast region of Malay settlement. These settlements, therefore, provided the nucleus for the growth of urban agglomerations in an otherwise completely rural landscape.

Another form of rural settlement that evolved during the early modern period is the estate settlement. From the beginning, the distribution of such settlements was directly related to the distribution of the South Indian immigrants, who comprised the majority of the estate labourers. Such settlements formed a distinct feature of the settlement landscape of the south-central districts especially where European estates predominated. This pattern of rural settlement in Kedah, is shared by most of the rubber growing States of the peninsula to the south.

Urban settlement of the type typical in Kedah is not a feature of traditional geography. The traditional counterparts are port cities based on commerce but not of the type and scale of the modern era. With the development of modern commercial activities through the cultivation of cash crops, mining and the increase in the trade in rice, the State witnessed the beginnings of modern forms of urbanization.

Alor Setar, the primary "town" of the State since the period of traditional settlement expectedly became one of major points of urban growth. The expansion of population of this settlement is reflected in the table below.

Table 13:
The Population of Alor Setar 1905 to 1947

	1905	1911	1921	1931	1947
Total Population	5,000 (estimated)	8,000	11,596	18,568	32,424
Percentage Increase	—	60.0	44.9	59.9	94.0

Source: *Kedah Annual Report*, 1905–1906 and the Censuses of Population, 1911, 1921, 1931 and 1947.

The most significant feature in the development of the urban geography of the State, however, was the growth of a number of points of concentration in the hitherto sparsely settled areas of the State. These concentrations rapidly acquired urban characteristics. This was particularly true of the southern districts where immigrant settlements predominated. Urban settlements in the Districts of Kulim and Kuala Muda, for example, developed from almost nothing in 1900 into concentrations of several thousand inhabitants between 1911 and 1921. At the end of 1921, the town of Kulim carried a population of more than three and a half thousand inhabitants and the town of Sungai Petani, which was an intentional creation of the colonial administration, boasted a population of some four and half thousand persons in 1921.

The monopoly of the southern districts of most of the urban development of the modern period, became evident as early as 1915. In that year when the railway was first completed it was indicated that despite the fact that Alor Setar was the main town of the State, urban settlements in the south stood to benefit most from its construction. The British Adviser commented that

"... it is unlikely that any great development of Alor Star will result from it. On the other hand the town of Sungei Patani in south Kedah, shows remarkable

growth, and it is probably in the south that any expansion may be looked for. The bulk of the mining and planting industries are in the south while in the north there is little but rice".⁴⁰

The prediction appeared to be true because in the following year it was reported that, "The town of Sungei Patani continued to grow and has now 109 completed houses and many under construction. The new township of Bedong [Kuala Muda District] now has 39 completed houses and fresh building lots are being taken up".⁴¹

At the district level, the pattern of urbanization was for population to concentrate in the main towns of each district. At the State level, there was a tendency for urban dwellers to concentrate in the three main urban centres of the State, namely, in Alor Setar, Kulim and Sungai Patani. These centres increased at a rapid rate during the first three decades of the century while the smaller concentrations increased at very slow rates. By the eve of the Second World War, the pattern of urban settlement in the State was more or less fixed. The pattern was one of great concentrations in the few large centres and small concentrations (average 1,000 inhabitants) of urban dwelling in a large number of smaller centres (average four to each district).

Table 14:
Expansion of The Urban Population 1911—1947

Town	District	Pop. 1911	Pop. 1921	Pop. 1931	Pop. 1947
Alor Setar	Kota Star	8,000	11,596	18,568	32,424
Yan	Yan	—	901	950	1,354
Jitra	K. Pasu	—	860	942	1,175
S. Patani	K. Muda	—	4,578	7,703	13,175
Gurun	K. Muda	—	748	1,386	1,869
Kota	K. Muda	—	1,615	1,002	624
Padang Serai	Kulim	—	933	1,210	1,464
Kulim	Kulim	—	3,601	5,829	9,500
Lunas	Kulim	—	1,614	1,926	1,274
Baling	Baling	—	647	1,533	2,599
B. Baharu	B. Baharu	—	997	1,233	912

Source: Censuses of Population, 1911—1947.

Urbanization and urban settlements in Kedah appear relatively under-developed when compared with the experience of other west coast States to the south. When the size and frequency of urban settlements are compared, these States appear highly urbanized by contrast.

Kedah, therefore, has emerged as a largely rural State. The several decades of population activity had succeeded in strengthening the rural component much more than that of urban settlements. The balance between urban and rural population never

⁴⁰Hall G.A., *Kedah Annual Report*, No. 1914 — Nov. 1915, 12.

⁴¹Hall G.A., *Kedah Annual Report* Nov. 1915 — Oct. 1916, 11.

exceeded more than 15 per cent of urban dwelling throughout the period. This places the State in the transition zone between the highly rural States of the east coast of the peninsula and the highly urban States of southern and western Malaya.

The predominantly rural character of the settlement geography of Kedah when compared with the west coast States to the south, can be attributed to the fact that it has been less extensively affected by the immigration of the Chinese. Consequently, it had been termed as one of the "Malay" States of the peninsula together with the east coast States of Kelantan and Trengganu, as opposed to the "non-Malay" States of Perak, Selangor and Negeri Sembilan, for example. The equation between the degree of urbanization and the degree of Chinese predominance in the total population is true in most areas of the peninsula from the highly urbanized States of the west coast to the highly rural States of the east coast. In Kedah, however, this theory is only partially true.

From the earliest date of alien penetration into Kedah until the close of the phase of immigrant pioneering, two factors continually disproved the total validity of this contention. It is true that since the early days of urban development, the Chinese dominated the urban settlements. But in Kedah, unlike the other west coast States, there was a more proportionate representation of the two major communities, the Malays and the Chinese, in the populations of the urban settlements. This pattern differed from that of Perak, for example, where the Chinese formed a disproportionately large part of the population of urban settlements and it differed, too, from the east coast State of Kelantan, for example, where the Malays represented a major proportion of the urban population.

Table 15:
Proportion of the Chinese in the Population of Alor Setar,
Kulim and Sungai Patani, 1921-1947

	1921		1931		1947	
	Total	Chinese	Total	Chinese	Total	Chinese
Alor Setar	11,596	5,492	18,568	7,740	32,424	15,534
Sg. Patani	4,578	2,485	7,703	4,136	13,175	7,579
Kulim	3,601	1,931	5,829	3,294	9,481	5,965

Source: Censuses of Population, 1921, 1931 and 1947.

A second explanation lies in the fact that the Chinese in Kedah had from the early days of their immigration shown preferences for rural settlements to a much greater degree than was experienced in the other west coast States. The reason for the persistently rural landscape, therefore, was not so much the small number of Chinese immigrants as the fact that most of those who came showed marked preferences for rural occupations. In 1921 only 19.5 per cent of the State's Chinese population was urbanized. The Federated Malay States, on the other hand, had 30 per cent of the Chinese in their areas living in concentrations of a thousand or more persons. The percentage of urbanized Chinese in Kedah in 1931 and 1947 was 24 and 34 per cent respectively. The State of Selangor, on the other hand, had 45.3 and 48.7 per cent of

its Chinese population urbanized in 1931 and 1947. In urbanization as in other types of development during the modern period, Kedah formed a zone of transition between western and eastern Malaya.

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The Kedah Sultanate in the Nineteenth Century: Some Economic Aspects

Sharom Ahmat

In the context of the 19th century, it is generally true that the political power of the Sultan, depended on the extent to which he controlled the economic resources of the country, which in fact meant the control of taxation. In theory, the Sultan and other holders of royal offices could collect the taxes of the State, but because of practical difficulties, district chiefs were deputized for this job; in return for which they could keep a proportion of the revenue. But in States like Perak and Selangor, the Sultans were unable to make district chiefs hand in what was due to them. As a result the Sultan was dependent only on the revenue from his own royal district. The situation in these States grew more complicated when tin mining became the primary economic activity. The district chiefs whose domains were fortunately endowed with this metal became the all powerful political figures in the State. One consequence of this was the constant intrigues and manoeuvring for power among the chiefs not only among themselves, but also between the chiefs and the Sultans. The end result was political instability and general chaos in these States.

The case of Kedah represents a refreshing change from what is assumed to be the typical picture of the state of affairs in the Malay States of the 19th century. As Sir Frederick Dickson, Acting Governor of the Straits Settlement, noted in 1890, "Kedah stands out conspicuously above all the other states of the peninsula . . . in all the signs of successful and intelligent administration . . ."¹ Various factors, some internal and others external, help to explain the Kedah situation. Among these, a fundamental factor was undoubtedly the nature of the economic administration of the State. Unlike the other west coast Malay States, the economic resources of Kedah were centralized in the hands of the Sultan. This meant that the chiefs were dependent upon the Sultan for their income, forcing them also to toe the line. In the context of Malay political structure, Kedah was also fortunate to remain an essentially agricultural State. The unimportance of tin in her economy freed her from the undesirable features, characteristic of the other Malay States to the south of Kedah.

The basic economic activity of the people of Kedah during this period was rice cultivation. Natural factors favour this activity, for the characteristics both of the physical and of the human geography of the country favoured this form of activity. The report on the census of population for Kedah and Perlis in 1911 showed that in the same year, there were 88,491 Kedah Malays engaged in agricultural occupations. Out of this number, 88,121 or 99.5% were padi planters.² If this was the situation in 1911, when various forces of change such as the development of communication, the greater influx of immigrant population and the expansion of commercial agriculture, had already altered the traditional patterns of Kedah life, then it is reasonable to assume that the proportion of Malays in the rice industry must have been at least the same during the earlier years. But although the Malays were so involved in rice culti-

¹ CO273/168 Report of Sir F. Dickson's Visit to Kedah, 1890.

² Cavendish, A. *Report of the Census of Population of Kedah and Perlis, 1911* (Penang 1911).

vation, their activity was not organized on a commercial basis. On the contrary, most rice planters worked within a rather tightly knit subsistence framework. To supplement their diet, they engaged in a little fishing, the raising of poultry and the planting of various fruit trees in their *dusun* (orchard). But there were still certain other basic necessities which the peasants required but did not produce, such as cloth, salt, and tobacco. In order to obtain these, the Malays collected jungle produce like bamboo, *damar* and rattan; and some engaged in a very rudimentary form of tin mining; the commodities thus obtained were then exchanged for what they needed.

The extent of rice cultivation in Kedah never failed to impress foreign visitors to the State. F.A. Swettenham, then British Resident of Perak, when he visited Kedah in 1889 remarked that, "the padi fields are of greater extent than any that I have seen elsewhere in the Peninsula. The whole country up to Perlis for some distance from the coast is one vast padi plain . . ."³ Yet, in spite of this, the objective of the rice cultivators was limited to the production of enough rice for their immediate needs. Consequently, the amount of rice produced by the *rakyat* was just adequate to pay his landlord to meet a few traditional obligations and to leave enough over to feed his family until the next harvest. This absence of an incentive to produce a surplus can be explained by several factors. In the first place, the cultivator was greatly hampered by the limited labour which was available to him. More often than not, he did not have any draught animal to do the heavy work of ploughing and hired labour was out of the question as the farmers could not afford it. A much greater deterrent was the operation of the system of *hasil kerah* (compulsory labour) which entitled a chief to call upon the peasant to work for him at any time. The consequent uncertainty as to the amount of time he might have available for his own fields, had the effect of discouraging a peasant from being ambitious, for if he planted too much, he might not be able to cope with the work at all. Finally, there was always the fear that a large harvest might merely mean that the successful cultivator had to part with the excess on the demand of some chief, petty or otherwise.

This situation was changed, but not to the benefit of the *rakyat*, when the Sultan decided to farm out to various Chinese, the sole right of collecting the export duty on padi and rice for the whole State. As for the Chinese revenue farmers, they obviously wanted to encourage production. Having agreed to a fixed annual rent on the farm, the more rice that was produced, the greater their profits would be. One way in which the Chinese revenue farmers ensured that a large and regular supply of padi was available for the export market, was to get the Malay peasants into debt. This was very cleverly done in the name of assisting the padi growers and unfortunately the Sultan naively assisted in it. For example, the Sultan wrote to one such farmer, Phua Leong, approving of his intention to "help" the Malay cultivators by giving them loans. The Sultan then issued instructions whereby the *rakyat* who wished to take a loan from Phua Leong would have to enter into agreements with their land as surety.⁴ What normally happened of course, was that the *rakyat* was unable to honour the loan on time, and this meant that he had either to hand over a more than proportionate share of the harvest or lose the land. As for the Sultan, he wanted rice production to be good, for if

³ CO273/162 Visit of Swettenham to Kedah 23 November 1889.

⁴ S.C./2 Sultan to Phua Leong, 5 Muharram 1312 (1894).

the revenue farmer could not make ample profit, he normally asked for a reduction in the rent of the farm. Thus, Lim Lan Jak, in 1893 one of the most important revenue farmers in Kedah, wrote to the Sultan explaining that he had been losing \$1,000 a month for 7 months on the padi farm and asked that his rent be substantially reduced. The Sultan finally agreed to reduce it by \$500 a month but he was most unhappy that his income had been thus curtailed.⁵ In all this, the *rakyat* remained the exploited party, and the only dubious advantage to him was that the Sultan now relaxed his obligations to perform *kerah*.

