

# **BRITISH RULE IN MALAYA**

The Malayan Civil Service and Its  
Predecessors, 1867-1942

ROBERT HEUSSLER

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To the Memory of H. S. P.

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## Series Foreword

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MANY YEARS ago Lord Acton enjoined historians to study problems, not periods. Certainly students of imperialism, and of the Imperial Revolution brought by the expansion of European societies into non-European cultural arenas, are fulfilling this injunction, for there can be few current problems so historically important as our effort to come to terms with the meaning and the mechanics of the imperial experience. We are—or at least many of us are, happily—past the point where it is necessary to categorize scholarship as Marxist, anti-Marxist, or otherwise, for we have come to understand that we simply do not know enough about how imperialism actually worked, for both European and non-European, to be able to engage in broad theorizing, unless our purpose is polemical and tendentious. It is to the principle that our primary need of the moment is a series of case studies, written by students of empire with broadly based research backgrounds, that this series of Contributions in Comparative Colonial Studies is committed.

As the series' title suggests, these contributions, taken collectively, are meant to illuminate the interaction between societies through a comparative approach. At times the approach is overtly comparative, as when a scholar writes of slavery in a variety of different colonies controlled by differing European powers. At times the approach is more subtly comparative, as when an author explores the impact of a high-technology culture on a number of cultures possessing materially lesser technologies. In the case of Professor Robert Heussler's work, the sense of comparison arises from the diversity of his own background and research, so that even when he is writing of a specific place and time, one is aware that his conclusions are based upon insights derived from having done equally close research on a different place and time. Few scholars know so much about the bureaucracy of imperialism. His exploration into "the making of the British Colonial Service," *Yesterday's Rulers*, published by the Syracuse University Press in 1963, remains one of a small handful of key inquiries into how recruitment, placement, and promotion worked within the largest of colonial offices. Only Anthony H. M. Kirk-Greene, John W. Cell, and, most recently L. H. Gann and Peter Duignan, in their *Rulers of British Africa* (Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 1978), have provided us with the kind of detail necessary for understanding a subject—bureaucracy and the functioning of a civil service—that is itself a reflection of the burden of detail borne by the actors in the drama of

administration. But Robert Heussler has also written of Nigeria, of *British Tanganyika* at the district-officer level (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1971), and in articles of a variety of other subjects. The second of these books, *The British in Northern Nigeria* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968), is particularly useful at the level of the district officer.

Now, in his *British Rule in Malaya*, Professor Heussler has written a detailed, absorbing study of how a bureaucracy worked within Southeast Asia, where the local response by Malay sultans stands in several ways in contrast to the local responses of African chiefs. The element of comparison—to anyone who has followed Robert Heussler's work—is explicit and rewarding. To be sure, Malaya has been the object of substantial study of an administrative nature, often by political scientists (Robert O. Tilman and James C. Scott come immediately to mind), and our understanding of the interaction with local collaborators (to use the term now so readily attributed to Ronald Robinson and John Gallagher) has been more than usually sophisticated ever since the path-breaking work of J. M. Gullick in his *Indigenous Political Systems of Western Malaya* (London: Athlone, 1958). It is precisely because the history of modern Malaya is so well developed that one welcomes the kind of rich fare put before us in this work. I am pleased to have played some small role in seeing it into print, for I am sure that it will give rise to many further probes into the history of British rule in Malaya, especially at the level of the individual sultanates or states.

Robin W. Winks



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## Preface

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THE ADMINISTRATIVE cadres that ran British Malaya had various names over the years. Shortly after the 1914 war they were joined together as the Malayan Civil Service. This study focuses on the officers themselves, on their backgrounds and education, on the work they did in Malaya, and on the moral and professional precepts that developed in the course of the service's life. Though the study is not a full scale history of the territories that eventually became West Malaysia and Singapore—that should be emphasized at the start—it is set in the broad context of their social and political history.

Beginning with a sketch of government in the Straits Settlements under India, the book concentrates on the period 1867-1942, from the assumption of control by the Colonial Office to the fall of Singapore, which brought British rule to an end. Japanese administration lasted only three and a half years, after which the British came back. But their remaining time was short and markedly different in outlook and expectation. The earlier span had an historical integrity and continuity of its own.

Planning for the study began in the 1960s, when the late H. P. Bryson, a retired MCS officer, was serving as secretary of the British Association of Malaya in London. In 1960, Hugh Bryson and I had a talk at his office, then housed in the Royal Commonwealth Society, about work on the colonial services at large. Among the books we discussed was Philip Mason's incomparable history of the Indian Civil Service. Shortly afterwards, while Dame Margery Perham, J. J. Tawney, and others were establishing the Colonial Records Project at Oxford, collecting papers from all territories including Malaya, Bryson was visited by Kathleen Clark, who was working on the covenanted services of the Straits Settlements. Their talks naturally got Bryson thinking more specifically about a history of the MCS, an idea that was furthered in 1966 by Harry Miller of the British Association of Malaya Committee, who suggested that retired officers be urged to jot down their recollections.<sup>1</sup> When Bryson retired from the secretaryship and had more time on his hands, T. B. Barlow, a past president of the association, added his support and put forward the thought that the history might cover commercial as well as administrative activity. The possibility of seeking financial help from London-based firms with interests in Malaya, including Mr. Barlow's, was mentioned. In consultation with two colleagues, the late Charles Corry and the late David Gray, Bryson then formulated an appeal to all retired members of

the MCS, asking them to send notes of their service, any private papers that might be of use to a historian, and memoranda dealing with subjects that each was particularly knowledgeable on, such as the Chinese Protectorate, the Labor Department, land-office work, and secretariat duties. This was put in hand. By the end of 1969, several dozen files had been assembled, mostly comprising direct responses to the appeal but also including transcripts of tape-recorded interviews of some of the more senior men by Bryson.

