GLIMPSES OF MALAYSIAN HISTORY

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Edited by
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PENGANTAR

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Sebahagian daripada karya mereka dikumpulkan dalam buku *Sejarah Malaysia Sepintas Lalu*. Hampir semua karangan yang kita terbitkan dalam buku ini adalah hasil dari pemikiran dan penyelidikan ahli sejarah tempatan. Saya ingin mengucapkan tahniah kepada semua yang memberikan sumbangan untuk menghasilkan buku ini.

Memandangkan betapa pentingnya buku ini, Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka memutuskan untuk menerbitkan naskhah yang sama dalam bahasa Inggeris, bertajuk, *Glimpses on Malaysian History*.

Kami harap semoga buku ini akan mendapat sambutan, di samping memberikan sumbangannya yang sewajarnya.

Datuk Haji Hassan bin Ahmad
Ketua Pengarah
Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka.

April, 1979.

EDITORIAL NOTE

This collection of essays was originally prepared for a series of talks organised by the Malaysian Historical Society for broadcast by Radio Malaysia. The public response to the talks has been so encouraging that the Society decides to publish them so that they could reach a greater number of people, particularly Malaysians, in the hope of enchancing amongst them a better understanding of the history of their country.

The essays have been chronologically arranged, from prehistory to **Merdeka** in 1957. The writers make no claim for definitiveness in these essays, but some results of recent researches have been included. In preparing them, the contributors have been specially requested to direct their contributions essentially to Form V level.

Nine different persons have contributed to this volume and since they have prepared their writings almost independently of each other, a consistent theme is difficult to maintain. However, it is contended that some new aspects of, and approaches to, Malaysian history have been presented.

It is hoped that this little volume would be able to meaningfully fill a little corner of the large empty space in the field of writings on Malaysian history.

Professor Datuk Zainal Abidin bin Abdul Wahid

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THE STONE AGE IN MALAYSIA

by
TOM HARRISON

A hundred thousand years ago, or roughly a hundred thousand years ago, you could walk from John O'Groats which is in the extreme north of Scotland in Western Europe, to Sandakan in the extreme north of Sabah, in the extreme north-east corner of what is now Malaysia. In fact, Sandakan was the land's end of an enormous continent which covered the whole of Europe and Asia and a lot more. It is only since that time and after the last Ice Age that we had the sort of fragmentation which is characteristic of Malaysia and Indonesia and all our part of the world today. But this great land mass did stop at Sabah and it just joined up at Palawan. It was called Sundaland in these parts. It included Palawan in the southern Philippines but north of Palawan and east of Sabah and the east coast of Borneo, there was a deep shelf and no land continuity — very often that is called Wallace Line after Alfred Russel Wallace, the great scientist of the last century. Now this is very important when we begin to think of the beginnings of the Stone Age in Malaysia. Because Malaysia was really the end of the line for human movement eastward, there is not as yet, and there probably will not be any indication of very early man, in early stages of human evolution, east of the Wallace Line, for instance, in the Celebes or in Australia where they have not found anything even 50,000 years old. Man himself in various forms, is several

millions years old, and in his present form — Homo sapiens — about 50,000 years old.

We have abundant evidence now that Homo sapiens was found in Malaysia, at a very much earlier stage than was previously thought of. It is normally being thought that Homo sapiens lived in the Middle-East and in places like that and did not extend far out across into Asia but recent research, especially in Palawan and in East Malaysia, has proved this is not true. But we still have not got a clear picture of very early man, earlier than Homo sapiens, such as Java man, nut-cracker man, and these very primitive ape-like forms, in Malaysia at all, that is to say, the sort of man who lives a million years ago or several hundred thousand years ago but obviously they were here. They were in the Malay Peninsula, in East Malaysia and in Borneo, because we have Java man well established in Java, a very primitive type, earlier than Homo sapiens, and at Kota Tampan in Malaya proper. In West Malaysia, we have the Tampan stone-chopper industry, which is mainly described by Dr. and Mrs. Sieveking and by Dr. Collings of the National Museum, in Singapore before. Although there is a lot of argument about the exact age of the Tampanian which depends entirely on geological dating of the layers of the gravels and so on, it does look as if there was a very early form of primitive stone-tool being used by a primitive type of man at and around Kota Tampan. It is very difficult to date this and Mr. Brian Peacock has been doing a lot of work on it in the University of Malaya. But we can certainly think and it is generally said in the books that this is the only evidence in Malaysia itself of very early pre-Homo, pre-modern man.

We have also found two rather similar choppers from a bauxite mine at Sematang in Sarawak in recent years. Again, they do not have any supporting information as they are merely found in the mine, but they certainly do look like very early tools of the Java man type. On common sense grounds, we must expect to make more important finds in this very early field in Malaysia, and especially in the Malay Peninsula within the next few years but that is in the future. What we have succeeded in doing in the last 20 years particularly, is to clarify the picture of early modern man — Homo sapiens — and we have been very fortunate in Sarawak because we have in the great Niah Caves, one of the most wonderful caves in the world. It has a floor space of 27 acres. We have been excavating with the Sarawak Museum team in this cave. I

brought help from outside, steadily since 1954, and down in the deeper layers at Niah, we have what appears to be the earliest Homo sapiens skull. It is of a boy of about 15.

This skull is found about 12 feet beneath a perfectly stratified deposit and we have been able to date the depth from the layer by associated charcoal and animal bone, using the radio-carbon method of dating. We have three related dates around the 40,000 year mark. Now that isolated find caused a great deal of surprise because of the rather presumptive attitude that modern man was really a sort of Westerner, a kind of expatriate as far as we were concerned in these parts, and he could not be right out here. Of course, that is really an intellectual fault in thinking but I was partly responsible for this find and I was rather left out on the limb by my colleagues for several years. But fortunately now, Dr. Robert Fox of the National Museum of the Philippines and his powerful team, have found a similar skull with a similar date in a cave at Palawan in the Southern Philippines. As I mentioned earlier Palawan as part of Sundaland was directly connected by land with Borneo and with the whole Continent that stretched from John O'Groats and Land's End England before the last Ice Age and until the Pleistocene era or the later part of the Pleistocene era. So it is not surprising to find Homo sapiens in Palawan as well as in the Niah Caves and if they were in those two places, it is perfectly obvious that they were also in West Malaysia and all over Asia. It is only a matter of finding them. Excavation in a cave is difficult. One of the difficulties is that many caves, especially those in West Malaysia, have been heavily disturbed and stripped, even utterly destroyed, by guano collectors using the guano for fertiliser. Fortunately, we have been able to control this at Niah when the Museums took over the caves immediately after World War II and stopped the guano collecting in the excavation areas. And for 13 years, we have been able to carry out one continuous excavation.

The Homo sapiens skull of the young man found beneath the cave which is about 40,000 years old is not absolute the bottom of the deposit. More things could be found below the stratified deposit which have been excavated, though I would not like to interpret it quite yet. But what is most interesting and which we will discuss is what is above the stratification. Deep down, there is an unbroken succession of human habitation in this huge, bright cave, over a hundred yards wide, in the mouth, perfectly dry, and cool in the evening, no mosquitoes, a vast protein supply with over

a million swiftlets making edible birds' nests and another million or so bats living in the cave which primitive man could eat and, believe me, modern museum man eats when he is hungry.

Therefore, this was an ideal place for people to live in and we find from that early Homo sapiens an unbroken succession, right up into modern times. As we go up inch by inch, we can follow up the gradual evolution of the Stone Age there in Niah. We find underneath the cave, fairly rough deep tools, chopper-tool types, large stones usually just broken off and roughly flaked at one end. Associated with these and carrying on later, we have an evolution of smaller tools made of struck flakes usually of quartzite and some of these are quite fine tools. And then as we go higher up in the deposits, say to about 10,000 years ago (we calculated that an inch of the deposit of Niah is about 300 years), we see these tools evolving into more sophisticated types with a wider variety of use, and eventually ending up in polished stone tools such as adzes, axes, tools with obviously different functions and purpose, some of which are quite lovely and, of course, are very close to those in West Malaysia. A great deal of work is being done on this tool by the museums in Malaya proper, and the university. A book written by Michael Tweedie, *The Stone Age in Malaya*, describes all these tools. I am only emphasising on East Malaysia because that is only the work that I have particularly been doing and the great advantage we have at Niah is this unbroken succession. I have not mentioned one particular type of tool — the Hoabinhian. It is a pebble flaked off at the sides, which is associated with the Mesolithic or Middle Stone Age culture, generally thought to be somewhere between 10,000 to 20,000 years ago, because we do not have that at all in Niah.

That is one of the features that we seem to lack — the Hoabinhian culture. But the other thing that is really impressive, not only in Niah but also in all the caves studied, is that when we come to this Neolithic, the late Stone Age with its polished tools, there is a tremendous flowering of culture such as the introduction of pottery, boat making, and the use of jewellery, such as jade, and one feels that a certain degree of civilization had been acquired when one is confronted with hundreds of burials of people, beautifully laid out 4,000 years ago. They were wrapped up in matting and netting, with shell and stone jewellery which showed love for the dead. There were little shrines, religious objects, markers, coffins and babies buried in beautifully made pottery

urns. People in the period of the late Stone Age were even populating the smaller islands. There is a little island off Labuan in Sabah where we found a small cave crammed with the same Stone Age remains. It is quite a difficult island to get to even now but people had been carrying their dead lovingly and burying them over there.

So, finally, what we must remember about this late Stone Age, which continued into the Metal Age about 1,300 years ago in Borneo (we are not quite sure about this in West Malaysia) is that there was a complete continuity for 50 or 40,000 years. The skull which is about 40,000 old is really a Dayak — he is not much different from the modern people living around here today and this ancient endemic Stone Age culture has continued into the Metal Age until today.

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THE LATER PREHISTORY OF MALAYSIA AND THE BEGINNINGS OF CIVILIZATION

by
B.A.V. PEACOCK

The first lecture in this series of talks on Malaysian History dealt with the earliest human cultures of this region, cultures known to us only by the scantiest of remains. The most ancient of these, the Palaeolithic or Old Stone Age cultures of the Pleistocene, are represented by crudely worked stone implements found in older river gravels such as those exposed at Kota Tampan in Perak and at several other localities in South-East Asia, for example the Irrawaddy Valley in Burma and the Kali Baksoka river in South Central Java near the town of Patjitan. These simple stone implements were made by knocking off a few large flakes, usually from water rounded pebbles. In general, the minimum of effort was employed to produce the desired cutting edge. It is most probable that these chipped pebble tools were the work of men rather different physically from ourselves and at a lower level of evolutionary development.

The later, Mesolithic or Middle Stone Age phase of Malaysian prehistory shows increasing technological sophistication. True, the principal industrial material continues to be stone, but the degree

of skill and control in the processes of chipping and flaking show dramatic improvement. The small, precise discoidal or ovate stone axes that are so characteristic of this period of our prehistory are an unmistakable advance on their Old Stone Age predecessors.

It is particularly significant that careful studies of the skeletons of the people who made and used the Mesolithic stone implements and who were buried in caves and rock shelters in the Peninsula were men just like ourselves, Homo sapiens, although all present indications suggest that they belonged to the Oceanic Negroid or Melanesian racial type. These Mesolithic cultures, often called Hoabinhian from the site in North Vietnam where they were first identified, are widespread throughout most of South-Eeast Asia, although for some reason not yet clear, they do not seem to have occupied East Malaysia and the Islands.

In spite of their developing technical abilities — it is probable that at a later stage in their history they came to make and use pottery — the Mesolithic Hoabinhian people were, nevertheless, still culturally limited in one important respect. They depended for their subsistence on hunting and food-gathering. Such an economy imposed on them a wandering nomadic existence and restricted their social organization to small family groups. To this extent the Hoabinhian way of life was comparable to that of the still existing nomadic Negrito tribes of the Peninsula.

There can be little doubt that one of the most significant events in prehistory was the transition from a hunting and food-gathering subsistence economy — as exemplified in Malaysia by the Hoabinhian cultures — to a food producing economy based on knowledge of the arts of agriculture and animal domestication which marks for the archaeologist the beginnings of the Neolithic or New Stone Age phase.

This highly important transition from one economic system to another is often difficult to document archaeologically since the beginnings of plant cultivation and the domestication of animals often leave only ambiguous clues in the remains of ancient cultures. It is particularly difficult to define the transition in Malaysia and South-East Asia where hunting and food-gathering continued to supplement the economy long after agricultural techniques were introduced. What is more, early plant cultivation followed the swidden or shifting agricultural pattern in which a patch of forest is felled, burnt off and planted with crops for two or

three seasons before being allowed to revert to forest and the process repeated elsewhere. A system like this leads to a way of life only slightly less nomadic than that of Mesolithic hunters and often hard to distinguish in the sequence of prehistoric occupation of archaeological sites.

Recent archaeological discoveries in Malaysia and Thailand begin to suggest that the idea of plant cultivation and animal domestication was not an indigenous development within Malaysia or even South-East Asia, but was introduced from outside the region. Detailed comparison of pottery, stone and other artifact types, burial rites, settlement patterns and many other cultural characteristics of early South-East Asia Neolithic settlements, such as Ban Kao in West Central Thailand, Bukit Kaplu in Kedah and Gua Cha in Ulu Kelantan, with materials from Chinese Neolithic sites, particularly those of the so-called Lungshanoid cultures, show striking similarities. Such similarities, however, need not, and indeed probably do not, imply ancient and widespread population movements into South-East Asia. It must be emphasized that ideas can be spread as successfully through cultural contacts as through actual human migration. In this connexion, it is probably significant that many of the correspondences that have been noted between Chinese and South-East Asian Neolithic artifact types betoken sometimes rather inept copying in South-East Asia rather than direct borrowing or importation from China. It is most striking also that studies of skeletons that have been found associated with Neolithic cultural remains, for example at Gua Cha, raise the possibility that they belong to the same Oceanic Negroid stock as the people of the Mesolithic. This fact too lends support to the belief that early farming techniques were transmitted to South-East Asia by cultural contacts and were adapted to local conditions by an indigenous population rather than through the agency of wholesale population movements.

In general then, we can say that the introduction of agriculture into South-East Asia and Malaysia was a gentle transition which did not immediately result in any revolutionary upheaval of social or economic patterns, nor lead to any sudden changes in the physical types of the inhabitants.

Thanks to the wider use of the radiocarbon method of dating archaeological remains, a much clearer idea of the date of the events of which I have spoken is gradually beginning to emerge. Radiocarbon dates from Neolithic contexts at Ban Kao and from

two Malaysian sites — one in Perak and the other in Pahang — cluster fairly closely in the range from 2000 B.C. to 1500 B.C.

The next major advance in the social and economic development of our region is marked in the archaeological record by the appearance of metal artifacts and the growth of a knowledge of metallurgy and metal-working.

In order to understand more fully the impact of these innovations, it will be helpful if we examine briefly the social and economic implications of metal-working. Metallurgy is a complex technological process. The making of a metal artifact calls into play a very wide range of highly specialized skills. Ores do not generally resemble the metals derived from them and so to seek out and exploit ore deposits requires special techniques and knowledge of a high order. Similarly, the smelting of ores, the alloying of metals in the correct proportions to produce the desired hardness and durability, the making of moulds and the casting and finishing of artifacts are all intricate technological processes.

The special talents demanded by these processes need long apprenticeship and much time spent in their application. To a greater extent than anything found at lower levels of cultural and technological development, these are full-time specializations. Outside of primary food production, such a level of technological specialization is inherently unlikely in a swidden or shifting agricultural economy. The emergence of a full blown metallurgical tradition implies the support of a stronger economic base which in our context could only come from the development of irrigation agriculture. There are other implications too. There would inevitably be a trend towards a more sedentary way of life and the investment of labour in irrigation works and longer-lived settlements would encourage a growing complexity of social and political organization. This phase of prehistory, therefore, deserves to be regarded in some senses as a formative one and with the appearance of metal-using communities in South-East Asia and Malaysia, one can already discern the dawn of some of those distinctive features that mark the earliest South-East Asian states to emerge in the full light of history.

The arts of metal-working appear in the archaeological record of our region with dramatic suddenness and at a surprisingly high level of technical sophistication. It is hard to imagine complex alloying and casting techniques being developed without a long history which one would expect to have left some archaeological

traces. Such traces have not so far come to light. The facts then as we have them strongly suggest that like agriculture, metal-working in South-East Asia owes its origins to ideas and stimuli from external sources.

The first major centre of South-East Asian metallurgy to be explored archaeologically was the site of Dong-s'on on the banks of the Song Ma river in North Vietnam. Here, archaeologists found the remains of an ancient village settlement, built partly on piles over the water and strategically located to command important trade routes both by land and river. That the inhabitants of ancient Dong-s'on subsisted not only by agriculture but also by trade is indicated by the presence of several superb bronze objects imported from China. That Dong-s'on flourished is amply attested by the wealth of magnificently decorated metal objects placed as offerings in the graves that were discovered near the settlement.

The influence of the culture that has come to be known after its type site as Dong-s'on was certainly great and was widely felt in South-East Asia and in Malaysia — perhaps even further afield. But here again, as has so often happened in the reconstruction of prehistory and early history, the spread of metallurgy and all that it implies has all too often been viewed in terms of the wholesale movement of peoples and cultures instead of a more gentle diffusion of ideas through trades and other casual contacts which seem better to fit the facts. One scholar, for example, has conjured up an overly dramatic vision of South-East Asia overrun by hordes of Dong-s'on people fleeing from the invading armies of the later Han Dynasty.

In Malaysia, quite a large number of bronze antiquities with clear affinities to Dong-s'on have come to light. In 1905, three beautiful bronze bells decorated with typical motifs were unearthed near Klang. One of these may be seen in the Muzium Negara in Kuala Lumpur, one was presented to the British Museum and the third was unfortunately lost during World War II. In 1926, the badly corroded remains of a bronze drum in Dong-s'on style were washed out of the banks of the Sungai Tembeling in Pahang by the great flood at the end of that year. This is now in the possession of the National Museum in Singapore. Towards the end of the Japanese occupation, fragments of a second drum were discovered in the course of digging foundations for a new building near Klang. These fragments, partially reconstructed, are on display in the Muzium Negara, Kuala Lumpur.

Owing to the circumstances in which these discoveries were made, no proper archaeological investigation of any of them was possible. It was, therefore, fortunate when in 1964, two more bronze drums of Dong-s'on type were found in the course of agricultural operations. The site was preserved and investigated by a team of archaeologists from the Muzium Negara and the University of Malaya. Careful excavation of the site, at Kampung Sungai Lang near Banting in Selangor, showed that the two drums had been intentionally buried in an inverted position on a plank of *chengal* wood — possibly the remains of a wooden boat. Round the drums, several groups of pottery had been disposed. This pottery had a curious brown shiny glaze produced from some resinous organic substance. At one place, numerous orange glass beads were found and there were traces of socketed iron implements. After the groups of objects had been put in place, a hemispherical mound of soil had been heaped up to cover them. This mound was about fifteen feet in diameter and four feet high.

Following desertion of the site by its ancient inhabitants, a deposit of peat built up to a depth sufficient to cover and conceal the mound. It was shrinkage of this peat layer due to agricultural drainage that led to the mound's discovery. Two other earthen mounds were subsequently located in the same kampung, but unfortunately they were too badly disturbed for proper examination to be possible. Instead of drums, these mounds were found to contain fine undecorated bronze bowls, rock crystal beads and pottery with the same resinous coating.

Samples of the wooden plank have been subjected to radiocarbon analysis and this has yielded a date of about 200 B.C. Again in 1964, the widening of a road just south of Kuala Trengganu brought to light two more fine bronze drums which were unfortunately rather badly damaged in the process. Although the site was disturbed, it seeems reasonably certain that as at Kampung Sungai Lang, these drums had been buried as a pair and were associated with small coloured glass beads, pottery and a fine socketed iron spearhead.

Over many years, as a result of mining, road building, drainage and other activities, numerous other finds of metal antiquities have been made. Some fine cast socketed bronze axeheads are known from various mines scattered throughout the country. There is also a group of socketed iron implements — some of them of somewhat uncertain use — known generally as *tulang mawas*. These are

found mainly on the West Coast of the Peninsula — although a few have been recorded from the Sungai Tembeling and near Raub in Pahang. They occur either in small hoards, as in the case of the discovery at Bukit Jati near Klang — or in association with strange tombs constructed from rough granite slabs which seem to be limited in distribution to the Sungai Slim and Sungai Bernam regions of South Perak and North Selangor.

In East Malaysia, so far no bronze drums in the early Dong-s'on style have been reported, but stone moulds for casting bronze axeheads are known and other evidence of Dong-s'on influence exists.

The concentration of discoveries of metal antiquities in the region of Klang and the Selangor coast certainly suggests that this area was an important centre during this phase of Malaysian prehistory. Indeed, the general distribution of metal age antiquities on the West Coast is a striking fact to which attention has frequently been drawn — but the recent discovery of bronze drums at Kuala Trengganu suggest that perhaps too much should not be read into this.

The precise relationship of the early Malaysian metal using cultures to the Dong-s'on centres of mainland South-East Asia and South China is still far from clear. But archaeological discoveries do not seem to document any direct colonization from those regions. We are perhaps more entitled to see evidence for a concern with trade and the prospecting for tin and perhaps gold, in the opening up of which these peoples — on the fringes of history themselves — played a highly significant role, thus laying the foundations for civilized history in Southeast Asia.

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THE EMPIRE OF SRI VIJAYA

by
DR. S. ARASARATNAM

In the states system of South-East Asia, till the beginning of the 7th century, the Indo-Chinese Peninsula was the main centre of political power. The Empire of Funan, centred on the Menam basin, had a long period of dominance in the South-East Asian region. Lesser states in the Indo-Chinese and Malay Peninsulas owed allegiance in varying forms to this Kingdom. During the 6th century, this Empire suffered decline and many other states both in mainland and island South-East Asia asserted themselves. In the course of this century, the focus of power in this region shifted to the Archipelago where Sumatra and Java became the seat of strong kingdoms.

Prior to the 5th century, such political power as there was in the islands of Sumatra and Java was localised and meagre. Indian cultural influences which had penetrated deep into mainland South-East Asia were still but thinly spread in these islands. Their rise from around this time was based on economic factors. With the disintegration of Funan, the strong grip this Empire had on the trade between India and China was loosened, giving opportunity to other centres to develop further south. While Funan was dominant, the route across the isthmus of Kra was the most popular trade route. Now the all-sea route via the Straits of Malacca became more used, creating the opportunity for the rise of ports of call on

the Sumatran and Javanese coasts. This in turn led to the rise in the power of states in the hinterlands of these ports. With the enlargement of the possibilities of the China trade under the T'ang dynasty and the consequent increase in the India-China trade, the volumes of sea-borne traffic passing through South-East Asia was such as to put both the isthmian as well as the Straits routes to maximum use.

By the middle of the 7th century, there were in Sumatra two states both of which appear to have derived their strength from the trade that passed through the Straits. These were Melayu which is the modern Jambi on the mouth of the Batang Hari and Sri Vijaya, the modern Palembang. A series of events recorded in inscriptions dated 683 to 686 A.D. enables us to come to the conclusion that at about this period, the rise of Sri Vijaya had begun. An important state in this rise appears to be the over-running of the rival trading kingdom of Melayu and the consequent extension of power along the east coast of the island of Sumatra. This was soon to take Sri Vijayan power across the Straits to Peninsula Malaya. The exact extent of the spread of Sri Vijayan imperial control is uncertain. The discovery of a stele in Ligor with inscriptions on both sides attests definitely to Sri Vijaya control at least up to Ligor on the east coast of the Peninsula. On the west, other evidence enables us to come to the conclusion that they must have controlled the coast and all the trading stations up to the well-known emporium of Takuapa. It is at this time too that Sri Vijaya is reported as sending regular embassies to China bearing a wide variety of presents. The cultivation of Chinese friendship was crucial to Sri Vijaya's policy of domination of the China trade.

The origins of the dynasty that made Sri Vijaya great are obscure. In fact, almost nothing is known about the identity of its early kings. But we do know that by the middle of the 9th century, the rulers of Sri Vijaya belonged to the Sailendra Dynasty. Now the Sailendras, it is generally believed, are a Javanese dynasty. The title Sailendra, meaning Lord of the Mountains, was used first by the Emperors of Funan and on the decline of this kingdom, the rulers of the central Javanese kingdom of Mataram took over the title with its implicit claims to some vague overlordship in the region. The appearance of the Sailendra dynasty on the Sri Vijayan throne has intrigued scholars and many ingenious theories have been put forward to explain this. One strongly held view is that it was probably the result of a dynastic marriage between the royal

families of the two states. In any case, by 850 A.D., one Balaputradewa, the King of Sri Vijaya, is recorded as a descendant of the Sailendras of Java. It does not appear that the two Kingdoms of Sumatra and Java were united under this dynasty. At about the same time, the Sailendra hold over the Central Javanese kingdom declined and they were superceded at Mataram by another dynasty.

By 900 A.D., the power of Sri Vijaya in the South-East Asian region was undisputed. Regular embassies to China and friendly relations with this Empire gave her the stamp of recognition as such. Smaller states of Sumatra, the Malay peninsula and Western Java were vassals of Sri Vijaya. A challenge was offered to Sri Vijayan supremacy and its capital was attacked by Dharmavansa, King of East Java, in the 990's. These attacks were beaten off and Sri Vijaya seems to have then launched a massive counter-attack on this kingdom. The country was sacked, the king was killed and the kingdom collapsed. Thus, Sri Vijayan supremacy in the archipelago was confirmed and ensured.

The Sri Vijayan Empire had no pretensions to being an extensive territorial Empire. In fact, even in Sumatra, its hold did not extend beyond a few miles of the coastline. Its historic significance lay in the fact that it was a maritime empire, in the words of a recent historian, a thalassocracy. Its power was not based, like other well-known Empires in history, on an established system of agricultural production or on fertile resources and export surpluses. In fact, a large part of its original homelands, near the capital at Palembang, was marshy and unproductive land. The capital of Sri Vijaya was situated about seventy miles up the Palembang river in the midst of infertile, sparsely populated country. Contemporary records speak of it as essentially a market town populated by merchants and money-changers from many lands. The town afforded a safe haven for weather-beaten ships on the India-China route to refit and resupply themselves and was the venue for the conduct of a brisk business in the accumulated products of other regions. It was strategically located to control both the Straits of Malacca and the Sunda Straits. The extension of its power northwards into the Malay Peninsula up to Takuapa gave it control of the isthmus route as well. It was thus in a commanding position in relation to the entire East-West trade. Its domination of the seas enabled it to force ships to sail through the Straits of Malacca and to call on its ports to pay tolls and dues. As

late as the 13th century, Chua Ju-Kua, the Chinese inspector of foreign trade, wrote that all foreign ships passing the Straits were forced to pay tolls under the threat of outright destruction.

Towards the East, it was natural that the Sri Vijayan kings should maintain friendly relations with the trading kingdoms of India. We know from I-tsing's voyage that there were regular sailings from Sumatran ports to Tamralipti, the port on the estuary of the Ganges. The most powerful maritime power of India at this time was the Cholas, between whom and Sri Vijaya relations were close. The Cholas were greatly interested in the China and South-East Asia trade. They were the only Indian power that pursued a dynamic naval and maritime policy to support their commerce. It is probable that the growing strength of Sri Vijaya in the Indonesian waters and her attempt to derive full benefits from this trade resulted in growing friction between the two maritime powers. The exact causes of these differences are not known. We know only that after a period of friendliness, the Cholas under Emperor Rajendra launched a massive attack on Sri Vijaya in 1025 A.D. It was a naval attack spread out on all the major trading stations of the Empire. They raided the whole Sumatran coast and crossed the Straits to attack the east and west coasts of the Malay Peninsula including the important ports of Kedah, Takuapa and Ligor. As was to be expected, there was much plunder and the King himself was captured. As a naval raid, it does not appear to have had much lasting effect. There was no conquest of territory and Sri Vijaya soon regained its hold on many of these places but probably not as firmly as before. After the whole incident, friendly relations between the two Empires again appear to have been re-established. Besides its considerable exertions in the direction of commerce, the Empire also seems to have played a historical role as a centre of Buddhism. Evidence of this appears throughout the history of the Empire. In its early years, the Chinese Buddhist pilgrim I-tsing tells us that Buddhism was already very firmly established. In the capital city of Sri Vijaya, there was a community of about 1000 Buddhist monks engaged in religious studies. He himself was able to study Sanskrit grammar there before proceeding to India. On his return from India, he spent another five years at Sri Vijaya in the Company of some other Chinese bhikkhus. Here, they were able to collect and translate about 400 Buddhist texts.

It appears that both the main sects of Buddhism, Hinayana

and Mahayana, were practised here, though the Mahayana form appears to predominate. The court seems to have strongly supported Buddhist institutions and learning. The Buddhism of Sri Vijaya evidently had contact with that of the Pala Dynasty of Bengal. There was contact with the famous Buddhist University of Nalanda in that Kingdom. The Sri Vijayan rulers arranged to provide accommodation for their students studying at Nalanda. The ascendancy of Mahayanism in Sri Vijaya is partly attributable to this connection with Pala Buddhism. In 11th century, there was a renowned Buddhist scholar of Sri Vijaya called Dharmakirti. Many from India came to study under him. One of his most famous disciples was Atisa, a Tibetan who made great contributions to Buddhism there. Tibetan works of this period described Sumatra as the chief centre of Buddhism.

In South India too, there is evidence of the extent of Buddhist commitment of the Sri Vijaya rulers. For the worship of their merchants who sailed to the Coromandel coast, the king secured the permission of the Chola Emperor to build a Buddhist temple at the port city of Nagapatnam. This was in 1005 and the name of the King was Sri Schulamanivarmadeva. The Chola Emperor Rajaraja endowed this temple with the revenues of a village for its maintenance. Some years later, in 1090, the Chola King granted a new charter to this temple at the request of the Sri Vijayan ruler.

Even after the crippling Chola raid of 1025 A.D., the Empire seems to have held on its own for another two and a half centuries. It is true that at some points its hold was weakened. The Central Javanese Kingdom revived and recovered what it had lost to Sri Vijaya. But Sri Vijaya still held power on both sides of the Straits and, through this, the control of the trade. Two factors seem to have aided the recovery and resilience of Sri Vijayan power. Under the Sung Dynasty, China pursued trade with South-East Asia vigorously. Also from the 12th century, Arab shipping came back for direct participation in the China trade. More and more of the primary produce of South-East Asia was absorbed for the China trade. Palembang and Malaya were places for the assemblage and transhipment of these goods. But at the same time, other rival centres grew. Java, once it broke away from Sri Vijayan dominance, began to develop its own trading stations. To the north, many of the vassal states of peninsular Malaya began to break away. It appears also that within Sumatra, the focus shifted from the city of Sri Vijaya to Melayu which then became a more

important trading centre. Marco Polo, visiting Sumatra in 1292, describes Melayu as the most important state. The name Sri Vijaya also now ceased to be used. The rise of the Majapahit Empire in Java and the Thai Empire in Siam undermined the remaining power of Sri Vijaya. The Javanese got control of the Sunda Straits and the Thais expanded southwards into the Malayan dependencies of Sri Vijaya. By the 13th century, the Empire had dissolved.

4

GLIMPSES OF THE MALACCA EMPIRE—I

by
ZAINAL ABIDIN BIN ABDUL WAHID

The importance of the Malacca Empire in Malaysian history could hardly be exaggerated. The book *Sejarah Melayu,* written in the 15th or 16th century, spoke in glowing terms of the splendour, power and extent of this Malay Empire. The account in the *Sejarah Melayu* is confirmed, on the whole, by Portuguese writers who wrote on Malacca in the early 16th century. Tome Pires, for example, stated, "Malacca is of such importance and profit that it seems to me that it has no equal in the world .... It is a city made for merchandise fitter than any other in the world ....". Duarte Barbosa, another Portuguese writer, came out with the statement, "Malacca is the richest seaport with the greatest number of wholesale merchants and abundance of shipping that can be found in the whole world".