Figures for rice production and exports prior to 1909 are difficult to come by. But there are ample references which give a fairly satisfactory idea of the amount. For example, the Sultan told Swettenham in 1889 that Kedah exported 7,000 tons of rice in the previous year.⁶ Mr. Meadows Frost, the British Consul for the Siamese Western States, in a report on the trade of these areas for 1906, stated that the amount of rice exported to the port of Penang, nearly all of which came from Kedah, was about 83,432 *pikuls* or about 5,000 tons. This was valued at \$20,548 but the total export of rice from Kedah was worth \$58,333 which meant that a substantial quantity must have been exported directly to other areas.⁷ The padi farms of Kedah also indicated the extent of exports. The two farms of Kota Setar District, the most important rice producing region, which were leased for 6 years each in 1899 and 1901, fetched an income of \$97,000 a year. The other two farms included in the volume containing records of the issue of farm licenses were in Kuala Muda and Merbok and they together brought in another \$5,500. In the lists containing information on the revenue derived from Kuala Muda and Merbok for the years 1301–1304 A.H. (1883–1886 A.D.) the income from the padi farms totalled to 160 a year. All these of course did not include many small farms in the other districts of Kedah; neither did they include various *ampun kernia* (royal grants) which the Sultan bestowed on his subjects. Nevertheless, on the basis of the export duty which was \$5 per *koyan* (800 *gantangs*) on padi and \$8 per *koyan* on rice, together with the revenue farmer's margin of profit, it can be seen that the exports were large. And these rice and padi exports were not only significant to Kedah, but also to the neighbouring areas because "the other Malay states in the Peninsula are almost without exception compelled to import rice in order to meet their requirements".⁸

There is also other evidence to show how important rice was in Kedah's life. A look at the Kedah Laws will show that out of the four codes, two directly reflected the agricultural bias of the State. The second code in particular, the Laws of Dato Sri Paduka Tuan (dated 1667) dealt with various aspects of agriculture, especially with the cultivation of wet rice.⁹ A much more important evidence of the importance attached to rice cultivation is seen in the great emphasis which was laid on canal building in

⁵S.C./2 Sultan to Lim Lan Jak 14 Shaaban, 18 Shaaban and 5 Shawal 1311 (1893).

⁶CO273/162, *op. cit.*

⁷K.A.R. 1905–06, p. 10.

⁸K.A.R. 1905–06, p. 6.

⁹Winstedt, R.O., Kedah Laws *JMBRAS* vol. 6, pt. 2(1928), pp. 8–9.

Kedah.¹⁰ The construction of canals, known in Kedah as *sungai korok* had long been considered as a very vital activity by all those who owned rice land. This was not only essential for successful rice growing but it also served as a magnet to attract new settlers. Thus, the flat low-lying strip of alluvial land, about 12 miles wide, on the Kota Setar coast became the centre of the agricultural wealth of North Kedah not only because the soil was admirably suited for rice cultivation, but also because it was so well drained. The network of canals in this region enabled the draining away of excess rain water during the monsoon months of September and October, which would otherwise remain stagnant on the low expanse of land and drown the newly sown rice plants.¹¹

In addition to rice cultivation, commercial agriculture in the form of plantation crops existed on a small scale, but did not contribute much to the economy of the country during this period. In the late 19th century, the most important plantation crop was tapioca. Tapioca planting was the monopoly of the Chinese but for many of them this was not their major occupation. The plantation owners normally owned tin mines and they took advantage of the fact that the land in the vicinity of their mines were extremely well suited for tapioca, especially the rolling hills in the district of Kulim. Later in the period, tapioca was planted in conjunction with rubber and coconuts. The predominance of tapioca growing is seen from the list of principal estates in Kedah at the beginning of 1906. Out of the 25 estates, 16 were devoted to tapioca, all in the southern districts of Kuala Muda, Kulim and Krian which were also mining areas with substantial Chinese population. Most of the tapioca was made into sago before being exported, and the right to collect duty on this product was farmed out to various Chinese towkays, except for one farm in Kulim and Karangan held by Wan Mat Saman. The five tapioca sago export duty farms between them brought in a revenue of \$23,300 a year. This was not very much and by the turn of the century, this crop had lost even its slim importance as a revenue earner. This was mainly due to two factors. In the first place the price of tapioca had dropped, and secondly the plantation owners brought its decline. Tapioca was an extremely soil exhausting crop and through indiscriminate planting large areas of land became useless. Finally in 1905 the government insisted that tapioca could not be planted unless other crops were also planted in conjunction with it, and in sufficient quantities to keep the soil fertile.

Rubber which was introduced into Malaya in 1876 did not become significant even in the Federated Malay States until the beginning of the 20th century, when high prices caused by the demand in industrialized western States, resulted in a phenomenal expansion of rubber growing. In Kedah, rubber plantations came on the scene with some degree of success only after 1905, and it was not until the British took over Kedah in 1909 that sizeable well capitalized companies commenced operations. In the

¹⁰ The emphasis on canal building in Kedah presented an important contrast with that of other Malay States on the West Coast. In Perak and Selangor for example, irrigation works were left entirely to the peasants and hence the canals that were built were simple and temporary in nature. This was primarily due to the political instability of these States which tended to make permanent settlement uncertain. In such circumstances, the peasants were unwilling to spend much time and effort on irrigation; likewise the land owners were also reluctant to invest in these projects. Gullick, J.M., *Indigenous Political Systems of Western Malaya* (London 1965), pp. 28-29, 131.

¹¹ K.A.R. 1909, pp. 23-25.

period before 1905 only the district of Kuala Muda obtained any significant income from rubber. This was from the rubber farm leased out to Beng Loon for \$2,210 a year.¹² Other crops grown on a plantation basis were coffee and sugar, but these were isolated cases and there is no evidence to show that they were successful. In 1870, it is known that Sultan Ahmad Tajuddin opened a coffee plantation at Bukit Pinang and at the same time, he also granted land to Chinese merchants to grow coffee, nutmeg and cloves.¹³ But nothing else is known about this coffee plantation or whether the Chinese merchants made use of the land they obtained. Another reference to coffee cultivation appears in 1892, when Lim Lan Jak, who had a tapioca and coffee plantation in Kulim, petitioned the Sultan for exemption from land tax until after his plantation bore fruit. The Sultan refused his permission because Lim had already been exempted from paying for the last three years.¹⁴ The only reference to a sugar plantation during this period was that a "Chinaman has opened up a sugar estate on the banks of the river below Alor Star."¹⁵ This was the estate started by a Chinese merchant, Lim Eow Hong, in 1900. Although this estate was still in existence in 1906, nothing else is known about it and shortly afterwards Lim gave up his venture. Finally, there were a number of estates in South Kedah which planted coconuts together with rubber and tapioca. But again no details of its production or export are available. The fact that the list of revenue farms did not include any coconut or copra farm, may indicate that this crop was not important.

Small holding agriculture was another feature of Kedah's economy, and like plantation agriculture, this too was essentially practised by the immigrant population. But in this sphere some Malays did participate, as it was not a drastic change for them to engage in the growing of some side crops, and they could still continue being padi growers. However, it was the Chinese who predominated as the market gardeners and the small scale producers of tobacco, groundnuts, coffee and *sirih* (betel leaves). Of all the small-holding commercial crops, the most important was pepper. This activity was the monopoly of the Achenese community, who planted pepper on small plots in various areas in the districts of Yan, Kulim and Kuala Muda. It is said that the pepper harvests during its best years attracted an average 2,000 Achenese from Sumatra who came as transient workers.¹⁶

The only mining activity which contributed towards the economy of the country was tin. The presence of tin deposits in Kedah had attracted the Chinese from the mid-19th century and they brought in men and capital into the hitherto unpopulated areas in Kulim, Krian and Kuala Muda. Prior to the opening of the Chinese tin mines, this industry existed on a very rudimentary level in the hands of the Malays although

¹²The tax levied on rubber was fixed at 15 *katies per pikul* (100 *katies*).

¹³Muhammad Hassan bin Dato' Kerani Muhammad Arshad, *Salasilah Negeri Kedah* (Penang 1928) p. 330.

¹⁴SC/2 Sultan to Lim Lan Jak 29 Jamadil Awal 1310 (1892).

¹⁵C.W.S. Kynnersley, Notes on a Tour through the Siamese States on the West Coast of the Malay Peninsula, 1900, *JSBRAS*, July 1901 p. 65.

¹⁶Zaharah bt. Hj. Mahmud, *Change in Malay Sultanate: An Historical Geography of Kedah before 1939*. (MA. University of Malaya, 1966) pp. 253-254.

tin was an important article of export prior to the 18th century. After this period, the importance of tin declined. In 1791 M. Topping observed that "Qualla Muda is a shallow and rapid river, but convenient on account of its communications with the tin mines. The annual produce here is about 100 *pikuls*. This small quantity, however, is not owing to the scarcity of the ore but to the want of hands . . ." ¹⁷ By 1839, the production of tin had increased to 600 *pikuls* but this was still very small when compared with the other West Coast States. This small production was primarily due to the fact that the Malays who did some mining considered this as a secondary activity, so that it did not clash with their predominant activity, rice planting. Consequently, Malay mining methods which were unsophisticated could not yield substantial results.

In Perak, Selangor and Sungai Ujung, the 1840s saw the beginning of period of Chinese penetration into the tin-bearing areas. This rise in mining enterprise continued throughout the 1850s and by the 1870s tin mining had reached an unprecedented scale in the Malay Peninsula. ¹⁸ From the available references to tin mining in Kedah, it seems that the Chinese only began to open mines there in the 1870s. Data on tin mining in Kedah is very scarce indeed. Primarily, this is because the concentration was all on the other west coast States. In Kedah, the lack of communication into the interior made Chinese merchants from Penang reluctant to invest their capital there. Furthermore, the Kedah administration did not look upon tin mining as a very important source of revenue and so unlike the British residents in the Protected Malay States, they made no serious attempts to encourage Chinese mining enterprises. For instance, the British authorities stimulated investment in mines by eliminating inland transit taxes on people and goods, and some of the import duties. In Kedah, all such duties had been farmed out, and flexibility was not possible. Furthermore, the British adopted the policy of adjusting the rate of duty on tin in accordance with the state of the world market. But not so in Kedah. In 1897, for example, there was a complaint that Kedah was charging a transit duty of 16% on tin coming from Rawan. The authorities in the Straits Settlements objected to this and wanted the Sultan to reduce the duty to 10% which was the rate imposed by the States under British protector. ¹⁹

On the whole, then, tin production from Kedah remained very small throughout this period, although the mining potential of the State was good. As Mr. G.C. Hart, the Financial Adviser to Kedah, commented, "the mineral wealth of the country has hardly been exploited yet, though in parts of Kulim and Kuala Muda Districts, tin mining had been flourishing for some years. Out on the eastern boundary amongst the hills towards Rawan there are said by some to be rich possibilities . . ." ²⁰ The Chinese mines seems to have been concentrated in the district of Kulim and this appears very clearly in the Sultan's correspondence. There were constant references to the Chinese population in Kulim, particularly the various problems that they created. Tunku Mohamed Saad, the territorial chief of Kulim, was always writing to Alor Setar on matters arising out of differences between the Chinese miners and revenue farmers,

¹⁷ M. Topping, *Some Account of Kedah J.I.A.* vol. 4, 1850, p. 44.

¹⁸ Wong Lin Ken, *The Malayan Tin Industry to 1914* (Tucson 1965), p. 29.

¹⁹ CO273/224 J.W. Archer to Sir C. Mitchell 17 March 1897.

²⁰ K.A.R. 1905-1906, p. 6.

quarrels between miners over water rights, secret society problems and a whole host of other problems, ranging from prostitution to petty thefts. There were in addition to Chinese mines, some European concerns. The Singkep Tin Maatchapij, a Dutch concern "had been working with success at the base of Kedah Peak."²¹ Others included the Karang Hydraulic Tin Mining Company in Kulim, the Cherok Kliang Company in Kuala Muda, and the mine owned by G.B. Cerruti in Baling. Figures for tin production are not available but some idea can be deduced from the income of the Tin revenue Farms. The four Kulim Farms were worth \$25,250 to the State; the two Farms in Krian brought in \$8,000 and the Kuala Muda Farm was leased for about \$2,400 a year.²² While revenue from tin was not very much, mining areas with their concentration of Chinese population did contribute to the State coffers in other ways. These were areas where the opium and *candu* farms, gambling farms, spirits farm and pawn broking farms were most active. It would seem that the substantial revenues derived from Chinese activities in these fields were directly connected with Chinese mining population in those areas.

As has been indicated in the preceding pages, the revenue from the major economic activities in Kedah were leased out to revenue farmers. Indeed, the revenue farm system was the whole basis from which the State received its revenue. In 1889 the British Consul for the Siamese Western Malay States observed that the revenue of Kedah estimated at \$170,000 a year, almost all of which came from the income of revenue farms. The right of collecting duty on padi and rice was farmed out for \$17,000 a year; the opium and spirits farm were let for \$38,000 that of Kulim for \$26,000, and from the Kuala Muda District came another \$28,200.²³ These of course were only the revenues from the most lucrative farms in the State. The origin of the revenue farm system in Kedah is not known, but this method of organizing revenue collection has a long history in Asia. This was the system which was extensively used in India during Hindu times and was also favoured by the Moghuls. In the East Indies, the Dutch took over this system from the native rulers, thus saving themselves the expense of building up a new financial administration.²⁴ In Kedah, revenue farms seem to have been fairly well established by the beginning of the 19th century. In the early years of that century, a group of Hokkien merchants from Penang more or less monopolized all the revenue farms of Kedah. For example, Kota Kuala Muda was during this period still the main transit port of Kedah, and this was the main point at which fees and duties were levied on imports and exports. The Sultan decided to lease out these sources of revenue for five years to two Chinese merchants from Penang, Che Seong and Che Teoh. By this lease they were given the monopoly of trade and navigation on the Muda River, and they were also responsible for imposing and collecting duty on all merchandise which travelled up and down the river. Various members

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² The tax on tin was \$9 per *bahara*.