The value of such material would be hard to exaggerate. Together with diaries and letters it offers a rich corpus of primary documentation. In these files we find brother officers talking openly with one another in the easy shorthand that insiders use in the comfortable knowledge that there is no need to explain or to apologize. For scholars to read published accounts of such events as the Kelantan outbreak of 1915 is all to the good, especially when these can be compared with official reports. How much more real and immediate it seems when we are told what the British adviser and his staff were doing as the news arrived, how they reacted, and what they proceeded to do. Lucky the historian who can read what four or five officers have to say about serving under Captain Berkeley in Upper Perak and then correspond with them after hacking about in the district himself. Sir Cecil Clementi looked rather different to his young private secretaries and ADCs than he did to Lord Passfield.

It will be obvious to students of colonial history, furthermore, that civil servants taken as a group were far more important than governors and other senior officials who received honors and notoriety and can therefore be looked up in *Who Was Who*, *The Dictionary of National Biography*, or in the files of Somerset House or the Historical Manuscripts Commission. The average career officer was in the country much longer, knew languages, and had close knowledge of institutions and day-to-day events. Yet, unless he produces an autobiography or becomes the subject of someone else's account, he and his story are likely to remain anonymous. This being so, working scholars are all the more indebted to the Hugh Brysons and the Jack Tawneys of this world who dig out otherwise unobtainable memorabilia, rescue valuable papers from ruthless house-cleaners, and coax old friends into retrospective essays, many of them grumbling all the way that nobody will be interested in such anachronisms.

Some men are not very forthcoming, and occasionally for reasons that one cannot help respecting. "On retiring in 1946 I made a resolution to live exclusively in the present and the future."<sup>2</sup> Others are vitally interested and, not only supply memoirs and answer questions, but also suggest lines of attack for the historian or justifications for his labors. "In a subject as wide as an entire service there is room for many shades of

opinion and the eventual writer of an MCS history will presumably read everything . . . and then stir the whole lot together and produce a picture that may not be absolutely correct in any one detail but that is close to the total truth in all its many facets."<sup>3</sup> Several have seen the history as a potential counterweight to public attitudes they deplore: ". . . the apathy, ignorance and willingness to think the worst of ourselves [that is] prevalent in Britain at this time."<sup>4</sup>

These relatively new raw materials, needless to say, are not read in a vacuum. Even in the category of evidence produced by administrative officers—not to mention others—they constitute recent additions to lists that are old and long. Nineteenth- and early twentieth-century officers had deep familiarity with peoples native to the places they were posted to, ample time to study further, and, in many cases, the interest, ability, and inclination to write. Whatever one thinks of the points of view expressed in such classics as those of Sir Frank Swettenham, Sir Hugh Clifford, Major J. F. A. McNair, R. J. Wilkinson, and Sir Richard Winstedt, the works remain valuable, and they are still used by scholars of widely varying outlook.<sup>5</sup> Though conditions changed, and with them the amount of leisure time officers had for ethnography, linguistics, genealogy, and local history, the MCS is remarkable for the scholarship it has continued to create right down to the present, a generation after Malaysia's independence.

Other materials that have been used are listed at the back of this book. The most important of all are the files of the Public Record Office. Since Malaya was invaded and conquered, unlike most African colonies, a certain amount of official material was lost, some of it in 1941-1942 and some during the reoccupation of the country by the British in 1945. However, dispatches sent to London in the seventy-five-year period ending in 1942 included many valuable reports and other documents such as the journals of district officers and advisers. By the same token, letters written to families in England often survived, whereas there was a heavy toll of diaries and other private papers in the last weeks before the fall of Singapore and in prison camps afterward. In combination, the official and private papers, weighed in the scales with published material, present a galaxy of quite separate and often conflicting views of men, institutions, and events. These have been embellished in the later chapters by talks and correspondence with retired members of the service. Everything considered, there has been an embarrassment of riches.

My debts are correspondingly large. For financial help I thank the Social Science Research Council in London, the American Philosophical Society, and certain gentlemen in the City of London who were members of the former British Association of Malaysia and Singapore and who prefer to remain unnamed. St. Antony's College, Oxford, helpfully administered the SSRC grant. The State University of New York gener-

ously paid my way to London on one occasion when I made an appeal for help at the annual dinner of the Malayan Civil servants Association, and allowed me some released time from teaching in the spring of 1978. The many alumni of the MCS who have given unstintingly of their time, hospitality, and ideas, in England since 1944 and in Malaya since 1948, are offered thanks in the notes. I must record special gratitude to R. P. Bingham, Andrew Gilmour, Sir William Goode, J. M. Gullick, Derek Headly, H. A. L. Luckham, and H. G. Turner for their criticism of the first draft and to Tan Sri Mubin Sheppard for assisting with photographs. E. C. G. Barrett kindly helped with the preparation of a glossary. The map at the front of this book was made by Vincent J. De Santis III with the advice of Professor Donald Q. Innis.