The Malacca Empire, therefore, is of sufficient significance to merit further study.

It has been popularly assumed that Malacca was founded around 1403. But recent researches have shown that Malacca was founded earlier than 1403 and there is a greater likelihood that it was already established at the end of the 14th century.

Professor Wang Gangwu has shown, from his studies of Chinese historical sources for this period, that in 1403 the Emperor Yung-lo "... sent the eunuch Yin Ch'ing and others with imperial messages to the kingdoms of Malacca and Cochin and also with gifts ...". This Chinese imperial mission to Malacca is significant in that it was sent at a time when there had already been three missions despatched by the Emperor of China into the South-East Asian area within a period of two months prior to Yin Ch'ing's departure. In other words, it could be argued that by 1403, Malacca was sufficiently well-established to merit a somewhat special mission from China. This would also imply that Malacca had been founded earlier than 1403.

Prior to the coming of the Portuguese, the life of the people of Malacca was centred around the royal court. In fact, it is quite a problem to find any detail account of the day to day life of an average Malay, for example, his means of livelihood, internal trading activities, social engagements, etc. A Malacca sultan had no State Council to advise him. He declared war and peace, decided on the question of life and death. Though he had no formal council to advice him, he, however, had his Bendahara, the equivalent of the present Menteri Besar, the Laksamana and to a lesser degree the Temenggung whom he could consult on all matters.

A weak ruler or one who was more disposed towards personal pleasures relied more heavily on the Bendahara and the Laksamana, but an able ruler normally took matters into his own hands. For example, Sultan Alauddin Riayat Shah disguised himself and went out at night to ensure that law and order was maintained and that justice was done.

One of the main sources of income for a ruler seems to have come from the taxes paid by the foreign traders that came to trade in Malacca. He also obtained wealth from his conquests and tributes from the vassal states. There is also a possibility that the rulers themselves indirectly participated in trade.

In matters of administration, while the sultan had all the different officials assigned with their various duties, he himself held audience from time to time when his subjects could present their complaints direct to him.

Theoretically, life in the Malacca Empire was governed by two major laws — the *Hukum Kanun Melaka* and the Maritime Laws of Malacca. These two laws are fairly comprehensive, particularly,

when considered in the context of life in the 15th century. While one could find many references to occasions when power was abused and justice not carried out, yet these laws give us an insight into the life and activities of the people then.

The *Hukum Kanun Melaka* reflects the agricultural nature of the society. It deals, for example, with the question of the need to fence in one's buffaloes, cows and goats so that they would not damage the rice plants in the fields. An interesting aspect of the law is its recognition of the status of slaves. Contrary to popular assumption, they were not treated like chattels but had certain rights. In fact, there is a reference in the famous history book, *Sejarah Melayu* that one of the Bendaharas of Malacca mistook one of his slaves for a relative because the slaves was so well-dressed.

The Martime Laws of Malacca tell us of the powers of the *nakhoda* or ship captain and the rights of the crew. This particular set of laws also informs us of the existence of a trading group and the regulations governing their activities; and that trading was not confined to this group of people but was also indulged in by the ship captain and crew. Perhaps one could assume from this that the functions of the merchant class in the Malacca society were not too clearly demarcated, for even a ship's crew participated in trading.

Despite these laws, however, the Malay rulers normally enjoyed an almost absolute power. This power was not merely derived from the fact that he could exercise many rights but the Malay masses themselves accorded the ruler with what could be termed as "blind loyalty". Although there were exceptions but generally, this was true. The cultural tradition of the Malays played an important role in shaping this attitude.

There are two traditional Malay concepts which would have a strong influence on the people. One is called *daulat* and the other *derhaka*. *Daulat* could be interpreted as "sovereignty". The sovereignty of a Malay ruler is not merely a legal concept; it is a cultural and religious one as well. And it lies in the person of the ruler. The *daulat* endows him with many rights and privileges, places him above his society, beyond reproach and criticism. The *daulat* also entails unquestioning loyalty from his subject. *Derhaka* is a related concept to *daulat*. It could, for convenience, be translated as "disobedience" though, in actuality, *derhaka* has a wider meaning. If you were disobedient to your ruler, you could be

regarded as *derhaka;* if you were to rebel against him, you would be considered as *derhaka;* or if your father were ordered to be killed by a sultan for unjustifiable reasons, you would still be regarded as being *derhaka* if you were to try and stop your parent from being killed. In such a context, therefore, it would be extremely unlikely that a Malay would openly criticise his sultan. This factor is an important consideration in understanding early Malay society for it not only affected the attitude of the Malays towards their rulers but it also influenced their writings.

The day to day affairs of the state were normally carried out by the different officials. The Bendahara was the chief advisor to the Sultan. Two of the Bendaharas of Malacca became powerful figures. One was Bendahara Tun Perak and the other Bendahara Seri Maharaja. Tun Perak had been credited with not only administrative abilities but also diplomatic skills. He was regarded as the power behind the throne and was considered responsible for the defence and expansion of Malacca. Bendahara Seri Maharaja was reported to be a very able man and that Malacca would not fall to any other power so long as he was alive. There was an account which stated that he was better known to the foreign merchants than Sultan Mahmud himself. As is well-known, the Bendahara was executed not long before the attack by the Portuguese.

According to the sources available to me, there existed no record to show that the Bendahara or other officials of the Malacca Empire received regular monthly salary from the government. Of course, the different high posts carried with them prestige as well as certain privileges. The Bendahara, for example, generally received a certain percentage of the taxes paid by the foreign merchants for permission to trade in Malacca. And, each one of them was entitled to participate in trade. In fact, Bendahara Seri Maharaja enriched himself considerably through trading activities. However, this system, that is the absence of regular monthly salary, exposed the officials to bribery and corruption.

The Laksamana has been popularly regarded today as the equivalent of an admiral or chief-of-staff of the navy. But the Laksamana of Malacca was more than just an admiral. Laksamana Hang Tuah was as much a warrior on land as on the sea. This was probably due to Malacca being a trading centre and a maritime power, thus making the Laksamanaship an important and more-embracing assignment.

The Temenggung, generally regarded as the chief police of-

ficer, was responsible for the maintenance of law and order. The existence of this appointment, theoretically at least, implied the existence of a police force, the administration of justice and the concept of the rule of law. In fact, during the reign of Sultan Alauddin Riayat Shah, police stations were established all over Malacca, theft was eradicated and justice was then a meaningful concept.

The Shahbandar was another important official of Malacca. He was the equivalent of the present harbour-master but had the additional function of allocating store-houses and trading areas for the various racial groups of traders who came to Malacca.

The presence of these foreigners had political significance, for the Arabs and the Indian Muslims managed to establish themselves in the court circle of Malacca. In fact, the Indian Muslims played a major role, indirectly in the killing of Sultan Abu Shahid, and the installation of Raja Kassim as Sultan Muzaffar Shah on the throne of Malacca. Just before the Portuguese attack of 1511, an Indian held the post of Shahbandar.

Arab religious teachers occupied a special position in Malacca. A case in point was when one of these Arabs, who was teaching Sultan Mahmud, refused to teach the Sultan when the latter came for his lessons riding on an elephant. The Arab teacher insisted that the Sultan should walk to his house and Mahmud complied.

The teaching and study of Islam, a religion introduced to Malacca at a very early stage of its foundation, had progressed significantly by about the middle of the 15th century. The *Sejarah Melayu* tells us of the sending of a delegation from Malacca to Pasai to discuss theological questions with the Muslim scholars in Pasai. It does appear from this discussion that the study of Islam had advanced well beyond the mere learning of the basic tenets. This contention is borne out by the story pertaining to Sultan Mansur Shah's request to Makhdum Patakan, an Islamic scholar in Pasai, for the latter to translate into Malay the religious book *Durrul-manzum* which deals with the philosophical aspects of religion.

Malacca, prior to the Portuguese conquest, therefore, was not merely a major trading port but also a centre for the study of Islam.

5

GLIMPSES OF THE MALACCA EMPIRE—II

by
ZAINAL ABIDIN BIN ABDUL WAHID

The greatness of Malacca did not entirely depend on the fact that it was a major trading centre and a place for the study of Islam for, as an Empire, it was a power to be reckoned within its own right. In the early stage of its history, Malacca had to face the threat from Siam. Later, it managed to strengthen itself and was able to counter the Siamese threat. By the beginning of the 16th century, the extent of the Malacca Empire included Klang, Bruas, Pahang, Trengganu, Kelantan, Kedah and Patani on the Malay Peninsula, while Kampar, Siak, Indragiri and Siantan on the east coast of Sumatra were also part of the Empire. Some of these territories were colonies while others were either tributary states or, at least, acknowledging the overlordship of Malacca.

One significant point to be remembered here is that the concept of a political unit covering the whole of the Malay Peninsula dates back to the time of Malacca and not just a British creation as have been assumed by some Western writers.

An empire like Malacca would certainly have relations with the other countries in the region. It would be of interest, therefore, to look into the external relations of Malacca.

Malacca's foreign policy seems to be based on her relations with Siam, the necessity of maintaining Malacca as an important

trading centre, the need to keep a sufficient flow of rice into the country and as the centre for the study and spread of Islam.

With regard to her relations with Siam, Malacca found that the visit of the Chinese embassy in 1403 provided her with the opportunity of having a powerful protector without having to sacrifice her independence. Her relations with China in the early 1400's appears to have been motivated by a desire to maintain a balance of power between Siam and China. In the initial stage of her development, Malacca did not feel strong enough to face Siam by herself; thus, the Chinese friendship provided her with a breathing space. And when China decided to withdraw from active participation in South-East Asian affairs in the 1430's, Malacca was in the position to repel the attacks from Siam. Later, she even managed to conquer Pahang and Kelantan, thus removing Siamese influence from these two states.

The relations between Malacca and China is very interesting. Many writers have regarded Malacca as the vassal of China. Nowhere in the *Sejarah Melayu* is this vassalage status mentioned, except perhaps in one sentence where such an interpretation could be alluded to. This came out during a conversation between the ruler of Brunei and Tun Telanai, an envoy of Malacca to the court of China. The Brunei ruler wanted to know the content of the letter from Malacca to China, and the opening sentence read as follows: "With the highest respects from the ruler of Malacca to my esteemed father, ruler of China". But this could easily be due to the elaborate and extremely respectful ways the Malays express themselves in letter-writing.

Even though the Chinese historian recorded Malacca as a vassal of China yet it need not necessarily mean that China had any constitutional rights over Malacca. It was the practice of Chinese historians of that period to regard all other countries that had relations with her as her vassals. Italy and Portugal were considered as such, though it would be difficult to imagine these two countries regarding themselves as vassals of China.

In the case of Malacca, her leaders must have thought that whatever interpretation the Chinese might have placed on their relationship, they were not unduly worried so long as their purpose was served, i.e. in relation to Siam. Anyway, there was no evidence to show that China at that time wished to interfere in the affairs of Malacca. China's interest, perhaps, was more a question of her being acknowledged as the biggest power in the area.

The sending of tribute by Malacca to China has also been interpreted as a sign of her vassalage. Criticisms have been made against the *Sejarah Melayu* for not acknowledging this alleged status of hers vis-a-vis China. But, again, the sending of tribute need not necessarily imply a tributary status for as Professor Wang Gangwu has shown in his monograph *The Nanhai Trade*, that this was only a way to trade.

The maintenance of control by Malacca over status on the west coast of the Malay Peninsula, the subjugation of states on the east coast of Sumatra and the suppression of piracy near Singapore could be regarded as attempts to keep the seaways open and safe for traders so that they would be more attracted to come to Malacca. The importance of trade to the prosperity of Malacca cannot be overestimated. The measures taken to keep friendly relations with Java and the normalization of relations with Siam after the two wars could be considered as implementation of Malacca's trade policy as well as attempts at ensuring an adequate supply of rice for the country.

The propagation of Islam was not confined within the Empire only but went far and wide in the Nusantara. Through Malacca, Islam was conveyed to the Sulu Archipelago and Southern Philippines.

Malacca's relations with other countries had been established for a sufficiently long period as to have some definite procedures. The protocol regarding the reception of foreign missions had been introduced. Embassies from Pasai or Haru, for example, would be received by a full complement of the court musicians and that the letters and gifts would be carried on an elephant; but some other countries might only be welcomed by part of the court musicians and that their letters and gifts would only be conveyed on a horse. Even the seating arrangement for a royal audience had been worked out. Some rulers of the smaller states were only allowed to sit with the Bendahara while one ruler was placed together with the Temenggung.

One of the things that received impetus as a result of the coming and spread of Islam to Malacca was the development of literature, for, with Islam, also came the Jawi script. The importance of the *Sejarah Melayu* as a historical source could no longer be denied. It is the most important historical document for pre-Portuguese Malacca.

Through the *Sejarah Melayu*, we come to know of the existence of such books as *Hikayat Muhammad Hanafiah* and *Hikayat Amir Hamzah*. Both these books had been translated into Malay from Arabic. If such long romances had already been translated then there was great likelihood that translations of smaller works had also been made. We are told of the *Hikayat Iskandar Dzulkarnain* which was widely known then. The author of the *Sejarah Melayu* also referred to a book containing stories on Raja Suran and further stated that the book was a lengthy one. Last week, we heard of the religious book *Durul-manzum*.

It is clear, therefore, that Malay literature had attained a high degree of development even before the coming of the Portuguese in 1511.

Reference has been made last week to the role of the Indian and Arab communities in Malacca. It has been argued that Arab religious teachers occupied a special position in the society. It seems, however, that this special position was not fully accepted by the Malays. The author of the *Sejarah Melayu* made oblique reference indicating the Malay protests or even resentment.

During the reign of Sultan Mahmud, there was a supposedly learned Arab in Malacca known as Makhdum Sadar Johan. The Sultan had him as a teacher and so too the Bendahara. One day, while teaching the Bendahara, Seri Rama, an official of Malacca, came. Seri Rama was drunk. The Bendahara, nevertheless, invited him to join the lesson. But the Makhdum refused to teach Seri Rama and quoted something from a religious text which said that drinking was one of the worst of the vices. Seri Rama replied with another quotation which declared that greed was the worst; and further contended that the Makhdum came to Malacca not so much to teach religion as to make money.

In another instance, it involved another Malay warrior who could not pronounce Arabic words properly. He was strongly criticised by his Arab teacher. He then countered by asking his Arab teacher to pronounce some Malay words which the Arab could not do.

It is a pity that the *Sejarah Melayu* is the only book about Malacca, contemporaneously written, that has survived to this day. Nonetheless, it has given us an interesting insight into the society of Malacca then, a society which forms the basis of present day Malaysia.

6

THE PORTUGUESE IN MALAYA

by
KHASNOR BINTI JOHAN

The fall of Malacca in 1511 to the Portuguese marked the beginning of Western domination in the Malay Archipelago. For a hundred and thirty years, the Portuguese held Malacca despite incessant Malay attempts at recovering the city, but finally Malacca fell to the combined forces of the Malays and the Dutch in 1642.

Portuguese conquest of Malacca was economically motivated for the aim was to use the port as a base of operations in their bid to control the trade of the East Indies. Accordingly, it was essential to retain the goodwill of the surrounding region useful to Malacca's trade and to attract as many traders as possible to its shores. But the sudden appearance of the Portuguese had upset the status quo and the Malay powers could not but view the intruders with mixed feelings. Although in general, the Malays resented Portuguese presence yet a few of the states thought it to their advantage to cultivate Portuguese friendship. Economic motives weighed heavily in the adoption of this attitude since these states depended on the entrepot trade at Malacca and on its demand for food supplies to feed its own population.

Portuguese capture of Malacca had given them prestige and a greater control over the trade of the region. But their position in the Malay Archipelago was by no means safe. The dethroned ruler of Malacca, Sultan Mahmud, still retained sovereignty and

authority over most of his Empire in the Malay Peninsula and in Eastern Sumatra. Thus, even while the Portuguese were sending out missions of friendship to the surrounding areas, receptive to their overtures, Mahmud and his allies were preparing to attack Malacca.

Throughout the period of Portuguese stay in Malacca, the military element continued to play a dominant role in the relations of the Portuguese with the Malay states. The most persistent of Portuguese enemies were Mahmud and his descendants whose claim on Malacca was continuously pursued.

The Portuguese themselves were undoubtedly aware that Malacca was in a vulnerable positon, for apart from the city and the small area around it which came under Portuguese control, the rest were in the hands of mainly unfriendly powers. Even within the city walls, the long established trading communities, particularly the Javanese, were often rebellious. Their understanding with Mahmud complicated matters as the Portuguese had to handle enemies both from within and without. It was for this reason that the Portuguese extended and strengthened their defences and fortification. Indeed, they were not wrong in anticipating hostility for in 1512, Mahmud and his allies took the offensive in an attempt to recover his capital and to redeem the humiliation he had suffered at the hands of his enemy.

From then on until his death in 1528, Mahmud waged open war against the Portuguese from his new capital at Bentan. His war boats continually harassed Portuguese shipping and made several assaults on Malacca in the 1510's and early 1520's. Realizing that Malacca was not self-sufficient, he attempted to cut off food supplies by intercepting boats bringing rice to the city. It was in this way that Malacca was often on the point of starvation only to be saved by the timely arrival of relief and reinforcements from Goa, China and the rice areas of Pegu and Siak.

Portuguese enterprise in the East was greatly handicapped by their lack of manpower and total reliance on their naval supremacy. This confidence in the strength of their fleet was not misplaced but what the Portuguese did not envisage was the hit and run tactics Mahmud adopted which rendered their naval power ineffective. Before the Portuguese could give a chase, the light Malay warboats were already out of reach far upstream in one of the many rivers into which the cumbersome Portuguese ships could not manoeuvre. These frequent attacks reduced the trade of

Malacca to such an extent as to place Portuguese finances in poor shape. Macgregor in his *Papers on Johor Lama and the Portuguese in Malaya* tells of the inability of the Portuguese administration at Malacca to pay their servants regular wages so that by 1527, they were paid in arrears. Even the men-at-arms generally had to buy their own weapons and clothes.

Portuguese contacts with the Malay states were never extensive. Essentially peripheral in character, they did not go beyond the lucrative ports both on the Malay Peninsula and in Sumatra. The Portuguese realized it was unwise militarily to venture into the unfamiliar interior without endangering themselves. Moreover, they lacked the manpower to exercise any measure of effective and continuous political control over these regions. As long as they kept close to the sea, their navy could safeguard their interests. Politically, therefore, the Portuguese made little headway in the Archipelago. It was only at Pasai that they had any say at all in its politics, when in 1521, they deposed the Sultan and installed in his place their own protegee. At the same time, they appointed the governor and shahbandar. They also built a fort and garrison and forced the new Sultan to supply pepper on their terms.

When Mahmud had placed the Portuguese on the defensive at Malacca, they retaliated with counter-attacks on the Malays. The first two of such moves were made on the Malay bases on the Muar River in 1518 and 1520 when they succeeded in destroying the Malay stronghold at Pagoh. Although it was a great blow to Mahmud, he was still able to operate successfully from the island of Bentan. After 1521, the Portuguese, determined to cripple Mahmud's power completely, made several attacks on the Malays at Bentan but without success until in 1526, with fresh troops from Goa and a large fleet, they sacked Bengkalis and then Bentan. Mahmud lost all power and fled to Kampar where he died. That he was able to hold his own for sometime could be attributed to his not lacking in loyal supporters, coupled with the commanding position of Bentan as a base and an alternative entrepot port. In fact, Mahmud was able to attract a bulk of the trade that once belonged to pre-Portuguese Malacca so that after his overthrow, he continued to prosper once he had settled in Bentan.

The Portuguese, fortunately, did not antagonise all the Malay states. During one of Mahmud's attacks on Malacca in 1515, it was food supplies from Siak that saved the city from starvation. Pahang, in the meantime, had also transferred its loyalty from

Mahmud to the Portuguese. Macgregor in his monograph mentions that Duarte Coelho, while on one of his trips back from Siam, stopped at Pahang and was pleasantly surprised at the Sultan's hospitality. He took advantage of that occasion to conclude a treaty of friendship in which the Sultan promised to pay an annual tribute in gold. But in the 1520's, Pahang began to pay homage to Bentan and brought a fleet against the Portuguese in 1526. Perhaps this could be explained by the successes Mahmud had had against the Portuguese and Pahang's growing confidence in Mahmud's leadership. Portuguese relations with Kampar was also cordial. As early as 1512, Sultan Abdullah of Kampar though son-in-law and vassal to Mahmud, yet came to an understanding with the Portuguese. Mahmud angered by this treachery, summoned Lingga to his aid in attacking Kampar but was defeated. The *Sejarah Melayu* confirms Kampar's overtures towards the Portuguese but implies that Abdullah was later double-crossed and taken by force to Goa and later to Portugal. Western sources, however, agreed that Abdullah was taken to Malacca and given the status of a Bendahara until he lost favour with the Portuguese and was killed. Even Lingga shifted its loyalty to the Portuguese when its safety was threatened by Indragiri.

With Mahmud's death, a new phase in Portuguese-Malay relations began. Mahmud's son at Johor continued to pursue his father's policy. In 1535 and 1536, serious encounters took place between Johor and Malacca after which the Malays sued for peace. A factory was then established at Johor as had already been done by the Portuguese in Pahang and Patani and a period of comparative peace ensued. Circumstances of the period influenced greatly this change in attitude on the part of the Malay states, particularly Johor, Pahang and Perak, towards Portuguese Malacca. Acheh was, about this time, rising in power and was presenting a threat as a trade rival to Malacca.

Its strength soon encouraged ambitions both commercial and dynastic which actuated its policy to spread its influence in Eastern Sumatra. This brought it into conflict with Johor which had many dependencies in the area. At the same time, the Malay states feared and hated Acheh and preferred the Portuguese to the latter. While the Portuguese could never exercise more than normal control over them, Achinese subjection would entail the disruption of their political structure and total loss of independence. Thus, Acheh's rise to power proved a blessing in disguise for the Por-

tuguese, as it created a balance of power within the Malay Archipelago.

However, peace did not last long between the Portuguese and Johor. In the second half of the 16th century, there were repeated conflicts arising out of commercial rivalry. Johor had managed to attract Asian traders as had Bentan earlier, and its practice of charging less dues attracted more ships to its port. Strategically, it commanded the entrance into the Straits of Malacca and could block the Singapore Straits to shipping from China and the Moluccas thus, discouraging ships from going to Malacca. With its new source of wealth, Johor felt strong enough to attack Malacca in 1587 but a counter-offensive by the Portuguese the following year resulted in defeat for the Malays.

Meantime, the Achinese had sent envoys to Malacca. Acheh was by then gradually weakening due to the absence of strong leadership. A succession of women to the throne had been largely responsible for Acheh's decline in power so that in 1599, it was compelled to seek help from Goa against Johor. At the same time, the Dutch had arrived on the scene and allied themselves with Johor thus, leaving Acheh no option but to seek Portuguese friendship.

Johor's strengthened position found expression in increased trading activities. Its understanding with the Dutch further reduced the authority of the Portuguese outside Malacca.

The Portuguese had held sway over Malacca for over a century. It was only with the advent of a more superior western power that they were finally ousted from Malacca when in 1642, the Dutch in alliance with Johor defeated them decisively.

There seems to be a strong opinion that one of the biggest weaknesses of the Portuguese was their inability to compromise successfully their commercial ambitions with religious sentiment. This may be true for in Albuquerque's policy was seen the ruthless treatment of the Muslim commercial groups so that many left Malacca. The result was that the Portuguese antagonised the Muslim nations of the Malay Archipelago. In short, the Portuguese were never able to combine the two elements in their Eastern enterprise with the consequence that Portuguese-Malay relations were a mixture of wary bargaining and religious distrust. Small wonder that they were unable to extend their influence over the greater part of the Archipelago which was virtually a Muslim region.

Portuguese impact on the Malay Archipelago was, therefore, on the whole essentially commercial and military. It was only in Malacca that they managed to effect a cultural influence which today can be witnessed in Catholicism, Portuguese music and the Eurasians of Portuguese descent. The remains of Portuguese forts too exist today in Malacca to enrich our history.

7

ACHEH AND THE MALAY PENINSULA IN THE 16TH AND 17TH CENTURIES

by
LEE KAM HING

The fall of Malacca in 1511 marked dramatically the collapse of Malay dominance in the Straits of Malacca after a century of political supremacy. Having been on a decline for some time due partly to internal difficulties, the Sultanate came to an abrupt end when she suffered a disastrous defeat at the hands of the Portuguese. But though the city was now taken, the Portuguese never quite succeeded to the role of the previous Sultanate in so far as it concerned the possession of a complete political and commercial preponderance of the Straits. It is certainly not in Portuguese Malacca that one could find a historical continuity to the Malaccan era but if one is to be sought for from the annals of Malaysian history, it is probably to be found in two new states that emerged out of the changing political and commercial fabric of the Archipelago. The first of these two states was Johor, the place to which the last Malacca Sultan fled and from where he sought to recover the grandeur that had been lost. The other was Acheh, a state then rising into prominence in Sumatra.

Few states which today form an integral part of modern Indonesia have been so closely involved in Malaysia's past as Acheh

did in the 16th century. By far, she benefitted most from the changes following the fall of Malacca particularly the conflict which arose between the Portuguese and the other Malay states. Acheh at this juncture was asserting her influence in north Sumatra and had just thrown off whatever semblance of overlordship Pedir previously had over her. The Portuguese takeover of Malacca and their subsequent anti-Islam policies created apprehensions among the Muslim traders and before long, this important branch of the trade which formerly belonged to Malacca shifted elsewhere. North Sumatra, particularly Pedir and Pasai, had been a traditionally strong Muslim area and it was, therefore, to this place that the traders resorted. At the initial stage, Pasai took over most of the transferred trade. But when she came under Portuguese attacks herself in 1523, trade there was so badly affected that Muslim merchants had to look elsewhere again for a safer port. Pasai was soon abandoned and Acheh located further to the west took over as the new Muslim emporium. Infused by the addition of a valuable Muslim trade, Acheh assumed new commercial importance and developed rapidly into an entrepot centre which soon attracted traders from all over the Archipelago and the surrounding region.

But to safeguard her new and increasing importance as an entrepot centre, she found it necessary to carry out a programme of expansion not only to control the essential and valuable commodities but also to prevent Portuguese encroachments into her new found sphere of influence. This she implemented quite successfully under her able and energetic rulers especially Ali Mughayat Shah (1530) who led the early establishment of Achinese power in Sumatra. But quite inevitable, the course of Acheh's expansion brought her into direct collision with the two Peninsular powers namely Portuguese Malacca and Johor both of whom not only had economic and political interests in Sumatra but were equally opposed to Acheh's attempt to carve out an exclusive sphere of control. A struggle for paramountcy broke out subsequently providing a significant theme in the history of 16th century Malaysia. That no single party could impose an obvious superiority resulted in a long drawn conflict, a process which finally weakened them sufficiently for the subsequent successful entry of the Dutch in the 17th century.

Acheh's initial attempts to consolidate her position in Sumatra were immediately challenged by the Portuguese who in 1524 supported Acheh's opponents, Pedir and Pasai. The Portuguese

efforts failed and both these states came under Achinese domination. By their defeat, the Portuguese suffered such a serious setback that any future attempts to gain a foothold in Sumatra was ruled out, thereby leaving the whole island open to Achinese ventures. Encouraged by this success, the Achinese now carried the offensive across the Straits and in 1537, Alauddin Riayat Shah launched the first of the many subsequent expeditions against Malacca but the attack was beaten off and another attempt, sent two years later, met with no greater success.

The need for pepper, an essential commodity for her valuable trade with the Chinese, led Acheh at this time to reach out for the control of the pepper producing districts in Sumatra. But by so doing, she made a deliberate intrusion into the reserves of Johor which laid claim to many of these areas.

Therefore, when Acheh seized Aru in 1539, retaliation came strongly in the following year when a combined Johor, Perak and Siak fleet attacked and successfully recovered the place. But this victory merely sharpened the conflict and in 1564, the Achinese mounted a massive attack on Johor. Johor Lama, the capital, was destroyed and the defeated ruler, Alauddin Shah was taken as prisoner to Acheh where he died in captivity. His son was permitted to assume power in Johor but only on the condition that no hostilities would be waged by his state against Acheh. But immediately on the young Sultan's return to his state, he began making military preparations.

Meanwhile, the Achinese kept up their relentless pressure on Malacca which by this time was more often than not forced to be on the defensive. They managed to foil an Achinese surprise attack in 1547 when the latter made a quiet landing one night but having lost the initiative, they sailed away. Instead, the fleet made its way to the Perlis river where they set up a fort with the object of putting up a prolonged blockade of Malacca. The plan was to reduce her stubborn resistance by imposing a strict control on all shipping along the Straits. It was a threat which Malacca could not possibly ignore and, therefore, despite the arrival of a combined Johor, Perak and Pahang fleet then lying menacingly in the harbour, the Portuguese found it imperative to despatch a fleet against the Achinese in Perlis. The Achinese fleet was defeated and the danger removed, at least, for the moment. On receiving news of the Portuguese victory, the combined Malay fleet waiting at Malacca withdrew.

The conflict between Acheh and the Portuguese took on a bearing close to that of a religious war, for in the minds of the Achinese, they, on their own, represented Muslim resistance against Portuguese intrusion. In this respect, their religious zeal was probably greater than that possessed by Johor which was motivated, in their resistance against the Portuguese, more by political and commercial considerations, and in the main the recovery of Malacca.

The strong religious element could be explained by the fact that Acheh, standing at the crossroad of the main shipping routes running between the Archipelago and India, received the fullest impact of Islamization. It was the last port of call for pilgrims en route to West Asia and at the same time a necessary stop for Muslim scholars and missionaries coming to the region. Moreover, with the positive support given throughout by her rulers, Acheh understandably developed into a centre of Muslim learning. Her active role in the spread of Islam and a sympathetic policy towards Muslim traders drew to her port their voluminous and lucrative trade and her own commercial enterprises took Achinese ships to the Indian coasts and West Asia with all of whom she had official ties. It fell upon Acheh, therefore, to rally around herself a Muslim coalition against Portuguese provocations and vexations and to protect Muslim trade against the monopolistic demands of the enemy. The religious element in Acheh's conflict with the Portuguese is reflected in her overseas alliances. Acheh, during this period, maintained close relations with Calicut, Bengal, Ceylon and most significantly, Turkey. It is believed that in 1564, an Achinese mission reached Turkey where an application was made submitting Acheh to Turkish suzerainty. An acknowledgement was reported to have been made and the mission returned with Turkish mercenaries and artilleries. Quite likely, it was a political expediency aimed against the Portuguese who was their common foe. However, the basis of such an alliance was religion and this could be attested by the fact that in the same year, a naval pact was contracted which included not only these two states but also several other Muslim powers of India. However, Turkey's involvement in the South-East Asian conflict was minimal and whatever assistance that Acheh could obtain from Turkey by virtue of the alliance did not amount to more than just the occasional offer of mercenaries and sporadic supplies of artillery pieces. Acheh also made an attempt

to extend the Islamic alliance to include Japara but this was abortive.

Nevertheless, the overseas connections and her own economic strength gave Acheh a sense of invincibility and in 1568, she launched another fullscale attack on Malacca with an estimated force of twenty thousand men, including some 400 Turkish mercenaries. The small Portuguese garrison withstood the onslaught and the Achinese were forced to withdraw once again.