²³ CO273/160 *Report of Consular Tour in the Malay States and Siamese Provinces north of Penang 17 May 1889.*

²⁴ Wong Lin Ken, 'The Revenue Farms of Prince of Wales Island, 1805-1830', *Journal of the South Seas Society*, Vol. 19 (1964/5) p. 2.

of the ruling class received from the Sultan, what was known as *ampun kernia* (royal gifts) in lieu of salary. These gifts were normally the right to collect duty on some commodity or service, and the grantees in most cases preferred to farm them out to the Chinese. Amongst such farmers were the Lee brothers, Yoke Siew and Ook Cheng (whom the Malays called Eh Ma and Eh Tok respectively).²⁵ These two in fact commanded so much respect and confidence from the Malays, that the Sultan constantly showed his favour towards them. Yoke Siew was invested with the title of Dato Vijaya Besara, a rare honour for a non-Malay, which made him in effect a chief of the State. He later became treasurer to the Sultan. Another well known revenue farmer was the Kapitan China of Kulim, Chiu Ah Cheoh, who held a large share in the spirits, opium and gambling farms of Kulim. Chiu was really serving a dual purpose in Kulim which was the most violent district of Kedah because of secret society activities. As Kapitan China, and also a leader of the Triad Society, he was able not only to collect revenue without being molested, but he was also useful as an enforcer of law and order.

Other than indirect references of this sort, our knowledge of the revenue farms during the first three decades of the 19th century is unsatisfactory. Fortunately, this situation was rectified during the reign of Sultan Abdul Hamid Halim Shah where the availability of some documentary sources has enabled us to get an idea of the working and problems of the revenue farm system and also to realize its importance in the context of the country's economy. Twenty-eight different types of farms have been listed but these were not necessarily all the farms that existed, although they certainly included all the major ones which collectively constituted more than 90% of the revenue of the country. Most of these farms, and certainly all the major ones were leased out to Chinese merchants of Penang and Kedah. There were quite a few revenue farms held by Kedah Malays, from amongst the members of the royal family and various government officials. But these farms were generally low in value, indicating probably that they had been *ampun kernia* grants from the Sultan. In any case, the general practice of this category of farm holders was to let them out to the Chinese. In general all these revenue farms were leased out to their respective farmers by the system of tendering which took place in Alor Setar. The one exception, however, was the opium and *candu* farm which was tendered for in Penang. This was because after 1887, the Sultan of Kedah and the British authorities in Penang agreed that the Kedah and Penang opium farms should be let out simultaneously to the same revenue farmer or syndicate. The object of this, was to prevent the development of friction between two different sets of farmers who were in such close proximity to each other. Much more important, it was hoped that a joint farm would eradicate smuggling particularly in areas like Kuala Muda and along the Province Wellesley border where smuggling would be easy and detection difficult. In practice, these farmers usually formed themselves into a large syndicate. Like the Singapore syndicate which held opium and *candu* farms in the nearby Dutch islands, the one in Penang controlled those in Kedah, Langkawi Islands and Sumatra. This system, however, did not work in Kedah's favour. Firstly, the joint farm meant that only a large syndicate could bid for the farm and this immediately reduced the number of tenderers. In addition the tenderers tended to bid high for the

²⁵C.S. Wong, *A Gallery of Chinese Kapitans*, Singapore 1963, pp. 50, 54-55, 56.

Penang Farm to ensure that they secured both, while leaving an ample margin for profit on both farms in their tender for the Kedah sector.²⁶

The revenue farms in Kedah were leased out for a specific period of time. The average lease seems to have been 4 years but there were instances when a 10-year or 12-year lease was given and these gave additional problems to the work of financial reorganization in later years. The successful tenderer then had to sign a contract known as the *surat kecil* which incorporated certain conditions. One of these was the necessity to pay a deposit on the farm which normally amounted to six months' rent, although there were many farmers who had to pay a whole year's rent or even the total rent for the period of lease as deposit. This deposit was refundable by monthly instalments usually spread over the whole period of the lease. Another condition which the farmers had to observe was not to violate the established rates which were fixed when levying duties on goods and services. For example, the duty on tin was fixed at \$9 per *bahara*; that on rubber was 15 *katies* for every 100; for tapioca it was \$3 per \$100, and the charge on ferry passengers was 1 cent per passenger. Finally there was the clause which required the farmers to pay their monthly rent regularly. Lapses for two consecutive months could lead to forfeiture of the deposit, and even confiscation of the farm which the Sultan could re-let to someone else.

The most important revenue farm in Kedah was the opium and *candu* farm which between 1895 and 1905 brought in an average income of a quarter of a million dollars. This being such a considerable revenue earner, the rules and regulations which governed this farm appeared more rigorous than all the others. For one thing, the sale of opium had to be regulated and this was done by allowing only shopkeepers with licensed premises to do business. The price at which opium could be sold was fixed and special concessions were given to plantations with more than 20 coolies, and mines which employed more than 50 workers. Failure to observe these prices would result in a fine of \$2,000. Likewise, only the farmer could import opium into Kedah and unauthorized importers, if caught, would have to pay a fine equivalent to a month's rent which was to be shared between the Sultan who would get two-thirds, and the revenue farmer who would receive the remaining third. The illegal opium would be confiscated and the proceeds from its sale was also to be divided between the Sultan and the revenue farmer in the same proportion. One other provision was that which required prompt monthly payments of the rent. Failure could result in the loss of the deposit, and confiscation of the farm which would be auctioned, and in the event of this happening, the farmer could not appear for any losses incurred.

Although the opium and *candu* farm was the biggest single revenue earner, there were many others which also contributed substantially to the treasury. The following table is a list of the value of the various revenue farms for the year 1318-1319 (1900).

On the whole it can be said that the system of revenue farming worked well in Kedah, and this expedient had its advantages for both sides. For the State, this was a convenient method of acquiring revenue since it did not possess an elaborate administrative organization. To the *ampun kernia* holders, it meant that they were assured of a fixed and regular income without the responsibility and problems of trying to collect the revenue themselves. As for the revenue farmers, although they had to employ

²⁶K.A.R. 1905-1906 p. 10.

people to collect duties and to protect and enforce their privileges, they made handsome profits in return. In fact, the rents paid by the revenue farmer were often far below what the farms were actually worth, for when the government took them over on their expiration, the revenue collected showed a very disproportionate excess over the rents. One factor which enabled this to persist was the fact that the most important farms were controlled by a few syndicates, and this enabled the bidding for them to be lower.

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Abbreviation

- CO — Colonial Office Correspondence
SC — Sultan of Kedah's Correspondence
KAR — Kedah Annual Report

The Role of Kedah Rice Peasantry in Economic and Political Development of Malaysia

Afifuddin Haji Omar

Introduction

The Kedah rice peasantry, as a social class, began to play a major supportive economic role in the State during the early part of the 18th century. This was the period when commerce, which formed the core economic base of Kedah State centred in the Merbok-Muda estuarine region, began to be undermined by Dutch and British intervention. This intervention took the form of forced redirection of trade flow from China and India away from Kedah towards Dindings and other trading stations. The consequent deterioration of the supportive economic role of entrepot trade was complemented by physical deterioration of the port due to siltation caused by un-systematic mining in the Kulim hinterlands. Moreover, political intrigues over land concession among members of the ruling class, particularly among those in the core sector of the polity, added further impetus to the consequent search for a new economic base. This new base would have to cater for the support of an ever expanding ruling class by providing a sufficient surplus for international trade.

Since rice, which formed one of the many items for exchange in Old Kedah's trade, was the only major local produce that could be exploited and expanded in production, the rice peasantry began to be pulled into the central political-economic role from their previous peripheral position.¹ More rice land had to be opened. This resulted in the shift of power centre to Alor Setar, situated in the middle of a fertile alluvial plain. From this time on rice became Kedah's main export item.

This shift from a commercial-mercantile to a peasant-feudal State marked the beginning of a process of peasant-state interaction which would later significantly influence the political economy of current national development. Hitherto, from the early part of the 18th century up to the 20th century, the Kedah rice peasantry contributed their labour power initially under the exploitative *kerah* system and later under the capitalistic monopoly-monopsony to support not only the economic growth of the State but also the growth of tin and rubber economies of the British-protected Malay States and Settlements. The development of these States during the tin and rubber booms of the 19th century affected Kedah's trade favourably. Under British political and economic patronage, the expanding extraction of tin and natural rubber production attracted waves of Chinese and Indian immigrants. The local Malays, especially the peasantry, were also caught in the resulting whirlwind of economic growth of these States.

The pulling of the local peasantry into tin and rubber sectors resulted in the reduction of labour force in local rice production activities. It was reported in the *Malay Mail* that,

¹ The major items exported from the entrepot port of Kuala Muda were tin, elephant tusks, beeswax, hardwood timber, pepper and gambier which came from Pattani and the immediate hinterlands. Salt, opium, clothes, and tobacco were the major items imported from China, India and the Malay Archipelago. See R.O. Winstedt, "Notes on the History of Kedah". *JMBRAS*. Vol. XIV Pt. III Dec. 1936, p. 163.

"One district in Selangor i.e. Sungai Lukut, was then putting out a large quantity of tin, and Selangor men came and traded in Lukut, getting \$3 and \$4 for goods usually sold at \$1. The natural result was that the art of padi planting was forgotten . . . [with] Ulu Selangor and Bandar Kanching also opened up, the *rajaats* of Selangor forgot altogether about planting padi, to engage in buying and selling."²

This resulted in the increasing demand for Kedah rice. As a consequence to this, the feudal mode of production i.e. the *kerah* system; became more exploitative. The whole dialectical process of co-optation into the political core, exploitation, and peasant marginalization has resulted in an efficient and sophisticated state bureaucracy. It is this ability of the State to respond to conflicting situations through innovations in its bureaucratic structures and implementation policies, that managed to contain peasant frustrations and thus keep in them from rebelling or withdrawing from the system in the form of fleeing to other States. Moreover, Kedah soils, particularly those in the Kedah Plains are very fertile. The high productivity kept the peasants within the Kedah boundaries. Hence, Kedah maintained its role as a major rice supplier to the Malay Peninsula.

The above economic linkage between the Kedah rice peasantry and the other economic regions in the Peninsula existed during the early Dutch period. Windstedt's accounts of Dutch efforts to purchase Kedah rice to cater to increasing demands in Malacca between 1642 and 1662 illustrated this particular point.³ The realization of the existence of this linkage and the understanding of its significant contribution to the growth and development of the Malay Peninsula throughout the feudal, colonial and contemporary history would certainly eliminate Swettenham's "tunnel vision" of Malayan economic history.⁴ It is the major objective of this paper to point out the continuing and significant economic and political contributions of the Kedah peasantry to the national development in the perspective of the economics and politics of dependency. Through this effort it is hoped that a new dimension of viewing the social realities of national development is highlighted. And consequently neither government planners nor intellectuals or for that matter the entire Malaysian people would look upon the Kedah rice peasantry as mere recipients of government subsidies and hand-outs. The main issue pertaining to this should not centre around the question of "who owes who" but rather around the question of to what extent has all the developmental investment improved the income and quality of life of the peasantry

² *Malay Mail*, "Rice Cultivation in the States: Interesting Letter from Raja Bot." 14th. Nov., 1902.

³ See R.O. Windstedt, *op. cit.*, pp. 165-167.

⁴ Frank Swettenham devotes a whole chapter (Chapter 10), "The Evolution of the Residential System - Tin Mining - What the Malay States owe to Chinese Labour and Enterprise - Roads and Railways" (pp. 216-244) glamorizing the capitalistic drives of Chinese immigrants, conveniently overlooking the role of cheaply produced rice by the *kerah* system that supported these immigrants. Instead, Swettenham has these to say about the Malays. "The leading characteristic of the Malay of every class is a disinclination to work . . ." (pp. 136-138) obliviously ignorant about the toils of the Malay peasantry under the oppressive appropriating - expropriating system of the feudal order. See F.A. Swettenham, *British Malaya* (London, George Allen and Unwin Co., 1948).

while at the same time making them active participants in the national political system.

Socio-economic Structure

The Kedah rice peasantry at present constitutes about 3% of the total Malaysian population. The peasants operate about 27% of the total Malaysian rice land but contribute to about 5% of the national requirement of rice. Ninety-eight percent of these peasants are ethnic Malays, one percent Thais and one percent Chinese. Most of them reside in the Kedah Plain.

About 210,000 acres of the Kedah Plain are under rice cultivation, 10,000 acres under rubber and 8,500 acres under mixed horticulture. Another 75,000 acres of rice land are found around the Muda-Merbok estuaries and patches of riverine valleys in the districts of Kulim, Baling, Sik, Langkawi, Pendang and Padang Terap.

For most of the peasant population the major activity is rice cultivation. The opportunity cost of their labour is very low since very little alternative employment outside rice economy exists within their immediate surroundings. Manufacturing, commercial, and service economies only contribute to about 16% of the state's gross output.