Dato' Haji Nik Hassan, then principal private secretary to the prime minister, was entirely courteous and helpful, as was the prime minister of the time, Tun Razak, who kindly responded to a letter written to him in my behalf by the late W. C. S. Corry. I thank Cik Zakia Hanum Nor and her staff at the National Archives of Malaysia for their helpfulness and H. S. Barlow for his friendly assistance in Kuala Lumpur. Andrew Gilmour in Singapore and Sjovald Cunyngnam-Brown in Penang brightened one's days in those always pleasant islands, as did R. B. Perkins at his delightful house overlooking the strait near Telok Kemang.

In London, Bernard Cheeseman of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office Library, N. E. Evans of the Public Record Office, and D. H. Simpson of the Royal Commonwealth Society Library provided every assistance. Lord Teviot and Mrs. William Wagner gave cheerful, efficient help with statistical compilations and with photocopying. Lewis Frewer and F. E. Leese of the Rhodes House Library in Oxford have most helpfully answered many inquiries over the years.

I thank the trustees of the Liddell Hart Centre for Military Archives at King's College, University of London, for permission to examine a paper, "Disaster in the Far East, 1941-1942," by C. A. Vlieland, MCS, former secretary for defense in Malaya, and Messers Longmans, Green and Company for allowing me to quote from Sir A. Caldecott's poems in *Not Exactly Ghosts*.

Scholars and university staff members who have helped in various ways, all of them valuable, include: the late Arthur M. Wilson, professor emeritus of biography at Dartmouth College; Philip Mason, former director of the Institute of Race Relations in London; Dr. J. de V. Allen, formerly of the University of Malaya; Dr. D. S. Gibbons of the University of Penang; Dr. J. H. Drabble, formerly of the University of Malaya; Dr. Khoo Kay Kim of the University of Malaya; Dr. Paul Kratoska and Dr. Thomas Willer, fellow researchers at the archives in Petaling Jaya; Professor C. D. Cowan, director of the School of Oriental and African

Studies, University of London; Dr. O. W. Wolters and Mrs. M. C. Crawford of Cornell University; Dr. William R. Roff and Miss A. L. Wood of Columbia University; and, at Yale University, Professor Peter Millard, the late Professor H. J. Benda, and Dr. Christopher Gray.

It is a pleasure to have this opportunity of expressing my gratitude to Professor Robin W. Winks of Yale University for many kindnesses, including invaluable advice and support with regard to this and other research endeavors.

### Notes

1. See Harry Miller, "History of the Malayan Civil Service to be Written," *Malaysia* (Jan. 1973): 17.
2. F. K. Wilson to author, 27 Nov. 1974.
3. J. S. H. Cunyngham-Brown to H. P. Bryson, 1 July 1969. See also E. C. G. Barrett to author, 11 Nov. 1974 and 29 Dec. 1974.
4. E. A. P. Helps to H. P. Bryson, 30 Apr. 1969.
5. See W. David McIntyre's essay in C. D. Cowan and O. W. Wolters, eds., *Southeast Asian History and Historiography* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1976), p. 262 ff.; and Sir Richard Allen, *Malaysia* (London: Oxford University Press, 1968), pp. xi-xii.

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## Abbreviations and Foreign Words

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### Abbreviations

273—Colonial Office series 273, Public Record Office, London

717—Colonial Office series 717, Public Record Office, London

CRP—Colonial Records Project, Oxford University

M—Malaysian National Archives

RCS—Royal Commonwealth Society

SBRAS and JMBRAS—The Journal of the Straits Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society is designated SBRAS from 1878 to 1922, after which it becomes JMBRAS, the Journal of the Malayan (later Malaysian) Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society

AA—assistant adviser

ADC—Aide-de-camp, junior officer on a governor's staff

BA—British adviser

C. O.—Colonial Office, London

CMG } Ranks in the Order of St. Michael and St. George:  
KCMG } companions, knights, and knights grand cross,  
GCMG } respectively

MBE }

OBE } Ranks in the Order of the British Empire: members,  
CBE } officers, companions, knights, and knights grand  
KBE } cross, respectively

GBE }

DO—district officer

ADO—assistant district officer

FMS—Federated Malay States

PS—private secretary to a governor or other senior officer

ICS—Indian Civil Service

MCS—Malayan Civil Service

SR—Secretary to resident

### Foreign Words (Malay, unless otherwise noted)

*astana* (or *istana*)—royal residence, palace

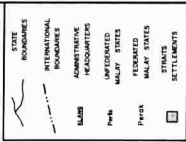
*bendahara*—originally chief minister (in Malacca sultanate). Later royal title, in Perak, ranking third after sultan and raja muda. Chief royal figure in Panang (becomes sultan)

- bukit*—hill  
*dato'*—nonroyal title, lord, grandfather  
*enche*—mister  
*haji*—one who has made the pilgrimage to Mecca  
*kampong*—group of rustic dwellings, village  
*kuala*—estuary, river mouth, harbor  
*mentri*—minister, e.g. *mentri-besar* (prime minister)  
*mukim*—originally, a parish; in modern times, an administrative unit within a district  
*padang*—treeless land, ground, field, sports ground  
*padi*—unhusked rice  
*penghulu*—head of *mukim* or subdistrict  
*pulau*—island  
*ra'ayat* (Arabic)—(literally, a herd) common people, citizens  
*raja*—ruler, prince (mainly in Perak and Selangor)  
*sepoy* (Hindustani)—Indian soldier  
*sultan* (Arabic)—ruler, king  
*sungei* (or *sungai*)—river  
*syce* (Hindustani)—driver, groom  
*temenggong*—Malay minister, e.g. in Johore, where they became hereditary and eventually displaced the sultans  
*tunku* (or *tengku*)—royal title, prince, princess  
*tungku besar*—chief prince  
*tungku bendahara*—see *bendahara*  
*towkay* (Chinese)—employer of labor, shopkeeper  
*tuan*—master, sir, lord; all white men, *suids*, *hajis*  
*ulu*—upper portion of a region, up-country  
*undang*—district chief, Negri Sembilan