It was more than just defective military organization that explains Acheh's repeated failures against Malacca. Without doubt, the Portuguese credited themselves extremely well against the odds before them but their ability to survive was also due to Acheh's other distractions with Johor. The Portuguese had at no time to face a concerted attack from these two states but rather their mutual distrust created a balance of power in the region which the Portuguese exploited to their own advantage. Johor perhaps feared the Achinese more and in 1568, allied herself with the Portuguese. In the same year, she sent a fleet to assist Malacca against an imminent attack from the Achinese but the force arrived in time only to watch the hasty retreat of the defeated Achinese. Johor's fears about Acheh became a reality in 1570 when she was subjected to another Achinese attack, and having consequently to move her capital further upriver.

By this period, the influence of Acheh predominated over most of north Sumatra having extended herself down to Bencoolen on the west coast and Batu Bahara on the east. Actual control over these territories was, however, vague and the absence of any direct administration led to frequent breakaways which required reconquering from time to time. In 1575, Acheh turned her attention to Perak. The latter was a vassal state of Johor and in 1540, had assisted in the attack on the Achinese at Aru. Of more importance to Acheh, however, was Perak's tin trade, a commodity valuable enough to prompt her into sending an expenditionary force. Perak was defeated and her royal family taken as prisoners to Acheh. This success gave Acheh a monopoly of the Perak tin trade for almost a quater of a century and with the control of the Sumatran pepper already in her possession, she now occupied an unrivalled position in the Straits trade. The control of these two highly demanded commodities emphasized the commercial preponderance of Acheh and enhanced her position as an entrepot

centre already strategically located to serve the Malacca and Sunda Straits routes.

In 1577, a Perak prince who had been brought over to Acheh as a captive two years earlier and who later married the Sultan's daughter became the succeeding ruler taking the title of Mansur Shah. He later appointed his younger brother as Sultan of Perak and according to traditions went there himself for a visit. Mansur Shah was noted for his religious piety and was a patron to Muslim scholarship in Acheh. It was perhaps during his reign that Acheh moved closest to Johor and the connection was made even closer by the marriage of Mansur Shah's daughter to the Sultan of Johor although this did not prevent a clash between the two states in 1582. Raja Buyong, the young son from this marriage, succeeded Mansur Shah in 1586 but two years later was murdered allegedly by the Achinese Laksamana who then took over power as Sultan Alauddin Riayat Shah.

The apogee of Acheh's power was reached during the reign of Iskandar Muda who certainly was the most celebrated of all her rulers. He continued his predecessor's policy of Achinese aggrandizement and under him Acheh moved into a new phase of expansion. In 1612, he reconquered Aru which was retaken by Johor earlier in the century and which had proved to be a source of friction between them. Johor in turn was attacked in 1613 and, on the capture of Batu Sawar, her ruler, Sultan Alauddin Shah, fled to Bentan but was eventually murdered a few years later on the instructions of Iskandar Muda. The Achinese then appointed his half-brother, Raja Bongsu, in his place who assumed the title of Sultan Abdullah. In the early years of his reign, Achinese influence prevailed in the Johor court and large numbers of Achinese remained in Johor who later assisted in the reconstruction of Batu Sawar. Sultan Abdullah himself was married to a sister of Iskandar Muda.

Apparently, Sultan Abdullah was quite unhappy over Achinese domination of Johor and got in touch with the Dutch. Nothing came out of it and in 1615, he had to comply with the orders of Iskandar Muda to assist in the attack on Malacca. Meanwhile, the former ruler, Sultan Alauddin, who was still alive and supported by the Portuguese, set up his son in Pahang as ruler. Upon this, Iskandar Muda sent his forces against Pahang and brought her under his control. Kedah met the same fate when she succumbed to the Achinese in 1619 and in the process suffered

heavy damages. Her pepper plantations which competed with Achinese pepper were devastated and large groups of her people were transported across to Acheh. In 1620, Perak which had been allowed to drift away in the course of time was reconquered. All these acquisitions both in Sumatra and in the Peninsula strongly underscored the dominance and dynamism of Acheh during the 16th and early 17th centuries.

But amidst these successes, Malacca continued to elude the Achinese between 1537 and 1627, no less than sixteen major expeditions were sent against her but the Portuguese fortress proved impregnable. However, by 1627, Malacca was virtually flanked on all sides by Acheh's vassals and on the sea her ships faced the menace of the Achinese fleet which gradually tightened its blockade around her. Finally, in 1629, Iskandar Muda threw his formidable fleet once more against the Portuguese. The small garrison besieged in Malacca held on desperately and was only relieved by reinforcements that arrived just on time. This was the closest the Achinese came to in their efforts against Malacca but it was also to be their last.

For even before the passing away of Iskandar Muda, the decline of Acheh had already set in. The long years of incessant warfare against the Portuguese and Johor began to tell on her economy. Her resources were stretched to the limits through the construction and arming of those mighty fleets and her cultivation neglected in consequence of a population decline brought about by the wars. Internally, political dissensions developed and factional interests, the most powerful being the Arabs, vied with each other for power. In 1638, Iskandar Muda died and leaving no heirs was succeeded by his son-in-law, Iskandar Thani, a Pahang prince. The new ruler, unfortunately, did not possess the same dominating and forceful personality of his predecessor and allowed the Achinese chiefs, in a very short time, to assume an increasing proportion of power.

With the capture of Malacca in 1641, the era of Achinese conquests and supremacy came to a close. It is historical irony that while her rise could be traced to the fall of the Malacca Sultanate, the period of her glories should so symbolically end with the fall of Malacca a second time. The increasing influence of the Dutch brought about another change in the political and commercial pattern of the region, a change which affected Acheh adversely but

which she no longer possessed the viability to overcome. She lost all effective control over her vassal states and could only watch helplessly as the Dutch obviated her remaining influence in the Malay Peninsula.

8

THE JOHOR-RIAU EMPIRE IN THE 18th CENTURY

by
KHASNOR BINTI JOHAN

Johor-Riau deserves attention befitting an Empire which, in its wake, provides a vital link in the continuity and perpetuation of Malay tradition born of the Malacca Sultanate. It represents the shift in the nucleus of Malay life from Malacca to Johor-Riau rising to its apogee in the course of the 18th century as a thriving centre of political, economic and social activities.

The beginnings of the Johor Empire followed the expulsion of Sultan Mahmud by the Portuguese in 1511 when short work was made of Malay defences at Malacca. Mahmud escaped to the south into Johor eventually to seek refuge on the island of Bentan where, from time to time, the Malays attempted unsuccessfully to recover their lost Kingdom.

With Mahmud's death, his son and successor moved onto the mainland of Johor where, for the next two centuries, he and his descendants strove to find a new capital. Shifting from point to point along the Johor river, the Royal house managed to rise and shape a semblance of the Malacca court, but they were not able to gain their former footing politically or economically for nowhere in Johor was a site well suited for a capital to rival Portuguese Malacca. At the same time, the rise of Acheh in the 16th century

and the presence of the Portuguese led to a power struggle in the Straits. For a time, when it looked as though Acheh was to gain complete supremacy over the area, Johor and Portuguese Malacca allied themselves to ward off a common enemy but as soon as Johor managed to hold its own against its enemies, the Malays resumed hostilities with the Portuguese.

The period of uneasy peace and intermittant warfare dragged on into the 17th century and the arrival of the Dutch saw the Malays form an alliance with the former against the Portuguese and Achinese. The outcome was the capture of Malacca by the Dutch in 1641, a victory which marked the departure of the Portuguese from the scene. At about the same period, the untimely death of the Achinese warrior-king, Sultan Iskandar Muda, removed Achinese threat and influence from the Straits. The Dutch concentrated more on trading activities than on local politics, and the Malays had little quarrel with them. But a prolonged period of peace with little prosperity and the absence of external challenges encouraged lethargy and internal strife, leaving Johor weak and almost defenceless in the face of new adversaries in the early 18th century. This new threat came from the Minangkabau and the Bugis.

By this time, Johor had passed into the hands of the Bendahara, Sultan Abdul Jalil Shah, following the death of Sultan Mahmud Shah. In many ways, the period marked a turning point in the history of Johor. A new phase had begun, with the transfer of power from the last Sultan of the Malacca line to his Bendahara and subsequent events were to prove the immense significance of the change. It brought into play external forces, the Minangkabaus and the Bugis, within the internal political framework, and in time much power passed from the hands of the Malays to a somewhat alien group.

Abdul Jalil's right to the throne was contested by a Minangkabau Prince, Raja Kechil, who claimed himself to be the posthumous son of Sultan Mahmud Shah II. By a surprise attack on Johor, Raja Kechil succeeded in subduing Abdul Jalil, made himself Sultan but retained the latter's services as Bendahara. The conflict that ensued promised a profitable hunting ground for such opportunists as the Bugis. Adventurous by nature and recognised for their prowess in war, the famous five Bugis brothers were requested to assist the Bendahara's family against the Minangkabaus. Humiliation and helplessness drove Abdul Jalil

and his family to seek an alliance with the Bugis — a lesser of two evils perhaps, as will be explained later.

As a pre-condition to Bugis support, the five brothers demanded as reward in the event of victory, the office of Yang di-Pertuan Muda or Under-king to remain a privilege and prerogative of the Bugis and their descendants. Thus, after the victory over Raja Kechil, the promise was fulfilled and an agreement was reached in what was termed as the *Aturan Setia Antara Melayu dan Bugis*. This system of Under-king was the unique feature of the Johor-Riau Empire.

The restoration of the Bendahara line onto the throne and the beginning of Bugis ascendency in the Johor-Riau Archipelago made certain the continuity of the Malay line of kings. But the price paid was high indeed, for it marked the exercise of actual control by the Bugis and the virtual surrender of Malay power to a somewhat alien group. Any power the Malay ruler retained was more nominal than actual. Nevertheless, the Bugis helped to keep the Empire intact. They represented the last bulwark of Malay defences and resistance against the European onslaught, for it was only with their decline that the Johor-Riau Empire fell prey to the Dutch and British designs, leading to the arbitrary division of the Empire into two different spheres of influence in 1824.

The system of indirect rule evolved was a new feature in Malay administrative history. As the power behind the throne, the Bugis were supreme in matters of war and peace. Their paramountcy within the Empire was further guaranteed by a system of marriage alliances between the Bugis and members of the Malay royal houses. The advantages of such alliances were immediately apparent to both parties. The Malays themselves did not fail to recognise in them a means of retaining the loyalty of the Bugis.

But Bugis success excited jealousy and resentment from the Malay nobility who regarded their participation in the government as a usurpation of Malay power. They objected to the free hand the Bugis had in the administration of an Empire that was not their own. This was the start of antagonism and conflict between the Bugis and the Malays — a situation in which each tried to undermine the other.

That the Bugis were able to hold their own against Malay opposition was due to the unwavering loyalty and support of their Bugis followers. Perhaps this solidarity was born out of the need to stand together, thus making up for what they lacked in numerical

strength. The Bugis were never very large in numbers and were scattered all over the Archipelago. Another point in their favour was their ability to sum up a situation to their advantage for on one occasion, when conditions looked explosive, the Bugis withdrew from Johor to Linggi, a shrewd strategy to avoid open conflict. Even in this instance, their prestige and reputation remained intact for they had withdrawn with dignity as the wronged party. Then they waited for the most opportune moment to make an effective comeback.

Internal rivalry, however, did not hinder economic prosperity. The choice of Riau as the capital of the Empire was far sighted and wise. Its strategic value did not escape the observation of the Bugis. Though Riau produced very little within itself, it was situated along the main trade routes between India and China and provided a link between the Indian Ocean and the Malay Archipelago. Thus, it was as an emporium of trade that Riau gained its fame.

Essentially a nation of traders, the Bugis, having travelled far and wide, had acquired too much experience not to be able to make success of their business venture in Riau. Needless to say, Riau's natural qualities were in no small way a contributory factor to its success. By this time too, Malacca had dwindled into a port of secondary importance for the Dutch were more interested in Indonesian rather than Malayan economic potentialities. As such, Malacca was much neglected, serving its purpose merely as a convenient collecting centre of Malayan tin.

Trade was of a seasonal nature following the trade winds and monsoons so that during the peak periods traders of all descriptions gathered at the mouth of the Riau river. There were Bengalis, Indians, Europeans, Chinese, Siamese and traders from the Malay Archipelago. From China came silk and porcelain; from India came opium and cloth; gold and silver from the Philippines; firearms from Europe and spices and other foodstuff from the Malay world.

The only produce of some significance from Riau was gambier — said to have been introduced through the initiative of the Bugis. Plantations were opened and hired labour brought in to work them. As early as this period, the Chinese had participated in the economic activity of Riau. They worked the gambier and spice plantations. While little is known about the relationship between the Chinese and the Malay-Bugis communities, intermarriages between them were not unknown.

Riau thus established for itself a commercial reputation to merit comparison with 15th century Malacca. The splendour and fame of the court was a reflection of the days of 15th and early 16th century Malacca. Now the Johor-Riau Empire could boast not only of its prosperity but also of its power. By the 18th century, Pahang was already a vassal state of Johor and Trengganu, through a marriage alliance, acknowledged the suzerainty of the more powerful Empire. Under Bugis influence which had spread far and wide, Matan, Mempawah, Sambas and Kampar preserved their peace by maintaining friendly relations with Johor-Riau. On the Peninsula, Selangor and Linggi had been subject to Bugis control while Perak and Kedah were by no means free from Bugis interference.

However, Johor-Riau's triumph was short-lived. Dependent totally on Bugis strength, the downfall of this nation of warriors inevitably heralded its decay. Bugis power was a common cause for alarm among Malays and Dutch alike. The Bugis were a threat to Malay sovereignty though the former never attempted to oust their Malay masters altogether. On the other hand, the Dutch feared Bugis rivalry in the economic field. The need for self-preservation was so great that both parties allied themselves to curb Bugis activities. While the Malays managed to avoid an open conflict with the Bugis, the Dutch engaged them in war in the second half of the 18th century. As with Malacca which had its Hang Tuah, Johor-Riau also possessed its own hero in the person of Raja Haji whose exploits are today legendary. It was only with his death that the Dutch were able to capture Riau and suppress the Bugis in the 1780's.

Malay power structure was thus considerably weakened without Bugis support for in the first place, it was the Bugis who built up the Johor-Riau Empire, after the second decade of the 18th century. Now, it was only a matter of time before Johor-Riau fell to pieces.

Despite their decline, the Bugis, through the Johor-Riau Empire, had provided a continuity in the Malay royal line from Malacca. The Johor-Riau Empire was also responsible to a certain degree in preventing the Dutch from conquering the interior of the Malay Peninsula for the Dutch had to be on their guard against Johor-Riau. A more permanent contribution of the Johor-Riau Empire was its literary and historical heritage. Two books written

in the mid-19th century Riau, the *Tuhfat ul-Nafis* and the *Salasilah Raja-raja Melayu dan Bugis*, provide us with important historical sources pertaining to the Johor-Riau Empire and the power rivalry in the Malay world.

9

THE DUTCH IN THE STRAITS OF MALACCA

by
DR. J. KATHIRITHAMBY — WELLS

In the panorama of modern Peninsular history, characterised by fluctuating power struggles and sharp commercial rivalries, one factor remained constant; namely, the competition over the tin trade of the Straits of Malacca. Where the European powers of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were concerned, the attainment of this objective was tied up with the contest for Malacca. As these European powers, the Portuguese and the Dutch, were essentially interested in trade and not territory, they aimed at controlling, through the popular entrepot of Malacca, not only the trade with Indonesia but local trade as well. For nearly a century and a half, the emporium of Malacca, founded and nurtured to its heights of glory by the Malay Sultanate, held the attraction of a talisman for the early European colonialists. Having persisted through a series of unsuccessful attacks, the Portuguese finally captured the Malay capital in 1511 and made it their settlement in South-East Asia. Malacca was, however, always an uneasy one, challenged by the powerful Acheh Sultanate, and its attacks on the Portuguese town and shipping. Their situation reached a crisis during the early decades of the next century which witnessed the entry of Dutch activity in the area under the *Vereenigde Oost-Indische Campagnie*

and Acheh's greatest period of overseas expansion under Sultan Iskandar Muda. The Achinese warrior emperor was bent upon sweeping aside foreign and indigenous powers alike in gaining full mastery over the Straits of Malacca. The wandering royal house of the old Malacca Sultanate, which still dreamed of reinstating itself, had its capital at Batu Sawar seized and ravaged in 1613 and again in 1615. In 1617, Pahang was taken by Acheh, and Kedah and Perak were captured in quick succession. By this time, the Dutch were making rapid progress in their economic ventures in Indonesia. In 1619, they established their base at Jakarta which was renamed Batavia. They then expelled the British from the Spice Islands and gained a virtual monopoly of the valuable spice trade.

In the Straits of Malacca, however, the Dutch made slow progress. They found in Iskandar Muda a rival contestant for Malacca and, although fear and apprehension of Acheh led Johor to conclude a treaty alliance with the Dutch, relations between the two parties were never stable. This was largely because the Dutch failed to assist Johor in the face of danger, as during the Achinese invasions. With reference to Acheh itself, the great Iskandar Muda died in 1636 and was succeeded by Iskandar Thani, a prince of Pahang reared in the Achinese court. Though the new ruler abandoned the militant expansionist policy of his predecessor and was relatively well disposed towards the Dutch, he was not prepared to assist them in the invasion of Malacca. Nevertheless, in the absence of any serious ambition on the part of Iskandar Thani to acquire Malacca, the field was left open to the Dutch to launch a major onslaught on the Portuguese stronghold. Johor assisted the invasion by the provision of a fleet of 40 ships manned by several thousand men for which she later earned no reward.

The Dutch seige of Malacca lasted six months, from June 1640 to January of the following year. The Portuguese fought bravely, but severe conditons of famine, which seriously depleted the town's population, finally compelled them to surrender. Of the total population of about 20,000 which is estimated to have existed under the Portuguese, only 2,700 inhabitants, including three to four hundred Chinese, survived the attack. The sad spectacle which awaited the Dutch in the town did not discourage them. They immediately set about re-organising the place and repairing the fortifications. Soon, Malacca which had once been dotted with buildings dedicated to the glory of the Catholic saints took on the

astute business character of the new masters. Unlike its Portuguese predecessor, the Dutch Company did not believe in mixing business with religion and did not actively engage itself in spreading the Protestant faith; but its own servants were obliged to attend services daily and the practice of Catholicism in the town was greatly restricted.

Commerce was the pre-occupation of the Dutch, and they immediately sought ways and means of cornering the most important local product, tin, first by laying claim as inheritors to Portuguese rights in the area and, second, by acquiring new treaty concessions. They asserted suzerainty rights over Naning and Rembau which by virtue of their having been part of Malacca territory during the Malay Sultanate had been tributaries of Portuguese Malacca. A Dutch treaty in 1641 with Naning and Rembau, guaranteed the payment of the traditional 10% tithes on crops and the regular flow of food supplies, particularly rice and cattle, vital to the Malacca populace. Compliance with the treaty stipulations was of course another matter, particularly because the tithe was found too burdensome by the people of Naning and Rembau. There was Dutch military intervention, first in 1643 and then in 1675 and, both times, after a tenacious struggle, Rembau and Naning submitted. The Dutch won the second campaign at the cost of nearly 8,000 florins only subsequently to abandon the difficult collection of tithes in favour of a nominal annual rice tribute.

The Dutch met even greater disappointment in the pursuit of their prime objective of gaining a total monopoly of the tin and cloth trade. Dutch efforts in this direction usually took the form of monopoly treaties and, in the event of non-compliance, they resorted to naval blockades and interception of shipping. The treaties themselves were of a very severe and arbitrary nature. In 1642, Johor was persuaded to sign one such treaty. It was agreed that all vessels sailing to areas north of Malacca, which covered the tin producing states of Kedah, Perak and Selangor, should obtain Dutch passes first. This was followed by treaties with Ujong Salang, or Puket, promising the sale of tin. None of these states honoured their treaty obligations while Perak held on stubbornly against conceding any promise at all which would affect the freedom of her trade. To the chagrin of the Dutch, large amounts of tin were carried away by Achinese, Javanese and traders from Bengal, Surat and the Coromandel with whom the tin states

preferred to transact because of the superior quality cloth they brought and the higher price they offered for tin. As a means of bringing pressure upon Perak to comply with Dutch demands, a treaty was forced from its suzerain power, Acheh, promising to share the tin trade of Perak. The Perak inhabitants immediately expressed their disapproval of the treaty by murdering the Dutch officials at their trading station. A move to re-establish the trading station in 1655 met similar failure. The Dutch, thereupon, imposed a three year blockade of Perak and Acheh. Because of it, Acheh suffered such a dire shortage of cloth supplies that, rather than lose its trade permanently with the Muslim traders, it chose to submit to Dutch terms surrendering two-thirds of the Perak tin trade. Even so, Perak succeeded in having its way by threatening Acheh that if forced to comply with the treaty, she would transfer her allegiance to Acheh's traditional rival, Johor.

Acheh was obliged to take heed of Perak's warning since after the mid-seventeenth century, Johor experienced a new lease of power first under Sultan Abdul Jalil Shah, and then under the Bugis. During the reign of Abdul Jalil Shah, Johor renewed her ties with the east Sumatran states and aspired to supplant Acheh's hold on Perak's tin. This was easily achieved by the Bugis adventurers from the Celebes under whose dynamic guidance Johor's influence expanded over the tin producing states. No doubt, perennial dynastic squabbles and tense rivalry between the Malay and Bugis cliques hindered Johor's rise to a powerful enough position to challenge the Dutch politically. Nevertheless, commercially, Bugis ascendance in Johor and in the tin states of Selangor, Kedah and Perak became a matter of serious concern to the Dutch. While exercising actual control or influence over the sources of tin, the Bugis established an entrepot trade at Riau island with its superior port facilities.

The appeal of Sultan Sulaiman of Johor in 1754 for Dutch assistance against the Bugis temporarily weakened their position, giving the Dutch a golden opportunity to sign a commercial treaty with Johor. The treaty promised the Dutch preferential and taxfree trade in all Johor territories, a monopoly over tin in Klang, Linggi and Selangor and also stipulated the imposition of discriminatory taxes against Muslim and Indian traders visiting Johor. The clauses were obviously ruinous to Johor but it was the Bugis who once again frustrated the schemes of the Dutch. Shrewd politicians that they were, the Bugis soon patched up their quarrels with the

Yang di-Pertuan Besar of Johor and nominally made peace with the Dutch. Daing Kemboja, the Bugis Yang di-Pertuan Muda at the Johor court, readily paid lip service to the commercial treaty with the Dutch, but at the same time, continued to encourage a flourishing trade at Riau. Here, foreign traders, including a large number of British private traders, found a haven where they collected tin and other local produce, free from the cumbersome Dutch restrictions, and distributed cloth and opium. The greater popularity and prosperity of Riau over Malacca during this period is sufficiently attested by the population of at least 50,000 Malays in Riau as against the total population of 10,000 at Malacca. Whatever tin the Dutch managed to collect for export was with extreme difficulty and it became increasingly obvious that the Bugis accommodated the Dutch only very grudgingly.

Raja Haji who succeeded his uncle, Daing Kemboja, as Yang di-Pertuan Muda of Johor, was less tolerant of the Dutch and the tense situation finally culminated in a rupture of relations. What followed was a Dutch invasion of Riau, and Johor's retaliatory attack on Malacca with assistance from Rembau and Selangor. The clash between the Dutch and the Bugis marked the final phase of three centuries of rivalry for supremacy over the west Peninsular region. The Dutch were hard pressed by the Bugis who were led by the great romantic warrior figure, Raja Haji. As Dutch naval power in the East had reached a low ebb during the course of the Anglo-Dutch war in Europe between 1780 and 1784, Batavia was unable to relieve the seige of Malacca. It was only the timely arrival of a squadron from Europe under Admiral Jacob Pieter van Braam which saved the fate of Malacca. Decisive action followed and the Bugis force were beaten while Raja Haji himself was killed. The power of the Bugis was irrecoverably shattered and Johor submitted to the Dutch. The post of Yang di-Pertuan Muda, traditionally held by the Bugis under-king, was abolished and the remaining state functionaries were allowed to continue with Dutch overall supervision. The glory of the old Malacca sultanate, perpetuated by the Johor sultanate, reached its nadir. It was, however, the Bugis defeat which constituted the actual triumph for the Dutch. Had it been otherwise, the Johor Sultanate would have survived a little longer perhaps but eventually, a final clash with the Western powers was inevitable. Measured against the magnitude of the political victory scored by them, what the Dutch earned materially, as a result of it, was insignificant. Through the

hostile and arbitrary commercial policies adopted by them, Malacca's trade had been steadily deteriorating. Besides, hardly were the Bugis dealt with, when the Dutch faced a new threat in the Straits of Malacca in the form of their traditional competitors, the British, who founded Penang in 1786 and Singapore in 1819. As compared to the free and unrestricted trade established at the British ports, the Dutch commercial structure, based on monopolisation and restriction, had remained unaltered over the years; Malacca, not surprisingly, lost out against the rival British ports.

By 1824, when the Dutch withdrew their interests for all time from the Peninsula, leaving Malacca to the British, the once mighty eastern emporium, the object of so many rivalries, was a shadow of its former self, relegated to the backwaters of trade. Its glorious past, however, was never forgotten and what survived through time, the remains of the fortifications, the church on the hill and the impressive Stadthouse stand tribute to the memory. Malacca, inherited from the old Malay Sultanate and carried into the present time under its original name, could be considered the Peninsula's longest and most direct link with the Malay past. The Dutch association of nearly 180 years with the town remains an integral part of that heritage.

10

NINETEENTH CENTURY MALAY PENINSULA — I

by
KHOO KAY KIM

Even those who have managed to acquire only a general knowledge of the history of the Malay Peninsula in the 19th century should be able to recall those events which have been taught and re-taught in schools, colleges and university. Many of these are spelt out in topical forms in the history syllabuses prescribed for study and those which perhaps come most readily to mind are the foundation of Singapore, the Anglo-Dutch treaty of 1824, the establishment and transfer of the Straits Settlements, the growth of the tin industry with the simultaneous increase in Chinese population, the British forward movement of 1874, the development of British administration, the formation of the Federated Malay States in 1896 and the beginning of rubber plantations. That these are historical facts, is not disputed by even historians with divergent interests.

What then remains to be said about the 19th century Malay Peninsula that has not already been said at great length? The answer may not be obvious to those who are accustomed to studying history within a political framework or who conceive history as the study of *great* events and *great* people. But the moment one introduces a shift in perspective, it will be seen that those topics which have hitherto been given exclusive treatment no

longer suffice. And one such perspective is the study of the evolution of what we now call the Malaysian society. Within the context of the problems we now face, the need to give due emphasis and, therefore, clarity to such a subject is, I think, obvious. And we can begin at no more appropriate point than with the Malay society which in the 19th century provided the nucleus for the development of what is now an extremely complex society.

I say 'Malay society' but, in effect, at the commencement of the 19th century, the Malay Peninsula was an aggregate of independent states rather than a political entity. Ideally, therefore, any historical study of the Malay Peninsula in the 19th century should treat the Malay States separately. That this would be impracticable in the brief confine of this paper is self-evident. Hence, one must look for some semblance of unity among the Malay States and, to my mind, it is to be found in the culture of the indigenous people. At the beginning of the 19th century, the dominant population in the Peninsula was made up of Malays who derived from various territories in the Malay Archipelago. It was the Malays who provided the Peninsular states with the political, social and economic systems which we find existing at the commencement of the period under discussion. Admittedly, within the broad sphere of Malay culture itself, there were regional differences. But, for the present purpose, it is proposed to focus attention on the similarities rather than the differences and in discussing the evolution of society, the Peninsula is loosely treated as one socio-cultural unit.

What was the broad structure of Malay society like at the beginning of the 19th century? At the apex of the political system was the Yang di-Pertuan, the central authority; below him, a large number of title holders, both of royal and non-royal descent, collectively referred to as *orang besar-besar*. Their functions were extremely diversified, ranging from those which were primarily ceremonial to those of an administrative and military nature. It was also an important function of the *orang besar-besar* to elect each new Yang di-Pertuan from among members of the royalty. At the base of the political system were the masses, generally referred to as *rakyat*. The social structure was based closely on the political structure: on the one hand, there were those who ruled and, therefore, enjoyed all forms of privileges and on the other, the masses whose very existence was based on the need to serve the privileged class.

In fact, the value system of the Malay society particularly emphasized the submission of the masses to the members of the upper social strata. The indigenous Malay economic system was originally probably of a subsistence type. Rice was the staple food supplemented by fruits, fish and other forms of edible jungle produce which were easily procurable. But, throughout at least the three centuries preceding the 19th century, trade was also one form of occupation; its significance, however, has yet to be investigated. It is pertinent to add, however, that even in the economic sphere, it was the ruling privileged class which provided the initiative and leadership. Until the early decades of the 19th century, it was the *orang besar-besar* who made up the "entrepreneur" class among the Malays. Exports and imports as well as investments in mining enterprise had to be channelled through them. Perhaps the first noticeable change which occurred in the 19th century was the establishment of a monetary economy in the Malay states. One cannot be certain, of course, that the system emerged only in the 19th century. But, speaking of the Malay states *as a whole* and bearing in mind that the volume of economic exchange between these states and outside territories increased sharply only with the foundation of the Straits Settlements, it is reasonable to speculate that the widespread establishment of a monetary economy took place in the early 19th century.

It is also necessary here to point out that changes which are easily observable do not always adequately reflect the overall situation. This is the one weakness in many history works on the Malay Peninsula which have in anyway touched on the subject of change. The tendency to concentrate on politically and economically aggressive alien elements which infiltrated into Malay society as the primary factor of change is unsound because it ignores the simple fact that for the greater part of the 19th century, it was the indigenous-traditional systems which provided the foundation for the new politico-economic superstructure emerging in the peninsular states so that the very introduction of new elements into Malay society did not take place independent of the Malay ruling elite though it may be argued that, in practice, they were powerless to check the tide of change. It is, at the same time, undeniable that for the greater part of the 19th century, there was on the part of the Malay ruling elite, resistance to change as well as a willingness to accept systems which were completely novel. However, the introduction of new ideas and systems apart, within

the indigenous-traditional systems themselves, conflicts were common and they often led to change. Although such change generally occurred within the basic existing social structure, it was nonetheless a departure from old practice. This is particularly evident in the principles governing the succession systems which were modified from time to time.

Whether such changes were radical or not, it is, I think, clear that the ruling elite formed the dynamic group in Malay society and they continued to play a significant role in the evolution of the indigenous traditional social system until their position was completely undermined by the establishment of British administration. Existing historical records, of course, make it easier for the historian to speak of external factors affecting change. But even here, care has to be exercised not to over-estimate the direct role played by British influence. To my mind, the challenge to existing indigenous traditional Malay systems from the outside began with the commencement of sustained economic development in the second quarter of the 19th century. This followed the growth of the Straits Settlements which saw a rapid increase in the accumulation of capital that had in turn sought a convenient and lucrative outlet for investments. And since a number of commodities available in the Malay states were demanded in both Europe and the surrounding Asian countries, a significant proportion of Straits economic enterprise was directed towards the appropriation of these commodities for export. The increase in the volume of trade suited well the position of the Malay ruling elite who could gain much by virtue of the fact that they controlled the economy of the Malay states. The process of economic development, however, was eventful. Competition arose not only among Straits entrepreneurs but also among members of the Malay ruling elite and this, in turn, led to serious political conflicts. The situation was aggravated when the Chinese population increased substantially, beginning from the 1850's. This was particularly so because the existing Malay society failed to devise an effective administrative mechanism to cope with the Chinese problem. While on the one hand the Malay rulers kept aloof from the Chinese masses and, at the lower level, the two races even lived physically apart, on the other hand, a rather conciliatory attitude was adopted towards the Chinese headmen so much so that by the early 1879's at least, we find the Malay leaders in the tin-bearing states taking a partisan stand in Chinese disputes. In the Malay

society itself, there had been no central authority with sufficent power to maintain political stability. With the merger of Malay and Chinese conflicts, the political situation which ensued was indeed turbulent.