One of the outstanding features of the Kedah rice peasantry is the considerable size of landless cultivators who are composed of tenants and agricultural wage labourers. They contribute to about 40% of the peasant population as shown in Table 1. The

Table 1:
Status Structure of Kedah Rice Peasantry

Categories	No. of Households	No. of Persons	% of Peasant Population
a. Owner-Operators	21,400	111,280	34
b. Owner-tenants	13,822	82,932	26
c. Pure Tenants	18,201	101,106	32
d. Agric. Wage Labourers	5,271	25,300	8
TOTAL:	58,694	320,618	100

owner-operators and owner-tenants constitute the better-off cultivators who operate on land averaging 7 acres. The pure tenants cultivate an average holding of about 3 acres. Concentration of landownership does not reflect a polarization of large landowners and landless tenants. Instead, the pattern is more of a continuum from zero to 100 acres in which less than 1% of the land belonging to large landowners of 50 acre class or above. Most of the ownerships are in the 1 to 15-acre category. The landlord-tenant relationship is more characterized by a pattern of "poverty-sharing" where between 60%—70% of tenancy relations are those between close kins. There are no more than 2,000 absentee landlords, many of whom are peasant family members who work and reside in semi-urban or urban areas in Kedah or in other parts of Malaysia.

The above situation of fragmented landownership goes to determine the pattern of the size of operation of farms by all categories of peasants. Most of the farms operated fall within 1—15-acre group in which about 62% fall below 6 acres. The fragmented

landownership and the smallness of farm operation present a low potential for income increase even under the present technological level. The present income structure reflects a concentration of income around the poverty level as shown in Table 2.

Table 2:
Income Structure of Different Categories
of Kedah Rice Peasantry

Categories	Income Per Family M\$	Income Per Family M\$	Average Family Size
a. Owner-Operators	2,410	463	5.2
b. Owner-tenants	3,130	522	6.0
c. Pure-tenants	1,825	332	5.5
d. Agric. Wage Labourers	1,220	254	4.8

To attribute peasant poverty entirely to their cultural elements or observed subsistence way of life is to neglect the significant deterministic effects of economic and political processes impinging on the peasant society. Throughout history Kedah rice peasants have shown patterns of economic behaviour which are as rational as any other economic man. In Kedah, particularly in the Plain, peasant responses to the provision of physical infrastructures and production subsidies alone in themselves, without the accompaniment of far reaching economic institutional innovations which would break the existing monopoly-monopsony, were appropriate to the economic rationality of maximizing income and minimizing costs. The marginal returns to investment, due to low padi prices during the 1960s did not motivate peasants to apply the fully recommended levels of fertilizers. They only applied 70% of the recommended amount thus attaining only marginal increases in yield as shown in Table 3.

Table 3:
Mean Padi Yields in Water Controlled Areas
in Kedah Plain — 1957—1959

Year	Yields
1957	452
1960	492
1963	454
1966	521
1967	531
1968	508
1969	543

Source: Federation of Malaya, *Report of Drainage and Irrigation Department for the years 1952-54, 1955-57 and 1958-60* (Kuala Lumpur: Government Printers, 1955, 1959, 1961) Appendix E.

However, from 1970 to 1976 when the monopoly-monopsony by the millers and middlemen syndicates were broken mainly in Kedah Plain through the formation of

the Muda Agricultural Development Authority (MADA), Farmers' Associations, the Agricultural Bank, and the Rice Marketing Board, there was a sudden increase in productivity to 21 *gantang* per acre per annum as shown in Table 4. The technological

Table 4:
Mean Padi Yields in Kedah Plain
(Muda Area) and Kedah State 1970-1976

Year	Kedah Plain (Gtg. per Acre)	Kedah State (Gtg. per Acre)
1970	604	496
1971	612	525
1972	629	548
1973	640	578
1974	656	555
1975	666	545
1976	751	495

Source: *Rumusan Perangkaan Bahagian Pertanian MADA (Teluk Cengai: MADA 1976)*.

level during this period was not significantly superior to that of the former period. During this period peasants have become acutely sensitive to price policies as reflected in their interest articulation activities through Farmers' Associations (FA). Their response to fertilizer use which mainly accounts for the increasing productivity was very much dictated by the market prices of padi as shown in Table 5.

Table 5:
Fertilizer Use and Padi Prices

Year	Padi Price (M\$/Pikul)	Fertilizer Levels (lbs/acre)
1972	16.20	36
1973	23.00	46
1974	28.25	62
1975	27.30	126*
1976	27.70	88
1977	27.89	99

Source: As for Table 4.

*In 1975, a urea subsidy scheme was carried out by the Federal Government to absorb the high cost of imported urea.

All this goes to show that the Kedah rice peasants would jump to any economic opportunity if the institutional arrangements are not exploitative but instead facilitate their participation in all aspects of the economic processes. All the observed economic "irrationality" of peasants' culture of poverty are actually reflections of their defiance towards an exploitative economic system. The peasant family is a unit of production

as well as a unit of consumption. Its consumer demand is irreducible below a minimum amount needed to support the lives of all its members. Hence, he has to be very wary of all the economic forces around him.

In the above light, peasant articulation for increased padi prices which dated back to the later part of the 1940s are indeed rational responses to a manipulated market. This demand for higher paid price is an effort to rationalize the economic situations which the peasants find themselves in. The cost of padi production has significantly increased as shown in Table 6.

Table 6:
Average Cost of Cultivation, Transplanting and
Harvesting Per Acre

Year	Cultivation	Transplanting	Harvesting
1972	23.90(100)	25.28(100)	40.00(100)
1973	31.50(127)	32.20(127)	56.40(141)
1974	38.60(162)	45.60(180)	67.00(168)
1975	39.20(164)	46.20(183)	75.50(189)
1976	42.79(179)	45.9 (182)	80.24(201)
1977	44.65(184)	47.26(187)	86.77(217)

Source: As for Table 4.

Peasants, however, do not use only the economic cost criteria to value their produce. They always include the qualitative dimensions of the production process. For instance, many knowledgeable peasant leaders argue that the drudgery of paid cultivation should constitute a cost item in the same manner as the determination of hardship allowance for government workers. Hence, peasants always perceive higher true values of their produce than other people do.

Appeals for more economic rationality among peasants, such as exhortation to save, to work harder etc. are in fact reflections of ignorance on the realities of peasant economic and political plight. The vicious-cycle concept of the culture of poverty has contributed to the shaping of development strategies which stress on unsystematic extension of everything, from fertilizers to big four-wheel tractors that planners realize that the need for certain major institutional restructuring which would enable peasant participation in all economic processes, is of prior importance to the diffusion of technological innovations.

In the Muda Region of Kedah, significant institutional innovations have lately been made to put the rice peasantry in a stronger bargaining position through their economic participation beyond mere production roles. The Farmers' Association movement while contributing to increasing agricultural and social productivity has at the same time mobilized peasant financial capital for investment in secondary as well as tertiary economic sectors. The economy generated by rice double-cropping alone, as suggested in Table 7, is significantly large to enable peasant economic participation in most economic growth processes that emerge.

The above massive contribution to economic growth by the peasantry has indeed created conspicuous signs of affluence over the Kedah Plain. But the question of how

Table 7:
Annual Production of Rice in The Muda Region
(Kedah/Perlis Plain)

Year	Tonnage	\$
1970	487,000	135,487,150
1971	548,050	154,060,540
1972	654,050	178,339,030
1973	726,550	282,411,820
1974	795,830	377,553,870
1975	798,917	366,026,517
1976	1,240,000	567,341,101
1977*	702,330*	329,078,126*

*In 1977, a total of 8,200 acres of padi were completely destroyed by severe drought. The remaining acreage experienced reduction in yields due to water stress.

much this affluence is shared by the peasantry still remains an issue. To understand the mechanics of the distribution of power and wealth, we have to go back into the social and economic history of the peasantry.

Social and Economic History: The Economics and Politics of Dependency

The abolition of the *kerah* system after British intervention in the administration of the State in 1909 motivated the peasantry to increase production level and enabled a certain portion to participate actively in petty trading. A community of petty traders emerged from among the peasantry. This is a significant evolutionary pattern of economic development i.e. from the feudal-peasant phase to that of the merchant phase.

However, British intervention also facilitated further massive inflow of capital from the Penang Chinese, who prior to this had already entered Kedah's economic scene through comprador-linkages with the ruling class. British agency houses in Penang have been their major sources of finance. The subsequent encroachment of strongly organized capitalism from Penang gave rise to a monopoly-monopsony which obstructed further development of indigenous mercantile sphere of circulation as well as indigenous sphere of industrial production. The result was an involution which took the form of a defensive reversal to subsistence-oriented agriculture and the proliferation of petty trade which never went beyond retail peddling. The *Pekan Rabu* in Alor Setar is an epitome of the latter phenomenon, in which traditional goods which have low income elasticity of demand are traded. This has persisted through decades such that efforts towards increasing capital investments through credit schemes and permanent trading arcades would only achieve marginal income increases. The "penny-capitalist" status of the traders remains. In Paul Baran's words explaining this twisted career of capitalism which occurs in most developing countries, the process of capitalistic evolution

"having lived through all the pains and frustrations of childhood, it never experienced the vigor and exuberance of youth, and began displaying at an early

age all the grievous features of senility and decadence."⁵

Even before British intervention Barnes observed that in 1905.

"Whilst Kedah is politically independent under the suzerainty of Siam, economically it is a mere dependency of Penang. Every dollar of capital invested in it has come from Penang and all its Chinese traders are connected in Penang firms."⁶

The above pattern of development linked the helpless peasantry to a market system controlled by a well endowed and well integrated communally based capitalist class. The incentive structure available to the peasantry existed only in the form of the acquisition of marginally productive capital such as marginal rice land, and jewellery. Much of peasant surpluses were appropriated by the merchant class and channelled to Penang and the southern States where returns to capital investment were higher in tin, rubber, commercial, and industrial sectors than in the predominantly rice sector of Kedah.

The above situation of economic dependency exists until today where leakages of capital to other regions have been estimated to approximate \$100 million per annum. The proliferating financial institutions especially the banking system and the Pilgrim Board (*Lembaga Urusan Tabung Haji*) have been directing the outflow of capital from Kedah. The commercial banks which achieved a high rate of expansion over a decade i.e. from only two in 1967 to fifteen banks in 1977, have been the major channels for the inflow-outflow of financial capital. However, the Pilgrim Board and the Co-operative Bank which have been mobilizing peasant savings have most of their investments in other regions outside the State of Kedah.

The leakages prevent further development of the State. The amount of outflow could otherwise be mostly spent on projects designed to relieve the high population dependency on limited rice land. Income and employment generating agricultural and non-agricultural projects could not proliferate due to lack of capital. As such, capital infusion through public sector channels has been inadequate, apart from the massive investments in the building of the Muda Irrigation Scheme totalling about \$300 million. However, from the estimated outflow of capital which is entirely derived from the economy generated by the Scheme, this massive investment is in fact paying back.

The commodity taxation which is the sole preserve of the Federal Government forms the major portion of the total taxation and it is expanding with the 13%–18% regional economic growth. The amount collected at present is only in the region of \$20 million per annum.

The State can only collect taxes on land and irrigation water. When fully implemented in the Muda Region the amount of taxes collected would only total around \$4 million. Whereas annual maintenance cost of the Scheme is around \$7 million. The need for Federal contributions exists and these only total between \$10 to \$20 million per annum to be spread throughout the State. Considering the massive savings in foreign exchange totalling more than \$200 million a year by the Muda

⁵ P. Baran, *The Political Economy of Growth*, New York: Modern Reader, 1957, p. 177.

⁶ W.D. Barnes, "Memo on Kedah", *Colonial Office 273/311*, January 21, 1905.

Table 8:
Muda Scheme Local Economy — Taxation Potentials

Year	Potential Amount
1967	\$44,008,008
1968	\$63,680,199
1969	\$59,620,400
1970	\$66,144,753
1971	\$65,957,131
1972	\$77,204,510

Source: FAO/IBRD, *The Muda Study*. Rome. Text. Vol. I.

Irrigation Scheme alone, the above contributions from the Federal Treasury are far below acceptable standards of equitable distribution of revenues.

There is no dispute to the fact that the level of Kedah's peasant income has increased through federally funded projects. In 1966 the per capita income per month was \$16 and this has increased to \$60 in 1975 which is an increase of 2.4 times in real terms. This increase is still below the required rate to uplift the peasantry from absolute and endemic poverty. It has, moreover, been shown by various studies that the pattern of income distribution favours those with higher factor endowments and better market integration.⁷ An estimated 20,000 households or one-third of the peasant community, are still living under the poverty income level.

The whole rice-bowl poverty issue has formed a major factor for political agitation since as far back as the late 1930s. This led to the formation of 289 rural co-operatives in the Muda Plain. The *Kesatuan Tani Kedah* (Kedah Peasants Union) was formed in 1946 and this became a national forum in 1953 called *Pertubuhan Tani Malaysia* (Malayan Peasants Union). The first Kedah-based political party, *Saberkas*, which was to be one of the precursors of UMNO, also utilized peasant poverty issues as one of the items in its manifesto.

The marginal results in the elimination of poverty despite the existence of multi-interest articulation media, have been attributed to the politics of dependency which could be traced back through history.⁸

During the feudal and colonial periods, peasant-state interaction was mediated by bureaucrats in the persons of *ketua kampung*, *panglima*, *penghulu*, school teachers, and other government officials. In these patron-client relationships the contents were mostly economic transactions pertaining to land and other proprietary or usufructory rights. In these processes the peasants were always at the losing end. The patrons were

⁷ See Afifuddin Haji Omar, *Some Organizational Aspects of Agricultural and Non-Agricultural Growth Linkages in the Development of Muda Region*, Alor Setar. MADA Monograph No. 33, 1977, and S. Jegatheesan, *The Green Revolution and the Muda Irrigation Scheme: An Analysis of its Impact on the size, structure and Distribution of Rice Farmer Incomes*, Alor Setar, MADA Monograph No. 30, 1977.