**BRITISH RULE  
IN MALAYA**



# THE STRAITS SETTLEMENTS and the MALAY STATES



WITH SO many of her other imperial dependencies the territories of the Malacca Strait first came to the notice of Britain not primarily for their own worth but because acquisitions there were seen to be useful in the service of a larger aim. Trade between England and China and between India and China, together with the need to protect India and her commerce with naval units, accounts for the leasing of the island of Penang off the coast of Malaya in 1786. Malacca on the mainland was taken from Dutch vassals of France during the Napoleonic Wars, was briefly handed back to Holland afterwards and returned to Britain in 1825. Singapore, the third and last of the settlements ruled for Britain by the East India Company, was taken over, with the grudging approval of the Dutch, in 1819.<sup>1</sup> The great names in these early ventures were Sir Stamford Raffles, the founder of Singapore, and Francis Light, a ship captain engaged in trade between India and the East Indies, who persuaded the government of Bengal that Penang should be acquired and who carried out the plan himself. Both had intimate knowledge of the Malays and their language; both were vigorous, farseeing pioneers determined to expand Britain's commercial interests in the area; and both were bolder than the Indian government liked, to say nothing of London, with its concern for relationships among the great powers in Europe and its instinctive abhorrence of adventurers in far-off places.

In the second quarter of the nineteenth century, the prosperity of Singapore and secondarily Penang increased apace. By contrast with Dutch and Spanish stations nearby, Singapore was a free port. While the East India Company maintained a monopoly of the China trade—China tea in return for British manufactures paid for mostly by Indian opium—Singapore did well on transshipment charges and local Southeast Asian business. After the end of the monopoly in 1833 her trade quadrupled, the percentage accounted for by Southeast Asian transactions rising to almost half of the total. In these circumstances, straits merchants and their London backers began to regard India as a block to their well-being, while the Indian government came to look on the straits as a needless expense

both administratively and militarily. Wishing to keep costs down, Calcutta would not approve the kinds of expansion into the hinterlands that were increasingly benefiting Dutch, and later French, competitors of straits businessmen.

For a time the Malayan mainland itself did not figure very largely in straits trade, at least by contrast with China and the Indies. Viewed from Penang, however, it was of growing importance. Fullerton, governor in the 1820s, risked Calcutta's displeasure, as Light and Raffles had done before him, this time to help the weak Malay states of the west coast resist aggression from Siam that could have held trade back or ended it entirely.<sup>2</sup> Kedah, the state from which Penang had been leased, was a natural trading partner for the island. A stipulation of the lease was that Britain would protect the state in case of Siamese pressure. Slowly, Penang capital began to flow to the mainland opposite, in both Kedah and Perak. By mid-century, British investors based in Penang had close relations with Malay chiefs and Chinese tin miners alike. In Johore, across the narrow strait from Singapore, the situation was similar. Chinese planters entered underpopulated Johore in large numbers, and mining labor came from China to all of the west-coast states between Singapore and Penang. Straits investors loaned money to Malays and Chinese on the mainland. At the same time, profits on trade with the Dutch and Spanish islands were drying up due to the restrictive practices of their governments. Straits merchants, both British and Chinese, came to see an expanded commerce with the Malay states not merely as an opportunity, but as a condition of survival.

While Calcutta went on looking at the Straits Settlements as a dumping ground for her convicts, the straits government using them as laborers, and otherwise as an unwanted stepchild, straits merchants stood small chance of getting a sympathetic hearing. After the Indian mutiny of 1857 and Britain's assumption of control from the East India Company, however, there was a change. For years, Parliament and Whitehall had listened to protests by merchants trading with the East that British commerce in the straits was suffering because of Calcutta's neglect and restraints. In 1847, Alexander Guthrie, head of one of the most prominent Singapore firms, moved to London permanently in order to be in direct and continuous touch with the government.<sup>3</sup> In 1858, the leading Singapore traders petitioned Parliament for a complete separation of the straits from India.<sup>4</sup> Discussion among the departments of state in London—the Treasury, the Admiralty, the India, Foreign, and Colonial offices—centered not on whether a change should be made but on what the new arrangements would be.<sup>5</sup> Lord Carnarvon, under secretary in the Colonial Office, wrote to his minister, Sir Edward Lytton, that the Straits Settlements were links in the colonial chain eastward, soon to be connected by

telegraph, and were valuable for trade with England, for a naval base, and for white colonists.<sup>6</sup> India had nothing in common with them. The Colonial Office was the logical department to take responsibility because, unlike the Indian government, it had long experience in many parts of the world with setting up administrations designed for specific needs *ad hoc*. As the London talks dragged on, Sir Hercules Robinson, governor of Hong Kong, was sent to the straits and was charged with making a report to the C.O. on the settlements and their requirements. This was received in 1864. At long last the transfer was made by act of Parliament in April 1867.