If economics was a singularly important factor affecting change, it follows that only those states which became important centres of economic activities received more fully the impact of new ideas and systems. Indeed, this was the case. Initially, all the Malay states were accorded equal importance by Straits economic interests. In effect, the eastern Peninsula had a slight edge. It was certainly the more densely populated area in the early 19th century, with its traditional reputation for producing gold, which captivated the attention of merchants and would-be investors. It was also that region which benefitted from a direct trade with Singapore, the most successful of the three settlements. But physical environment soon proved to be an insurmountable obstacle because of six months of the year, no commercial vessel could call at the eastern states owing to the fury of the monsoon. Added to this, in the 1860's, the expansion of the tin-plate industry in Britain witnessed a sharp rise in the demand for tin and since the western states contained the richest tin-bearing land, the greater proportion of the Straits capital and commercial energy were rapidly directed towards this area. With geography also favouring communication between this region and the Straits Settlements, the eastern states were soon left far behind in the economic race. The extent to which tin affected development in all spheres can also be seen from the 'lag' suffered by Kedah and Johor despite their proximity to Penang and Singapore respectively when compared to Perak, Selangor and Sungai Ujong. Between Kedah and Johor, the greater freedom with which the *de facto* ruler of Johor could act in his dealings with the Straits entrepreneurs compared to his counterpart in Kedah who had to live under the shadow of Siam, must be deemed an important factor accounting for the obvious difference in the rate of socio-economic progress.

It was the possibility of a large scale economic development with capital investment from Britain which made it meaningful even to consider the establishment of British administration in Perak, Selangor, Sungai Ujong and subsequently Pahang and the rest of Negri Sembilan. The same reason made it vital that the construction of roads and railways should be undertaken once British administration had been established. As these transport

and communication projects were concentrated in the interior where the tin mines were located, we find that by the end of the 19th century, direct links had been established between the tin mining areas and the entrepot ports of Penang and Singapore so that the importance of the traditional riverine ports declined. Towns also grew up by the 1880's which served as not only commercial centres but also political-administrative centres. With the beginning of urbanization, the riverine sttlements were completely eclipsed as they served no useful purpose within the new political and economic structure. Since the mid-19th century, the Chinese mining population had been concentrated in the interior settlements and so from the 1880's onwards, they formed the bulk of the population in the urban areas. The rapid economic development which had taken place in the tin-bearing areas led to a higher degree of differentiation in occupational and commercial activities. The complicated network of economic system which emerged was controlled largely by the Chinese at the parochial level; and since the Chinese economic system was based on kinship and territorial-dialect affinities, there was little opportunity for outsiders to penetrate it.

Until about the mid-19th century, the Malay ruling elite had been able to play a positive role in the economy of the Peninsula as they controlled investments in the tin mines. After the Chinese merchants had been allowed to participate directly in the economic development of the Malay states, the role of the Malay ruling elite was confined to the collection of duties on exports and imports and to the allotment of concessions to speculators. With the establishment of British administration, even this function was taken away from them and, to all intents and purposes, they were able merely to play the role of government servants. This had important repercussions on Malay-Chinese social relationship at the higher level for whereas the Chinese merchants and headmen and the Malay ruling elite were once mutually dependent, the Chinese could now bypass the Malay rulers to deal directly with the British administrators.

Even with the breakdown of the indigenous traditonal Malay political system, the Malay masses did not immediately rise above their old status for the new systems introduced were largely of an administrative-economic nature. The value system of the Malays had not been greatly impaired. On the contrary, it was precisely this that the British administration had endeavoured to preserve by

giving a semblance of political-administrative authority to the traditional ruling elite and by establishing a separate educational system which did not aim at altering the world-view of the Malays.

Hence, by the close of the 19th century, we see the emergence of a hetorogenous society which was divided not only along racial lines but also on geographical and economic lines. There was an increasingly wide gap between the urban and the rural areas in terms of economic progress and also culturally. In the urban areas, a new value system emerged which was essentially materialistic: the system of stratification was based primarily on wealth and colour quite unlike the traditional adherence to birth, a criterion which was still subscribed to in the rural areas. Where there is frequent communication between the urban and rural areas, it would be possible for the former to effect a significant influence on the latter. In the case of 19th century Malaya, the urban areas were able to exist largely independent of the rual areas so that contact between the two was superficial. The Malay rural society would have remained in darkness for a much longer spell but for the fact that at this stage a narrow door was open for the receipt of more enlightened influence from outside in the form of the reformist movement in West Asia. But this was a phenomenon of early 20th century Malayan history.

11

NINETEENTH CENTURY MALAY PENINSULA — II

by
KHOO KAY KIM

In a previous account of the history of the Malay Peninsula in the 19th century, emphasis was centred primarily on the tin producing states of Perak, Selangor and Negeri Sembilan. It was in these states, which experienced drastic economic and political reorganization, that a proportionately large alien population grew up followed by the establishment of towns with a variety of modern amenities borrowed from western technological culture. These towns served not only as distributing centres but also administrative capitals. The new environment accordingly gave birth to a new set of value system while the economically less developed areas, populated largely by Malays, retained much of its indigenous traditional culture.

Reference has also been made previously to the cultural bond which provides for the identification of the Peninsular States as a distinct society in South-East Asia but bearing in mind, of course, that within the fold of the Malay cultural world, there is justification for including Sulu, Brunei and the Sumatran states. However, this is not the place to elaborate on this subject for it was not a 19th century phenomenon but an earlier one and, in fact, at the beginning of the 19th century, the dismemberment of the

Malay world was taking place more clearly than ever before owing to changes in the South-East Asian environment.

While on the one hand, Perak, Selangor and Negeri Sembilan have been isolated from the rest of the Peninsula for the purpose of discussion on the grounds that they, more than any of the other Malay States, experienced more fully the impact of new economic forces in South-East Asia, on the other hand, no positive unifying theme can easily be put forward for a broad treatment of the other states. It has continually been emphasized that the Malay States can be seen culturally as one entity but it has also been pointed out that within Malay culture itself there were significant regional differences but since this is not the place for an elaborate treatment of each of the Malay States, other unifying themes would have to be used to provide for a group treatment of these states. One convenient device would be their geographical situation and it has not been unusual for the Peninsular States to be divided into three broad geographical divisions: firstly, the northern Malay States comprising Perlis, Kedah, Kelantan and Trengganu; secondly the western Malay States consisting of Perak, Selangor and Negeri Sembilan and thirdly, the eastern Malay States made up of Pahang and Johor. But such a division is certainly less than satisfactorily precise because there is, for example, no justifiable argument for including Trengganu in the northern division but not in the eastern division. It is submitted here that it would be more logical to divide them also on the basis of the particular sphere of political influence to which they belonged and here, we can immediately identify Perlis, Kedah and Kelantan as those states which were clearly subject to Siamese political influence. There are good reasons for arguing that Trengganu was no less so but its geographical location alone did ensure that Siamese interference was far less substantial than that in Kelantan, for example. But, more important still, at the commencement of the 19th century, as it was in earlier times, Trengganu was more closely tied, politically, to Johor than to Siam. Johor here, it may be added, refers not to Johor proper but to the *kerajaan* Johor founded by the last effective ruler of Malacca, Sultan Mahmud Shah, which, at the zenith of its power was said to have included Kelantan and Patani as well as some of the territories in Sumatra. It is for this reason that Trengganu together with Pahang and Johor proper will be discussed today under the heading of the eastern Malay States.

Historians are agreed that by the beginning of the 19th

century, the *kerajaan* of Johor had declined considerably. The failure to resolve internal conflicts was a significant contributory factor. The growth of Bugis power in the 18th century which gave Johor its greatest strength was also its greatest weakness. Politically aggressive and economically restless, the Bugis made their impact felt throughout the western Peninsula where they established their own *kerajaan* in Selangor and were often appealed to by various Malay potentates for military assistance. Economically, they turned Riau into the most successful trading centre in South-East Asia in the 18th century. And the decline of Riau dated from the decisive defeat which the Bugis suffered at the hands of the Dutch in 1784. Of no less significance to Johor history was the perpetual conflict between the Malays and the Bugis and since both the immediate rulers of Trengganu and Pahang were Malays, they tended to draw further and further away from the political centre in Riau-Lingga owing to the large amount of power wielded by the Bugis there. But, if by the early 19th century, political relationship between Riau-Lingga and the *jajahan* of Pahang and Trengganu was less than nominal, there were still significant kinship as well as sentimental ties between the Malay ruling families in all these territories. Until at least the mid-nineteenth century, there was certainly no unanimous refusal to acknowledge the Yang di-Pertuan at Lingga as the presiding head of the Johor *kerajaan*.

If the Dutch had contributed to the breakdown of the Johor *kerajaan*, the presence of the English in Singapore hastened the process of dismemberment. A great deal of significance has been attached to the appointment of Tengku Hussain as Yang di-Pertuan of Johor by Raffles. It has been argued that this provided the final blow to the collapse of the Johor *kerajaan*. Existing historical data do not fully substantiate this. What is particularly striking is that the Malays, in general, did not take the appointment seriously for Sultan Hussain was, in contemporary Malay documents, referred to not as Yang di-Pertuan Johor but Yang di-Pertuan Selat. Certainly, it was unresolved internal conflict which continued to weaken the *kerajaan* but by the second quarter of the 19th century, the pattern had changed. Malay-Bugis conflict was no longer the vital issue.

The Resident at Telok Blanga, Singapore, was Temenggung Ibrahim, son of the Temenggung who was a signatory to the treaty ceding Singapore to the British. Ibrahim's associates were made up largely of enterprising and venturesome British entrepreneurs,

among the most important of whom were W.W. Ker, founder of the firm subsequently known as Paterson, Simons & Co. and the then leading lawyer of Singapore, W. Napier. Even at this early stage, Singapore had achieved the reputation of being the most successful trading centre in South-East Asia. Though Singapore relied primarily on the trans-continental trade between Europe, India and China, the leading merchants there were always on the look out for other avenues of commercial expansion and to that extent they were no less interested in establishing trading connections with the hinterland although at this stage they were more inclined to do so indirectly for the Chinese served as the link between the Malay states and the British agency houses. Kelantan, Trengganu, Pahang and Johor benefitted considerably from the growth of Singapore for these alone of the Peninsular states had a direct trade with Singapore. The desirability of British commercial houses attempting a more direct investment in the Malay states had always been acknowledged but to the British entrepreneurs, politics could hardly be divorced from economics. Investments could hardly bring dividends if there was no political security and they were not disposed to place any degree of confidence in Malay rulers indiscriminately. They, therefore, adopted the course of nurturing and fostering the ambition of those rulers who were on intimate terms with them with the expectation that should these rulers succeed in establishing their influence over a wide area, they would be in a position to provide the necessary political guarantee which would make greater investments possible. And since Temenggung Ibrahim was conveniently available, he was encouraged to spread his political influence.

British assistance had enabled him by 1855 to consolidate his position in Johor proper — the son of Sultan Hussain, Tengku Ali, though recognized as Yang di-Pertuan was given only Muar to rule. The next step was taken in the direction of Pahang which was generally accepted as being potentially rich in tin and gold. With the death of Bendahara Ali, a concerted move was made to establish the Temenggung's influence in Pahang by attempting to eliminate Wan Ahmad, a son of Bendahara Ali, who was given control of Endau and Kuantan, Kuantan being then the richest tin-bearing district in Pahang. The Temenggung's attempted interference in Pahang affairs led to the war of 1857—1863. The incident is not only an indication of the extent to which the Temenggung had been groomed to challenge the traditional order

but also a reflection of the strong sentimental ties which continued to bind the ruling families of Trengganu and Pahang to the Malay royal family of Lingga. Admittedly, a split had taken place in both the Bendahara family and the royal family of Lingga. Bendahara Mutahir and his sons merged with the Temenggung family and Dutch as well as British interference brought about irreparable dissension among the *anak raja* of Lingga. But the extent to which the ruler of Trengganu and Wan Ahmad were prepared to accept the Dutch-deposed Sultan Mahmud of Lingga is clear evidence that there were elements among the Malay ruling hierarchy who did not want to subscribe to the new order that was being created by the western powers. The ultimate victory scored by Wan Ahmad in 1863 saw the end of William Paterson's scheme for developing the tin mines in Kuantan.

The failure of Trengganu and Pahang to keep abreast of the western Malay States, however, was due to geographical reason more than political ones and this, in fact, has been mentioned last week, namely, the inability of trading vessels to visit the eastern Peninsula for about six months every year. Nor can one omit to add that much of the impetus which provided for the rapid economic development of the western Malay States was due to the sharp rise in demand for tin in Europe owing to the growth of the tin-plate industry. But if Trengganu and Pahang were thus handicapped, both the states had the advantage of being able to offer large tracts of land for agricultural development. And indeed Johor proper proved in no uncertain terms that even before the introduction of rubber, agricultural development could be advantageously undertaken. But here again, it was Johor's geographical proximity to Singapore which facilitated development for Singapore's agriculturalists found it convenient to move to Johor when land was exhausted in Singapore. The products were easily conveyed to Singapore for export without excessive cost of transportation. By the third quarter of the 19th century, Johor was exporting a large amount of pepper and gambier in addition to a lucrative trade in gutta percha and timber. If Singapore's entrepreneurs considered Trengganu remote, they continued to retain faith in Pahang. Until the end of the 19th century, the consensus of opinion in the Singapore commercial world was that Pahang had rich untapped mineral resources particularly gold and that the soil there was especially suited for cultivation. It was speculated that when finally developed, that is, with more efficient means of communication

established also between Pahang and the western Malay states, Pahang would prove to be economically the most advanced of the Peninsular states.

It is not surprising, therefore, that there was a distinct concentration of political and economic activities in Pahang in the last two decades of the 19th century. The Straits Government decided that British administration should be set up in Pahang and in anticipation of a sharp rise in demand for land, numerous Singapore merchants acquired concessions in Pahang not so much with the idea of developing them but with the hope of making quick profits by re-selling them to corporations with concrete plans for developing Pahang. As it happened in the western Malay States, the attempt by an alien power to control Pahang politically and the growth of economic activities led to serious political disturbances. In the early 1890's, a concerted attempt was made by conservative groups to resist British domination. And as it happened in the other states, the resistance was crushed but here, it provided a greater challenge to British colonial expansion than the efforts of Malay conservative groups elsewhere. The Dato' Bahaman incident led to a financial crisis in British administration in Pahang and with the Straits resources unable to help meet the exigency, the problem was not surmounted until a Federation of Perak, Selangor, Negeri Sembilan and Pahang was created in 1896 so that the surplus from the Perak and Selangor budgets could be used to maintain British administration in Pahang. With the establishment of the Federation, hopes of rapid economic development in Pahang rose again only to peter out subsequently owing to factors which have still to be carefully investigated.

Compared to Pahang, Trengganu's history at this stage was less colourful but no less eventful. Trengganu's political stability was continually threatened by internal conflicts. As the class of *anak raja* grew in number, the struggle for power increased in intensity. Internal conflicts had been successfully arrested by Sultan Omar who reigned from 1839 to 1876 but after his death, the political centralization which he had been able to bring about was no longer effective and by the end of the century, members of the royal family were able to dictate demands so that the whole state was divided among them.

Johor proper, on the other hand, suffered none of the troubles which afflicted Trengganu and Pahang. With the exception of a brief period of uncertainty which resulted from the death of Sultan

Ali in 1877, Abu Bakar, who succeeded Temenggung Ibrahim in 1862, held complete sway. Tengku Alam, son of Tengku Ali, who challenged Abu Bakar with the assistance of a prominent Singapore merchant, W.H. Read, encountered no success as the British Government was favourably disposed towards Abu Bakar and with the Teochew Chinese, who predominated in Johor, providing no threat to security, Johor was agriculturally more advanced than any other Malay state in the 1880's. Tea and coffee-plantations also came into existence and by the end of the century, Johor was the only Malay state which had on its own adopted a western type of administrative system.

By then, the old Johor *kerajaan* had clearly collapsed. No vestige of the old order was left in the Peninsula. In 1881, Wan Ahmad was elected Yang di-Pertuan of Pahang by the *orang besar-besar*. In 1885, Abu Bakar, who, in 1868 had adopted the unusual title of Maharaja which was more in keeping with Indian tradition, was raised to the status of Sultan by the British. The Malay states which had once been subject to the *kerajaan* founded by Sultan Mahmud Shah of Malacca had finally claimed their independence.

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NINETEENTH CENTURY MALAY PENINSULA — III

by
KHOO KAY KIM

Siam loomed so large in the early history of the Malay Peninsula that until the end of the 19th century, it was customary for the northern Malay States to be referred to as the Siamese Malay States. Included among them was Trengganu which is here placed in a different category for reasons already given earlier. Three states — namely, Perlis, Kedah and Kelantan — are, therefore, here referred to as the northern Malay States not only because of their location at the northern end of the Malay Peninsula but also because these, more than the other Malay states, shared in common the full impact of Siamese influence. Kedah tradition, as recorded in the *Hikayat Raja Merong Maha Wangsa*, gives a full explanation for the origin of the close relationship between Siam and some of the Malay states. According to this tradition, it was the descendant of Raja Merong Maha Wangsa who established a *kerajaan* in Kedah, which ruled over Patani, Perak and Siam. Few historians today are prepared to accept fully the Kedah tradition and although Siamese influence over the states of Perlis, Kedah and Kelantan is not denied, it has still to be shown in concrete form whether the socio-political systems of these states were derived at all from Siamese practices. At a glance, one certainly finds that culturally Kedah (of which Perlis was originally a

jajahan) and Kelantan shared a great deal in common with the other Malay states. While we await more careful research into the social history of Kedah and Kelantan, we have unavoidably to deal primarily with political events in our survey of the northern Malay states in the 19th century.

It was, of course, a matter of coincidence that Kedah, in the early part of the 19th century and Kelantan, at the close of the same century, featured in international political negotiations although neither Kedah nor Kelantan had a say in the outcome of the negotiations. The principal parties involved were British and Siam. The events serve to illustrate, as much as South Vietnam does today, the extent to which the political future of small nations can be determined by external political powers.

The *kerajaan* of Kedah was established long before that of Malacca and just as Malacca in the 15th century proved to be an important trading centre, Kedah in earlier times had attracted traders from India and West Asia. It is known that in the 16th century, Kedah had its own currency known as *Samas*. J.H. Logan, a Penang lawyer who had an intimate knowledge of Kedah, speculated, in the mid-nineteenth century, that at the height of its prosperity, Kedah must have had a population of about 100,000. But from the second half of the 18th century, Kedah had not been blessed with political stability. More disrupting than the internal conflict among members of the ruling elite, which was a common feature of Malay politics, was the perpetual threat of foreign aggression, for Kedah was a close neighbour of not only Siam but also Burma. Kedah had since a long time ago expressed its submission to Siam by despatching to that state triennially the *bunga emas dan bunga perak*. The aim was no doubt to preserve Kedah's integrity for any defiance would surely invite a large-scale invasion. But this strategy provided no guarantee of security because Siam and Burma were constantly at war and in such times Kedah was inevitably called upon by one power or the other to render assistance by providing weapons, supplies or even manpower.

Kedah's position was particularly vulnerable at the end of the 18th century when the Chakri Dynasty was established in Siam for the Chakri rulers were bent on a policy of expansionism. It was, therefore, at a time when Kedah's security was threatened that Sultan Abdullah made the offer of Penang to the English hoping to receive in return the protection of a new political power in South-East Asia. And since Sultan Abdullah failed to obtain that

protection, Kedah had to endeavour to accommodate Siam in every way in order to avoid the possibility of an invasion. In 1788, when Siam asked for 5,000 men and 150 *perahu* to attack Burma, Kedah had to obey. In 1811, another request was made for 1,500 men and 100 *perahu*. This too was complied with. In 1813, Siam made known its intention to subjugate Perak. Kedah, realizing the danger of allowing the Siamese army to march through its territory, offered to conquer Perak on Siam's behalf. The war with Perak which began in 1816 lasted until 1818 and by 1819, Perak was despatching the *bunga emas* to Bangkok. In the meanwhile, Kedah had also to help Siam in a campaign against the Burmese at Pulau Tongkah. By the end of that decade, Kedah's resources had been badly strained. In 1821, the much dreaded Siamese invasion took place and thereafter, Siam directly ruled Kedah for 22 years. It was at this time that Perlis emerged, at first as an autonomous and subsequently an independent state. The Siamese gave it to Syed Hussein Jamalulail to rule just as Setul was given to Tengku Bisnu and Kubang Pasu to Tengku Anum. But whereas the other two *jajahan* returned to the fold when Siam allowed Sultan Ahmad Tajuddin to resume his rule over Kedah in 1843, Perlis remained apart until today. But unfortunately for us, the history of Perlis has still to be written.

Siamese rule had brought considerable damage to Kedah. Large scale depopulation had taken place and when Logan visited Kedah in 1851, he found the Malay ruling authorities still shaky and prospects of the re-establishment of a large population were dim. The majority of the refugees had acquired land in Province Wellesley and they preferred to remain there. Kedah's population in 1851, according to Logan, numbered only 11,300. Throughout the rest of the 19th century, Kedah enjoyed ample political stability but it continued to stand under the shadow of Siam. This affected to no small extent the prospects of economic development. Kedah, in the mid-19th century, might not have been able to offer valuable mineral resources to the Straits merchants, but the success of agricultural activities in Province Wellesley convinced many that Kedah provided good opportunities for the cultivation of cash crops and since agriculture was, in the mid-19th century, being undertaken on a larger scale than ever before, there was ample interest in the possible development of agriculture in Kedah. However, Straits entrepreneurs, whether European or Chinese, were inclined to be biased in favour of British administration and

protection. The distrust of the Siamese was strong enough to prevent any significant attempt to develop the agricultural potentialities of Kedah. Many of the Penang planters who had achieved some degree of success in Province Wellesley looked instead to the fertile plains of Krian and Dinding in Perak for the establishment of agriculture on a firmer footing in the Malay states.

This, however, is not to say that the Straits merchants completely neglected Kedah. Members of the royal family had always been on intimate terms with Penang merchants, particularly the Chinese. Their business transactions with the Penang Chinese were largely confined to small scale trading. Penang Chinese influence in Kedah also extended to the control of revenue farms but, as it has been mentioned earlier, there was no substantial amount of capital invested for purposes of development.

Kelantan's history has hitherto been even more neglected than Kedah's because it does not feature prominently in British colonial history in this part of the world until the close of the 19th century. But for those who are interested in the subject of Malay culture, the history of every Malay state is undoubtedly worthy of attention irrespective of its relevance to the subject of British colonialism.

The present Sultanate of Kelantan was founded by Long Yunus bin Long Sulaiman who derived from Patani. Long Yunus began his rule in 1756 and by the time of his death in 1794 Kelantan had to struggle to preserve its identity against Trengganu domination for the next ruler was Long Yunus's son-in-law, Tengku Muhammad, son of Sultan Mansur of Trengganu. It was not until 1800 that the people of Kelantan succeeded in forcing Tengku Muhammad to withdraw allowing Long Muhammad, son of Long Yunus, to become the ruler with the title of Sultan. But this served only to sour relationship between Kelantan and Trengganu and the threat from the latter state was so great that in 1810, Sultan Muhammad decided to seek protection from Siam. Siamese protection did help Kelantan to ward off further threat from Trengganu but in return, Kelantan had to despatch triennially the *bunga mas* as a token of submission. In subsequent years, Kelantan was to rely even more on Siam not only to discourage foreign aggression but also to settle internal disputes. For example, in the war which broke out in 1837 because two candidates, Long Zainal and Tuan Senik, contested for the title of Sultan, both parties sought Siamese assistance. It was with

Siamese assistance that Tuan Senik succeeded in defeating Long Zainal and hence, Siamese influence was further strengthened in Kelantan. Although there was no direct Siamese rule in the state, Tuan Senik's freedom was certainly circumscribed for apart from the obligation to send the *bunga mas*, he had also, periodically, to send reports to Siam about the political situation in Kelantan.

So much for Kelantan's position in relation to her neighbours, a few words here about its internal political structure would not be out of place. Like the other Malay States, the central authority here was the Yang di-Pertuan. At the time when Long Zainal ruled in Kelantan, several important titles had already been established in the state, among these were Raja Muda, Perdana Menteri, Raja Temenggung and Raja Bendahara. A glance at these titles should indicate immediately the amount of power wielded by members of the royal family for it was not then common for such titles as Temenggung and Bendahara to be held also by members of royalty and indeed, in Kelantan, it was the function of the Majlis Negeri to elect each new Yang di-Pertuan and members of the Majlis Negeri were made up of *anak raja*. Again, as in the other Malay states, the principle upon which the Majlis Negeri functioned was *meshuarat dan muafakat* (agreement preceeded by discussion) and it was only when no *muafakat* could be arrived at that war might be resorted to.

Economically, Kelantan was, in the early part of the 19th century, undoubtedly one of the richer Malay states. Before the 1830's, it was said to have had a population of 40,000. A lucrative trade had been established with Singapore since about 1820. Its exports included gold dust, pepper, rattan, tin, coffee, rice and woven silk. Munshi Abdullah, who visited Kelantan at the time of the civil war, testified that, despite the political disturbances, the market was busy. Victuals were abundant including a wide variety of vegetables and fruits such as bananas, durian, rambutan, rambai, langsat etc. But Kelantan was as much handicapped as were Trengganu and Pahang by the monsoon which assailed the eastern Peninsula yearly from about October to March.

However, apart from the unfavourable physical environment, much of Kelantan's development was also retarded by frequent internal conflicts. Even Tuan Senik who emerged victorious from the civil war found that he had still to face competition, from other quarters. In an attempt to preserve peace in Kelantan, the Siamese appointed Tuan Senik Penambang, a relative of Tuan Senik, co-

ruler of Kelantan with the title of Sultan Dewa or in Siamese *Phya Choa Puan*. And when tension persisted, the Siamese removed Sultan Dewa to Ligor in the 1840's. For the next 40 years, there was comparative peace in Kelantan. This period saw the rise in power of a number of non-royal personages. Apart from the title of Perdana Menteri, the holder of which had enjoyed substantial power in Kelantan, a new title *Hakim Besar* was also conferred on a certain Syed Ja'apar and two other persons were appointed to be his assistants. These were innovations introduced into the administrative system of Kelantan. It was also at this period that Siamese control over Kelantan appears to be particularly strong. Sultan Muhammad II (Tuan Senik) had been given the Siamese title of *Phya Pipit Pakdi*. In 1881, the Siamese felt justified in making Tengku Sulong Ahmad, the eldest son of Sultan Muhammad II and who had hitherto held the title of *Phaya Ratsada* or Tengku Sri Mahkota Indra, the new *Phya Pipit Pakdi* or Raja ruling over Kelantan. Sultan Muhammad II was given title of *Phya Lecha* or Raja Tua.

Internal conflicts in Kelantan grew worse during these last two decades of the 19th century. Tengku Sulong Ahmad who succeeded to the title of Sultan in 1886 died in 1889. His son, Tengku Kundor who succeeded as Sultan Muhammad III, died suddenly in 1890 and the field was left open for further competition among members of the royal family. The non-royal *orang besar-besar*, especially the Dato' Laksamana (Che Ha') and the Sri Paduka (Nik Yusof) pulled their weight to have Tengku Mansur, the Raja Muda, elected as the ruler of Kelantan but, until 1898, Tengku Mansur was afraid to use the title of Sultan. But meanwhile, in 1894, his principal supporter and adviser, Che Ha', was fatally shot in his own house at Kampung Penambang. Even in 1900, the political situation was so unsettled that when Sultan Mansur was seriously ill at the beginning of the year, the Siamese immediately sent an officer, Phya Sukum, together with a number of soldiers to Kota Bahru to prevent any outbreak of violence when the Sultan died. And when Sultan Mansur passed away, Phya Sukum acted swiftly and firmly to have Tuan Long Senik, son of Sultan Muhammad III, appointed as *Phya Pipit Pakdi*.

The last few years of the 19th century was not only a period of internal upheaval, it was also the period when Kelantan, together with Trengganu, began capturing the attention of British officials who were responsible for the formulation of imperial policy in this

part of the world. British officials in Malaya had, since the 1880's, pressed for British control over Kelantan and Trengganu but the Imperial Government was more concerned with maintaining good relationship with Siam. And indeed in the Boundry Agreement between Britain and Siam signed in 1899, it was formally admitted that both these Malay states were Siamese 'dependencies'. But, as so often happened, the smooth schemes put up by administrators and bureaucrats were disrupted by the ventures of enterprising commercialists.

In October 1900, William Duff, once a F.M.S. police officer and District Officer of Ulu Selangor, obtained from the Raja of Kelantan 2,000 square miles of territory at Ulu Kelantan as a concession primarily for mining purposes. But with the concession went broad governmental powers which practically handed the control of the entire area over to the the proposed Duff Syndicate. Duff was certainly confident that Kelantan could be profitably developed but in the meanwhile, Duff's action had turned Kelantan into a critical diplomatic problem for Britain.

There is no space to dwell on the Duff affair here. It has been claimed that the incident led to a complete re-consideration of British colonial policy towards the northern Malay States which resulted, in 1909, in the transfer of these states to the sphere of British influence. This may well be an overstatement but between 1900 and 1902, Kelantan certainly kept the British Colonial Office and Foreign Office busy while Duff's success in acquiring a concession without Siamese consent is a clear sign that Kelantan was eager to put an end to continual Siamese interference in its internal affairs. The immediate result of the Duff affair was that Kelantan came under the administrative control of British officers for following the Anglo-Siamese Agreement of 1902, W.A. Graham and H.W. Thomson were sent to Kelantan as Siamese Resident, Commissioner and Assistant Commissioner respectively in mid-1903.

The close of the 19th century, therefore, may be said to mark the beginning of the decline of Siamese influence in Kelantan. But perhaps more important than this was the extent to which the traditional systems had broken down at this stage much as it had happened in many other Malay states and the main weakness of the indigenous systems was their inability to accommodate the rapidly rising number of aristocrats and members of royalty who vied with one another for limited positions of power and dignity. By

1900, the conflicts had so increased in intensity that all the *orang besar-besar* felt it necessary to reside in the royal capital, Kota Bahru, so as to be near the ruler and hence, the administration of outlying areas was completely neglected. The situation reached a stage when the *orang besar-besar* were not only in a position to influence the Raja, they were actually given the right to veto the ruler's *perintah* on matters of state. The result, therefore, was an extremely loose political-administrative structure which was, however, replaced by a western type administration in 1903 marking the beginning of a period of important changes under external influence.

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THE ADMINISTRATIVE DEVELOPMENT OF MALAYA, 1896 — 1941

by
JAGJIT SINGH SIDHU

The span of 45 years enveloping the period from the Treaty of Federation to the outbreak of the Second World War (1896 — 1941), witnessed momentous developments in the political, economic and social history of our country. Politically, a series of administrative changes altered the framework of British Government in Malaya and laid the foundations of a modern state. The economic fortunes of the country are the subject of serious fluctuation in the prices of tin and rubber and we find ourselves moving overnight from a period of prosperity which followed the outbreak of the First World War to a period of depression which reached its most severe dimensions in the late 1920's. Fortunately, a welcome change in the world situation in the 1930's resulted in a resurgence of our economy and by 1940, the slum was little more than an experience to be forgotten. In the sphere of social development, vast strides were made in the opening up of the country by improved road and railway communications, a coherent educational system was established, and medical services were organised.