⁸ See Afifuddin H. J. Omar, *Peasants, Institutions, and Development: The Political Economy of Development in Muda Region*. Ithaca, New York. Unpublished Ph.D. thesis submitted to the Graduate School, Cornell University. 1978.

mostly paid for their services in the form of the appropriation of certain portions of peasant land mostly through *jual janji* and consequently amassing esteem and power through increasing the size of ownership.

The Second World War saw the rise of Malay nationalism in the Malay Peninsula. The intensification of the feelings of economic nationalism among the Malay elites was perhaps most apparent in Kedah rice areas where 77% of her total population reside. The exploitation of Malay peasants by the monopoly-monopsony syndicates strengthened the elites' determination to champion the peasantry. This resulted in the proliferation of co-operative societies and peasant unions which later turned out to be more instruments for wealth and capital accumulation among the elites.⁹ At present, most of the co-operative societies and peasant unions are under lethargic conditions of existence. The co-operatives are carrying about \$2 million bad-debts with an approximate 700 years of unaudited accounts.

Through these institutions, the elites obtained wealth which were eventually made use of in increasing social esteem and political power. The 18,201 small tenants and 5,271 agricultural wage labourers are mostly dependent on elites' resources for their livelihood. From this, power-based elites' domination of political leadership in Kedah has become an undeniable reality. As such even though the platform for their political struggle was peasant poverty, the resulting government investments to alleviate poverty managed only to minimally affect the peasantry. The bulk went to the better endowed rural elites and their merchant comparadors. Thus a considerable proportion of the peasantry remain under the poverty line as indicated in Table 9.

Table 9:
Distribution of Gross Annual Income (M\$)
Gini Coefficient 0.046

Size Class (M\$)	% Of Households	Cumulative % Of Households	% of Income	Cumulative % of Income
0- 500	1.99	1.99	0.26	0.26
501-1000	10.34	12.33	2.61	2.87
1001-1500	16.69	29.02	7.10	18.37
1501-2000	14.32	43.34	8.40	18.37
2001-2500	13.57	56.91	10.37	28.74
2501-3000	11.83	68.74	11.07	39.81
3001-3500	6.10	74.84	6.70	46.51
3501-4000	5.98	80.82	7.60	54.11
4001-4500	5.11	85.93	7.34	61.45
4501-5000	2.49	88.42	4.07	65.52
5001-5500	1.50	89.92	2.68	68.20
5501-6000	1.30	91.22	2.47	70.67
6001-6500	1.50	92.72	3.16	73.83
6501-7000	1.12	93.84	2.59	76.42
7001-7500	0.50	94.34	1.22	77.64
7501-PLUS	5.66	100.00	22.36	100.00

⁹ See B.A.R. Mokhzani, *Credit in Malay Peasant Economy*, Ph.D. Thesis submitted to London University, 1973.

Conclusion: Peasant Mobilization Towards a Restructuring of Society

Through institutional arrangements, Kedah peasants have been subtly exploited by the elites both economically and politically. The peasants form an inexhaustible pool of economic and political resources. Their historical statuses as economic dependents and political objects had stayed put until very recently when they are slowly brought into the mainstream of the nation's economic and political structures. Elaborate political organizations enable a certain form of peasant representation in the State's legislative structures. Elite's accumulation of capital and simultaneous activities in the politics of welfare have been two major activities which manage to stabilize the social order.

However, this stability would be short-lived if the massive investments made in the Region in the middle of 1960s are allowed to be moulded in the old political-economic structures. An acute situation of relative deprivation would ensue, with the peasantry which is supposed to benefit from the investments becoming relatively worse off than they were during the periods before the investments were made. This would threaten the present political system itself.

To overcome the above threat, a unimodal economic growth model in which the forward and backward linkages are intensified based on structural preconditions, should be adopted. These structural preconditions are, firstly the mobilization of the peasantry within a participatory economic and political framework, and secondly the control of capital outflow resulting from exogenous investments. The Kedah peasant agriculture must be made complementarily related to expanding local industrial-commercial economy controlled to a large extent by peasant capital and labour. The increasing productivity of labour in the agricultural sector must be followed by increasing productivity of labour in the industrial-commercial sector. While income rises in the agricultural sector, a high degree of savings and investment among the peasantry should be induced. Forced savings in the form of taxation must be made in order to support the increasing industrial sector.

Looking at the above implications of agriculturally-led internal generation of growth, to the potential unfolding of new opportunity structures in another way, the first effect generated is the output-effect which takes the form of growth in agro-based labour-intensive industries in both rural and urban sectors. This can further be reinforced by agricultural diversification in the rice areas even though it may be of limited scope. Such possible industries are straw-mushroom canning, rice-noodle and rice-bran-oil manufacturing, chicken processing and strawboard manufacturing.

Up to this time the above pattern of rural development is occurring in Kedah not only through conscious and direct governmental efforts but also through autochthonous development. The Farmers' Association (FA) has been instrumental in the search for these new opportunity structures. Apart from MADA's labour-intensive shoe factory no other industries which suit the factor-proportions of the State have been established. FA's efforts in diversifying agriculture through mango, coconut and freshwater fish culture are at present taking shape. Their efforts in enterprises such as in furniture-making, house-construction, bicycle-assembling, brick - and dress-making have progressed and are opening new employment avenues to the unemployed and under-employed farm labour.

The participatory nature in the processes of production and distribution practised by the FA significantly alter the economic substructures which go on to open new

avenues for the emergence of political consciousness among the peasantry. Peasants have perceived a wider horizon of their relationship with other communities and the State.

With the above autochthonous growth occurring at rapid rates which even outstrip the rate of capital formation among the FA members, a certain amount of capital assistance is needed from governmental sources. However, this assistance has not arrived despite repeated presentations to the central agencies. These rebuffs were made on grounds that the Muda Scheme has already been dumped with massive infrastructural investments.

Hence, the peasantry's plight has not been understood by policy makers whose criteria of project success are only confined to the mileage of roads, the number of dams and office buildings being constructed and the number of people getting social amenities. Economic growth beyond that are expected to proceed autochthonously, which obviously would be taken advantage of by those better endowed with capital and having strong integration to the market system. What is needed by the peasantry is State's intervention in providing them with enough capital for the purpose of competing with those with bigger factor endowments and strong market integration to exploit the expanded potential of the Regional resources. Without this assistance, they would forever be left in the margins of the economic system.

This is the reason why peasants were and are agitating, much to the dismay of the planners and policy makers who may go to the extent of accusing peasants of being ungrateful for the massive infrastructures provided them. Such an incomplete developmental thinking is reflected in incomplete infrastructures provided by the bureaucracy throughout history which later may serve its end more than the peasant's aspirations.

The State's contribution to the national economy should never mislead one to use it as the only criterion in evaluating the success of development projects within it. The main issue as stated earlier should be how far all the development projects have benefitted the peasant. The FA as the only viable institution which is able to distribute regional wealth should be prepared for this function. Since 79% of the FA members in the Muda Region are low-income peasants (those operating land below 6 acres) this makes the movement more appropriate for such a function. Within this group, 51% are landless tenants and landless farm labourers who are most in need of the benefits from the increased economic potential of the region.

Enough capital is needed by the FA for the undertakings of employment generating projects. The increase in income of these poorest peasant categories would generate increasing consumption of certain food products. This has been observed to have occurred by the FAO/World Bank Study.

"The pattern of expenditure on food items ... appears to be changing. The general tendency is for expenditure on cereals and related products to decline while expenditure on vegetables, fish and milk and milk-related products increases."¹⁰

This forms the basis for diversification in agriculture. The Muda Region in Kedah has ample acreage for vegetable and fruit growing. Marginal rice areas should be converted to fresh-water fish ponds and the water buffaloes which are the best converter of

¹⁰ FAO/World Bank Report — *Op. cit.* p. 36.

roughage to protein could be developed as the suppliers of beef and milk. Within a certain degree of limitation the potential for the full exploitation of the above resources is still enormous. They are still awaiting to be tapped and developed.

The capital mobilized from the peasantry should, however, not be channelled solely within the agricultural diversification projects. In terms of monetary returns to investments these projects rank low, but in terms of providing employment and extra income to poor peasant families, they are highly favourable.

The overall expenditure on food, however, declines in proportion to the total annual expenditure. The income-effect industries could therefore come in after this point. Peasant shares in the FA have been channelled to produce goods with high income-elasticity of demand such as furniture, bicycles and house-building materials, such as bricks and pillar-supports. These are labour intensive industries.

The peasantry should, however, never be condemned to those economic activities pertaining only to agriculture and small scale manufacturing and trade activities. The approximate \$250 million marketable surplus of rice per annum produced by the Region now provides too large a cake to too few urban entrepreneurs and private syndicates. The peasants, through the 27 FA's could be organized to undertake a portion of this marketing business volume. Thus the growth linkages between the peasantry and the outside world could directly extend beyond the Region's boundaries.

An investment strategy which stresses the importance of the production commodities or enterprises which give high rates of return to capital at the expense of the primary material satisfaction of the historically deprived peasants is certainly a perpetuation of the expropriation/appropriation structure of the traditional monopolistic capitalism. The order of the day is to allocate more resources within a completely integrated market to the poor peasants even at the cost of a slow transformation towards a national industrial society. The increase in the amount of wealth has to be shared by the lower strata not totally in the form of government "welfare" hand-outs mainly derived from taxation of the rich, but rather through simultaneous development of the peasantry based upon the current national economic development process. The peasantry should never be made only as the beneficiary of the national growth. They have to participate in it. Peasants, like everybody else, place more values on things they are involved with than on those given to them from the result of other people's efforts.

The self-generating growth and development of the peasantry should form integral elements of the whole growth and development of the nation. Rapid economic development is not likely to occur unless the peasantry rises together with the other segments of the population. The raising of the level of material welfare of the population should be done within the context of human development in which the realization of human potentiality irrespective of social class is encouraged. This egalitarian strategy of development would prevent the dehumanization effects of the capitalistic course which recognizes the effects as only temporary, while in the real world temporariness tends to be perpetuated indefinitely in most cases.

Looking beyond the State's boundaries, more symmetrical linkages between the State and other regions can be established through the network of townships and urban centres of the former. The increasing income of the State's urban sector would create

more demand for consumer goods with high capital-labour ratio, while most of their demands for food and food products should be satisfied by the developing rural hinterland of the State. This should improve the present situation where much of the non-rice food items are imported. Furthermore, this would initially generate growth linkages with the other regions, especially the industrial regions, in terms of increased importation of high capital-labour ratio goods. However, for the overall growth of the Region, this tendency should not be allowed to create a high net-outflow of capital as has been the tradition. Selected industries of medium capital-labour ratio should be introduced in the State. The concentration of all types of industries in the Penang industrial complexes to the south of Kedah has deleterious effects on the economy of the latter, and generate social problems to the former. These industries attract a large number of unskilled labour from the State causing, in effect, a transfer of poverty from one region to another.

Therefore, in planning and implementation of development projects in which the peasantry forms the primary target, both the micro-economic variables and the totality of the social structural changes, which can meaningfully integrate the peasants into the national socio-economic and socio-political communities, should be considered.

Despite the fact that many past government-initiated organizational experiences have created much scepticism on among peasants on co-operative organizations, in the last couple of years peasant responses to mobilization efforts have been very encouraging. Although these responses are mainly attributed to the material trade oft perceived by peasants upon becoming involved in these organizations, the effects of the parallel political participation structures have shown initial signs that political involvement and economic changes are going to vary together. Such a trend would ensure the actualization of permanency in peasant movement.

The intermittent nature of most peasant movements or organizations has been mainly due to the lack of long-range goals which embrace changes in the totality of the social structure. Once immediate economic problems are solved, the political zeal starts to fade, until another immediate problem surfaces again. However, with an explicit long range goals in restructuring society, and through constant mobilization towards these goals, a state of organizational permanency can be achieved.

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The Formation of Saberkas

Ahmad Kamar

This paper is intended to describe a brief history of a defunct political organization known as *Sharikat Bekerjasama Am Saiburi* or *Saberkas* in the State of Kedah.¹ The story of the rise and development of political movement in this State is traced through some documents and efforts made by a student of History.² A quick glance at the political parties in Kedah shows that *Saberkas* and its leaders had lived in intimate contact through the changing politics in this country. In other words, Kedah politics in the context of traditional and socio-economic factors had grown indirectly within the United Malay National Organization or UMNO leadership, particularly when UMNO was under the leadership of Tunku Abdul Rahman.

It is quite natural that in newly independent countries such as Malaysia, religion, traditions and socio-economic factors play a very important role in the development of politics. Thus the set-up of *Saberkas*, as based on these factors, was strong, particularly when striving for independence was the central idea among the people of the Malay Peninsula.

Owing to the influence of political environment, there had been changes in *Saberkas*. Its leaders realized that the struggle for independence must be based on a wider domain of influence and power, and *Saberkas* had to be associated with other organizations within UMNO. However, one cannot study UMNO without reference to the role played by *Saberkas* and its leaders, particularly after Dato Onn bin Jaafar, the first President of UMNO, left the party and Tunku took over its leadership. With regard to the political development in Kedah, it is interesting to look at the activities of Malay leaders during the Japanese occupation. Tunku Abdul Rahman, for example, related to us that there were prisoners of war who escaped by crossing the border to Perlis and Kedah from the 'Death Railway' in Thailand. These prisoners who begged for food and shelter lived in 'complete degradation.'³ It was under these circumstances that Mohammad Khir bin Johari, Senu bin Abdul Rahman and Kasim of Muar, to mention a few, got together to help these human derelicts.⁴ In a way, this event engendered the formation of the organization. However, this organization which was first intended for economic and social activities gave rise to political consciousness among its members. There were two factors which could be considered with this rise of political awareness. Firstly, there was the national consciousness on the change of government and the 'cruelty' of the Japanese towards the people; and secondly, the

¹ Saiburi was the name of Kedah when she was incorporated into Thailand during the Japanese occupation in Malaya - Interview with Azahari bin Taib, a former Member of Parliament Malaysia, in London on 7 May 1977.