As its first governor the C.O. appointed Colonel Harry St. J. Ord, an army engineer who had served in the West Indies and Africa and had governed Bermuda for the past six years. In the army and the colonial service, Ord had been accustomed to discipline, to regulations, to taking responsibility and being given a reasonable measure of authority with which to exercise it. By all accounts he was a somewhat crusty character, more at home in barracks than in a chamber of commerce.<sup>7</sup> But even if he had possessed the diplomacy and tact of his successor of the 1880s, Weld, or the Rotarian amiability of the last governor in the 1930s, Thomas, he would have faced a difficult task. His London superiors were hesitant, cautious, close with funds, and determined to keep the new administration on a tight rein, while all around him in Singapore and Penang were the powerful businessmen whose pressure in London and in the straits had had much to do with ending the old regime and who now expected to have things their own way. They wanted a government that would hold expenses down and promote their interests in all matters, from low taxes to strong military defenses, and protection from political instability within the Straits Settlements and farther afield.

Ord ranks as easily the most unpopular governor from the start of C.O. rule to 1930. Everything seemed to go wrong from the first. Arriving two weeks before his term officially began—a circumstance for which he was not to blame—he found himself in the anomalous position of an onlooker in his own colony. He insisted on being addressed as "Excellency"—a demand that was promptly refused by Sir Peter Benson Maxwell, recorder and chief justice-designate, the man who was to be his bitterest opponent within the government. By the day of his inauguration, the governor had managed to offend almost everyone of any importance—male and female—in the capital. For the next six years, a critical time in the history of the straits, the C.O. was bombarded with complaints from the business community there and in London and with angry denunciations of his tormentors by Ord. Within months, representatives of the leading firms met to form the Straits Settlements Association.<sup>8</sup> Its first president was John Crawford, a contemporary of Raffles and resident (that is, administrator) of Singapore in the 1820s. Branches were opened in Singa-

pore and Penang. Among the many criticisms leveled by the association against Ord were that the new Government House was too large and costly. They fought his plan for a supreme court, a common fixture in crown colonies, realizing that this would be part of the government apparatus rather than a separate arm independent of the governor. They protested the governor's projected taxes and suggested that popular elections be held, putting an end to the system whereby governors appointed members of the Legislative Council. They accused the governor of insulting native cultures, and they urged that the secretary of state discuss their complaints with Ord's own colonial secretary, then in London on leave. When the C. O. replied backing Ord, saying it would no longer deal directly with the association and noting that business firms had more than adequate representation on the Legislative Council, a petition went to the House of Lords, signed by all unofficial (that is, business) members of the council and by nearly every well-known European, Chinese, and Indian businessman in the colony. Towards the end of Ord's term, the latest in a constant stream of such petitions took issue with the governor on his plan to downgrade the offices of his subordinates in Penang and Malacca, terminating the titles of lieutenant governor. It was clear to all that the more decentralized the government's power was, the easier it would be for traders to make their influence felt in each of the three settlements.

Sir Peter Benson Maxwell remained a thorn in the governor's side until his retirement in 1871. Their disputes reflected the difference between the way the settlements had been run in company days and the normal methods of colonies. Calcutta's system was reminiscent of Spain's in America, with magistrates reporting directly to the home government and acting as checks on local executives. Ord reminded the C.O. that this was a situation "... unknown in the colonies..." and one that was sure to be chaotic, especially with businessmen watching for every loophole through which to snipe at the government.<sup>9</sup> His battles with subordinate officers and with private citizens were not surprising, given the nature of society and government in the straits under Indian rule. The transition to colonial procedures could not have been easy in the best of times. Nor should Sir Harry Ord, as he became early in his term, be criticized overly for the heat of controversy with businessmen that characterized his administration or for his troubles with the C.O. Every one of his successors would have similar experiences, all growing out of circumstances which they could try to influence but could never essentially change. Governors were instructed to do all they could to help British commerce. But they were not to let matters go so far that the home government might be called on to sanction political moves that would involve military expense and trouble with other European powers or native authorities nearby. Al-

though they were to pursue the aim of prosperity with vigor and imagination, they were not to do anything of significance without prior approval from home.

Even in quiet times, governors would be hard put to manage such a balancing act successfully. In Ord's years, the Straits Settlements and their neighbors in the Malay Peninsula had closer trade relations than ever, and this in a time of unprecedented upheaval in the latter. Though Calcutta, and now London, steadfastly resisted any interference in Malay affairs by straits officers and wanted intercourse to remain commercial only, it had always been hard to keep trade and politics separate. Captain Light, in Kedah, and Sir Stamford Raffles, in Johore, had had to deal directly with Malay chiefs. In taking over Malacca on the mainland, the British inherited long-standing relationships dating all the way back through Dutch times to the age of exploration when the Portuguese were there. British merchants trading with the interior soon found themselves dealing with river chiefs and with Chinese and Indians, some of whose countrymen had been in Malaya for generations and who were themselves intimately involved with the Malays. Administrative arrangements could be confined to small areas in accordance with strict instructions from Singapore. But trade ranged farther inland and brought a degree of economic integration that had little reference to boundaries. W. H. Read, a second-generation Singapore merchant who arrived in 1841, had fallen into the business of king-making, like it or not, well before Ord came.<sup>10</sup> The sultan of Johore and his rival, the *temenggong*, had been put on annual stipends as part of the deal whereby the British acquired Singapore. When gutta-percha was discovered in Johore early in the 1840s, the *temenggong*, an efficient river pirate, was sent by a group of Singapore traders to scout it out and to keep other pirates from flooding the market with the new commodity. His success at doing so won him official recognition as well as considerable wealth. The sultan enlisted Read's help in his cause, giving up his "chop," or instrument of authority, to Read as collateral, thereby becoming Read's political as well as financial debtor. The resourceful trader had similar dealings with chiefs of more importance in Pahang on the east coast and up the west coast towards Penang.