Today's talk, however, will confine itself to the administrative developments within the country and with this in view, I will first of

all look at what were known as the Federated Malay States and then go on to consider the Unfederated Malay States.

As mentioned in an earlier talk the Federated Malay States inaugurated on 1 July 1896 had envisaged a large state of Perak, Selangor, Negeri Sembilan and Pahang, under the overall control of a Resident-General, and having its capital at Kuala Lumpur. The first Resident-General, Sir Frank Swettenham, explained that the new scheme was framed because the old Residential System had become unworkable. The aim was to further a natural process of evolution from the former system and to secure uniformity of practice in all the states without altering the status of the Sultans in any way. Although from the outset it was quite clear that the British bureaucracy would in fact constitute the fountain of all power and authority, feeble attempts to preserve the myth of the Sultans' rights continued to be made.

For a few years, this situation prevailed but the general dissatisfaction of the Rulers finally asserted itself publicly on the occasion of the second Durbar of Rulers held in Kuala Lumpur in July 1903. At this meeting in the presence of his fellow Rulers, the Resident General and the Residents of the four States, Sultan Idris of Perak made a most significant speech and, amongst other things, stated:

> These States are now known as the united countries but the matter of union I do not clearly understand. But you are all aware that the States have become friendly, amicably assisting one another. If, however, the four States are amalgamated into one, would it be right to say that one State assisted the other? Assistance implies something more than one: for if there is only one which is the helper and which is the helped? A Malay proverb says that there cannot be two masters in one vessel. Neither can there be four Rulers over one country. It is my hope that the affairs of each State may be managed by its own officers so that the Governments may be separate entities.

While acknowledging the benefits of British rule, the Sultan was unable to understand the nature of the new union. He was against amalgamation, reminding the British that by the provisions of the Treaty of Pangkor, the Residents and not the Resident-General were the Sultans' advisers.

In spite of the assurances of the British to the contrary and the occasional conferences that were convened, there is little doubt that with Federation, the centre of gravity of all major administrative policies had shifted from the Residents and the Sultans to the Resident-General and his Secretariat in Kuala Lumpur. State

Councils, which had occupied an insignificant enough position before 1896 were now thrust even more into the background. The entire legislative authority was now vested in the person of the Resident General. The sensitivity of the Sultans to the deterioration in their position continued throughout the first decade of the 20th century. And the first attempt to modify the situation was made in 1909 by the High Commissioner, Sir John Anderson. The proposals put forward by him envisaged the formation of a Federal Council.

But the reforms were, by no means, aimed at increasing or even restoring either the power or the influence of the Malay rulers. For as Anderson himself maintained in February 1909, it was unlikely that the Malay Sultans of the time would have taken any close interest in the proceedings of the Council or be assiduous in their attendance. Their knowledge of English was considered too elementary to enable them to keep up with the discussions and in practice the Council was expected to consist of English Officials and Unofficials. Anderson's motive behind the move seems to have been to bring the High Commissioner directly into the administration of the Federated Malay States for the first time. On December 11, 1909, he took his position as President of the first meeting of the Federal Council and on November 2, 1910, the office of Resident-General was abolished. Thus, the 1909 scheme of reforms resulted in two fundamental changes in the government of the Federated Malay States: the first was the creation of the Federal Council and the other was the replacement of the office of Resident-General by an official known as the Chief Secretary to the Government. In effect, this meant the shift of power from the hands of the Resident-General to that of the High Commissioner. It is fairly clear that Anderson was not in the least interested in the decentralisation of the powers of the Federal Government and throughout his tenure of office neither he nor the Chief Secretary nor any of the Residents did anything which could even vaguely be construed as being in accordance with such a policy.

With the outbreak of the First World War in 1914 and the increased prosperity which resulted from a growing demand for rubber and tin, political issues were temporarily pushed into the background. But as could be expected, the boom did not last forever and the resumption of peace was followed by an economic depression. Poverty increased, dissatisfaction began to brew and more critical eyes began to focus themselves on the Government and its officials.

The appointment of Sir Laurence Guillemard as High Commissioner on 3 February 1920 was followed by the renewal of the demands of the Malay rulers for a change. On 14 November 1920, after a thorough study into the various aspects of decentralisation, he announced:

> ...while we are bound to avoid taking any false step or any nasty or ill conceived decision, I can assure Honourable members that the Government is in earnest in this matter of decentralisation and means to carry it as soon as possible to a successful issue.

After further investigation, Guillemard formulated his decentralisation proposals in December 1925. But progress was slow and by 1927 when Guillemard retired, only two changes were perceptible. The first reform related to finance and involved the transfer to the states of a certain limited autonomy with regard to expenditure. The other change occurred in the reconstitution of the Federal Council. An Agreement was concluded whereby the Sultans withdrew from active membership of the Council but retained the rights to attend any meeting. The number of unofficial members was also increased so as to make the body a more representative organisation. Although both these moves were desirable, they cannot be seriously regarded as steps towards decentralisation.

Guillemard was succeeded by that old Malayan pioneer, Sir Hugh Clifford but during the latter's period of office no progress whatsoever was made in the matter of decentralisation and matters were allowed to languish. It was not until the arrival of Sir Cecil Clementi as High Commissioner in 1930 that new momentum was given to this thorny problem. Clementi did not waste much time and in August 1931, he presented a draft scheme to the Sultans, the Residents and the Chief Secretary, on the occasion of the Sri Menanti Durbar. His primary motive for decentralisation was his antagonism towards amalgamation. He was convinced that his dream of a United Malaya could only be achieved by handing over more control to individual State Governments in the Federated Malay States, thereby winning the confidence of the Unfederated Malay States and inducing them to join a wider and broader federation.

The scheme, put forward as representing the view of the Sultans, was severely criticised by Unofficial European and Chinese who feared that such a move would amount to an almost unrestricted exertion of power by the Sultans and would work

against both their economic and political interests. British opinion too considered the proposals most unwise. The two major factors in the Sino-British hostility were firstly that the time was not conducive to drastic administrative changes. They felt that the economic depression of the late 1920's necessitated efforts towards economic advancement rather than political reform. The other factor was the inability of Sir Cecil Clementi to conciliate some of his opponents.

There was, however, a certain amount of support for the proposals and this came largely from the Malays. To them, it represented an increase in the powers of the Sultans and a reduction, to some extent, of the very centralised British control from Kuala Lumpur. They also looked upon it as a measure that would help to minimise the economic and the political power of the Chinese.

In spite of the heavy criticism, Clementi decided to implement at least part of his scheme. But he did this without the prior sanction or knowledge of the Colonial Office in London. The Colonial Office in turn found itself in an equally tricky position because any orders to Clementi to back down would have resulted in a breach of faith with the Sultans. So in May 1932, the British Government announced the appointment of Brigadier-General Sir Samuel Wilson, Permanent Under Secretary of State for the Colonies, to visit Malaya and to report on the new constitutional proposals. Wilson's report was submitted to the British Parliament in March 1933 and represented a complete vindication of the programme that had been set out by Guillemard and Clementi. In June of the same year, the British Government announced that the recommendations contained therein would be implemented after the necessary consultations with Clementi.

Eventually in August 1934, decentralisation was put into motion. In 1935, the Chief Secretary's post was abolished and replaced by a minor official, and by 1939, six departments had been decentralised, the various State Councils were enlarged and given increased responsibility. And so the position remained until 1941 which saw the beginning of a new epoch in Malayan history.

These then were the chief administrative developments within the Federated Malay States between 1900—1941. I would now like to move on to the Unfederated Malay States and to consider briefly the position of Johor, Kedah, Perlis, Kelantan and Trengganu. Unlike the Federated Malay States, it is impossible to take them

together because of the differences that existed from one to the other. In general, however, we can say that they came under British protection only in the early 20th century and instead of Residents, the principal British officials in these areas were given the designation of Advisers. Also the intensity of British influence in these states was well below that in the Federated States and much of the day to day government continued in the hands of the indigenous officials. The Sultans too had a greater measure of independence than their counterparts in the Federated Malay States.

Having made these preliminary remarks, I would first like to take a look at Johor. Situated in the south of the Peninsula, Johor in 1900 was under the rule of Sultan Ibrahim who had succeeded his father, Sultan Abu Bakar, in 1895. The form of government was based on the Constitution of 1895 which named the Sultan as the absolute ruler of the state. He was assisted and advised by the Council of Ministers and the Council of State and members of these Councils had to be subjects of the state. In 1912 a third Council, known as the Executive Council, was created to which members were appointed by the Sultan.

British protection was extended to Johor by the Treaty of 1914 and from then on a British officer, known as the General Adviser, was accepted in the state. Although even after this date, the Sultan enjoyed a certain measure of autonomy and independence, the substance of political power and the set up of administration passed unmistakably into the hands of the British authorities. There was little variation in this pattern of government throughout the period until 1941.

The other four states of Kedah, Perlis, Kelantan and Trengganu, had been until 1909, under the control of the Thai Government. In that year, however, as a consequence of the Anglo-Siamese Treaty, they became a part of Malaya and came under British protection. But their legal assimilation as Protected States, was by gradual stages. In 1910, the British signed new agreements with Kelantan and Trengganu but in the latter case, provision was made only for the stationing of a British Agent and a further agreement was necessary in 1919 to complete the process. Kedah signed its agreement in 1923 but that with Perlis did not take place until 1930.

The case of Kelantan and Trengganu saw the idea of a protectorate being carried to its logical conclusion. Here, the scope

and extent of British rule was not easy to distinguish except in terms of its general spirit and direction. To a casual observer, the administration of these states until the outbreak of the Second World War was still very much in the hands of the indigenous authority. There were no significant changes that distinguished the character of the states from what they had been prior to British protection. But in both the states, the fact of the matter was that the British Advisers and their staff held the important positions while the Sultans and their councils only possessed formal sovereignty.

In Kedah and Perlis too, the administration was run by the British Advisers and their subordinates with the Malay officials perhaps exerting a slightly greater degree of vigilance on the affairs in the states. They were distinguished, however, by the relatively small number of British officials that they employed.

From this survey of administration in the states of Malaya from 1900—1941, we thus notice that the significant changes that occurred were confined largely to the Federated Malay States. The main reasons behind the demands for change were of course the growing tendency towards centralised administration and the consequent loss in the powers wielded by the individual states and their Sultans. The larger percentage of non-Malays too added new dimensions to the problem and their influence was largely instrumental for the constitutional changes that were finally introduced. As for the Unfederated Malay States the basis of their administrative development moved along two separate broad patterns and progressed at two different speeds. In terms of economic development, the more dynamic Federated States outstrip the others significantly. And it was only after the Second World War that we get the formulation of a common all Malaya administrative policy and a growing concern for the economically backward states.

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THE MALAY PENINSULA: A POLITICAL SURVEY, 1900 — 1941

by
KHOO KAY KIM

Compared to the people of some of the other South-East Asian countries, the inhabitants of the Malay Peninsula were considered politically inert and immature. The stigma has never really passed away even today. For somehow political passion and aggression have been seen as synonymous with political maturity; and if political frenzy with a strong anti-European fervour is what one is looking for in the Malay Peninsula of the first four decades of the 20th century, then one is due for some amount of disappointment. But if one is interested in more than anti-European movements, then beneath the apparently calm surface of the Peninsular political scene, one can discern the stirring of strong current even at the beginning of the century itself.

In the first place, among the Malays, there was already emerging a vocal educated group dissatisfied with existing conditions. Members of this group were largely educated in West Asia and therefore, understandably, they were influenced by the reformist movements which were going on there. Their ideas were primarily propagated through the newspaper, *Al-Imam*, first published in 1906, under the editorship of Syed Sheikh Al-Hadi

who was born in Malacca in 1867. Syed Sheikh Al-Hadi spent a number of his early years in a religious school in Trengganu and subsequently visited Egypt, Beirut and Mecca several times accompanying the sons of the Sultan and Raja Muda of Riau. In the words of a modern historian: "*Al-Imam* was a radical departure in the field of Malay publications. Newspapers and journals in the past... had been mostly short-lived, and contained little more than transcriptions of overseas news taken from the English language press, a little local news, and occasional special articles of Malay concern." In *Al-Imam*, however, were to be found "ideas of social change and elements of politics". Such ideas were closely associated with the prevailing new concepts of Islam which "stressed an evangelical return to the Koran as the prime source of the Muslim faith; opposed the heavy accretions of folk Islam and traditional eclecticism; announced its desire to bring Islam in line with modern scientific advances and empiricism, and its willingness to examine the great social, political, and economic upheavals of the modern world in the light of revealed Islamic truth; and above all, urged a dynamic application of individual energy in the furtherance of one's social and economic status in life."

As a result of the strong religious tone of a great deal of Malay writings then, this period (beginning with the publication of *Al-Imam* in 1906 until the foundation of the *Kesatuan Melayu Singapura* in 1926) has been described as the religious phase in the history of the rise of Malay nationalism. Although this is to a large extent true, it is equally important to note that it was possibly not religion that provided the impetus to the rise of political consciousness among the Malays. In effect, to speak of political consciousness may be premature at this stage. To throw more light on the subject, let us examine one of the first articles published by *Al-Imam* entitled: "The Proper Task: What is Most Needed for Our People".

Among other things, the writer said:

> "Perhaps it may be said that our people most need skills of craftsmanship or agriculture, or that we should first preserve our country from its foes, or that we need education to rescue us from the slough of apathy, or that we must learn to unite amongst ourselves .... This is all true. But that which will fortify and realise all our desires is knowledge of the commands of our community".

Significantly, a historian has remarked: "These few lines

embody, in essentials, the message which *Al-Imam* was to preach with great assiduity and at considerable length during the next two and a half years — a message which was, indeed, to be reiterated in other periodicals under similar sponsorhip for the following quarter of a century." If this was the case, it is important to note that the writer of the message was emphasizing not specifically religion as an end in itself but as a means to an end for he agreed in principle with the claim that there was need for greater unity among the Malays and for economic upliftment. The reference to "Our People" is no less significant. Two things, therefore, emerge rather clearly: firstly, there is already a clear sign of ethnic consciousness; secondly there was awareness that the Malays, as an ethnic group, were economically backward compared to aliens in the country.

To elaborate further: it is not the case that prior to 1900, the Malays had never been conscious of their ethnic belonging. But this consciousness lay dormant or was taken for granted.

There are certainly instances in Malay history of this consciousness of belonging to a larger ethnic group being submerged by stronger regional feelings nurtured not only by the fact that the Malay Peninsula was made up of several independent political units but also by the geographical origin of the Malays, the majority of whom derived from various parts of Sumatra. The ethnic consciousness which began to grow in the 1900's was largely a defensive mechanism. It has grown and spread because of this increasing economic domination of alien ethnic groups in the country, particularly the Chinese whose affluence could not but be conspicuous since their number was so large here. In later years, the fear of foreign domination was to some extent increased by the strengthening of Indian influence in certain spheres of economic life. With the growth of urban areas, the *chetty*, who had long established themselves in the Straits had expanded their business to the Malay states and many of their unfortunate clients were Malays. The English educated Indians, including the Ceylonese Tamils, tended to have a strong hold on government services and they were, therefore, seen as a rival group to the Malays who were equally keen to enter government services. Strangely enough, antagonism towards the British, if it existed in the first decade of the century was mild and it did not trouble the British until the late 1930's.

In these few words then, the crux of Malay nationalism has

western powers took no concrete step to check Japan. The anti-Japanese campaigns in this country caused considerable anxiety to the British because, basically, they were no less anti-British.

Certainly compared to the Malays, the Chinese were frightfully aggressive in their political activities especially in the late 1920's and 1930's. Although a great deal of the activities were directed towards the fulfilment of Chinese national objectives, a small group of Chinese, at the same time, began to think in terms of their political future here. The majority of these were local-born Chinese, caught up in a world of confusion. While they could not refuse to respond to the call of Chinese nationalists, their lives had been so much influenced by the new environment that they were quite uncertain where their loyalty belonged to. One thing, however, they were sure of. Many generations of residence in this country and successful business ventures had given them a great deal of economic interests in the country which would require political protection. It was, therefore, at this time that some of them began to call out for a policy which would grant them a political position equal to that of the Malays. But the means they adopted to attain such an objective proved disastrous to ethnic relations in this country.

To what extent were the Indians also involved in political activities? As a minority group, one cannot expect that they would be particularly active or effective. But they were not inert either. All the same, the activities of the Indian Congress in India did not immediately influence the Indians to form a similar type of party despite the interest that local Indians had on India's fight for independence. In 1928, for the first time, a Pan-Malayan Conference of Indians was held. However, the conference was mainly interested in Indian labour problems. It was not until after the years of economic depression that the Indians showed a better spirit of unity and they raised protests against British policy towards the Indians. In 1936, an association was formed known as the Central Indian Association of Malaya. The leaders were not made up of capitalists or leaders of the Indian labourers but middle class Indians primarily English educated. Although the CIAM was interested in politics, its activities were governed largely by social and economic considerations — they were anti-British because the British were the owners of the estates where Indian labour force was employed. When Nehru visited the country in 1938, the existing anti-British sentiment was greatly strengthened.

But the Indians played no significant part in the struggle of Chinese and Malay left-wing groups against the British.

Reviewing the whole period under discussion and bearing in mind the political frenzy that had gripped many of the South-East Asian countries, one is certainly tempted to say that nothing much really happened here. Such a judgement would not be justified for the explosion did come in the post World War II days. It would be impossible to see such events as the Malayan Union issue, the MCP rising, Sino-Malay clashes etc. without a clear knowledge of the situation which existed in the four decades before the war.

15

THE MALAY PENINSULA: A SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC SURVEY, 1900 — 1940

by
KHOO KAY KIM

The rapid rate at which western technological culture has been introduced into this country over the last few years tends to give the impression that a radical transformation has taken place in the Peninsular society. Such an impression would be more prevalent among urban inhabitants, more particularly those in Kuala Lumpur. It is not always easy to visualize correctly how small parts of the country have changed beyond recognition while much larger areas have remained basically the same. This then is one of the most serious problems the historian has to face when dealing with this country as a whole.

It seems hardly necessary to reiterate that in so far as the non-indigenous aspect of the Peninsular society is concerned, its existence or presence is due entirely to economics. It was tin, pepper and gambier, to put it simply, which brought the greater proportion of the Chinese to this country in the 19th century; it was tin and the revenue it produced which made it even feasible to consider the establishment of British administration in some of the Malay states. The desire to acquire more wealth and to maximize profits was so great by the mid-nineteenth century that the entire

traditional systems of the Malay states were being continually undermined. Thereafter followed the complex process of economic growth and development. But the direction towards which such a process would move was not then predictable. However, by the close of the 19th century, it became clear that in those states where economic growth had taken place, the indigenous people were fighting a losing battle against forces which they could not possibly hope to control. The growth of urban areas, the shift of economic activities to such areas from the traditional riverine bases have been mentioned in a previous discussion. It is sufficient merely to say that by the beginning of the 20th century, it had become evident that the unequal distribution of wealth was taking place along ethnic lines.

To give an accurate picture of social conditions in the Malay Peninsula in the first few decades of the 20th century, it is necessary to emphasize that the greater part of the country had remained relatively unchanged except in a political sense. That is to say, the lives of the people continued very much as they had been in the 19th century. There was no significant economic change and the process of urbanization, if it had already begun, was moving at a painfully slow rate. Access to such places was still difficult. The majority of the indigenous people were to be found in these places. Hence, for those who are interested in the subject of radical change, attention will have to be focussed on the few areas in the country which had speedily developed largely owing to economic factors. We have earlier made a distinction between urban and rural areas, it is therefore useful to further emphasize that here, we are not even talking about each state as a whole but territorial unit within each state. For even in those states where significant economic growth had taken place and which were geographically close enough to the Straits Settlements to receive a great deal of new influence, namely Perak, Selangor, Negeri Sembilan and Johor, only specific areas had to any extent revealed a pattern of life which was similar to that found in the Straits Settlements and *alien* to that of the traditional Malay *kampung*.

To be more precise, it was in towns such as Taiping, Ipoh, Teluk Anson, Kuala Lumpur, Klang Seremban and Johor Bahru that one could see the emergence of a cosmopolitan way of life — social relationship was less personal, there was greater division of labour and a higher degree of specialization. It was here that some of the people came directly under the influence of western culture

for English education was available and through various means of mass media — magazines and newspapers in the earlier days, radio and cinema at a later stage — the people were able to obtain a perspective of western society which many found new, exciting and intriguing. Moreover, the European population had set an example by establishing in such towns socially exclusive clubs to provide for entertainment and recreation. Some of the Asian population, particularly the wealthy Chinese, also established exclusive, prestige clubs of their own. The less wealthy English educated local population merely took to western modes of recreation and entertainment — soccer, cricket, drinking and something else which was both equally a western and an eastern vice — gambling: it could be poker or *mahjong;* horse-racing or *chap ji kee.* It was here, in such urban areas, that what we may describe loosely as a 'Malayan' way of life had emerged. It was essentially materialistic, carefree, tending to be irresponsible and based largely on self-interest. This applies more particularly to the English educated. The non-English educated, in general, remained conservative — not that they did not share the same vices as the English educated but they were more inclined to continue to subcribe to traditional values; to continue to do as the old people had done. They were conscious and proud of their old culture. These were the people who made integration in a multi-racial society difficult. And although the urban areas were significantly different from the rural areas, various such groups were present there — they lived close to one another but relationship was superficial. Racial and religious differences coupled with class consciousness added to the complexity of the social situation. Even before the end of the second decade of the 20th century, many of the differences among various social groups were beginning to take an ethnic colour, more particularly so the economic differences between the indigenous people and the immigrant population.

Those who are asked to describe the economic condition of the Malay Peninsula in the first two decades of the 20th century will undoubtedly say that it was a time of prosperity. From the first year for which we have reliable statistics (i.e. 1898) down to 1905, the Peninsula's output of tin constituted more than half that of the total world production. And, although from about 1906 onwards, there was increasing competition from other countries, in particular Bolivia and Nigeria, the Peninsula continued to maintain top position among all the world's tin producers. Moreover, it is

important to note that though production did not substantially change between about 1895 and 1938, the value of tin had steadily increased so much so that the average value during the four years after the Depression of the 1930's was still twice as much as the quinquennial average for the period 1898—1903. And while tin was fetching good profits, rubber had replaced tin as the most important product of this country.

In 1905, there were 38,000 acres of rubber estates. Within a year, it had risen to 100,000 acres and four years later, it reached 500,431 acres in the Federated Malay States alone. Rubber had become so important as a raw material that although by the end of the second decade of the 20th century, supply had exceeded demand, the acreage devoted to rubber in this country continued to increase so that the total acreage in the Peninsula was half that of the total world acreage.

The expansion of the Peninsular economy at this stage depended largely on the inflow of capital from abroad, mainly from Britain. In the case of the tin industry, until the end of the first decade of the present century, Chinese capital, chiefly from the Straits, continued to dominate — they controlled more than three-quarters of the total tin output. But from about 1912 onwards, the financially stronger British companies were able to displace the Chinese companies. This was particularly so when the dredging method was introduced. In 1937, the average cost per pikul of tin ore produced in the F.M.S. by dredging companies was $33.34, while that by the Chinese gravel-pump was $63.11. British administration, in general, also embarked on a policy of favouring British investors. Hence, by 1937, Chinese control of tin output amounted to less than one-third the total production. In the case of rubber, British capital had dominated even initially. At the end of 1938, of all the estates in this country (an estate being defined as any holding over 100 acres), only one-sixth was owned by the Chinese and an even smaller percentage by the Indians; the rest were owned by British and European capital with the British controlling more than half of them.

But, as has been pointed out earlier, notwithstanding the phenomenal growth of the tin and rubber industries, it is a myth to speak in terms of the Peninsula's economic development. In so far as tin was concerned, the Kinta valley and the vicinities of Kuala Lumpur and Seremban were the areas which directly benefited from the high returns that tin was able to fetch. Life in the major

towns here was lavish, but the greater part of the country remained outside this fold of economic prosperity. The rubber industry was spread out over a larger area than tin. We may have a better picture of its geographical location if we take a look at the growth of Indian population in the Malay states.

It is well known that the growth of Indian immigration in this country coincided with the growth of the rubber industry. In 1910, only 2,523 indentured Indian immigrants had disembarked at Penang. But from the next year onwards until 1921, the number of recruited labourers arriving in this country had increased to about 100,000 each year. The highest figure reached was in 1926. Of 174,795 Indians who arrived here, 149,414 were recruited. Of the four Federated States, Perak and Selangor were the only two where Indian immigrants flocked to. In 1911, each had an Indian population of over 70,000. By 1940, the figure in each state reached almost 200,000. Negeri Sembilan in 1911 had an Indian population of 18,248 and in 1940, 59,472 while Penang in 1911 had only 6,611 Indians and in 1940 17,321. Of the Unfederated States, only Kedah and Johor received a significant number of Indians. Johor in 1911 had 5,659 Indians but in 1940, the figure had reached 58,622. Kedah began with a figure of 6,074 in 1911 and ended in 1940 with a figure of 61,161. In all the other states, the number of Indians present was negligible. Between 1911 and 1940, Kelantan alone, had an Indian population exceeding 2,000. It is clear that the development of rubber estates had taken place largely in the states of Perak, Selangor, Kedah, Johor and Negeri Sembilan. In the other Malay states, where rubber was grown, it was largely in the form of smallholdings (i.e. less than 100 acres) owned by the Malays.

Between tin and rubber, tin originally contributed more to government revenue and, therefore, to the implementation of social projects. Even the improvement in the system of transport and communication was largely carried out before rubber had become an important industry in this country. In the words of one economic historian: "Owing to duties levied on the export of tin, opium never supplied the same important percentage of the revenues of the Federated Malay States as it did in the Straits Settlements. Opium and the duty on tin were the two chief sources from which the revenues of the Federated Malay States were derived." But the contribution of tin to government revenue decreased in later years and this was in proportion to the extent to

which tin production became a British enterprise. Since rubber was from the beginning primarily a British enterprise, its contribution to government revenue was never substantial. In 1910, some of the British rubber companies paid dividends as much as 300 percent and more. Between 1911 and 1919, rubber shareholders in Britain received an estimated average annual dividend of 225 percent. Profit tax was paid to the imperial and not the colonial government. Even in the Federated Malay States, the contribution to revenue from opium (consumed largely by the local people) was larger than that from rubber.

It is clear to most people that during the period under discussion, the major towns in the Peninsula were made by tin and not rubber. Where rubber estates had been established no important township had followed. The greater proportion of the population in most large estates were made up of Indians whose wages were never sufficient to enable them to rise to a higher standard of living and it seems clear also that the bulk of the Indian labour population showed little propensity to move to an urban environment. And since the estate population, in general, required much less in terms of social amenities than the Chinese mining population, no stimulus was provided for the development of a higher degree of specialization in such estate localities.

In other words, in areas where tin had been originally the principal industry, there were at least signs of general prosperity. Although a great deal of the money concentrated in Chinese hands was annually remitted to China, a great deal more continued to circulate locally for many of the Chinese began to invest in land and property. On the other hand, the greater proportion of the profits from the rubber industry was sent back to Britain and, therefore, a state like Kedah which had not been developed by tin continued to be undeveloped even when rubber estates had been widely established there.

At any rate, even where economic prosperity seemed to prevail during the first two decades of the present century, the future was never really predictable.

In the words of another historian: "Second in interest only to the extraordinary prosperity which has been attained by the FMS is the amazingly high degree to which its economic eggs have been concentrated in the two baskets of rubber and tin." And since both were produced entirely for export, the situation, economic or otherwise, of the countries on which the Peninsula depended for its

market had a direct effect on it. When the World Depression occurred in 1930, it had a shattering effect on economic and social conditions in this country. Since a very large proportion of the immigrant population was made up of labour force, the prevailing social anarchy brought about by unemployment especially among the Chinese was not surprising. But it also provided a good indication of the extent to which social tranquaility in the urban areas depended on the employment opportunities available to the Chinese population who, more than Indians and Malays, were prone to turbulent activities.

But this was just one of the broader problems which the peninsula was already beginning to face by the 1920's. The rapid increase in immigrant population, the extent to which Chinese dominated economic life in urban areas, the growth of social amenities in the townships, the spread of education and literacy, the rise of political consciousness in countries which had a direct bearing on the Asian population of the Peninsula, all combined to produce a political situation which was more complicated than most people realize for although there was no clear sign of the political frenzy which had seized many of the peoples in Asia, the political undercurrent was indeed strong. It was during this period that ethnic problems with political and economic undertones began to emerge — problems which have remained to this day and defied solution.

16

THE JAPANESE OCCUPATION AND NATIONALISMS

by
ZAINAL ABIDIN BIN ABDUL WAHID

One of the most important events in the history of the political development of Malaya was the coming of the Japanese in 1941. The Japanese occupation encouraged the growth of political consciousness amongst the peoples of Malaya. It acted as a catalyst for the emergence and development of nationalism in this country. It was somewhat a paradox. On the one hand, it enabled the over development of Malay nationalism which later became the basis of Malayan nationalism; on the other, the Japanese were also responsible for the intensification of racial feelings which hindered and still hinders the formation of a truly united Malaysian nation.

A period such as this, which has such important repercussions on our history, certainly deserves our attention.

The Japanese invaded Malaya on 8 December 1941 and by 15 February 1942, i.e. 70 days later, the British administration in Malaya and Singapore had surrendered. This invasion of Malaya was part of the bigger Japanese plan which hoped to establish a "Greater East Asia New Order". This Greater East Asia New Order was "to comprise an area centred around Japan, China and Manchuku" and to include the Mandated Islands, French Indo-China, Thailand, Malaya, Borneo, Netherlands, East Indies, Australia, New Zealand, possibly India". The Japanese referred to

this area as a Co-Prosperity sphere, a region that was to be economically self-sufficient under the political hegemony of Japan.

In the creation of this New Order, the Japanese promised independence to some of the South-East Asian countries. But Malaya was not to be granted independence. Japan regarded Malaya more as a colony and a source of raw materials. In fact, in the latter half of 1943, the Japanese handed over Kedah, Perlis, Kelantan and Trengganu to Thailand. And at one stage of the occupation, Malaya and Sumatra were governed under one administration.

The overall picture of the Japanese Occupation was one of disorganisation. Since a war was on during the whole Occupation period, every effort of the Japanese Government was directed towards strengthening its military position. Little attention was given to the economic development of the country. The two major industries of Malaya, i.e. rubber and tin, came to a standstill. In fact, they regressed, for rubber trees were cut down to give way to tapioca plants and tin dredges and been either destroyed or were rusting away. The administration hardly moved.

However, the Japanese Occupation could not be regarded as a period of non-activity. Actually, the Japanese Government systematically tried to discredit the Allied Powers e.g. Britain and the United States, and destroy their influence on the South-East Asian people.

In August 1942, the Japanese Government decided to ban the possession or use of short-wave radios. The idea was that the people of Malaya should not listen to the broadcast of the Allied Powers. In September 1943, films belonging to the enemies of Japan could not be shown in Malaya. This was followed in August 1944 by the banning of enemy music. In October 1944, cabarets were banned.

The Japanese tried to create a feeling of repugnance for Western culture in the Asian mind.

On the positive side, the Japanese Occupation Government introduced a semblance of racial equality by opening the formerly exclusive European clubs and swimming pools to all, regardless of colour. While this gesture may mean very little today but it made its impact then.