² Baharuddin bin A. Majid, *Saberkas-Pergerakan dan Perjuangannya 1944-1956*, graduation exercise, University of Malaya, 1975/1976.

³ Tunku Abdul Rahman, 'As I see it ... Helping Hand for Human Derelicts. Looking After Refugees of Death Railway' in *The Star* 13 October, 1975. See also H. Miller, *The Story of Malaysia* (Faber, London, 1965), 156.

⁴ Tunku Abdul Rahman, *loc. cit.*

involvement of the leaders of Saberkas in the *Kesatuan Melayu Muda* and other associations between the Second World War.

One of the dynamic leaders during the Japanese period and shortly after the war was Haji Taha. He had made close contacts with the Pembela Tanah Ayer or PETA and Kesatuan Rakyat Indonesia Semenanjung or KRIS, and secretly communicated with the *Kesatuan Melayu Muda* (KMM) and Malayan People's Anti-Japanese Army or MPAJA as Saberkas representative. The main purpose of the co-operation with the militant groups particularly the MPAJA was to liberate the Malay Peninsula including Kedah from the Japanese occupation. The other leaders were Senu Abdul Rahman, Mustafa Afifi, Azahari Taib, Mohd. Khir bin H. Awang Jaafar, Syed Abdul Hamid al-Jafri, Wan Din bin Mohd. Hashim and Ahmad Nordin M. Zain.⁵

The Saberkas also had political contacts with the people in Satul, Yala, Patani, Narathiwat and Kelantan. The underground contacts with those people from Southern Thailand were made at the market place at Alor Setar, and during theatre performances held at Alor Setar, Jitra, Sungai Petani and in the villages. In fact, many Malays from those provinces emigrated to Kedah. One of these outstanding emigrated leaders and religious teachers who opposed the Thai government was Haji Wan Abdul Samad, also known as Tok Guru Wan Samad. According to the Malays of South Thailand, the Thai Government had tried to erase all traces of Malay identity in this region from the map and make Satul, Yala, Petani, Narathiwat predominantly Thai areas by limiting the religious activities of the Malay population and aggravate their economic condition.⁶ On the other hand the Kedah people and the Saberkas regarded those provinces as belonging to them with the Malays forming part of their own race based on primordial attachments such as religion, language and culture. In order to achieve this objective the Saberkas leaders formulated two policies; firstly, to wage 'diplomacy' with the Thai Government officials, and, secondly, to provide support to the Malay militant group in those areas to be liberated from Thai domination.

The activities of Saberkas in giving support to the liberation movement was strengthened, when in July 1945 Ibrahim Yaakub and Burhanuddin proposed secretly to unite the Malay Peninsula and South Thailand together with Indonesia, in the struggle for independence. Later Saberkas sent several youths organized in the *Gerakan Semburan Darah Raayat* (literally, the Flow of the People's Blood Movement or *Sedar*) together with other groups of youths, such as *Pemuda Bismillah*,⁷ Boestamam's men [API]⁸ and Gunung Semanggol Youths, to the southern part of Thailand via Kubang Pasu and Perlis. The purpose was only to strengthen contacts and give moral support to the Malays in Southern Thailand on behalf of the Malays in the Peninsula, particularly Kedah.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ Billy Brag, 'The Fight For Identity', *Suara Siswa* vol. 2, no. 2, Kuala Lumpur, December 1970. Further see M. Ladd Thomas, *Political Violence in the Muslim Provinces of Southern Thailand*, Singapore, April 1975, 7-10.

⁷ *Pemuda Bismillah* was headed by the late Haji Hussain Che Dol a religious teacher (*ok guru*) who later became one of the PAS leaders at national and state levels - Interview with Azahari Taib, Member of Parliament of Barisan Nasional in London on the 7 May, 1977.

⁸ They underwent a training organized by the Seventh Malay Regiment.

Among the Malay national leaders in the South were Haji Sulong and Haji Kenali. Both of them established contacts with the Saberkas leaders, among whom were religious functionaries as well as national Malay leaders of the Malay Peninsula such as Burhanuddin, Ishak Haji Muhammad and Ahmad Boestamam.

Saberkas was also approached by the British Armed Forces 'One Three Six' in June 1945 to assist in the overthrowing of the Japanese occupation forces in Malaya. Many Malays and members of Saberkas were trained and given arms to fight for the purpose. When the Japanese surrendered on 15 August 1945, the MPAJA also ruled Kedah before the imposition of the British Military Administration. There were some bloody conflicts between the Chinese and the Malays at Kepala Batas, Alor Janggus, Tokai and Jitra. These conflicts found their origins in retaliation measures by some Chinese, because during the Japanese occupation the Malay Police Force had been used by the Japanese to suppress the Chinese resistance movement which naturally led to a strong resentment on the part of the Chinese.⁹ Owing to the disintegration of relationship between the Malays and Chinese, the British could occupy Malaya without much opposition.

The failure of the Kedah political movement to liberate the country from the Japanese and then the British was due to the following factors. First, the masses had received little political education, and lacked political consciousness, spirit and determination. Second, most of the Saberkas officials were civil servants who had had better education and who could benefit from British rule so that they were not expected to take risks in opposing the letter. Third, the Malay political movement was not supported by the ruling class or the royal family who were amicable with the British.

During the British Military Administration in Malaya, the 'Society' law was not brought into operation. Saberkas, as a co-operative association was allowed to organize and to function politically without registration. In 1946, Saberkas was under the leadership of Mohd. Khir bin Haji Awang Jaafar, Syed Abdul Hamid al-Jafri, Wan Din bin Mohd. Hashim, Senu bin Abdul Rahman, Ahmad Nordin bin Mohamad Zain, Wan Ahmad bin Wan Din, Haji Ahmad Prai, Azahari bin Taib, Mohd. Ismail bin Yusof, and Mohd. Khir bin Johari. To strengthen the political and economic positions of the Association, Saberkas formed its Women's Section under the leadership of Tengku Mariam,¹⁰ Balkis binti Haji Abdullah and Rapiah. Balkis and Rapiah were teachers who actually organized this section in recruiting new members and raised funds for the political activities of Saberkas.

The Saberkas then made a clear stand by issuing 14 goals to be achieved in the future.¹¹ Among these were raising the standard of living of the peasants and the rest of the working class and uniting all Malays so as to enable them to work in close co-operation with one another for their common welfare and national progress. Saberkas also demanded the nationalization of all mines, power, water-supply,

⁹William Saunders Victor Purcell, *The Chinese in Malaya*, London, 1948, 267.

¹⁰As a member of the Kedah royal family she was chosen in order to attract membership and to get facilities for the Association — Interview with Azahari bin Taib in London on 7 May, 1977.

¹¹See Baharuddin bin A. Majid, op. cit., appendix E2(b).

transports, industries and services essential to public life and security. In addition, Saberkas fought for the preservation of the Malay national character as well as national identity. The most striking aim was that Saberkas demanded the establishment, as soon as possible and during its leaders' own life time, of a truly self-governing, democratic and socialist State of Malaya. With regard to religion, Saberkas found Islam an important element, to be preserved and disseminated all over the country.

Tunku Abdul Rahman was made patron of Saberkas, presumably in order to attract membership. However, Tunku Abdul Rahman who had shown little enthusiasm for the movement later withdrew from Saberkas as he did not agree with the policies, particularly the demand of establishing a democratic and socialist State of Malaya as stated above. He published the *Watan*, and had occasion to attack Saberkas in this publication. The result was a series of polemic articles in the *Watan* as well as the Saberkas magazine.¹²

Like other Malay political parties and associations, Saberkas based its struggle on Malay nationalism. It became an associate member of the United Malay National Organization under the leadership of Onn Jaafar and opposed the Malaysian Union.¹³ When Onn resigned from UMNO, Saberkas persuaded its former patron, Tunku Abdul Rahman, to take over the UMNO leadership as it was a very influential Malay political body throughout the country. When the Tunku became President of UMNO, the socialist idea adopted by the Saberkas petered out. Saberkas then dissolved itself when several of its leaders left Kedah for overseas¹⁴ and others worked in the UMNO headquarters at Johor Baharu.

In relation to the UMNO development, Saberkas contributed some of its personnels in organizing the party. In the 1954–1955 period, Mohd. Khir Johari was the Secretary-General. When Senu returned from the United States he was offered the Secretary-General post for the period of 1955–1957. Another man of Saberkas was the late Mohd. Ismail Yusof who became the Secretary-General of UMNO for the period of 1958–1959. Again in 1965–1969, Mohd. Khir Johari filled the post, but when he resigned, Senu took over and became Secretary-General until 1974.

Another group of people formed the *Kesatuan Melayu Kedah* in 1945 at the Malay School, Jalan Baharu, Alor Setar. This organization was led by Lebai Ismail as President. Other prominent leaders were Mat Khir of Segara, Haji Abdullah Abbas and Haji Othman Mahad. The Tunku was Chairman at its inception. A leading role was also played by Haji Mohamed Rajab.¹⁵ The representatives of the *Kesatuan Melayu Kedah* to the Malay Congress on 1 March 1946, consisted of Haji Hussin Che Dol, Ayob bin Abdullah (the brother of Mohd. Khir of Segara), Senu Abdul Rahman and Umar bin

¹² Tunku Abdul Rahman, *loc. cit.*

¹³ When Saberkas was unofficially declared 'a political movement' the original *Sharikat Bekerjasama Am Saiburi* was reformulated to read *Sayang Akan Bangsa Ertinya Redza Korban Apa Segala [Sahaja]* (Literally, *to love the nation means willingly to sacrifice everything*) – Interview with Azahari bin Taib in London, 7 May, 1977. Using slogans and catchy words in the Malay society seemed to be effective in promoting an understanding of the political goals and policies.

¹⁴ Haji Taha went to Indonesia; Senu Abdul Rahman to the United States; and Mustaffa Afifi to Mecca.

¹⁵ Tunku Abdul Rahman, *loc. cit.*

Din.¹⁶ Saberkas was represented in the same Congress by Muhammad Jamil of Binjai, Azhari Taib and Haji Muhammed Taha.¹⁷ The *Kesatuan Melayu Kedah* was later transformed into an UMNO branch when UMNO was officially formed in Malaya in 1946. Saberkas became an associate member of that party. According to *The Straits Times* of 3rd June 1946, at that time Dato Onn was rather surprised at this political development. This Malay leader was impressed by the solidarity and determination of the Malay nationalists in Kedah.¹⁸ It seems that this was more than he had expected. The Malays were even more determined than he thought.¹⁹

The national awareness of the Malays became more pronounced in 1946 when the British Government introduced the Malayan Union Scheme. All the Malay organizations decided to fight against this scheme and succeeded in mobilizing the Malay masses in their campaign, as expressed in a large number of militant mass meetings and demonstrations all over the country. Kedah, although not conspicuous for its anti-colonial struggle in the period before the Second World War, also took part in the struggle against the Malayan Union Scheme through Saberkas and the *Persatuan Melayu Kedah* which showed high quality leadership during that struggle. As a result of Malay protest, the British abolished the Malayan Union. It was replaced by the Federation of Malaya, formed on 1 February, 1948. As the new Federation was a British protectorate, there was still dissatisfaction among the Malays who wanted a fully independent Malaya. In the subsequent period the Malay people continued their political struggle but now with the aim of achieving total independence. This struggle was crowned with success when sovereignty was transferred by the British to Malaya on 31 August, 1957.

The political set-up in Kedah changed when she became one of the States of the Federation of Malaya and subsequently the Federation of Malaysia on 16 September, 1963. The State Legislative Assembly has power to legislate on matters not belonging to the jurisdiction of the Federal Parliament. The Assembly has the right to decide on its own procedures and its members enjoy "parliamentary privileges". At the Federal level, political leaders of Kedah play important roles so that this State also contributes substantially to national politics. In Malaya, as a whole, the Malay traditional rulers and their modern offsprings are always present and predominant in the make-up of the political elite.²⁰ This is also true of Kedah. For example, Tunku Abdul Rahman, the first Prime Minister of Malaysia and son of the Sultan Abdul Hamid of Kedah, has played a very influential role among the traditional-feudal elite.²¹ Even today as President of *Persatuan Kebajikan Islam Malaysia* (Muslim Welfare Organization of Malaysia or Perkim), his is still an important voice in religious and political circles. In

¹⁶ Umar is now known as Dr. Umar Din.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 65.

¹⁸ The branch of the Malay Nationalist Party (MNP) in Kedah headed by Zainal, Chegu Saidin, Syed Ahmad al Jafari and Zain bin Arif was one of the strongest political parties in Kedah.

¹⁹ *The Straits Times*, 3 June, 1946.

²⁰ Dey Hong Lee, 'Elite and Government in ASEAN countries' *Politics, Society and Economy in the ASEAN States*, edited by Bernhard Dahm and Werner Draguhn (Hamburg, 1975) 138.

²¹ Further see Harry Miller, *op. cit.*

the context of Malay traditional leadership the relationship between the leader like Tunku Abdul Rahman and the followers is still characterized by personal attachments²² to the leader rather than to the principles they stand for.