During the last Company years and into Ord's time, the straits government was increasingly irritated by the pin pricks of river and coastal piracy, Malay and Chinese, that interrupted commerce. When ships owned by British subjects, European or other, were raided or seized in Malay waters, the government could not be indifferent to the complaints of straits firms.<sup>11</sup> One of Ord's first moves was to look into the purchase of ships of the right draft and manoeuvrability for work against pirates. W. W. Cairns, lieutenant governor of Malacca, reported to London that Malay authorities over his border were utterly "...unscrupulous..."

[and] . . . barbarous . . ." their areas seething with crime, " . . . the will of the strongest [being] the only recognized law."<sup>12</sup> From Read the C.O. got the same sort of tale, together with the now-familiar charge that the straits government had no policy or consistency of aim and merely drifted from crisis to crisis.<sup>13</sup> The more responsible Malay rulers, he said, would welcome treaties that would expand trade and provide higher revenues for themselves.

The logic of Cairns's and Read's argument—and most people in the government and the business community felt the same way—was founded on close working knowledge of conditions on the mainland, particularly in Perak, Selangor, and Sungei Ujong on the west coast. Malay chiefs held positions of great traditional prestige and importance in an ancient scheme of ritual and deference dating from the Malacca sultanate of the fifteenth century.<sup>14</sup> Where political activity was concerned, their power depended on wealth, which enabled them to enlist the support of local headmen, *penghulus*, and to hire men to build stockades, wage war, and levy charges on river commerce. Loyalty to chiefs was considerable. They were the only symbols of order in an otherwise fluid situation in which long-term land tenure was virtually unknown. The hold of religion—Islam in most of Malay society—was more ceremonial and spiritual than social. Units were atomized, and, being dependent on personal authority, power tended to be transitory. Literacy was low, even among the governing groups. It was rare for a chief to accumulate capital, and money was collected for military campaigns *ad hoc*, after each of which the process started over again. Systems had a certain cohesion. But even when left to themselves, the Malay "states"—they were not that in the European sense—were endemically unstable, incapable of holding together for long and dealing with outsiders from positions of strength.

A major source of chiefs' income was Chinese communities: rough, hard-working groups engaged in farming and tin mining that had been growing in size, wealth, and power for generations before the British arrived.<sup>15</sup> Upheavals in early nineteenth-century China, especially after the Opium War, and the disintegration of provincial government that followed the opening of treaty ports, resulted in large-scale emigration southward. Those who came to such places as Malaya were from the lowest social classes—landless peasants and wanderers from the armies of defeated war lords. They came in the rags they stood up in, destitute, without their womenfolk, helpless gang laborers in the service of the toughest among them who dragooned them into a work force and were therefore recognized by local authorities—first the Dutch and then the Malays and the British—as "capitans China." Because of their numbers, their relative social discipline, and their wealth, the various Chinese

groups were able to treat with Malay chiefs as equals, to collect revenue for them, and, after some had settled down in the Straits Settlements and prospered along with their British neighbors, to lend money to the improvident Malays as the Europeans did. Up-country, capitans China were petty war lords as well: able to defy Malay chiefs, to defeat them in battle, and to hold sway as autonomous headmen.

British traders entering Malay states were thus the third component in an economic amalgam of great potential. They could provide the money that the Malays and the early Chinese lacked. Since their base of operations—the Straits Settlements—were havens of prosperity and peace, they could offer an atmosphere of stability that soon attracted leading Malays and Chinese, many of whom maintained homes in the colony and took advantage of its links to Europe, the fountain of manufactures, risk capital, skills, and technology.

The missing ingredient in Malaya was order. Rich tin mines, fertile soil, plenty of land available for settlement, and a yawning market for European goods, well served by coastal and river shipping, were all very well. But political chaos prevented the development that had beckoned straits traders for years at the very time when competition in the neighboring islands had made Malaya's ripe resources more tantalizing than ever. Ord's officers had no doubts about what should be done and how to do it. Many with first-hand experience with Malay chiefs, appreciated their gentlemanly qualities of courtesy and bravery in battle and their profoundly aristocratic outlook, which could not fail to find an echo in the consciousness of Victorian soldiers and administrators. Malay royals were admirable in their way. But their free and easy lives and the fatalism of Islam as interpreted by them made for a lassitude that degenerated all too often into social anarchy.<sup>16</sup> What was needed was a small number of British officers living at the courts of leading chiefs: men who knew their language and their ways and who could bring stability by a patient, firm discipline that would put starch into them without seriously damaging their local authority and influence. Ord was forbidden to meddle. What he could and did do was report regularly on the chaos in Malay states that was harming British commerce. He forwarded requests from Chinese and British merchants, and occasionally from Malays, that the straits government help in suppressing piracy and establishing order. In July of 1873, he told the C.O. that trade was at a standstill on the west coast, with disastrous effects in Penang and Singapore, yet arms were being shipped from Penang into Perak mining areas.<sup>17</sup> He had agreed to arbitrate dynastic disputes in Sungei Ujong. In sending to London the latest Chinese request for help he said frankly that he agreed with the petitioners and hoped the C.O. would take the situation seriously.