In fact, the success of the Japanese itself had an important effect in changing the attitude of the peoples of Malaya vis-a-vis the British. And the speed with which the Japanese managed to achieve victory, however temporary that might have been, shattered

the image of the British, and generally the 'whiteman' as a superior people.

The Japanese Occupation affected the various racial groups in the country differently. However, there were certain developments which had general applications.

There was, for example, a resurgence and strengthening of nationalism. Malay and Indian nationalism developed in the open, in fact, to a certain degree encouraged by the Japanese. Chinese nationalism also became more pronounced but it was more the result of anti-Japanese feeling.

It was stated that some Malay nationalists established contact with the Japanese Government, before the Japanese invasion of Malaya. It was alleged that most of them were members of the *Kesatuan Melayu Muda*, a political organisation started in the late 1930's. Many of the members of the KMM were detained by the British, just before the outbreak of the war in Malaya.

After the Japanese victory, however, these people were released and under the leadership of Ibrahim Yaakob, a former teacher and journalist, they re-established the KMM.

The activities of the Malays who were politically conscious or active during the Japanese occupation have been ably described by Raden Soenarno in his article entitled "Malay Nationalism, 1900—1945"; in the *Journal of South-East Asian History*.

According to him, the KMM did not last long, for the Japanese discovered that it had established contact with the Malayan Communist Party. In June 1942, the Japanese banned the KMM.

It is interesting to note that as early as June 1942, the KMM had already discovered that the Japanese Government was not to be relied upon completely in terms of the granting of independence to Malaya.

Although the KMM was banned, the leaders of the organisation were not arrested. Instead, the Japanese formed the *Giu Gun* or *Pembela Tanah Ayer*, the Avengers of the Motherland. This new body — the *Giu Gun* — was headed by former KMM officials. It was a para-military organisation.

This apparent liberality of the Japanese could be explained in terms of mutual needs. The Japanese needed this group of Malay leaders to establish rapport with the Malay masses. These were some of the people who had cooperated with them before. Also in June 1942, it might have been too early for the Japanese authorities

to have a proper assessment of the established Malay group — essentially the aristocracy — who could be regarded as more inclined towards the British, since it was part of the Establishment before. And so the Japanese continued to rely on the former KMM members.

On the part of these Malays, further cooperation with the Japanese would give them the opportunity to organise themselves and to provide them with some military training, in case the need arose. This contention is borne out by the fact that by early 1944, relations had been established between the *Giu Gun* or PETA and the MPAJA.

Meanwhile the Japanese Government began to realise that the war was not going to end in its favour. It then started to take measures to combat the possible return of the Allied Powers. In Malaya, it took the form of encouraging the Malays to become more politically active with a view to attaining independence, and this independence was to be achieved in the context of Malaya's incorporation into Indonesia.

It was hoped that, with independence in view, the Malays would be more willing to resist the return of the British for they would then have something to fight for, somewhat like the stand taken by some of the KMM members before the Japanese invasion.

Thus in July 1945, we saw the formation of *Kesatuan Rakyat Indonesia Semenanjung*, abbreviated to KRIS, or in English, the Union of Peninsular Indonesians. This organisation was to work for the Indonesia-Malaya independence.

Timely or untimely, depending on one's political stand, the Japanese sudden defeat in August 1945 misfired the plan.

With regard to the Indian community in Malaya, the Japanese used the appeal of nationalism in a different way. The attention of the Indians was focussed towards India — the liberation of India from the British colonial yoke. Indian Independence Leagues were formed and their military wing, the Indian National Army was established. Under the leadership of Subhas Chandra Bose, the Indian National Army dominated the political activities of the Indians in Malaya during the Japanese Occupation. Able-bodied men and women were recruited. Others contributed in cash or kind. The Azad Hind Government, the government in exile, was set up in Singapore. Many Indians rallied to the call, *Chalo Delhi!* Onward to Delhi.

The INA did not see much action but its recruitment

propaganda, the very fact of its existence and the activities of the Indian Independence Leagues generated political consciousness amongst the Indians in this country. Unfortunately, this political consciousness was directed towards India and hence the difficulties, in the postwar years, in the efforts to build a Malayan nation and, presently, the Malaysian nation.

While the development of Malay and Indian nationalisms was somewhat encouraged by the Japanese, that of Chinese nationalism grew as an anti-force. The Sino-Japanese War in China started before the Japanese invaded Malaya. Even before the invasion, anti-Japanese activities among the Chinese community had already begun in this country. So, when the Japanese arrived, the hostility continued. Essentially, therefore, the anti-Japanese movement of the Chinese in Malaya was the projection of the politics of China into this country.

The Japanese hostile acts against the Chinese and their apparently more favourable treatment of the Malays helped to make the Chinese community feel its separate identity more acutely. This does not only have an adverse effect in the development of Malayan and later Malaysian nationalism, but it was also the begininng of racial tension between the Malays and the Chinese.

As the Japanese had made use of the appeal of nationalism in order to rally the support of the Indians to their side, the Malayan Communist Party exploited the anti-Japanese aspect of Chinese nationalism in order to gain more members and supporters. It organised the Malayan People's Anti-Japanese Army giving it the appearance of a nation-wide if not a nationalist movement, though, in actuality the MPAJA was controlled and directed by the MCP.

It was during the Japanese occupation that the MCP was able to widen its membership and increase its strength. Under the guise of being an anti-Japanese movement, it was able to get a supply of arms and other military equipment from the Allied Powers.

Most of the members of the MPAJA were of Chinese origin, and most of the members of the Malayan police force happened to be Malays. So in the clashes between the Japanese Occupation Government and the MPAJA, an important factor came into play. What was basically a conflict between the Japanese Government and the MPAJA became racial. The use of the largely Malay police force by the Japanese against the Chinese dominated MPAJA introduced a racial element of Sino-Malay rivalry.

This rivalry, unfortunately, developed into conflicts. They took place during the transition period, i.e. after the Japanese surrender and before the arrival of the British, when there was a breakdown in authority. Fortunately, those tragic incidents did not spread too widely and better counsel prevailed when the British Military Administration succeeded in establishing its authority. But a scar was made.

17

THE MALAYAN UNION: ITS INTRODUCTION

by
ZAINAL ABIDIN BIN ABDUL WAHID

Earlier an attempt was made to see the effects of the Japanese Occupation on the growth and development of nationalisms in Malaya and its influence on the emergence of Malayan and later Malaysian nationalism.

The Japanese Occupation also led to the loss or at least lowering of the prestige of the Western powers. The defeat of the British in Malaya, the Dutch in Indonesia, and the Americans in the Philippines brought this result. For many Malayans, they began to ponder on the reliability of the British. The British government was supposed to protect Malaya. It had concluded agreements with the various Malay rulers in which an undertaking was given by the British to protect the Malay states in return for the many rights and privileges it enjoyed. Yet, when the Japanese came, the British had not provided an adequate defence arrangement for this country, hence the speedy surrender.

This loss or lowering of prestige was also the result of Japanese propaganda. Besides the measures mentioned previously, the Japanese vigorously put across the idea of Pan-Asianism and Co-Prosperity sphere. The Japanese Government also tried to identify the political, economic and social backwardness or difficulties of the country with Western colonialism.

The spirit of Pan-Asianism seemed to have made its impact. It became more evident in the post-war period e.g. in the sympathy with and support given by other Asians to the struggle for Indonesian independence.

The Co-Prosperity sphere did, in the initial stage, make some people realise the economic exploitation of the Western colonial powers. But the Japanese themselves failed to provide an alternative, since they were too fully-occupied with their war efforts. It is not inconceivable that the Japanese might have proven themselves to be no less exploitative had they attained the opportunity.

Nonetheless, the Japanese Occupation had aroused the political consciousness of the people and when the British returned to Malaya, a new situation had emerged.

As had been mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, the British Government had failed to fulfil its obligation of protecting the Malay states against the Japanese. It would not, therefore, be presumptuous if one were to expect the British to return to Malaya with a feeling of guilt or repentance.

On the contrary, the British far from trying to make amend for its failure to honour the treaties of protection instead tried to colonise Malaya, changing the status of the Malay states from protectorates to colonies.

This was the infamous Malayan Union, if not for its content, at least, for the way it was introduced. Not long after the fall of Singapore to the Japanese, the British Colonial Office in London began to make a survey of the problems that should be taken into consideration in planning for a future Malaya. By the end of 1943, the Secretary of State for Colonies presented a memorandum to the British War Cabinet outlining the general terms regarding the need for constitutional changes in a re-occupied Malaya.

There were many stages of preparation for the suggested constitution but it is not intended that they should be discussed here. It should be mentioned, however, that at least two memoranda were submitted during the Occupation to the Colonial Office — one from the Association of British Malaya and the other from the late Tun Tan Cheng Lock who stayed in India during the Japanese Occupation. Both these memoranda suggested that mainland Malaya should be constituted into a political unit although the British Malaya Association was of the opinion that Malacca and Province Wellesley should be returned to the Malay States while Penang and Singapore should remain as British

Colonies. Tun Tan advocated the inclusion of Singapore. The memoranda also proposed that the domiciled inhabitants of Malaya be given a greatly increased share in the government and administration of the country. The association of British Malaya suggested a nominated Council which Tun Tan considered not progressive enough. He was thinking in terms of election.

It is difficult to ascertain whether these two memoranda had any influence on the planners and drafters of the constitution. Nonetheless, some similarities could be detected, though, these might have been a mere coincidence.

Let us now try to examine some of the main features of the Malayan Union Constitution. Essentially the effect of the Malayan Union Constitution was to turn Malaya from a protectorate to a colony. This was done by making the Malay rulers surrender their jurisdiction to the British Government, thus enabling the Foreign Jurisdiction Act of 1890 to have effect in Malaya.

The nine Malay States together with Penang and Malacca were to become a political and administrative entity, to be headed by a British Governor. The Malay Sultans were, more or less, reduced to 'honorary' rulers. They would have some rights over Islamic religion. But even in this sphere, a sphere which had been their exclusive and traditional domain since ages ago, the British Government saw it fit to establish a Religious Council in which the Sultans became members and the British Governor its chairman, i.e. a Christian chairman presiding over an Islamic Religious Council.

Another important feature of the constitution pertained to citizenship. The principle of *jus soli* was to be introduced. It implied that any person born in Malaya, after the establishment of the Malayan Union, would be eligible to become citizen. For the immigrant people who were domiciled in Malaya then, a liberal citizenship provision was devised for them.

Members of the central Advisory Council were to be nominated by the British Government, and not elected by the people. The term "Commissioner" was revived as a designation for the British representatives in the states. (It may be recalled that the same designation was used by J.W.W. Birch, but after his assassination, it was changed to "Resident").

The Governnor of the Malayan Union was to have very wide powers.

On 10 October 1945, the Secretary of State for the Colonies

made an announcement on the Malayan Union, in the House of Commons. On 11 October 1945, this announcement was published in the Malayan press. On 12 October 1945, Sir Harold MacMichael, a special envoy of the British Government, entrusted with the task of getting the signatures of the Malay rulers, signifying their agreement to the Malayan Union, arrived at Port Swettenham.

To quote Sir Harold: "I am here to meet the Malay rulers and discuss with them the new policy for Malayan Union which has been decided upon in London."

It is clear from the timing of the announcement and the arrival of Sir Harold MacMichael that the British Government did not intend to give the peoples of Malaya an opportunity to study this new constitution. This contention was borne out later by the questionable methods used by MacMichael in getting the Sultans' signatures.

Meanwhile, after a lapse of a few days, the Malays began to express their opposition against the Union. The Malay press of this period carried a considerable number of letters and reports criticising and opposing the Malayan Union.

Some Malays began to organise themselves and on 20 November 1945, eight Malay associations in Johor joined together to form the Malay League of Johor. On 3 January 1946, the Peninsular Malay Movement of Johor came into being, under the leadership of the late Dato' Onn bin Jaafar.

The period between October 1945 to January 1946 saw the Malays busily organising themselves, reviving old organisations and forming new ones.

The Malay Press thought that the opposition against the Malayan Union would become more effective if these different bodies could be brought together. A meeting was then called for the 1st of March 1946. This was the first Malay political congress. Forty-one Malay Associations were represented, and they agreed to form the Pan-Malayan Malay Congress.

The Congress was essentially a confederation of existing Malay organisations, each retaining its autonomy. In fact, each organisation retained its own name. The major objective of the Congress then was "to unite the Malays into a strong articulate body in order to obtain repeal of the (Malayan) Union constitution." It then had no particular social or economic programme. It basically wanted to restore the sovereignty of the

Malay Rulers and the rights of the Malays as the indigeneous group.

The leaders of the Congress argued that the Malayan Union was introduced in a questionable manner, for the Malay rulers themselves had complained over the methods employed by MacMichael in obtaining their signatures. They were rushed and not given sufficient time to consult their advisors. In Kedah, MacMichael went further. According to the Sultan then, he was given a verbal ultimatum, that within a certain period of time, if he were to refuse to sign then, a successor, who had already agreed to sign, would be appointed to replace him.

This Kedah incident raised the whole question of the validity of the Malayan Union, for, at least one of the letters of agreement was obtained under duress.

In Johor, the State Constitution then required that any treaty involving the loss of State jurisdiction to be brought before the State Council. And this requirement was not fulfilled when MacMichael obtained the signature of the Sultan of Johor.

The Congress leaders also appealed to the British Government on the basis of the Atlantic Charter, a Charter proclaimed during the Second World War, in which Britain agreed to the principle of giving independence to dependent territories.

Despite the appeal, criticism and opposition to the Malayan Union, the British Government expressed its determination to carry out this plan. It considered the Malayan Union policy "to be right and in the best interest of Malaya". However, it relented on one point. The British Government agreed that citizenship provision on the basis of *jus soli* was to be suspended, pending further discussion.

While the Malays in Malaya were organising opposition against the Malayan Union, a group of former British civil servants who had served in Malaya before, strongly protested against the British Government. The late Sir Richard Winstedt regarded the methods by which the signatures of the Sultans had been obtained as a "sharp practice". One Labour Party member, i.e. the party in power then, had this to say on the Malayan Union:

> I do not want to go back to the status quo... we must have a forward policy but it must not be merely imposed. There must be free consultation than there has been hitherto.... We are doing the right thing in the wrong way. The scheme has been put across so high-handedly, unimaginatively and smugly that I am sorry to say I cannot support it.

From these accounts, both internal and external, it is possible to conclude that, not only was the Malayan Union strongly opposed by many, but its very validity was questioned.

To the Malays particularly, the Malayan Union was most objectionable; but, having the advantage of hindsight, I believe it was a blessing in disguise.

18

THE MALAYAN UNION: ITS ABOLITION

by

ZAINAL ABIDIN BIN ABDUL WAHID

One of the direct results of the Malayan Union proposals was the formation of the Pan-Malayan Malay Congress, the predecessor of the United Malays National Organisation, or more popularly known today as UMNO.

The Pan-Malayan Malay Congress was very disturbed when the British Government expressed its determination to institute the Malayan Union Constitution on 1 April 1946. The Congress held an emergency meeting on 29 and 30 March and it decided to appeal to all Malays in the country to cooperate and frustrate the Malayan Union.

One of the ways adopted by the Congress was to appeal to all Malays to boycott any ceremony that was connected with the introduction of the Malayan Union. Specifically, it appealed to the Sultans to boycott the installation of the Governor, and a similar appeal was sent to all the Malays who had been nominated to sit on the various councils established under the Malayan Union Constitution. The Congress also requested the Malays to *berkabung* — to be in a state of mourning — for seven days, as a sign of protest.

The intensity of Malay opposition to the Malayan Union could be gauged from their attitude towards the Sultans. In 1946, the Sultans were still occupying their traditional status, i.e. an almost

sacred one. Yet, we come across voices of criticism. One such voice was expressed in the form of a *pantun.*

Ampun Tuanku duli Mahkota
Fikirlah kepada rakyat jelata
Teriti dibaharui elok sekata
Supaya tidak putih mata

Jika lebih memandang dunia
Rakyat kelak teraniaya
Tuanku semayam di atas bahaya
Hilang kelak taat setia

Harimau terjumlah binatang gagah
Kerana kuku ada berceranggah
Hilang kuku tiada semenggah
Belang sahaja tidakkan megah

Patik semua menunggu rahmat
Mengubah teriti biar cermat
Siasat selidik dengan jimat
Supaya rakyat jadi selamat

The writer of this *pantun* was appealing to the Sultans to unite with the people in order to avoid being colonised. He urged the rulers not to do anything that might betray the people for then they would lose the support of the masses. Further, he stated that the Sultans would only be powerful if they continued to have their sovereign rights, and he, therefore, pleaded that the Sultans should be extremely careful in dealing with treaty changes so that the welfare of the people would be protected.

Many other letters along similar lines could be found in the newspapers of this period but the example quoted is sufficient to show how strongly the Malays felt against the Malayan Union.

Besides organising external activities against the Malayan Union, the Malay Congress also tried to strengthen itself. It appointed a committee to draft a constitution for a centralised organisation. At its next meeting, held on 11 May 1946, at Johor Bahru, the United Malays National Organisation was formally inaugurated. Thus, UMNO came into being; and the late Dato' Onn bin Jaafar was its founder president.

UMNO began to organise public rallies and demonstrations against the Malayan Union. Its leaders travelled all over the country to explain to the people the implications of the Malayan Union and why the Malays should oppose it. Their efforts were so successful that when a British Parliamentary Delegation visited

Malaya in May and June 1946, one of the members of this delegation later wrote regarding the demonstrations in the following words:- "In every hamlet, village and town that we visited, we were met by what appeared to be the whole population".

The strong, aggressive Malay opposition, and the comparative silence of the non-Malays in their support for the Malayan Union, together with the pressure of the ex-Malaya-hands in London made the British Government decide to hold talks with the Malay Rulers and UMNO. In July 1946, a Working Committee, comprising four representatives of the Malay Rulers, two of UMNO and six senior British officials, under the chairmanship of the Chief Secretary, was formed. The Committee was

> to work out in detail fresh constitutional arrangements in the form of a provisional scheme which would be acceptable to Malay opinion and which would provide a more efficient administration and form the basis of future political and constitutional developments.

It may be noted that the Working Committee consisted only of representatives of the Malay Rulers, UMNO and the British Government. Criticism against this limited representation was made but the Working Committee continued with its work. It completed its work before the end of the year and its report was published in late December 1946.

The British Government was in general agreement with the report, but due to the mounting criticism against the limited nature of the representation of the Committee, and the growing realisation amongst most of the non-Malays that the Malayan Union was more advantageous to them than the proposals that were to replace it, and hence their opposition to the Working Committee report, the British Government decided not to give its full approval to the report "until all interested communities have had full and free opportunity of expressing their views".

It was with this intention in view that the British Government set up a Consultative Committee in which the non-Malay communities were represented. This Committee was to collect and present the views of the non-Malays. Although the Consultative Committee managed to submit a report in March 1947 to the Working Committee, yet many non-Malays were dissatisfied with its work.

Non-Malay opposition to the Malayan Union centred around the All-Malaya Council of Joint Action or AMCJA. The AMCJA was inaugurated on 22 December 1946, under the chairmanship of the late Tun Tan Cheng Lock. The main organisations in the AMCJA were the Malayan Democratic Union, Malayan Indian Congress, Malayan New Democratic Youth League, the Malayan People's Anti-Japanese Ex-Service Comrades' Association and the Pan-Malayan Federation of Trade Unions. It was claimed that the total membership of the affiliates of the AMCJA was bout 400,000.

The AMCJA based its struggle on six principles:

(1) A United Malaya, inclusive of Singapore,
(2) A fully-elected central legislature for the whole of Malaya,
(3) Equal political rights for all who regard Malaya as their real home and as the object of their loyalty,
(4) The Sultans were to be fully sovereign and constitutional rulers, accepting the advice of the people through democratic institutions,
(5) Matters of Muslim religion and Malay custom were to be under the sole control of the Malays, and
(6) Special attention was to be paid to the advancement of the Malays.

At this stage, I think it is appropriate to mention that the Malays were no longer fully united under UMNO, for a little over a month after the formation of UMNO in Johor Bahru, the Malay Nationalist Party, a leftist political party which was already in existence well before the establishment of the Pan-Malayan Malay Congress and which was Malaya-wide in its membership, withdrew from UMNO. The Malay Nationalist Party then had most of the pre-Second World War Malay nationalist leaders as its members, e.g. Ishak Haji Muhammad and Dr. Burhanuddin Helmi.

These people were opposed to the British Government not merely because of the Malayan Union but they were also anti-colonial and wanted to see a greater degree of democracy practised in the country. They regarded the Malayan Union as a means to perpetuate British colonialism, for the Union Governor was given too much power and there was little possibility for elections by the people.

The Malay Nationalist Party was not also satisfied with the

proposals from the Working Committee. It considered them as too accommodating to British interests and insufficiently liberal as to play their part in the governing of the country.

It was in the latter aspect of its opposition that the Malay Nationalist Party or MNP found a basis for working together with the AMCJA. At first, the relation between the MNP and the AMCJA was not too clear, but, by February 1947, the MNP together with other Malay organisations that were equally opposed to the Malayan Union and the proposals of the Working Committee, decided to form the *Pusat Tenaga Rakyat* or People's United Front. Its abbreviated form was PUTERA.

PUTERA consisted of the MNP, the *Angkatan Pemuda Insaf* headed by Boestamam, and *Angkatan Wanita Sedar.* It claimed to represent 150,000 members.

PUTERA then formed a kind of an alliance with AMCJA. It adopted the six basic principles of the AMCJA but added four more of its own. These four were:

(1) Malay should be the official language of the country;
(2) Foreign Affairs and Defence of the country should be the joint responsibility of the Government of Malaya and His Majesty's Government;
(3) The term *Melayu* should be the title of any citizenship or national status in Malaya; and
(4) The national flag of the country should incorporate the Malay national colours.

The AMCJA-PUTERA combination claimed that they represented the views of the people and should, therefore, be consulted by the British Government in any attempt to change the Constitution of the country. In the words of the AMCJA-PUTERA, they asserted that they were "the only proper representatives of those who regarded Malaya as their real home, and as the object of their loyalty".

On this basis, they alleged that the Consultative Committee was not representative and they boycotted it. They also criticised the working procedure of the Consultative Committee which they regarded as having failed to provide "full and free consultation".

It may be commented here that both the claims of the AMCJA-PUTERA in terms of the actual number of their members, i.e. 550,000, and the undivided loyalty of these members towards Malaya, are questionable. I believe that both the organisations

would not be able to provide membership lists of that magnitude. As far as allegiance was concerned, first of all, there were no citizenship laws during that period that would enable the non-Malays to become citizens. The Malays were citizens by virtue of being the subjects of the Malay Rulers. Besides, as had been indicated in the previous two chapters, the Japanese Occupation encouraged the development of nationalisms oriented towards India and China rather than Malaya.

However, the ten principles of the AMCJA-PUTERA were certainly more progressive in terms of anti-colonial struggle, e.g. the demand for a fully-elected legislature for Malaya in 1947. It is also significant to note that PUTERA had asked for Malay to be made the official language of the country, even as early as 1947, and that *Melayu* was to be the nomenclature of citizenship or national status. What is more remarkable is that the AMCJA associated itself with these principles.

The temptation is therefore too great for me to resist in not asking the unhistorical question of "Would a Malayan nation have been created, had the AMCJA-PUTERA succeeded in gaining power?"

This question will remain unanswered.

Meanwhile, the report of the Consultative Committee was considered by the Working Committee and the latter subsequently published a new Constitution for a Federation of Malaya.

19

THE EMERGENCY: ITS CONSEQUENCES

by

ZAINAL ABIDIN BIN ABDUL WAHID

The final form of the Constitution of the Federation of Malaya 1948 was not the same as the contents of the Working Committee Report submitted in December 1947. The Working Committee Report was modified by the report of the Consultative Committee. One of the changes made concerned the number of members in the Federal Legislative Council. The membership was increased from 48 to 75. The number of unofficial members was also enlarged, from 20 to 47. The Chinese community was also given a bigger representation, i.e. from six to 14 representatives. Representation from other smaller communities was also proportionately increased in the ratio given to the Chinese community. Residential qualification in terms of obtaining Federal citizenship was also made easier to the extent of lessening the number of years.

This new Agreement was signed on 21 January 1948, between the Malay Rulers and the British Government, and the Federation of Malaya came into being on 1 February 1948.

This new Constitution, to a large extent, met the objectives of the main parties involved in the Malayan Union controversy. The sovereignty of the Malay rulers was restored. They once again became sovereign monarchs of their own states but under the protection of the British. The British Government had control of

defence and all the external affairs of the Federation of Malaya and undertook "to protect the Malay states from external hostile attacks...".

The UMNO succeeded in abolishing the Malayan Union and managed to draw Malaya out of the colonial status. The special position of the Malays as the indigenous people of the country was re-established. With regard to citizenship, the principle of *jus soli,* which was already suspended when the Malayan Union was inaugurated, was completely dropped as far as its application to nonindigenous sectors in the country.

In some ways, the British Government also achieved some of its objectives. Although it failed to turn Malaya into a colony yet it succeeded in bringing the nine Malay states and the two Straits Settlements under one administration, thus abolishing the former set-up like the Federated Malay States, the Unfederated Malay States and the Straits Settlements. Under the Malayan Union proposals, the British started out with the principle of *jus soli* in the granting of citizenship. The Federation of Malaya Constitution 1948, for the first time, introduced a citizenship law covering the whole country and enabling the non-indigenous inhabitants to become the citizens of Malaya. Although the qualification to become citizens, for these people, were rather restrictive yet the principle of their eligibility was established.

However, the Federation of Malaya Constitution did not satisfy the aspirations of all the people in the country. We have already had occasion to hear the activities of the AMCJA and PUTERA. These two political groupings opposed the Federation Constitution and instead published "The People's Constitutional Proposals for Malaya". These constitutional proposals were drafted by representatives of the PUTERA and AMCJA and approved by their two Conferences of Delegates held in July and August 1947.

One of these proposals was the inclusion of Singapore into the Federation of Malaya, the AMCJA-PUTERA would also like to see further reduction of the powers of the British Government. For example, they questioned the right of the British Government to insist that the Malay Rulers be required to ask for advice and, at the same time, be forced to accept it. For, they argued that the very nature of the word "advice" implied voluntariness, both in the asking and accepting.

They were also opposed to the extensive power of the High Commissioner, the executive head of the Federation, and they

suggested a fully-elected Federal Legislative Assembly.

However, the AMCJA-PUTERA proposals fell on deaf ears and the Federation of Malaya was inaugurated as scheduled.

The establishment of the Federation could be regarded as a defeat for the left-wing forces. It has been alleged that the Malayan Democratic Union, the Malayan New Democratic Youth League and the Malayan People's Anti-Japanese Ex-Service Comrades' Association were either infiltrated by the Malayan Communist Party or its front organisations. All these three organisations were affiliates of the AMCJA.

It has been argued that the failure of the Malayan Communist Party to achieve its objective through constitutional means led it to resort to the use of force; and hence the Emergency in June 1948. However, it has been contended that the MCP had already planned an armed uprising much earlier and that it was under external communist pressure to start it in 1948. The often-mentioned occasion related to the decision to use arms was the Asian Youth Congress held in Calcutta in February 1948.

Although arguments against this contention have been put forward yet it is interesting to note that the Communist rebellion was not confined to Malaya alone. At about the same time, there were communist uprisings in Burma, Indonesia and the Philippines, suggesting some kind of coordinated activities. Regardless of what the origin of the rebellion was, the Federation of Malaya Government declared the Emergency in June 1948.

The Emergency caused a great deal of hardship to the people of Malaya. Many lives were lost among the communist and the Government forces, as well as many innocent civilians. At one stage of the Emergency, the Government spent $300,000 a day just to fight against the communist insurgents. At that time, this sum of money could easily build one big school. And the Emergency lasted for twelve years. One could just then imagine the vast amount of money that had to be spent to counter the communist insurgency.

It is not proposed here to give a narration of the Emergency, on the number of policemen and soldiers killed, how many buses burnt, estates destroyed or trains derailed. But what I am more interested in is the effects of the Emergency.

One of the major consequences of the Emergency was the intensification of communal rivalry. The communist movement in Malaya has been dominated by people of Chinese origin, and more

often than not, many people tend to regard the movement as essentially Chinese. On the other hand, most of the members of the Government security forces were Malays — either in the Police Force or the Malay Regiment. Thus, we are confronted with a situation where an ideological conflict between the British Government and the Malayan Communist Party was injected with a communal flavour.

Despite the Malays' wrath and suspicion of the British Government, as a result of the Malayan Union, they still rallied to the Government's side when the Emergency began. The Malay Regiment was enlarged from four to six battalions, the Royal Air Force Regiment was strengthened by an additional squadron. Special Constables were recruited and Kampung Guards organised. A large majority of the members of these security forces were Malays.

Malay leaders from the UMNO also tried to get the British Government to appoint more Malays into the higher echelon of Government. They also requested the British Government to give a grant of £10,000,000 or about $85 million (Malayan) for a period of five to ten years to help the Malays in agriculture and economic developments.

These demands, however legitimate they might have been, tended to further accentuate racial feelings since they emphasised Malay interests.

One of the features of the Emergency was the resettlement schemes by which the Government tried to starve the communists out of the jungle. In order to do this, it must take measures that would deny them their food supply. One of the sources of food supply for the communists were the squatters along the jungle fringes. The squatters might not be in sympathy with communism but many of them, nevertheless, would provide food for the insurgents either because of kinship or being fellow Chinese or being intimidated. Since the squatters were spread all over the edges of the jungles, it would be extremely difficult for the Government to exercise control over the flow of foodstuff to the communist insurgents. So, the Government decided to introduce the Briggs Plan which was essentially a food denial programme. Under this plan, the squatters would be resettled in a new area where they could build their houses. But this new area, popularly known as New Village, would be fenced and their movements would be restricted. The Government then hoped that this would be an effective way of

stopping the insurgents' food supply.

While this measure contributed towards the defeat of the communist insurgency, it also had its side effects. Most of the squatters were Chinese. In the New Villages, they were provided with land on which to build their houses. They were also provided with other amenities in terms of health centres, schools, electricity and water supply. To the average Malay who had lived in the rural areas all his life, the New Villages perplexed him. He had considered himself a loyal citizen, had never given food to the insurgents and had probably joined the Special Constabulary; and yet his village continued to languish, without any of the modern amenities found in the New Villages.

This again contributed towards a heightening of racial tension.

The New Villages, as such, tended to emphasise communalism for the groupings of one racial group, almost wholly by itself, would normally be contributive towards identifying its separateness.

All these factors had and continue to have an adverse effect on the development of a Malayan or Malaysian outlook. As one political observer of the time commented:

> Some balance of forces, among those permanently attached to Malaya, is developing, and a situation will arise in which either racial conflict on a much larger scale will emerge or a solution can be attempted which will create a genuine nation capable of self-government.

Thus, we find the Malayan leaders of this period devoting their efforts towards the creation of a Malayan nation.

20

SARAWAK AND SABAH: THEIR ORIGINS

by
DR. J. KATHIRITHAMBY — WELLS

The territories of Borneo which constitute East Malaysia were once part of the Brunei Sultanate. During the early sixteenth century, at the height of its glory, Brunei was a regular port of call for travellers and traders from China, India and the West. Antonio Pigafetta, the Italian who visited Brunei with Magellan, wrote of the rich and colourful town he saw, built over the water.

The sixteenth century also witnessed the beginning of Spanish and Portuguese activities in the surrounding regions. After occupying the Philippines, the Spanish launched attacks on Brunei. The Sultan managed to hold on to his independence but European efforts to corner the trade in the area seriously affected Brunei's maritime economy. Partly as a result of this, her power, by the end of the century, began to wane. Whatever trade survived was virtually destroyed with the coming of the Dutch and their enforcement of a rigid monopoly system in the Malay-Indonesian Archipelago.