The Tunku's friends in Kedah such as Senu Abdul Rahman, Khir Johari and Khalid Awang Othman became national leaders and Ministers in the Alliance government headed by Tunku Abdul Rahman himself. Another outstanding national leader from Kedah is Dr. Mahathir bin Mohammad, who is now the Deputy Prime Minister of Malaysia. In the 1974 election his seat in the Kubang Pasu constituency was uncontested. He also won in the 1978 elections.

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²²Because he is the son of the Sultan and his *jasa baik untuk negara* (good service to the nation). In addition to this, the Tunku's seniority in age is also a factor of the personal attachments.

Some Aspects of the Administration of Islam in Kedah

Othman Ishak

The development of the Islamic religion in Kedah is of great interest to people in general. The administration of religious affairs in that State has been most efficient. Intellectuals are greatly impressed by the success and stability of the Islamic religion there from time immemorial up to the present day. Kedah is considered to be one of the States which firmly adheres to the teaching of the Islamic faith. Many historical events recorded in Kedah show that there were several activities pertaining to the development of the Islamic religion that the State can be proud of. Among them the one which can be considered as most significant is the establishment of several well-known Islamic study centres.

The above-mentioned study centres known as *pondok* or *madrasah* were established by experts in Islam on their own individual initiatives. There is also a religious school called Al-Ma'had Al-Mahmood (now known as Maktab Mahmood) which was built by the State government. All religious schools have been functioning very well up to the present moment with the inclusion of certain changes in their set-up and administration. It cannot be denied that these Islamic study centres have produced quite a number of national patriots and administrators in various fields.

History has recorded that the glory of the Islamic religion in Kedah is attributed to two main factors, namely the desire and willingness of the people in this State, and the effort of the State government itself. This is evident from a thorough and careful study of the history of Kedah.

The exact date of the coming of Islamic influence and teaching into the State has not yet been ascertained. The development of the teaching of Islam is also evident from the history of the dynasties of the State itself. According to *Hikayat Merong Mahawangsa*, the Kedah State was founded by a king known as Mahawangsa.¹ Kedah became part of the Srivijaya empire some time in the year 695 A.D. It was during this time that the State then became an important port of call for the voyages between the Gulf of Bengal and South East Sumatra.² Even after the fall of Srivijaya in 1025 A.D.³ Kedah became increasingly well-known when a greater number of trading vessels called at its port. Traders from India, Persia, Arabia and China intensified their commercial activities in the area of the Malay Archipelago. Perhaps it was during this period that the Islamic teaching and influence began to have effect.

According to *Nagarakertagama*, the Malay Peninsula came under the protection of the Kingdom of Majapahit after the fall of Srivijaya, viz. during the 14th century. On the other hand, at about the same period, there was the Ayuthia Kingdom in Siam which considered Kedah a territory under its rule.⁴

¹ Due to the lack of historical facts about Kedah, more details on this subject cannot be given here.

² D.G.E. Hall, *A History of South East Asia*, London 1955, p. 43.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 43.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 191.

Since the 13th and 14th centuries the islands of the Malay Archipelago have been subjected to the influence of the Islamic religion. Since then, the teaching of Islam began to permeate the system of government, especially in northern Sumatra. Kedah officially embraced the Islamic religion at the end of the 15th century, viz. when she was under the protection of the Kingdom of Malacca.⁵ According to the history of Kedah, the Sultan of Kedah who first embraced the Islamic faith died in 1474.⁶ His name was Pra Ong Mahawangsa, who was later known as Sultan Muzaffar Shah. He was converted to Islam by Sheikh Abdullah Al-Yamani.⁷

In accordance with tradition and the constitution of the State, the Sultan is considered as head of Islam, and he is strictly responsible for the religious affairs in the State.⁸ The earliest complete data regarding the administration of the Islamic religious affairs in Kedah have not been found until now. Nevertheless, some of the accounts have been obtained by means of interviews with several reliable religious experts in the State.

The post of *Sheikh Al-Islam* was created to help the Sultan in the administration of religious affairs. This means that *Sheikh Al-Islam* was the official who headed the administration of religious affairs. Before the Second World War, the Sultan appointed three *Sheikh Al-Islam*. The first one was Sheikh Mohamad Khayat, an Arab who served for a period of about two years, from 1901 till 1903; the second one was Syed Abdullah Dahlan who served for about a year; the third one was Haji Wan Sulaiman bin Wan Sidek who served for a period of more than 30 years, from 1904 till 1935.⁹ The first Religious Department was located at Limbung Kapal, Alor Setar. There were two medium-sized buildings which were used for conducting all matters pertaining to the Islamic religion in Kedah.¹⁰

After the death of Sheikh Al-Islam Haji Wan Sulaiman bin Wan Sidek in 1935, some changes were made regarding the administrative structure of the Islamic religious affairs. In order to streamline the administration of the Islamic religious affairs in the State, the government formed a *Majma' Sheikh Al-Islam* in 1935 in place of the office of *Sheikh Al-Islam*. The first *Majma' Sheikh Al-Islam* consisted of three members and was presided over by the Chief Kadhi of Kedah, Sheikh Ahmad Waksa, while the other members were Haji Abdul Ghani and Sheikh Mahmud bin Mohd. Noh. The last mentioned later became chairman of the *Majma'*. The last chairman of *Majma' Sheikh Al-Islam* in Kedah was Haji Abdul Rahman bin Abdul Latif.¹¹

The Council of Islamic Religious Affairs and Malay Customs in Kedah was first formed in 1948 according to Statute 4, 1948, enforced by the government. This Council

⁵S.Q. Fatimi, *Islam Comes to Malaysia*, Singapore, 1963, pp. 99–100.

⁶D.G.E. Hall, *op. cit.*, p. 184.

⁷For further detail, see S.Q. Fatimi, *op. cit.*, pp. 73–75.

⁸For further information, see R.O. Winstedt, "Note on the History of Kedah", in *Journal of Royal Asiatic Society, Malayan Branch*, Vol. 14, Pt. 3, pp. 155–189.

⁹This information was obtained through interviews with Dato' Sheikh Abdul Halim Hj. Othman, former President of the Islamic Religious Affairs and Malay Customs Council, Kedah.

¹⁰*Ibid.* The traces of the office can still be found.

¹¹*Ibid.*

consisted of 10 members nominated by the Sultan. Five of them were religious leaders and the other five were in charge of Malay customs.¹² The formation of the Council gave new life to religious affairs, with the prospect of achieving better success.

The administration of the Islamic religious affairs in Kedah underwent another change when the Islamic Religious Administrative Statute 9, 1962, was enforced. This law was considered quite adequate with regard to the administration of Islam. With the introduction of this Statute, some changes took place within the structure of the organization with regard to the officials and their functions. For example, the post of President of the Islamic Religious Affairs Department was created in 1962 and its President was automatically President of the Kedah State Islamic Religious Council,¹³ and at the same time a member of *Majma' Sheikh Al-Islam. A Fatwa (Advisory) Committee* was set up, consisting of a Chairman, two members from the Council, and not less than two but not more than six other Muslims who were not members of the Council. The function of this *Fatwa Committee* was to issue *fatwa*, that is to take over the function of the defunct *Majma' Sheikh Al-Islam*. The Chairman of this *Fatwa Committee* issued *fatwa* on behalf of and in the name of the Council.¹⁴

One point of great interest is the non-existence of the Mufti in the State of Kedah from the earliest times until now. This is something different compared with most of the other States in Malaysia. Nevertheless, the duty of the Mufti was in the first place carried out by Sheikh Al-Islam. After that this duty was given to *Majma' Sheikh Al-Islam*, and finally it was handed over to the *Kedah Fatwa Committee*.

Up to today, quite a few laws relating to the Islamic religious affairs have been passed by the State Legislative Council. Among them are: Kedah Tithe Statute No. 4, 1945; Kedah Islamic Religion Administrative Statute No. 9, 1962; Kedah Baitulmal Regulation No. 9, 1962; Mosque Official Regulations 1967, and others.¹⁵

The administration of tithes in Kedah is something that the State can be proud of. Collection from the tithes has played an effective role for the benefit of the Muslims in the State. The Kedah State Government has collected the tithes systematically. In 1960 the total collection was \$722,328.72; in 1961, \$730,520.71; in 1962, \$620,080.00; in 1963, \$1,742,652.31; in 1964, \$949,432.71; in 1965, \$1,092,972.43; in 1966, \$1,035,013.65; in 1967, \$889,603.59; in 1968, \$909,186.67; in 1969, \$825,243.02.¹⁶

The annual collection of tithes has also been spent systematically in accordance with the administrative decision based on the teachings of Islam. For example, in 1968, the State government made the following contributions to various bodies and for various causes: mosques and religious schools – \$100,400.00; charities to the needy, poor and converts – \$168,312.76; New Convert Centre – \$8,306.35; Ibn Sabil

¹² *Ibid.* and with several officials in the Islamic Religious Office now.

¹³ See *Undang-Undang Pentadbiran Ugama Islam*, Kedah No. 9, 1962. Bahagian II (iii).

¹⁴ *Ibid.* (35–37).

¹⁵ See *Collection of Laws at the Religious Department and Tithe Department, Kedah*.

¹⁶ This information was obtained from the Tithes Department, Kedah. Note that the increase or decrease in the total collection of the tithes in Kedah depended in general upon the success or failure of the harvests.

— \$445.00; Nidzami Religious School — \$110,247.00; poor students — \$112,867.32; scholarships — \$50,340.00; kampung Religious Teachers — \$58,520.00; funeral expenses assistance — \$5,740.00; administration for the needy — \$9,050.00; mosque expenses during the fasting month — \$3,960.00; Kedah Islamic Religious Council — \$47,800.00; Standing Committee of Quran Reading Competition — \$9,500.00; Islamic Welfare Organization, Malaysia, Kedah Branch — \$7,000.00; Madrasah Nahdatul Hasanah Library — \$2,000.00; Maktab Mahmud — \$1,000.90; emergency and other expenses — \$4,690.30. The grand total for that year was \$709,178.72.¹⁷

Beside the *pondok* and *madrasah* as Islamic study centres, there are also the Islamic kindergartens. The kindergartens are centres of guidance and education for the infants and are conducted in the mosques, prayer houses, religious schools and other suitable places throughout the State. The kindergartens have been set up in response to the request and wishes of D.Y.M.M. the Sultan of Kedah in 1968. The request of D.Y.M.M. Sultan is very appropriate to the teaching of Islam and is of great benefit in the field of education in general.

The Kedah Religious Affairs Council at its meeting on 9 June 1968 decided to set up a Central Committee to conduct the administration of the kindergartens. Later, sub-committees were formed at the district, *mukim* and other levels. This means that at present there are more than 100 kindergartens throughout the State of Kedah which are run by committees at different levels.

The policy and aims of the kindergartens imposed by the Central Committee are as follows:

1. To inculcate in the infants a love for their religion. To achieve this goal, the children should be given help and guidance to enable them to obey the commandments of God and the teachings of the Prophet, to respect their parents, the elders, the teachers, and to be noble in character and morality. This is an effective way of creating a society of high moral quality and good discipline.
2. To inculcate in the children a love for the nation, that is by fostering in them respect for the National Anthem and the National Flag as well as by instilling a feeling of loyalty towards the Ruler and the State.
3. To instil in the children a yearning for learning and knowledge. This means that it is necessary to inculcate in them the spirit of diligence and the courage to face reality, and to instil in them a feeling of self-confidence. At the same time, it is also felt that that it is important to instill in them the love for *bahasa Malaysia*.

The religious component of the syllabus consists of simple *fikah* and *tauhid* lessons, and prayers. In the *fikah* lessons, the children are given practical lessons in individual hygiene and ritual ablutions, whereas in the *tauhid* classes they are taught about the essence and the power of Allah in a very elementary way.

The budget to run the kindergartens is drawn from monthly subscriptions, donations and others. The collection of funds and the expenses are all managed by various committees. In spite of the low and unsatisfactory financial sources of income, the funds collected have managed to keep the kindergartens functioning. On the

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

whole, it must be emphasised that the kindergartens are very useful and have produced good results both in the secular as well as in the religious fields.¹⁸

Various types of religious festivals are observed in Kedah. These festivals are of a missionary nature although they are blended with the local customs. Perhaps some people might consider that the spreading of the teaching of Islam in such a manner was narrow-minded and of no benefit to the society in general. However, for the Islamic community in Kedah, the festivals observed by them have great impact on the Islamic education especially in fostering the religious spirit in the community. The types and nature of festivals observed sometimes have to be adjusted and adapted slightly in order to suit the times and conditions.

An assembly for Quran reading is something very popular and special, and is well received by people throughout the State. The assembly is normally held on a grand scale especially during the fasting month (Ramadhan) and also on the occasion of a marriage. People in Kedah are very keen to hold the Quran reading assemblies at various levels, beginning in a small gathering at the kampung level followed by one at the district level and finally a gathering at the state level. Thousands of ringgit have been spent for such occasions, held either at the mosque, small prayer houses or halls and the like. Many experts and well-known Quran readers are invited to participate in the reading, so much so it would be a cause for regret to them if they are unable to hold the Quran reading assembly on a grand scale each time they observe an Islamic religious festival. They are ready to contribute freely according to their means in order to make the assembly a success. Usually when there is a Quran reading assembly some well-known preachers are invited to give talks on certain aspects of Islam.

The Muslim community in Kedah also celebrates on a grand scale the anniversary of *Maulud Nabi*, *Isra' and Mi'raj*, *Nuzul al-Quran* and various other occasions connected with the history of Islam. During such celebrations, talks given by well-known religious personalities are the main features. Speeches are very cleverly and effectively delivered and they usually have a great impact on the Muslim community as a whole.