In London, there had been discussion of the pros and cons of intervention for some time. It would seem that the C.O. might have agreed to a forward move earlier but for their conviction that the much-battered Ord was not the man to direct the implementation of a new policy.<sup>18</sup> Now they had decided on his successor. R. H. (later Sir Robert) Meade, a future undersecretary of state, minuted that action was clearly required, that the Malays would welcome it, that the new governor, Sir Andrew Clarke, should be fully briefed on Ord's dispatches and instructed to report on the necessary course as soon as he arrived.<sup>19</sup> The secretary of state, Lord Kimberley, agreed, directing that Clarke be filled in on the talks between the C.O. and the Foreign Office in the late sixties, involving the Netherlands and Siam.<sup>20</sup> Britain's treaties with the Malay states required that she act to stop disorders that were ruining them. Other European countries must not be allowed to interfere, which the Malays would call on them to do, he thought, if Britain did not act. Clarke should advise whether the restoration of order would be helped "... by the appointment of a British agent, of course with the consent of the native rulers and at the expense of the Settlements, to reside at the seat of government of any of the states not under Siam."<sup>21</sup>

It will be recognized that these instructions, which Clarke was to act on in such a way as to make the C.O. wonder if he had in fact gone farther than they had meant him to go and without fully consulting them ahead of time, represented a marked departure from the policy followed by Calcutta since Light's time and by London over the past six years of their rule. In effect, the door was now open to British enterprise and administration on the mainland. Scholars and other observers have debated the reasons for the change with an intensity appropriate to its importance.<sup>22</sup> They have pointed to conditions on the ground, assigned weight to particular factors variously, pondered changed attitudes in England, and hunted, apparently in vain, for positive proof as to who made the fateful decision, influenced by whom, and exactly when. There is no doubt as to the immediate cause—the subject of Ord's dispatch—which was the violent conflict between competing clans and societies of Chinese miners in the Larut district of Perak, just down the coast from Penang. British and Chinese commercial interests stood to lose heavily if this were not dealt with, a task which the splintered Perak sultanate was clearly incapable of managing on its own. To say that the Malay royals in Perak, Selangor, and Sungei Ujong all wanted the British to take over would be a gross exaggeration, although the powerless sultan of Selangor did not like things as they were in his area and favored British help. The *mentri* of Larut, virtually autonomous, preferred British action to a continuation of a Chinese civil war that had ruined trade and left him helpless. Businessmen in London and the straits had certainly pushed hard for intervention

and would play a vital role in the event. The intentions of other European powers mentioned by Kimberley, and the importance of these in prompting British action are less clear. German traders were crowding the British in these years, although no one has maintained that there was any real possibility of Bismarck's government trying to compete politically in Malaya as it would soon do in West Africa. Students of imperial affairs know that forward moves—economic, military, and humanitarian—became more respectable in England during the 1870s than they had been before. A more active British role in Malaya was part of an Anglo-Dutch trade-off involving the Caribbean and Africa as well as Southeast Asia. The impulse to renewed expansion was by no means universally popular. Doubters in the press, in Parliament, and in the C.O. itself would continue to question the morality of imperialism straight through to the end of empire after 1945.<sup>23</sup> But the more important members of the permanent staff in the C.O. were increasingly convinced of the imperatives of trade from the 1870s onwards. The people of Malaya, wrote Meade, should be led "... to understand that their true interests are best served by the development of commerce and by the maintenance of peace and order."<sup>24</sup> Whereas earlier discussion had centered on the rectitude of Europeans ruling Asians, C.O. minutes would henceforth focus on how best to arrange this so as to end disorder and bring the good life, as defined by Europeans.

With the arrival in November 1873 of the strong, able, and supremely self-confident Clarke, matters moved smartly to a conclusion. Though the new governor had not been given permission to do anything but inquire, he was determined to go ahead and he was willing to take the advice of local officers and businessmen of long experience whose boldness matched his own. Colonel (later General Sir Archibald) Anson, lieutenant governor of Penang, had been a fellow cadet with Clarke at Woolwich. Since 1867 he had wanted to annex Perak or, failing that, to establish a protectorate there, a scheme he had worked out with the then sultan.<sup>25</sup> He now did a report for Clarke, advising how to proceed. From W. H. Read, who was never one to play the wall flower in straits politics, the governor received up-to-date details of Perak affairs, together with the draft of a treaty that Read sent to Abdullah, the long-time debtor of Read, and his friend Tan Kim Cheng. Abdullah, who had been passed over for the Perak sultanate, now saw a chance to revive his lagging fortunes.<sup>26</sup> By early January 1874, the treaty was back with Abdullah's acceptance. Anson tried to persuade Clarke that Abdullah was not the right man, but to no avail. Meanwhile, the all-important question of Chinese cooperation was placed in the hands of William Pickering, who had served for the last three years as Chinese interpreter to the straits government and who had acted as adviser to Ord in Larut four months

before. Pickering went at once to Penang for talks with the leading Chinese, finding on arrival that the longer-established and more conservative of the two factions in Larut was only too willing to fall in with the governor's plans for peace.<sup>27</sup> Seeing how the land lay, the other side also went along with Pickering. The final string to the governor's bow was T. C. S. Speedy, a soldier of fortune with experience in India, Africa, and New Zealand who had resigned in July from his job as superintendent of police at Penang in order to recruit *sepoys* in India for the *mentri* of Larut. Since Speedy's peripatetic activities had had the approval of the government, it was clear that he and his force would be more or less at Clarke's disposal.<sup>28</sup>

The so-called Pangkor Engagement was signed January 20, 1874, aboard Clarke's steamer off the Perak island of that name. It recognized Abdullah as sultan, confirmed the *mentri* of Larut in his district, provided for a British officer to reside at the sultan's headquarters at Perak's expense, bound the sultan to follow this officer's advice, and stipulated that an assistant resident would be assigned to Larut with authority over the *mentri*. Speedy was immediately appointed to this post. Though the engagement was signed by Abdullah, the *mentri*, and six other Perak officials, and then by Clarke, and therefore did not directly involve the Chinese, their representatives were required to sign a bond in conjunction with it, promising to disarm and accept a commission empowered to see that stockades were destroyed, piracy ended, and peace enforced.