The commercial decline of Brunei automatically led to economic distress and unrest within the state. It is not unlikely that the Sultanate was forced progressively to supplement its declining commercial profits with internal revenues in the form of tax and tribute and this led to dissatisfaction and civil uprisings. It is in

return for helping to suppress one such rebellion that, in 1704, the Sultan of Sulu was ceded all the territories east of Kimanis, comprising most of what is today Sabah. This large cession marked the beginning of the territorial disintegration of the Sultanate. By stages, further areas were given away by successive Sultans to other powers.

The more distant provinces, such as Sarawak, naturally took advantage of the weakening of the Sultanate to break away from it. The temptation to cast off Brunei control appears to have been particularly strong among the Malays of Santubong who claim a separate ancestry. They were predominant on the coastal regions of the First and Second Divisions, and exercised considerable power over the Land Dayak communities inland. Further east, the Batang Lapur and Saribas basins were inhabited mostly by Sea Dayaks or Ibans who had migrated from the Kalimantan region. The Batang Rajang and Baram river basins, similarly, had a large population of Ibans, with smaller Melanau communities along the coast, and a Malay population increasing in numbers towards Brunei town. The territories which constitute the present Sabah state had a mixed population, dominated by Dusun and Murut people and, like Sarawak, it also had a variety of minor tribes.

Apart from the Melanaus, Bajaus, Illanuns and Suluks who accepted Islam because of their coastal position, the other tribes were animists. Group and tribal differences amongst these people were further aggravated by competition for land, brought on by a general movement of population towards the coast. The result was constant rivalry with the stronger taking advantage of the weaker.

Despite her decline in power, Brunei made periodic attempts to re-assert control over her provinces and to maintain some kind of authority over the diverse population. The early nineteenth century saw one such phase when Brunei control over Sarawak was temporarily re-established. In 1827, Pengiran Mahkota from the court of Brunei was appointed to govern Sarawak and he established a town at Kuching. The governor's arrival with a retinue of Brunei Malays made the position of the local Malay *datos* uncomfortable.

Local power struggle was further complicated by the presence of *sharifs* who headed the marauding Iban communities, the most formidable of which occupied the Saribas and Sekrang rivers. They usually attacked Bugis, Chinese and other Asian vessels along the coast; but if victims were scarce, they attacked the neighbouring

upriver tribes. In such a scene as this, the local chiefs were not happy to see the arrival of the Brunei governor.

In 1836, a rebellion led by the local Malay *datos* and Pengiran Usop, an exile from the Brunei court, broke out against Governor Mahkota. Omar Ali Saifuddin, who was then Sultan of Brunei, sent his uncle, Pengiran Muda Hashim, to quell the disturbances, but to no effect. In 1839, at the height of the civil war, James Brooke made his first visit to Sarawak. Brooke, who had come to the east in search of trade and adventure, was commissioned by the British Governor at Singapore to carry some letters to Hashim with the hope of improving relations with Sarawak. Singapore already conducted with Sarawak a small trade in antimony mined at Bau, near Kuching, but this was virtually brought to a standstill by the civil war. Furthermore, it was rumoured that the rebel party in Sarawak had appealed through the Sultan of Sambas for Dutch help. If the plan succeeded, it meant the loss of the Sarawak trade for the British.

It was presumably Brooke's growing interest in Sarawak affairs, which prompted him to revisit Kuching in 1840. The civil war was still on and, in despair, Pengiran Muda Hashim was obliged to settle for Brooke's assistance, promising him the government of Sarawak as reward. Due to the Straits Government's concern over their Borneo trade, Brooke had no difficulty in getting the cooperation of the Royal Navy in suppressing the Sarawak rebellion. The delay which Hashim made in conferring the initial grant, pointed to the compelling circumstances under which the Pengiran had been forced to accommodate Brooke. The grant was later confirmed by the Sultan of Brunei and Brooke took on the title of Rajah.

The Brunei cession of 1842 included only the territories of the First Division but the event signalled further trouble and presented fresh opportunities for territorial extension. By tampering with Brunei politics, Brooke had disturbed a hornets' nest. The *sharifs* and the Iban communities, who saw Brooke's activities as a threat to their own positions and livelihood, offered ready cooperation to Brunei chiefs exiled from Sarawak. Pengiran Mahkota, the ex-Governor of Sarawak, formed an alliance with Sharif Sahap of Sekrang. Similarly, Pengiran Usop of the Sarawak rebel party, joined Sharif Usman and his marauding community of Illanuns at Marudu Bay. Thus, piracy and politics became irrevocably linked and Brooke's battle against his political opponents became ad-

vertised as a morally justified war against the pirate communities of the coast. It was fortunate from Brooke's point of view that, as a consequence of renewed British commercial interests in Borneo and the search for a base between Singapore and the newly acquired port of Hong Kong, he had the full backing of the Royal Navy. In 1843, Captain Henry Keppel, in command of the *Dido*, helped Brooke to raid the Saribas river and, by 1845, the campaign was extended against Sharif Usman of Marudu Bay. The Sharif was mortally wounded and died shortly afterwards. At the end of this episode, the Sultan of Brunei yielded to pressure from Brooke to offer Labuan to the British Government for the purpose of extending commerce and suppressing piracy. Although, the British Government occupied the island in 1846, it did not wish to involve itself in a colonising venture in Borneo and rejected Brooke's appeals to make the White Raj a British protectorate.

In 1849, another attack, probably the biggest, was launched against the Saribas Dayaks at Batang Marau. Eighty-eight Dayaks vessels were destroyed and enemy losses were estimated at about 300 at sea and 500 on land. This brutal campaign dramatically climaxed the steadily growing controversy over the piracy question which Brooke's actions had stirred in Britain. All the same, Brooke's victory at Batang Marau paved the way for further territorial demands from the Brunei Sultan.

Surrounded by turmoil, Sultan Omar Ali Saifuddin found his position a difficult one. His uncle, Pengiran Muda Hashim, an influential figure, was back at the Brunei court and the Sultan disliked him because of his close association with Brooke. The anti-Brooke faction at the court, led by Pengiran Usop, who was now the Sultan's trusted friend and advisor, did not help matters and poisoned the Sultan's mind against his uncle. To aggravate matters, he had constantly been threatened by Sharif Usman for favouring the British. The Sultan, whose feelings for the Sharif were however as much of respect as of fear, was unhappy about Brooke's attack of the Sharif's stronghold. Furthermore, he smarted under the grievance of having been forced by his uncle to sign Usop's death warrant because of his connections with Sharif Usman. Pengiran Muda Hashim himself gambled too much on Brooke's support. Though Pengiran Usop was put to death, the anti-Brooke clique survived at the court and, in 1846, there was a palace revolt in which Pengiran Muda Hashim and his brothers lost their lives.

In 1852, Sultan Omar Ali Saifuddin died and was succeeded by his brother-in-law and Chief Minister, Abdul Munim. Brooke gained from him a cession of the Saribas and Sekrang districts thereby incorporating the Third Division within his state.

As a result of the Chinese rebellion which broke out in 1856, the White Raj was soon extended even further to the northeast. The inssurrection had its origins in Brooke's efforts to prevent the evasion of taxes and secret society activity. In February 1856, the rebels attacked Kuching and killed several Europeans before they were routed by Brooke's forces and compelled to take refuge elsewhere. The rebellion inevitably had repercusssions on Brooke's relations with the important sago producing Chinese communities at Muka and Bintulu, outside the boundaries of his state. The Kuching-Singapore sago trade was affected, leading to Brooke's inteference in that section as well and the annexation, in 1861, of the territories of the Fourth Division. It was this large region, stretching from Cape Datu on the Sambas border to Cape Kerudong, that Charles Brooke inherited from his uncle in 1863.

By the time Charles took over the government of Sarawak, local opposition to the White Raj was virtually crushed. However, the appearance of rival European interests in Borneo spurred Charles Brooke to launch an even more vigorous expansionist policy than his predecessor. In 1865, the Sultan of Brunei made a 10 year lease of North Borneo to Charles Lee Mosses, the American Consul in Brunei, an event which initiated a new scramble for the remaining territories of Brunei.

Charles Lee Moses apparently had no ambitions of developing North Borneo and was happy to sell the lease for a fair price to some businessmen in Hong Kong. They, in turn, formed the American Trading Company of Borneo, but their attempts to find a suitable settlement at Kimanis Bay ended in failure.

Meanwhile, another complication arose because of a claim made by the Sultan of Sulu on certain areas of North Borneo which were previously leased to him by the Sultan of Brunei. These included a part of the territory granted to Moses, indicating that the Sultan of Brunei did not recognise the earlier transaction, but the Sultan of Sulu maintained the validity of his claim. On this belief, the Sultan of Sulu gave a concession to W.C. Cowie, a manager of a Singapore firm in Borneo, to found a settlement in Sandakan. The problem was partly solved when Cowie, on realising the conflicting claims, threw his lot with the American Trading

Company. The Company, frustrated by failures at Kimanis, sold the lease, which eventually came into the hands of an Austrian, Baron von Overbeck, and Alfred Dent of the Dent Brothers in London. Dent and Overbeck got hold of the grant given by Brunei to Moses in return for annual payments to the Sultan and Temenggung. They later skilfully solved the claim of the Sultan of Sulu to the areas in the north-east by transferring the sovereignty of all the areas between the Pandassan river in the north and Siboekoe river in the south by agreeing to pay $5,000 annually.

At this juncture, Spain, which regarded the Sultan of Sulu to be under its protection, disputed the arrangement. But Dent and Overbeck were lucky in that Britain now started to change its policy of non-intervention in Borneo. In 1881, Britain granted a charter to the North Borneo Company formed by Dent and Overbeck and, by 1884, succeeded in persuading Spain to abandon her claims to North Borneo. A settlement with the Netherlands Government proved more difficult because of Dutch presence in Kalimantan. Anglo-Dutch disputes over claims centred around the Tawau-Siboekoe region were settled in 1891. The Siboekoe river fell to the Dutch and Tawau to the British and the boundary was drawn between them.

While the boundaries of the British sphere were being permanently defined on the south and the north east, the frontiers of the Chartered Company and the Sarawak Raj were steadily expanding in the north at the expense of Brunei. The appearance of rival competitors in the northeast sent Brooke in a flurry of activity to expand his own state. His annexation of the Baram district, fringing on the centre of Brunei, was withheld only because of Britain's concern over her trade in Labuan.

Once it sanctioned the activities of the North Borneo Company, however, the British Government was obliged to lift the ban on Brooke's expansionist policy. The Sultan was powerless and, in 1882, he saw Baram clipped off the modest limits of his state. The acquisition, shortly after, of the Padas-Klias basin by the Chartered Company, induced Charles Brooke to try and check the westward expansion of his rivals by the annexation of Trusan although the district lay away from the existing eastern boundary of his Raj. The next move he planned was to join Trusan with the rest of his state through the acquisition of the Limpang district. The Sultan's reaction was one of panic as this would cut the remaining of his territories into two halves, with the province of

Brunei in the east and Baliat in the west. With the outbreak of rebellion in the Limbang, the Sultan's chances of holding on to the district were slim. To add to the confusion, the Sultan died in 1885 and was succeeded by the *Dato Temenggung*, Hashim Jalil, whose claims were disputed by many of the Brunei *pengirans*. Largely to prevent foreign powers cashing in on the situation, Britain offered to make Brunei a protectorate. Helpess in the face of perennial court intrigues and revolts in his vastly shrunken state, the Sultan agreed to the British proposal. In 1888 Brunei, Sabah and Sarawak became British protectorates. The Limbang itself was occupied by Brooke in 1890 and remained as part of the Sarawak state despite the Sultan's repeated appeals to the British Government for recovery of the area. The boundaries of Sarawak remained in that form and, together with Sabah's boundaries, now define the limits of East Malaysia.

21

SABAH, 1900 — 1961

by
JAGJIT SINGH SIDHU

Sabah or North Borneo as it was then called, first came directly under the influence of the British in November 1881 when a charter was given by the British Government to the British North Borneo Company. W.H. Treacher, seconded from Malaya, became its first Governor and when he left in 1887, a basic of administration along the west and east coasts and inland, had been established. Trade was encouraged and agricultural enterprise began. Development along these lines continued during the administrations of W.M. Crocker (1887-1888) and Charles V. Creagh (1888-1895) when the prosperity of the country depended largely on tobacco and land sales. In 1893, however, with the introduction of the Mackinnon tariff in America which eliminated Sabah's tobacco sales in that country, a serious slump resulted and the administration faced its greatest problems. Various remedies were tried but without much success and when Hugh Clifford resigned as Governor in 1901, as a result of disagreements with the London Board of Directors of the Company, the new appointment to the post was Earnest Birch who had been British Resident in Negeri Sembilan. In his two years as Governor, he initiated several improvements, the most notable being the abolition of slavery, creating a climate for new investment, and attracting new colonists. But his most important contribution was the opening up of bridle tracks which made the

interior accessible and encouraged trade and the movement of labour.

By 1910, the economic position of Sabah was quite satisfactory. In addition to the export of rubber, which began in that year, the tobacco estates, timber camps, jungle products, sago, dried fish, copra and coal all contributed to the prosperity of the country. But in London, W.C. Cowie, the dominant personality on the Board of Directors for 15 years, had saddled the company with debenture loans and had left a legacy of maladministration in Borneo. He had persistently insisted on paying out dividends annually and had exercised too stern a control on the administration of Sabah. His death in 1910 marked an end to the pioneering age of the 19th century and the beginning of a period of modernisation.

His successor to the position of Chairman of the Board of Directors was the ex-Governor of Ceylon, Sir West Ridgeway. He visited Sabah personally and there was an immediate relaxation of control from London. He asked for independent reports on various aspects of the administration and as a result of these, a Health Department was organised: an Education Department, a Forest Department, and an advisory Council for Native Affairs were set up; contract labour and the opium farm were done away with and various improvements in salary scales and pensions of officials were effected.

In 1912, a Legislative Council was set up in place of the old Advisory Council, and comprised 7 official and 4 unofficial members. The unofficials represented the Chinese community, the planters on the east and west coasts, and the business community. There was, however, no agitation against or opposition to company rule.

One of the reasons for this lack of political discussion and the absence of any demands for representative Government was the shortage of people. Lawyers, who formed the nucleus of most parliaments in the colonial territories, were discouraged by the Government from entering the country and were also reluctant to come because of the lack of opportunities. Government officials were few — there were only 45 of them in 1912 — and the businessmen were either too busy at Sandakan and Jesselton, or too remote in their plantations and estates. In several cases, they served on local sanitary boards but seldom showed much interest.

When the First World War broke out in 1914, Sabah im-

mediately faced a crisis. German shipping which had built up a commercial monopoly in the area during the course of the previous 20 years, now withdrew completely. And since the replacements available were at most intermittent and since the country had imported at least half her rice requirements, Sabah had to resort to severe rationing. In 1919, the food shortage was aggravated by a locust plague that attacked the rice fields. Chinese immigration which had received no encouragement till 1910 had shown signs of a resumption shortly before the outbreak of the war, making the supply of rice essential. This desperate situation resulted in Sabah and Sarawak appealing jointly in 1920 for a greater allocation of Burmese rice.

The decade after the outbreak of the war saw Sabah struggling for survival. The lack of capital and the scarcity of shipping crippled her exports, affected her development and weakened the administration. But despite the slump and the reduction in revenue, Ridgeway in London continued paying out dividends. This was done through borrowing and by 1924, the company faced a debt of £1,649,800. The prospect of bankruptcy loomed ominously and two of the company's directors, Mountstuart Elphinstone and Dougal Malcolm, pressed for a thorough investigation into the affairs of the company. The facts were finally revealed in a report published in 1926 and it came to light that Ridgeway had been paying dividends out of capital. He had little alternative but to resign.

General Sir Neill Malcolm was elected the new President of the Board. Year after year of careful spending reduced the debt considerably and by 1941, £700,000 were redeemed. He secured the financial stability of the company as Sabah continued to develop slowly. He was concerned primarily in the financial aspects of the problem and interferred little with the work of administration.

In 1934, the company embarked on a major policy change. Up till then all its Governors had been men who had had a certain amount of administrative experience in Asia and had largely been seconded to Sabah from Malaya. But in 1934 the Governor who succeeded Arthur F. Richards was Douglas J. Jardine whose administrative experience had been confined to Africa. But with vigour and enthusiasm, he introduced changes in many of the branches of administration. He was helped significantly by his Residents and experienced heads of departments whom he consulted. Improvements were made in the Education, Health, Land,

and Native Administration Departments.

He was, however, unable to alter the basic administration framework to any large degree. In 1935 the country was divided into four Residencies, the Tawau (or East Coast) Residency, and the Sandakan, West Coast, and Interior Residencies, with a total of 17 districts within them. Jardine felt that these were too many and inspite of the arguments of the Residents, he merged the Residency of Tawau with Sandakan, and the Interior with the West Coast. But his plans for amalgamating districts were opposed by every senior officer and were never put into practice.

Jardine revived the Residents' Conference which under its new title of Administrative Officers' Conference, included District Officers, and this body discussed all administrative problems. It first met in January 1935 and again in October, to discuss Jardine's ideas about native administration and indirect rule. From this, arose the Native Chiefs' Advisory Council which provided a valuable guide to local opinion till 1941. The Conferences also created significant links among the scattered staff of the country. The improved state of affairs resulted in an increase of revenue, the resumption of dividends in London, the necessity to control Chinese immigration, and a general air of peace and tranquility.

Jardine retired in 1937 and was succeeded by Charles R. Smith who retained the administrative structure that had been created. The Administrative Officers' Conferences, however, lapsed, because Smith was unable to find an important enough issue for discussion. They were revived after the war and are now an annual feature of the Government.

Sabah came under Japanese occupation in early 1942 and was divided by the Military Commander into two administrative areas, *Seikai Shiu* and *Tokai Shiu*. The former comprised of the previous West Coast and Interior Residencies and the latter was the old East Coast Residency. And while the company had controlled the country from the coast and had neglected the interior, the Japanese moved inland in strength and ruled Sabah from the centre.

The occupation force numbered 25,000 men with its main centres at Ranau and Pensiangan. But although the military takeover had been carefully planned, the Japanese lacked any long range conception of how they should govern Sabah. The Chinese and other peoples were quickly alienated by their plundering, looting, cruelty, and general maladministration.

As in Malaya, the first signs of opposition to Japanese rule

came from the Chinese whose shops had been looted and whose trade had been dislocated. News of American naval victories in the Coral Sea and Midway only encouraged this restiveness. In the same year, guerilla agents for the United States forces in the Philippines moved into the west coasts areas of Sabah and there contacted a young Chinese named Albert Kwok Fen Nam. Kwok formed his own force, the Overseas Chinese Defence Association, and although his main task was to collect and transmit information, he could not resist more active anti-Japanese measures. In October 1943, he planned a raid on Jesselton and eliminated 50 Japanese. Retribution for this, however, was quick and a wholesale persecution of the Chinese followed. Kwok surrendered in December and with 175 others was executed in January 1944.

Sabah was finally liberated from Japanese rule in October 1945 by a Brigade of the Australian 9th Division. In the wake of the troops, there moved in a Civil Affairs Unit under Brigadier C.F.C. Macaskie, who had held important government posts before the war. With him was Maxwell-Hall, a retired Judicial Commissioner, and a motley group of ex-Malayan and Sabahan civil servants who had been gathered in Melbourne. The task facing them was stupendous — it was like starting from scratch.

Meanwhile in London, Sir Neill Malcolm and his fellow directors realised that the cost of rebuilding Sabah and replacing it on a firm footing was beyond them. By an agreement signed on 26 June 1946, the country passed into the hands of the British Government as a Colony on 15 July 1946.

Sabah remained a colony for 17 years and during the period, experienced remarkable development. But it is significant that in its essentials, the Colonial Administration differed little from that of the Chartered Company.

As mentioned previously, at the end of the war, the country survived on a bare starvation and subsistence economy.

The reason for this was two fold. Firstly, rubber and timber which had formed the basis for the livelihood of the majority of the population had been without an export market for almost four years. Secondly, Sabah had depended on Thailand for much of its rice needs, and the loss of earnings as a result of an export stoppage placed serious curbs on the country's ability to pay for its imports. So, the first concern of the new government was to revive the pre-war pattern of trade. It was vital that transport facilities be re-established. It was a laborious task but gradually rubber from

the interior began to find its way to Jesselton again and by 1947, 15,000 tons were exported.

Rehabilitation of the economy continued until 1953. After that, however, it became possible to plan for expansion and new growth. Between 1954 and 1957 the Governor, Roland Turnbull, doubled the 300 miles of road that had existed previously. This provided opportunities for hundreds of land hungry people, and after decades of agricultural stagnation, the response was overpowering. There was a rapid expansion of rubber and timber lands and these two products remained the twin pillars of the economy.

The economic development yielded an increased revenue and allowed a parallel development in basic social services especially health and education. But politically and in matters of constitutional development, there was a marked absence of progress. Part of the explanation for this was financial since Sabah was not independent in this field and this encouraged a conservative feeling among the people of not wanting to rush into home rule.

A second reason was the general contentment with the existing conditions. British colonial officers were few in number and were an acceptable part of the community. Social and economic advance also resulted in general political apathy.

Even on occasions when political change was desired, there was an absence of any clear, united demand. And although throughout the 1950's an increasing number of people thought that a colonial status was inconsistent with their dignity, their voices were weak and divided. It needed an external stimulus for political parties to emerge and this came with the idea of Malaysia.

22

SARAWAK, 1900 — 1963

by
JAGJIT SINGH SIDHU

The history of Sarawak from 1841—1941 is the history of the Brookes. The first Brooke who influenced the history of the state was James Brooke who was proclaimed Rajah and Governor of Sarawak on 24 November 1841. He was succeeded in 1863 by his nephew Charles Brooke who had joined the Sarawak service in 1852 and had spent his first 13 years trying to establish orderly conditions in the country. When he took over the government of the country, although the use of force was still sometimes necessary, the trend had already moved towards establishing the supremacy of law and order. From 1878 onwards, things had progressed to such a state that attention could now be devoted towards the political and commercial advancement of the territory.

Government revolved around the Rajah and Charles Brooke kept a tight hold on the whole administration. He was aided in his task by a small group of people who kept the administration as simple as possible and justice was consequently rather arbitrary. There was very little paper work and many decisions were taken by word of mouth. District Officers sent in their reports to the Resident of their Division who forwarded many of them to the Rajah. All Residents were Europeans although sometimes a Malay was appointed temporary Resident. District Officers were

sometimes European, sometimes Malay and sometimes of mixed origin.

Charles Brooke ruled until 1917 and as Rajah for almost 50 years, he earned for himself the title of an enlightened despot. He was a clear thinker, had a sense of politics and was an able and active administrator. He personally supervised all details of government. The officials, especially in Kuching, were allowed little initiative and could not take any independent action.

He disliked pomp and spent much of his time on tours of inspection around the country. Except in the Ulu Ai, round the upper reaches of the Batang Lupar and along the frontier in the east, Sarawak was peaceful. Only on rare occasions did the Government have to interfere to end some tribal feud.

Economically, the beginning of the 20th century, saw an increase in immigration into the state. The first batch of government-organised Chinese immigrants arrived early in 1901 and was settled in the Sibu district. In addition, there was also considerable privately, organised immigration. The result of all this was the conversion of Sibu from a small village into the second town of the country. In those days, the settlers could grow and market anything they pleased. But rice was the primary objective. With the introduction of rubber in 1906, the basis for the prosperity of these settlers was established.

Each Chinese group was placed under the control of a *Keng Chew* headman, appointed by the local Resident and acting as liaison between him and the people. The Chinese were allowed to keep their customary law except in matters repugnant to the Government.

There was also a small Indian community in Kuching. The Rajah approved of education within moderation but he doubted if the Dayaks were ready for it. Nevertheless, he readily supported schools founded by missionaries. The pupils at these schools were mainly Chinese but since the Rajah insisted that religious education should not be compulsory, a few Malays enrolled. In 1903, a Government High School was established. It was open to all races and staffed by Chinese, Malays and Indians. But the ambitions of early educationalists were somewhat restricted by Charles Brooke's determination that education should not be allowed to disrupt the traditions of the country.

Medical services were rather primitive. There was only one European Medical Officer till the end of the 19th century. District

Officers were expected to have some medical knowledge so as to be able to keep an eye on the health of their districts. It was not till 1913 that Sibu was provided with a hospital and a Medical Officer.

Outside Kuching, there were no roads and transport was by water. A telephone was installed in Kuching in 1900 and soon extended to Upper Sarawak. Telegraph communications were established in the main centres early in the 20th century.

These then were the principal landmarks in the history of Sarawak under Charles Brooke. On his death, he was succeeded by his son, Charles Vyner Brooke who was proclaimed Rajah in May 1917. There was, however, no marked change in the system of government. There was little change in personnel and the European officials were given the same responsibilities and the same trust. But in spite of this, a change was inevitable. Rajah Vyner was a very different type of personality from his father who had been formidable, strict and autocratic. Although he could be dignified and solemn, he was more affable and enjoyed the pleasures of life.

Economically and socially steady progress continued. The years following the First World War were prosperous. But expenditure also increased as public services were developed. The railway was reorganised and roads around Kuching and Miri were improved. Politically, there were no grave crises to record.

Rajah Vyner had three daughters but no son and by the law of Sarawak succession was limited to male members of the Brooke family. Vyner's heir, therefore, was his brother, Bertram, the Tuan Muda. But the Tuan Muda was himself old and unhealthy and the next heir was his son, Anthony Brooke, born in 1912. Vyner accepted Anthony as his heir but was critical of him.

Anthony entered the Sarawak service in 1936 as a district officer in the Third Division. He possessed strong views about administration and expressed them fearlessly. In March 1939, Anthony was appointed Rajah Muda and when Rajah Vyner left for England in April, he took over the Government.

The result was unfortunate. The older officials were suspicious of Anthony whose views on the over-centralisation of administration were most unpopular with them.

The outbreak of war in Europe in September 1939 brought the Rajah back to Sarawak. Towards the end of October, Anthony left Sarawak to be married. After his marriage, while on his way to

England, he received news at Athens that he had been deprived of the title and rank of Rajah Muda on the grounds that he was not yet fit to assume the responsibilities of that high office.

Doubts about the succession seem to have inclined Rajah Vyner to consider whether changes should be introduced. In most parts of the world, the trends towards a democratic way of government were already apparent and the Rajah himself was weary. At this time too, a man by the name of Gerald MacBryan began to influence the Rajah more and more in his capacity as Private Secretary and it is believed that Vyner's subsequent actions were the outcome of his influence.

In March 1941, the Rajah issued a proclamation proposing to divest himself of his absolute power and establishing a Constitution for Sarawak. This was issued in September and set up a Supreme Council of not less than 5 members, the majority of whom had to be members of the Sarawak civil service and of the Council Negeri. The Chief Secretary and the Treasurer were ex-officio members.

Below the Supreme Council was the Council Negeri comprising of 25 members of whom 14 were to be from the civil service and the other 11 nominated unofficials. No legislation could be enacted by the Rajah-in-Council except by the advice and consent of the Council Negeri.

On the death of the Rajah and before the appointment of his successor, the Supreme Council was to act as Regent.

The Constitution was approved by the British Government and it was agreed to appoint a British Adviser to Sarawak, particularly, to look after its external relations.

The time had also come for reforms in the administration. It was felt that more indigenous people had to be integrated into the Government machinery. But it was only a small step towards self-government.

The Constitution, however, was never tested and only one meeting of the Council Negeri was held before Sarawak passed into the hands of the Japanese. For three and a half years, there was little news of Sarawak. The Japanese concentrated themselves in the towns and not many penetrated the interior.

With the Japanese surrender in August 1945, the Government of the country passed into the hands of a military administration and administrative order and essential services were slowly restored.

In April 1946, the civil government of the country was handed

back to the Rajah. Meanwhile, in 1945, Anthony Brooke had been reinstated and appointed head of the Provisional Government empowered to negotiate with the Colonial Office. Progress was slow and in the meantime, Sarawak had been liberated. The Rajah now changed his mind and in October 1945, dismissed Anthony Brooke and informed the British Government that he wished to cede Sarawak to the King.

The offer was accepted and in July 1946, the Privy Council in London ordered the annexation of Sarawak as from 1 July.

When Sarawak became a Crown Colony and the Brooke Constitution was implemented, the territory was divided into 5 administrative divisions: the First Division, with headquarters at Kuching, the Second Division, with headquarters at Semanggang; the Third Division, with headquarters at Sibu; the Fourth Division, with headquarters at Miri; and the Fifth Division, with headquarters at Limbang.

The set up remained unchanged for ten years until the Constitution was modified in 1956. By this, the membership of the Council Negeri was enlarged to 45 with 24 of its members indirectly elected. The Supreme Council was increased to 10 and consisted largely of nominated members. The situation remained so till the formation of Malaysia was effected in 1963.

23

THE RISE OF POLITICAL PARTIES — I

by

ZAINAL ABIDIN BIN ABDUL WAHID

As a result of the Emergency some political parties were banned or dissolved themselves. Those affected were the Malayan Democratic Union, the Malay Nationalist Party, the *Angkatan Pemuda Insaf* and the *Angkatan Wanita Sedar*. This banning or dissolution of political parties led to a kind of political vacuum.

While the All-Malaya Council of Joint-Action was not a political party as such yet it served as the medium for the expression of non-Malay political aspirations. The inauguration of the Federation more or less led to the decline of the AMCJA. And the resort to the use of arms, by the Malayan Communist Party and its other asociates or sympathisers, some of whom were in the AMCJA as front-organisations of the MCP, resulted in the disintegration of the AMCJA.

People, like the late Tun Tan Cheng Lock, while opposed to the Federation of Malaya Agreement yet found themselves unable to associate themselves with the use of force in fighting for their political objectives.

So, for a while, the Chinese communities in Malaya had no political organisation to turn to, except the MCP.

The MCP came into being in the late 1930's and since its inception, its membership had been, and still is, predominantly

Chinese. To the man-in-the-street, the MCP has been regarded as a Chinese party. In view of this, the British Government was concerned over the possibility of the MCP exercising a greater influence on the Chinese community. Besides, it also realised that it would be extremely difficult for the British Government to destroy the MCP if the Government could not get the support, or even cooperation, of a substantial portion of the Chinese community. In the light of this consideration, therefore, the British Government encouraged the formation of a political association amongst the Chinese community in order to provide it with an alternative to the MCP.

Early in 1948, Tun Tan Cheng Lock had already tried to form a Malayan Chinese League. At the same time, he suggested that a Malayan League and a Malayan Indian League be formed. He further proposed that once these three leagues had been established then a Malayan National Unity League be found to embrace all the three organisations. This proposal was very much like the present Alliance Party. However, Tun Tan's suggestion did not come to fruition. Further attempts were made and the person credited with the honour of forming the Malayan Chinese Association was the late Tun Leong Yew Koh.

Besides the importance of providing an alternative focal point of attention of the Chinese community, the MCA was also formed for other reasons. Because of the nature of the membership of the MCP, the Chinese, as a community, was regarded with suspicion pertaining to their attitude towards the communist insurrection. It was thought that a good number of them was in sympathy with the communist movement, either because of ideological inclination or kinship. The actual number of persons involved was difficult to determine but the situation was sufficiently bad as to cast a stigma on the whole community.

Chinese community leaders, therefore, felt that it was their duty to present the proper image of their community — that not all Chinese were communist or even sympathisers. They tried to identify themselves with the efforts of the British Government in suppressing the communist insurrection.