There is no doubt that the Islamic Religious Administrative Law in Kedah No. 9, 1962 has given a new life in streamlining and improving the living conditions of the Islamic community in Kedah. This can be proved by the fact that since the time the law was enforced, the administration of marriage and divorce and other related matters as well have improved a great deal in Kedah.

Nevertheless, from careful study and observation it is found that there are certain weaknesses in the law which needs improvement. Any change should be implemented with care and in accordance with the basic and original Islamic Law and in line with the new concept and spirit practised in other Islamic countries. These are the two ways to be considered by the Muslim community in general so that the teaching of Islam can be carried out fully for the benefit of all Muslims. The law will achieve its maximum result if it is fully put into practice in the best possible way and in the proper spirit.

¹⁸ Information about the Kindergartens can be obtained from the Islamic Religious Council, Alor Setar, Kedah; c.f. Abd. Khalil Hashim, *Struktur dan Fungsi Pentadbiran Hal Ehwal Ugama Islam di Negeri Kedah*, Universiti Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, 1970, pp. 38-47.

Islam is a religion which has a complete and guaranteed set of laws for the living. It embodies the Islamic family law. This is the main difference between Islam and the other religions in the world.

Can the Islamic family law in Kedah be reformed?

Before this question can be answered, I think we should look into the Islamic Laws in brief because it has close relationship with the Islamic Family Law which we have been observing until now.

The Islamic Laws embodied in the Quran and the Prophet's Hadith are the Constitutional laws or human living constitutions which are perfect and complete. This meets the need of all times and situations. The laws give the framework of the type of life that one should lead, and due to the difficulty to understand precisely the words and the sentences in both the Quran and the Hadith, there have been various interpretations made by great Islamic theologians. This has resulted in Islamic Sects and they are named after the individual theologians responsible for the interpretation of the sets of laws followed by the Sects concerned.

It is important to note here that the different interpretations among the various Islamic sects or the Islamic theologians of the Islamic Law is recognized and accepted in Islam. This is clearly stated in the *Hadith Nabi*: "The different understanding among my followers with regard to the interpretation of a law is considered a blessing. ... And anything which is considered good by the Muslim is good in the eye of Allah and anything which is not good in the eye of the Muslim is also not good in the eye of Allah."¹⁹ It can be understood here that Islam gives the opportunity to its people to think in order to find ways and means to achieve all goodness so long as it is not contradictory to its teachings and that it respects the opinions of its followers.²⁰

According to the history of Islamic Family Laws in the States of Peninsular Malaysia, it can be said that the administration of the laws is not smooth and is not organized properly. In the early days these laws were entrusted to the Islamic theologians or the *Kadhis* (Muslim marriage registrars) or community leaders, that is through the *Imam* (religious leaders) or religious teachers, for implementation. So, a system of laws relating to the affairs of the Muslim family is left to their consideration and efficiency to issue them. They refer directly to the books of law based on Muslim theology which they have studied as their final references. The presence of many theologians and the availability of many books of law based on Muslim theology resulted in the issue of several different systems of Islamic law pertaining to a single problem. The different systems of Islamic law not only occurred between one State and another but also within a single State itself.

The implementation of such Islamic Family laws has taken place for a long time in Peninsular Malaysia until the introduction of the Islamic Religious Affairs Administration Enactment in the States of Malaysia. With the existence of the said Enactment, the execution of the Islamic Family Laws can be considered as much improved compared with earlier times.

¹⁹ *Ibn Hanbal Al-Musnad*, Kaheerah, 1313, Vol. I p. 379; and al-Khatabi, *Ma'alim Al-Sunan*, Halab, 1352, Vol. 4, p. 165.

²⁰ Muslim, *Sahih Muslim*, Kaheerah, 1924, Vol. 12, pp. 13-14.

Even though this state of affairs exists, it should be emphasised here that the Enactment concerned is considered administrative law, not a form of Islamic family laws, arranged in a systematic way. This needs to be considered by the Islamic community nowadays. If there is a complete and systematically arranged Islamic family laws, this matter will certainly be of much use to the Muslims and will help the government in the affairs of administration and implementation. These laws should be arranged at least on the following basis:

1. The Islamic Family Laws should be the Islamic Family Laws which are referred to in the original sources of Islamic law in line with the Syariah.
2. The Islamic Family Laws should be arranged to generally embody all fields relating to family ties (*al-Ahwal Shakhshiyah*) and streamlined with regard to its administration and implementation.

After we have viewed at a glance the development of Islamic religious affairs in Kedah, it can be understood that the development and progress of the Islamic religion in this State are the result of the co-operation and the desire of the government of Kedah and the people as a whole. These are the two factors which always play an important role in the development of the Islamic religion in Kedah from before until now. This is a matter to be proud of in Kedah. Nevertheless, in order to progress further, several suggestions are submitted for consideration:

1. Kedah should have one exclusive and complete Islamic Family Law which embodies all the fields. These laws should be clear-cut in respect of administration and implementation.
2. The administration of tithes in Kedah should be further streamlined in order to include all forms of money which are obligatory to issue tithes in accordance with Islamic teachings. Its administration should also be organized in a more efficient manner.
3. The Kedah State treasury should be revitalized in order to really attain its goals or its aims according to Islam, that is to become the pulse and life of the treasury of the Muslim. The State treasury should enter the fields of business which are allowed by Islam.
4. As the State of Kedah is the oldest in Peninsular Malaysia in the field of Islamic Studies, it is quite logical and apt for Kedah to have a centre for Higher Studies in Islam, considering that in Kedah there are many religious books, and religious leaders who can assist.

As a first step to realize this idea, the most practical one, for example, is to set up a Department of Islamic Studies in the Universiti Sains, Pulau Pinang, with a centre of study in Kedah as its branch. This is in keeping with the Malaysian government's policy which encourages that the Islamic religious studies be conducted at all levels. This matter can be further discussed, if necessary. So if the centre for Higher Studies in Islam is set up, the State of Kedah will be all the more well-known like the other States in Malaysia which have centres for higher learning. It can also be stressed that until now the State of Kedah is the only State which does not have a centre for higher studies yet, whereas most of the other states have centres of higher learning or at least a branch of a centre of higher learning. This matter should be given priority by all concerned in the State of Kedah. This is one great service which should be sown for the benefit and progress of the future of the State.

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The Authors

Afifuddin Haji Omar, K.M.N.; B.C.K., born in Jitra, Kedah. *Qualifications*: Bachelor of Agriculture Science with Honours (University of Malaya) 1967; M.A. in Sociology and Development (University of Kentucky) 1969; Ph.D. (Cornell University) 1978 in Political Economy. *Profession*: Head of Agriculture, MADA, Alor Setar, Kedah. *Publications*: (i) Social Implications of Farm Mechanization in the Muda Scheme", in H. Southworth and M. Barnett, *Experience in Farm Mechanization in South East Asia*, The Agricultural Development Council Inc. 1974. (ii) "Role Conflicts of the Penghulu within a Rural Society in Transition, with Particular Reference to Kedah", *Development Forum IV*: 1, December 1973. (iii) *Some Organizational Aspects of Agricultural and Non-Agricultural Growth Linkages in the Developmental of the Muda Region*, MADA monograph, No. 33, October 1977.

Ahmad Kamar, born at Kuala Rompin, Pahang. *Qualifications*: Sarjana Sastera (Universitas Indonesia), 1971. *Profession*: Lecturer in Anthropology and Sociology, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, University of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur.

Asmah Haji Omar, A.M.N.; S.D.K., born in Jitra, Kedah. *Qualifications*: Sarjana Muda (Universitas Indonesia) 1961, in Indonesian Language and Literature; Sarjana Sastera (Universitas Indonesia) 1963, in Indonesian Language and Literature; Ph.D. (London University) 1969, in General Linguistics. *Profession*: Assistant Lecturer 1963-1966, Lecturer 1966-1971; Associate Professor 1971-1975; Professor of Malay Linguistics 1976. (all at the Department of Malay Studies, University of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur). Posts held concurrently with the above: Academic Assistant to the Vice Chancellor in Implementation of the National Language Policy of the University of Malaya, 1970-1972. Acting Director Language Centre University of Malaya 1972-1977, Director, Language Centre of the same University, 1977-. *Publications*: Among her publications are (i) *Essays on Malaysian Linguistics*, Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, Kuala Lumpur 1975; (ii) *The Teaching of Bahasa Malaysia In The Context of National Language Planning*, Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, Kuala Lumpur, 1976; (iii) *Language Planning For Unity and Efficiency: A Study of the Language Status and Corpus Planning of Malaysia*, University of Malaya Press, 1979.

Ku Zam Zam bt. Ku Idris, born in Tunjang, Jitra, Kedah. *Qualifications*: Sarjana Muda Kepujian (University Malaya), 1973, in Malay Studies; Sarjana Sastera (Universiti Malaya), 1978, in Malay Studies specializing in ethnomusicology. *Profession*: Lecturer, Department of Malay Studies, University of Malaya.

Othman Ishak, born in Sanglang, Kedah. *Qualifications*: Al-Shahadah al-Aliyah (Azhar University) 1964-65, in Islamic Law; Shahadah Imtiyaz (Kementerian Pelajaran, United Arab Republic) 1965; M.A. (Birmingham) 1971, in Islamic Law. *Profession*: Lecturer in Islamic Studies, University of Malaya since 1971. *Publications*: Among his publications are (i) "The Preservation or Rejection of Jahili Custom: the Quranic Doctrine of Fitrah", *Al-Islam: Quarterly Journal of Articles on Muslim and Islamic Affairs*, Singapore, Vol. 4, No. 2, 1973, pp. 22-29. (ii) "The Attitudes of the Early

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Rahmah Bujang, born in Pontian, Johor. *Qualifications*: Sarjana Muda Kepujian (Universiti Malaya) 1969, in Malay Studies; Sarjana Sastera (Universiti Malaya) 1973, in Malay Studies; Ph.D. (Hull) 1977, in Sociology. *Profession*: Lecturer, Department of Malay Studies, University of Malaya. *Publications*: Among her publications are (i) *Sejarah Perkembangan Drama Bangsawan di Tanah Melayu dan Singapura*, Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, Kuala Lumpur, 1975; (ii) (co-authored with Azman Wan Chik) "Kaedah Mengajar Kesusasteraan Malaysia Dalam Bidang Drama", dalam Mohd. Taib Osman (ed.) *Pengajaran Bahasa dan Kesusasteraan Malaysia*, Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, Kuala Lumpur 1977, pp. 258–264.

Sharom Amat, J.M.N., born in Singapore. *Qualifications*: B.A. with Honours (Singapore) 1962, in History; M.A. (Brown University, U.S.A.) 1963, in American History; Ph.D. (London University) 1969 in Southeast Asian History. *Profession*: Lecturer in History, University of Singapore 1971–1973; Professor of History, Universiti Sains Malaysia 1973–; Deputy Vice Chancellor, Universiti Sains Malaysia 1975–. *Publications*: Among his publications are (i) "The Political Structure of the State of Kedah, 1879–1905", *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, September 1970; (ii) "The Economic Structure of the State of Kedah", *Journal of the Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, Vol. 43, Pt. 2, 1970 (iii) "New Approaches to Planning and Management of Universities in Southeast Asia", *Rihed Project 1978*.

Siti Hasmah bt. Mohd. Ali, K.M.S., S.M.K., P.G.K., Datin Seri: born in Kelang, Selangor. *Qualifications*: M.B.B.S. (Singapura) 1955. *Profession*: Medical Officer in Alor Setar General Hospital 1956–1968; Head of the Rural Health Training School in Jitra, 1968–1974; Medical Officer of Health, Maternal and Child Health Division at the Public Health Institute, Kuala Lumpur, from November 1974 to January 1979. She is at present retired from Government Service but in constant contact with the Public Health Institute, and serves as guest and part-time lecturer at the University of Malaya at the Faculty of Dentistry and the Department of Social and Preventive Medicine of the Faculty of Medicine. *Publications*: Among her publications are (i) "The Effects of Adat and Islam on Health Attitudes", *Intisari*. (ii) *Adat, Kesihatan dan Wanita*, Jilid I (1978), Jilid II 1979, publications of the Public Health Institute, Kuala Lumpur.

Zaharah Haji Mahmud, born in Kulim, Kedah. *Qualifications*: B.A. with Honours (University of Malaya) 1963 in Geography; M.A. (University of Malaya) 1966, in Geography. *Profession*: Lecturer, Department of Geography 1966–1975, Associate Professor, Department of Geography, University of Malaya 1975–. *Publications*: Among her publications are (i) "The Population of Kedah During the Nineteenth Century", *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, Vol. III, No. 2, September 1972; (ii) "The Pioneering of Wet Rice Growing Traditions in West Malaysia — A Re-study with

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Yahaya Hussin, (a poet who goes by the pen-name Jihaty Abadi): born in Titi Baharu, Alor Setar, Kedah. *Qualifications*: Normal Teaching Certificate; Language Institute Teaching Certificate; Sarjana Muda (Universitas Nasional, Jakarta), 1972; Sarjana Sastera (Universitas Nasional, Jakarta), 1977 in Indonesian language and literature. *Profession*: School teacher in Kedah until 1972; language teacher at the University of Malaya Language Centre, 1972. *Literary works*: Poems and novels, among which are (i) *Gegaran* (antology), 1968 (ii) *Tidak Roboh Kota Melaka* (antology) 1974 (iii) *Tumpang Kasih Suami Orang* (novel) 1973.