The dissolution and banning of the political parties mentioned earlier also left the political pursuits in the country very much the monopoly of the UMNO; and it was felt that there was ample room for the emergence of another political grouping.

Besides, at the end of 1948 and early 1949 when the MCA was

inaugurated, the Communist Party in China was quickly gaining ground. The almost imminent victory of China's Communist Party led the Kuomintang elements in Malaya to intensify their anti-communist drive. Many of the founder members of the MCA were either members of the Kuomintang or its sympathisers. Here, they found identity of interests with the British Government as far as the latter's policy in Malaya was concerned.

The almost certain success of the Communist Party in China made it necessary for many people of Chinese origin in this country to appraise their position — whether they would like to return to Communist China or become permanent residents or even citizens of Malaya. Those with substantial wealth or engaged in capitalistic activities would certainly feel hesitant to go back to a communist China. And many of the founders of the MCA belonged to this group of people.

Later, the MCA provided much assistance to the Government in the latter's efforts to resettle the Chinese squatters in the new villages. The MCA supplied much of the social needs of the resettled squatters.

The MCA, however, did not start as a political party. In its early years it was, technically at least, a social organisation, although its interests, in things political, were quite apparent.

Some of its leading members wanted to retain its non-political character but many believed that it should become a political party so that it would be better able to serve and promote the interests of the Chinese community. The resistance from the former group was sufficiently strong to necessitate the issuing of the threat to resign by Tun Tan Cheng Lock, who was then the President of the MCA, if the members were to refuse to turn the MCA into a political party. It was not till mid-1952 before the MCA formally became a political party and even then, it led to the resignation of the secretary-general of organisation at that time.

Meanwhile the UMNO began to re-assess its position and future. When the struggle against the Malayan Union appeared to be assured of success, Dato' Onn bin Jaafar, the President of UMNO, tried to orientate the thinking of UMNO members towards further struggle and that the abolition of the Malayan Union was not their only objective. He told the UMNO Assembly, in September 1947:

> Though the task of fighting the Malayan Union is nearly complete, the Malays must be aware of the fact that it is only the beginning of

> our struggle. There are many other things that the Malays must do .... The UMNO has been formed not only for the purpose of opposing the Malayan Union, but also to fight against the Malays themselves. We have to find ways and means of how we shall change the habits and way of life of the Malays in order to enable them to realise their duties and responsibilities.

UMNO was reorganised. It was centralised and streamlined. And after the establishment of the Federation of Malaya in 1948, there seemed to be a change in the approach of many of the UMNO leaders towards Malayan politics. There appeared to be a willingness to work together. And after the formation of the Communities Liaison Committee in December 1948, Dato' Onn became more vocal in his advocation of greater cooperation between the Malays and the other communities in the country.

At first, UMNO was open to the other communities in terms of associate membership. In October 1949, Dato' Onn suggested that there should be only one nationality speaking one language in Malaya. His suggestion did not find receptive ears amongst the majority of the UMNO members. It was too radical for them. The UMNO Assembly deferred his proposal.

Dato' Onn followed this move with a proposal to amend the citizenship laws of the Federation Agreement to make them less restrictive. He again failed to get the support of UMNO. This led to his resignation in June 1950. His resignation was followed by the whole of the Executive Committee of UMNO, excepting the Secretary-General who withdrew his resignation.

At that time, however, the UMNO could not afford to lose the leadership of Dato' Onn. After a while, the UMNO General Assembly resolved to ask Dato' Onn to lead UMNO again, and in August 1950, Dato' Onn was reinstated.

This reinstatement implied the acceptance by UMNO of the proposal to liberalise the citizenship laws.

Despite these early difficulties with regard to the accommodation of non-Malays into the body-politic of Malaya, Dato' Onn made a further move.

He then wanted to change the name of UMNO from United Malays National Organisation to United Malaya National Organisation. The idea was to open UMNO to all the citizens of Malaya, regardless of their racial origins. He put this forward in early 1951.

It was reported that Dato' Onn then thought that the Progressive Party in Singapore, a non-communal party, intended to

come to the Federation. He believed that the Progressive Party should not be allowed to take the initiative in forming a multi-racial party in Malaya. He was of the opinion that if UMNO were to initiate this move, then it might be able to absorb the non-Malays into UMNO, thus preventing the rise of a rival party. It appeared that he was convinced that UMNO could handle the non-Malays if they were to join UMNO.

At about this time, the MCA was already urging for the introduction of the principal of *jus soli*, and together with the Chinese Chamber of Commerce, the MCA was asking for a Royal Commission to draft a new constitution.

Besides, the British Government then was planning to hold local elections at the end of 1951.

Dato' Onn thought that he could counter, not only the formation of a multi-racial political party outside UMNO but also the MCA, by absorbing Malayan citizens of non-Malay origins into the proposed United Malaya National Organisation.

However, this proposal was strongly opposed by a great majority of UMNO members who questioned the real allegiance of the non-Malays, since many non-Malay youths were then leaving Malaya in order to avoid being drafted into the National Service.

Many UMNO members believed that the opening of UMNO membership to all citizens would adversely affect the Malay characteristics of UMNO and that UMNO could no longer fight for Malay interests only, as had been orginally envisaged.

The opposition against the change was so strong that Dato' Onn decided to leave UMNO and started preparation for the formation of a new party.

On 27 August 1951, Dato' Onn formally resigned from UMNO. The UMNO General Assembly then passed a resolution recognising his services and paying tribute to him — the founder of UMNO and the person who united the Malays and awakened them to their political duties and rights.

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THE RISE OF POLITICAL PARTIES — II

by
ZAINAL ABIDIN BIN ABDUL WAHID

The resignation of the late Dato' Onn bin Jaafar from the presidency of UMNO was followed by many of the members of the UMNO Central Executive Committee. Together with some other leading non-Malay community leaders, these ex-UMNO leaders formed a new political party, known as the Independence of Malaya Party. This took place in September 1951.

The inaugural meeting of the Independence of Malaya Party or IMP was chaired by the late Tun Tan Cheng Lock, who was then actually the President of the MCA. The IMP, when it started, appeared very promising. It had most of the leading personalities of Malayan politics. It was a multi-racial party but its membership was confined only to Malayan citizens. One of the major objectives of the IMP was the attainment of *Merdeka* within ten years.

The emergence of the IMP had a rather ironic result. One of the major reasons for the formation of the IMP was the failure of Dato' Onn to persuade UMNO to change itself into a multi-racial party. But one of the immediate effects of the foundation of the IMP was the birth of the alliance between the UMNO and the MCA in Selangor, which later developed into the present nationally-based Alliance.

As a result of political activities and demands of the various political parties and groups in Malaya in the late forties and early fifties, the British Government decided to hold the first elections in Malaya in February 1952. These elections were meant for the Kuala Lumpur Municipality.

The IMP declared its intention to put up candidates for the elections. As had been stated earlier, the leadership of the party did not only appear promising but also formidable. There was in fact concern amongst the UMNO and MCA leaders over the potentiality of the IMP. It was reported that one prominent MCA leader in Selangor had personal differences with some top members of the IMP, while the UMNO and the IMP had already developed mutual hostility against each other, for obvious reasons. So, a combination of political and personal considerations led to the alliance between the UMNO and the MCA in the Kuala Lumpur Municipal elections of February 1952.

In the twelve seats contested for the elections, the UMNO-MCA combination won nine. This was a big boost for the new alliance and a blow for the IMP, from which the IMP did not really recover.

It is interesting to try and find out the reasons for the failure of the IMP to set a new approach and pattern in Malayan politics. As far as the majority of the Malays were concerned, they regarded the IMP with suspect, not only because of the multi-racial character of the party but also because some of its leaders were persons who had left UMNO, a party which was then considered as representing Malay interests. The early fifties was also a period when the anti-colonial feeling was mounting. Dato' Onn was then holding a high position in Government and this made him less acceptable to the Malay masses. Besides, the UMNO had proved itself. It had managed to abolish the Malayan Union and established the Federation of Malaya in 1948. UMNO had produced concrete results but the IMP, despite the calibre of its leadership, had yet to prove itself.

To the Chinese community, the IMP was not attractive either. First of all, only Federal citizens could become its members and, at that time, not many non-Malays had or could become citizens. Besides, the MCA had already been in existence for a few years and had begun to attract the attention of the Chinese in the country.

The role played by Tun Tan Cheng Lock, at about this period,

did not also make it easy for the Chinese community to make a decision whether to join the IMP or not. Although Tun Tan chaired the inaugural meeting yet he did not hold any office in the Executive Committee of the IMP. However, he did call on the Chinese to give their support to the IMP. In fact, when MCA branches requested for direction whether they should dissolve themselves and reform as branches of the IMP, the MCA headquarters failed to give a firm reply. The ambiguous role played by Tan Cheng Lock contributed towards the inability of the IMP to attract support from the Chinese community.

Meanwhile, the UMNO-MCA combination began to spread its operation into other areas of Malaya. Some UMNO and MCA leaders were still then in doubt over the workability of this alliance. But, of the 43 seats contested jointly by the two bodies, they managed to win 24.

This somewhat encouraging result led to a series of meetings between UMNO and MCA leaders. By February 1953, liaison committees consisting of officials of these two parties were established at branch level. By March 1953, the UMNO and MCA, at committee level, had agreed on the principle of general elections for the Federal Legislative Council and that this proposal was to be submitted to the parent bodies.

In April 1953, the UMNO General Assembly considered the election proposal. It then envisaged a council of 75 with 31 nominated and 44 elected members. In other words, it was to be a three-fifths elected council. The UMNO also resolved that the elections for the Legislative Council were to be held in 1954, and that if the Government were to reject these proposals then UMNO and MCA members who had been nominated to the Federal Legislative Council should resign from the Council.

Some British writers considered the demands made by UMNO as being intemperate; but the editorial of a local press regarded UMNO as being progressive for making such demands.

To strengthen its position, the UMNO called a meeting of Malay political organisations which was held at Johor Bahru in August 1953. While this meeting did not make any formal resolution but the response from the different political organisations was encouraging.

Then UMNO and the MCA jointly sponsored a National Convention, inviting the different political parties in the country to participate. The Convention decided that elections to the Federal

Legislative Council should be held in 1954, and a committee was appointed to discuss and suggest amendments to the 1948 Federation of Malaya Constitution.

The growing popularity of the UMNO-MCA alliance and its continuing success at various local elections led to the nomination of two members of the Alliance to become ministers in the then British Colonial Government in Malaya.

The failure of the IMP and the success of the UMNO-MCA alliance generated another move to counter the latter. A group of Menteri Besars, who were then appointed officials of the British Government, called for a Malayan National Conference in the hope of countering the influence of the UMNO-MCA group. The Malayan National Conference came out with a rather conservative approach to the question of constitutional and political advancement. The Conference was of the opinion that Malaya was not yet ready for a general election at Federal level. It suggested that elections should first be held at State and Settlement level and that the Federal Legislative Council should continue to be a nominated one but with an enlarged membership.

The resolutions of the Conference were regarded with disapproval by many people in Malaya. Some people considered them as "a retrogade step" and "a job-preserving blueprint".

While the political parties and groups were organising a convention and a conference, the British Government also appointed a committee consisting of 46 persons to study the question of Federal elections for the country. The committee then set up a working party comprising of 20 persons.

The reports of the Federal Elections Committee came out in February 1954 with majority and minority views. The majority report was subscribed to mainly by members of the Malayan National Conference. They proposed a council of 92 members, 44 of whom would be elected. In other words, it would be a minority-elected house. Whereas the minority report, supported by members of the UMNO, MCA and the Labour Party, argued for a legislature of 100 members, with 60 of them elected. They also suggested that the elections be held in November 1954, that the franchise would be Federal Citizenship and that voting was not to be compulsory.

At about this time, i.e. February 1954, the organisers of the Malayan National Conference, many of whom were formerly in the IMP, formed a new political party known as Party Negara.

The submission of the majority and minority reports was followed by party demands made by UMNO and the MCA, i.e. for a three-fifths elected council. But the British Government was not in favour of the demands and this strained relations between the two groups. The UMNO-MCA alliance organised another National Convention which reaffirmed the stand taken by the UMNO and MCA.

When the efforts made in Malaya did not prove successful, the UMNO-MCA alliance decided to send its representatives to London to see the Secretary of State for the Colonies himself. The Secretary of State for the Colonies, Oliver Lyttleton, refused to meet them. However, through the good offices of an ex-Malaya hand, they managed to see the Secretary. But they still could not get the three-fifths majority principle accepted.

The UMNO-MCA alliance, therefore, decided to oppose the British Government White Paper on the elections. It requested for the setting up of an independent commission for constitutional amendments. The Alliance backed its requests with a threat to withdraw all its councillors from the different councils throughout the country if they were not met by the Government.

By this time, the British Government had come to accept the principle of a majority-elected chamber. It suggested a house of 98 with 46 nominated and 52 elected members. But the Alliance refused to accept the offer.

On 11 June 1954, a meeting was held between the British Deputy High Commissioner and representatives of the Alliance. The British Government continued to be adamant. Consequently on 13 June, the UMNO-MCA alliance decided to boycott all the councils of the Government.

The *Straits Times* which seemed to be toeing the line of the British Colonial Government sarcastically commented on the boycott staged by the Alliance. On 16 June 1954, the *Straits Times* stated, "Since Government and administration from Federal level to the humblest town council can continue despite the 'boycott', what next does the Alliance propose?" The *Singapore Standard*, on the other hand, considered the UMNO-MCA walkout as an expression of self-reliance.

It may be worthwhile to mention here that the Malayan Indian Congress or MIC, which had been in existence since the days of the All-Malaya Council of Joint Action or AMCJA, expressed its

sympathy for the UMNO-MCA boycott but did not withdraw its own members from any of the councils.

After the boycott, the Alliance sent delegations to appeal to the Sultans for cooperation. The pressure on the British Government was increasing. Finally, the British Government offered that in addition to the 52 elected seats in a house of 98, it would be prepared to allow the party that had won a majority in the Legislature, to nominate five of the seven nominated members reserved for the British High Commissioner.

After an intra-party discussion, the Alliance agreed to accept the compromised offer of the British Government provided all Alliance councillors be reinstated in their former councils and an independent Constitutional Commission be set up. The British Government accepted the first condition but could do little with the second one since the establishment of a Constitutional Commission would require the approval of the Rulers. However, the British Government agreed to bring the request to the knowledge of the Sultans. The Alliance found the stand taken by the British Government as acceptable and, therefore, decided to withdraw its boycott.

The Alliance continued to get increasing support from the people and, by the end of 1954, it had already won two State elections convincingly. The MIC which had expressed sympathy for the UMNO-MCA during the time of the boycott, now joined the Alliance. Thus when the general elections were held in July 1955, the UMNO-MCA-MIC Alliance faced the electorates together.

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THE PRELUDE TO *MERDEKA*

by

ZAINAL ABIDIN BIN ABDUL WAHID

In more ways than one, 1955 was a momentous year. It was the year of the first general elections on Malaya-wide basis, even though the elections were not for the whole legislature. It was the year when the three political parties representing the three major races in Malaya agreed to form an alliance and face the electorate with a common platform. It was also the year when the Federation of Malaya, in effect, became self-governing.

The UMNO-MCA-MIC Alliance presented a fairly comprehensive manifesto to the people. Its greatest appeal was the promise to attain *Merdeka* in four years. The Alliance also planned to Malayanise "the Public Service substantially" within its first term of office. It wanted to accelerate the rate of Malayanisation by replacing expatriate officers with Malayan officers and to allow no further recruitment of expatriate officers without prior reference to the Executive Council.

In terms of education, the Alliance planned to "establish a type of national school that will be acceptable to the people of Malaya and will promote their cultural, economic, social and political development as a nation so as to facilitate the fulfilment of the Alliance aim to adopt Malay as the national language of the country."

In the constitutional and political fields, the Alliance promised to uphold and safeguard the position of the rulers as constitutional heads of their states; and to press for the appointment of a Special Independent Commission to inquire into constitutional reforms, having regard to the position of the rulers and the special interests of the Malays. The Alliance stated its intention to examine the immigration question with a view to safeguarding the position of the Malays and the citizens of the country.

The Alliance also promised to "adopt Malay as the national language of the country within a period of ten years ...". There were other items in the Alliance platform, e.g. agriculture, economics and finance, the Emergency, fisheries, housing labour, etc.

With regard to the Emergency, the Alliance wanted to end it as soon as possible by offering a general amnesty and, if that were to fail, to mobilise all the resources of the country and seek all foreign aid to increase the vigour and intensity of the fight against the terrorists.

These promises were put to the people in the 1955 elections. They were explained and, at times, elaborated or even expanded. For example, the Alliance contended that it was an established fact that a free country must have its own national language for the national purposes. It was argued that the existence of the national language would facilitate the working of democracy and foster a more profound sense of common nationhood.

As the leader of the Alliance then, Tuanku Abdul Rahman Putra, in an address to a Special Assembly of the UMNO on 4 June 1955, stated that the Alliance had decided that Malay would become the national and official language, in the fullest sense of the words, within ten years. He was convinced that, within the ten year period, the Malay language would be used in all aspects of administration, including its use in courts.

The question of nationality for an independent Malaya was to be left to a special independent commission.

The only serious contender to the Alliance at that time was Party Negara. Party Negara was aiming for *Merdeka* in terms of five years, and by 1955, many of the leaders of this Party, who were formerly in the IMP, and earlier in UMNO, had, more or less, gone a full circle. For, they then again re-emphasised Malay interests, as they had done in the days of Malayan Union.

The other parties contending in the Federal elections were the

Pan-Malayan Islamic Party, the National Association of Perak, the Perak Malay League, the Perak Progressive Party, i.e. the earlier name for the present People's Progressive Party and the Labour Party.

The Alliance put up candidates for all the 52 seats. The Party Negara contested 33, while the PMIP eleven. Besides candidates from the other smaller parties, 18 persons stood as independents.

The general elections were convincingly won by the Alliance. They secured 51 out of the 52 seats. Of the 80 opponents of the Alliance, 43 lost their deposits. It was really a remarkable victory which, I believe, was beyond the expectation of the British Government.

The Alliance considered that its victory was essentially due to its promise of early independence. But this was only part of the explanation. The financial strength of the MCA, the earlier record of UMNO, the penetration of UMNO into the rural areas and the comparative weakness of the other contending parties, all these contributed towards the success of the Alliance.

It was estimated at that time that there were 1,600,000 eligible voters and of these, 1,280,000 registered themselves. Of the registered, 85% voted.

If one were to classify the registered voters along racial lines, then 84% of them were Malays, 11% Chinese and less than 5% were people of Indian origin.

It is interesting to see the relations between the racial breakdown of registered voters and the distribution of seats amongst the partners within the Alliance. For the 1955 elections, the Alliance put forward 35 Malay candidates from UMNO, 15 Chinese from the MCA and two from the MIC. In other words, the Alliance was taking a big risk by allotting only 35 seats to the UMNO and that was about 69%; whereas the percentage of registered Malay voters was 84. Although there were only 11% registered Chinese voters yet the Alliance put up 15 MCA candidates which formed 23% of the total Alliance candidacy.

As it turned out, the 15 MCA candidates together with the two from the MIC, all won their seats. The only seat that the Alliance failed to capture was won by the PMIP.

It could be argued that the victory of the UMNO-MCA-MIC alliance manifested the non-communal trend in Malayan politics. For, some of the non-Malay candidates of the Alliance were standing in Malay-dominated constituencies and against Malay

candidates who were from Party Negara. Yet, the non-Malays won.

However, it should be noted that the test of non-communalism on the votes cast was only made on Malay voters. There was, for example, no Malay candidate from the Alliance who stood against a Chinese in a Chinese dominated constituency.

The 33 candidates of the Party Negara, all failed to gain any seat. The National Association of Perak and the other political parties, excepting the PMIP, faced the same fate.

A point worth noting was the inability of the Labour Party to attract much support from the people. This could perhaps be explained in terms of the association of ideas between socialism and communism. The experience of the people in terms of militant communism during the Emergency made them hesitant or even hostile towards the Labour Party. Since socialism of the Labour Party would imply non-recognition of the 'special position' of Malays, the latter group hardly gave its support to the Labour Party.

The ability of the Alliance to obtain 51 of the 52 contested seats also means that the Alliance had a sufficient number of party men to form the majority group in the Federal Legislative Council, and hence, it was in the position to form a government.

A kind of self-government was immediately put into effect and a quasi-cabinet was established. Five British officials became members of this quasi-cabinet.

But the objective of the Alliance was *Merdeka* and it requested the British Government to start negotiation for an independent Malaya.

Meanwhile, attempts were made to secure the laying down of arms of the communist insurrectionists. These efforts culminated with the famous Baling talk but it failed to get the MCP to agree. Nonetheless, the communist insurgency was used as a lever to get early *Merdeka* from the British. It was contended that the prolongation of colonial government in Malaya would provide the MCP with a nationalist flavour which might attract some support whereas the granting of *Merdeka* to Malaya would deprive the MCP of its anti-colonial slogan and, in fact, it could be branded as being anti-national if it continued with its armed insurrection even after *Merdeka*.

The *Merdeka* talk was held in London from 18 January to 6 February 1956. Four Alliance representatives and four representatives of the Malay rulers together with those of the

British Government, participated in the negotiation. The representatives of the Alliance and those of the Malay rulers had already come to an understanding before they reached London; and so, the representatives from Malaya presented a united front. This made it easier for the conference to deal with its problems and it soon reached agreement on the direction of progress it wished to make, i.e. to secure the early establishment of a fully self-governing and independent Federation of Malaya, within the Commonwealth and on the basis of parliamentary institutions.

The British Government was not only concerned with the question of granting political rights, for, it also wanted to be sure that British expatriate officers be properly compensated if their posts were Malayanised.

The Alliance delegation requested for the abolition of the post of the Financial Secretary and that it should be replaced by the appointment of a Malayan Minister of Finance. With regard to defence and internal security, the Alliance wanted a Malayan Minister of Defence who should replace the British Director of Operations in the Emergency Operations Council, i.e. the Minister was to be the chairman of the Council.

It was also agreed that the projected independent Federation of Malaya would afford the United Kingdom the right to maintain United Kingdom forces in Malaya in fulfilment of its Commonwealth and international obligations. This later led to the signing of the Defence and Mutual Assistance Agreement between Malaya and the United Kingdom.

The other important item agreed to by the conference was the composition and terms of reference of the Constitutional Commission and that the members of this Comission were to be appointed as soon as possible.

Full self-government was to be granted immediately while independence within the Commonwealth was to be proclaimed by 31 August 1957, if possible.

The members of the Constitutional Commission were appointed in due course and the Commission was asked to recommend a Federal Constitution based on parliamentary democracy, with a bi-cameral legislature and with a strong Federal Government. In doing this, the Commission was to safeguard the position and prestige of the Sultans as constitutional rulers of their states. There was to be a common nationality for the whole Federation and that a head of state for the whole country was to be appointed.

The Commission was also requested to safeguard the 'special position' of the Malays and the legitimate interests of the other communities.

With these terms of reference, the Constitutional Commission, under the chairmanship of Lord Reid, set out to draft the Constitution for an independent Malaya.

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MERDEKA

by

ZAINAL ABIDIN BIN ABDUL WAHID

The Federation of Malaya Constitutional Commission held the first meeting of the full Commission in late June 1956. It began by inviting written memoranda from all organisations and individuals who were interested to submit them. In all, 131 memoranda were received by the Commission. In addition to the written memoranda, the people could also give their views orally, including those who had already done so in writing.

Among the 131 written memoranda, two of them could be considered as of greater importance—one submitted by the rulers of the Malay states and the other by the Alliance.

The Alliance memorandum was submitted on 27 September 1956. The memorandum was agreed to by the Alliance National Council. It spelt out the general principles of the future Constitution of an independent Federation of Malaya, the structure of government, the distribution of powers, both in terms of the legislative, executive and the judiciary as well as between the States and the Federal Government. The memorandum had sections dealing with fundamental rights, citizenship, 'special position' of the Malays, language, religion, etc.

While this memorandum was submitted jointly by the UMNO, MCA and MIC, it does not mean that these three partners agreed on all the subjects presented. They did not agree, for example, on

the status of citizenship for those who were born on or after *Merdeka* day but of alien parentage. There were also differences with regard to the use of Kuo-Yu and Tamil during the ten-year period after independence. All these differing views were stated in the joint memorandum. In other words, the UMNO, MCA and MIC agreed to disagree.

The memorandum was a compromise. While MCA and MIC accepted the 'special position' of the Malays and that Malay was to be the national and official language of the country, the UMNO agreed to the introduction of the principle of *jus soli* with regard to the granting of citizenship for post-*Merdeka* period and a more liberal qualification for those non-Malays born before *Merdeka*.

There was opposition against the Alliance memorandum. Many Chinese Guilds in Malaya were against the retention of the special position of the Malays and the failure to make Chinese as one of the official languages. There were Malays who were opposed to the stand taken by UMNO for they considered that UMNO had conceded too much, particularly on the question of citizenship. They argued that a law granting citizenship rights would have immediate effects. The persons concerned could become citizens and enjoy the rights and responsibilities of citizenship, just with the stroke of a pen; but a law recognising the 'special position' of the Malays with reference to commerce, employment opportunities and educational facilities would not have immediate results. Unlike citizenship, the benefits from the special position could not be enjoyed immediately. As has been stated earlier, the Constitutional Commission received 131 written memoranda and, in addition to these, oral evidence was also given. The members of the Commission, after completing their hearings, retired to Rome in order to draft the Constitution. In February 1957, they submitted a draft Constitution for an independent Federation of Malaya.

This draft Constitution was not accepted *in toto* by the Alliance. It made several changes. The Commission suggested that the right of a Commonwealth citizen to have dual citizenship be recognised. In other words, a person could be at the same time a citizen of India and a citizen of the United Kingdom and the Colonies, although such a person would have undivided loyalty to the country in which he was residing. The Alliance rejected this proposal and insisted on single citizenship.

The Commission agreed with the many representations that Malay be made the national and official language, but for ten years

after Merdeka, English was also to be used as an official language. At the end of the ten-year period, the continued use of English as an official language was to be decided by Parliament. The Commission also proposed that in exceptional cases, within that ten-year period, the use of Kuo-Yu and Tamil be allowed in the Legislature.

The Alliance agreed with the status of Malay and English as indicated but did not agree with the use of Kuo-Yu and Tamil in the Legislature, even in exceptional cases.

There were other amendments made, for example, regarding citizenship by registration, and the responsibility of looking after the 'special position' clause was entrusted to the Agong, acting on the advice of the Cabinet.

On the whole, the draft Constitution was generally accepted by the people of Malaya.

There were, of course, voices of discontent, as had been shown when the Alliance submitted its memorandum to the Constitutional Commission in September 1956. But one particular voice worth a special mention, not so much for its importance but more for amusement. This was the voice of the Straits Chinese British Association who wished to keep Penang and Malacca separate from an independent Malaya so that they would be able to continue to be Her Majesty's subjects—the Queen's Chinese.

But the party in power then was the Alliance. It controlled a majority of the seats in the Federal Legislative Council. Thus, it was able to get the Council to approve the draft Constitution that it had amended. The Constitution came into force on 27 August 1957, and on 31 August 1957 the Federation of Malaya gained its independence from the British Government.

Malaya's attainment of *Merdeka* had been quite remarkable. In the 1955 elections, the Alliance presented a platform which hoped to achieve independence in four years. Yet within two years, Malaya became *Merdeka*.

Two major reasons contributed to this — one was the ability of the three major races to come together into a political alliance, and the other was the existence of the Emergency.

It had been reported that the British Government had made it almost as a pre-condition for independence that the three major races in Malaya must first be able to cooperate polically. It was argued that the British wanted to assure that there would be no trouble when independence came. It could also be contended that

the British Government, realising the strong differences existing between the different races, made political cooperation between them as a pre-requisite to *Merdeka*, thinking that such a co-operation would take a long time to accomplish. But the big success of the Alliance in the 1955 election was quite overwhelming, if not unexpected.

The Emergency was also an important factor in quickening the pace towards independence. In the early stage of the Emergency, however, it was, in fact, a retarding factor for, the British Government was of the view that all efforts must be concentrated on suppressing the communist insurgency and that constitutional and political advancement would have to wait. But it soon dawned on the British Government that the fight against the communists could not be regarded as a purely military matter. With that realization, constitutional and political progress gained emphasis.

The attainment of independence itself was a big blow to the Malayan Communist Party for, it could no longer appeal to the people on the basis of anti-colonialism. In fact, after *merdeka*, it was regarded as anti-national.

There were, of course, other contributing factors. For example 1955 was the year of the Afro-Asian Conference in Bandung, an event that generated a more vigorous struggle against colonialism. The nature of the Alliance must have been a consideration which made the British Government less hesitant in meeting the popular demand of the Malayans. The Alliance was not a socialist party; it depended on 'big business' for its finance particularly from the Chinese community. As such, an Alliance Government would unlikely resort to a policy of nationalisation. Therefore, the massive vested interests of the British would remain secure.

Besides, the British had already secured the agreement of the Alliance and the Malay rulers for a mutual assistance and defence arrangement which would look after their economic and strategic interests in this region.

Coming back to the 1957 Constitution, it was quite a remarkable document. Despite the fact that it was drafted by foreigners, it nevertheless had some historical bases in Malaya's past. It was a democratic constitution based on parlimentary democracy. Some people may say that democracy is essentially a Western concept and, therefore, alien to Malaya. But aspects of democracy had been practised in this country well before the

coming of the British. If one were to examine the *Adat Perpatih*, practised widely in Negeri Sembilan for centuries past, one would come across the elective principle and the concept of majority rule.

The Constitution also provided for a *Yang di-Pertuan Agong* who was to be elected by the nine Malay Rulers from amongst themselves, to serve for five years. This elected monarchy was a unique feature. Yet, one could still find similarity in the systems of the *Undangs* and their election of the *Yang di-Pertuan Besar* in Negeri Sembilan.

The Federation of Malaya also had a federal type government, a combination of eleven states. Again, we look to Negeri Sembilan to provide a kind of precedent, i.e. the combination of the nine states.

The principle of *jus soli* was enshrined into the Constitution and citizenship by registration was also included. For a year after independence, the non-Malays who had fulfilled the residential qualification could become citizens, without having to know either Malay or English. The exclusion of the language requirement was a special dispensation for the period from 31 August 1957 to 31 August 1958 only. It was reported, however, that within that space of time 800,000 non-Malays became citizens.

It had been argued that the liberal terms offered concerning the granting of citizenship was the compromises agreed to by UMNO in return for the MCA and MIC's acceptance of the 'special position' of the Malays and that the Malay language was to be the sole official language in 1967.

Slightly earlier, I mentioned that the 1957 Constitution was a democratic one. But the 'special position' of the Malays seems to have contradicted my earlier contention. In fact, when the Malayan Government raised the question of apartheid at the Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Conference, the South African Government pointed an accusing finger at our own Constitution.

The main difference was that the Malayan Constitution was approved by a Legislature, a majority of whose members was elected by the citizens of this country. Besides, the apparent favour was given to the indigenous group; whereas in South Africa the reverse was true.

In addition to these two basic elements, the inclusion of the 'special position' clause had historical reasons. For example, the different rate of advancement in the economic and educational fields between the major races of Malaya had created an imbalance

which would prove unhealthy for the whole country if such a situation were allowed to continue.

It was contended, and I believe it is still true today, that no Malayan or Malaysian nation could emerge until the economic and educational imbalance amongst the racial groups in this country is effectively corrected. It was thought that the 'special position' could contribute towards this effort of nation-building.

To conclude, it is extremely important that to get a proper and fair picture of Malaya or Malaysia, one should look at it from its historical perspectives.