Clarke has been criticized for his appointment of Abdullah, understandably so in view of subsequent events. The new sultan proved not only incapable of rallying the major Perak chiefs to his cause but disloyal to the British as well. Still, it is not certain that Clarke could have brought the *de facto* sultan, Ismail, to accept a satisfactory agreement or that if so he would have proved more viable than Abdullah. Yusuf, the third alternative, was hardly known to the British at the time. The most pressing problem was the Chinese fighting. For better or worse, Clarke's principal adviser, Read, was closely associated with Tan Kim Cheng and Abdullah. Pangkor's main result was to stop Chinese destructiveness and bring about a resumption of trade. Sorting out Malay factionalism, a less important issue at the time, would now be accomplished through trial and error and at considerable cost.<sup>29</sup>

The role of Clarke as a mover and shaker by contrast with Ord, was a function not only of the C.O. having given him a latitude denied to Ord but also of his incomparably better connections and record in London. Like his successors of 1904 and 1920, he was very much an insider, a Whitehall habitué with friends in high places and accustomed for years to doing things on a grander scale than regular soldiers or members of the career colonial service were privileged to do. Committing himself and

London to an instrument as fundamental as Pangkor, and then assigning an officer to a new post in accordance with it before asking the approval of headquarters, were acts that the average Victorian governor would not have thought of. Clarke admitted that he had exceeded instructions, while pleading that the pressure of time justified it. And London, instead of blasting him for impulsiveness and insubordination as they had done so often with respect to Ord's much milder transgressions, let him get away with it.<sup>30</sup> Predictably, Lord Stanley, an outspoken critic of imperialism, remarked in the House of Lords that governors were not sufficiently controlled by the C.O.<sup>31</sup> This only strengthened Clarke by bringing Sir Robert Herbert, the undersecretary, to his defense. Public opinion in the straits saw the new governor as a hero. There was virtually universal approval locally as Clarke and his officers proceeded in the next few months to make arrangements in Selangor and Sungei Ujong that were similar to those made in Perak and for comparable reasons. By the end of 1874, residents and subordinate officers had been posted to all three west-coast states, and an uprising in Sungei Ujong had been dealt with by armed force from the straits. Clarke's brief governorship ended in May 1875, when he left to accept a seat on the governor general's council in India, a position of much greater importance in the imperial hierarchy and an ideal stepping-stone to the most senior posts in his profession.

His place was taken by General Sir William Jervois, like Clarke an engineer and a professional with an impressive record. He, too, knew people in London, though he had spent somewhat more time away from home than his predecessor had. In vigor, in determination, and in imperialist conviction, he was stamped out of much the same mold. His administration would be like Clarke's in brevity, in dramatic events, and in causing the C.O. to consider once again whether it was better to have a governor on a short rein who was therefore unable to deal effectively with local turbulence or a strong one who took the bit in his teeth and gave his distant masters some anxious moments.

In November, Jervois's government was jolted by the news that J. W. W. Birch, resident in Perak, had been murdered. Birch's brusque and tactless approach to his delicate job had bothered Clarke. The meaning of Pangkor had not been fully understood or accepted by Abdullah, not to mention the deposed Ismail and his followers who were stronger than Abdullah and who, after all, had not been consulted. Lacking the military support needed to enforce an irritating and unfamiliar system, Birch nonetheless conducted himself in an arbitrary way. A backlash of some kind was foreseen by Anson, who had warned Clarke that half measures would not do and that the government must either stay out of the native states or go in with enough power to impose their will.<sup>32</sup> Jervois, for his part, had been sure that his residents ought to administer the country

directly, though in the name of the Malay chiefs, a policy which he followed without London's approval and in fact, against the grain of specific warnings from Lord Carnarvon, the secretary of state.<sup>33</sup> The ensuing Perak War, which had to be fought with troops called in from India and Hong Kong, discredited that policy. A system of powerless residents and unfettered Malay chiefs on the other hand had been shown to be unworkable. As Meade in the C.O. saw it, there were three alternatives as of the end of the war: the residency system could be reestablished on the lines laid down at Pangkor; British officers could govern in fact, though in the sultan's name and with the assistance of a council; or the states could be annexed outright, as Jervois wanted.<sup>34</sup> Meade's colleague, W. R. Malcolm, studied the legal documents and the correspondence with the straits and found nothing to justify annexation.<sup>35</sup> Birch's murder and lesser incidents elsewhere had resulted in greater British discipline however and a corresponding decline in the ability and inclination of Malay chiefs to make trouble. There was a heated exchange between the secretary of state and the governor: when the smoke cleared, their personal relationship had been rescued, and Jervois was able to go on to his next governorship with an unblemished reputation. The supremacy of London over governors had been accepted by all. But policy remained ambiguous. There would be no annexation. Residents would stay. On paper, they would continue to be advisers rather than executives, though, as the Pangkor Engagement noted, rulers were required to accept their advice, which was now backed by force and by the fresh memory in Malay minds of what can happen to those who ignore it.

What followed has a familiar ring to students of British colonial administration in other parts of the world. Having got into difficulties with a high-spirited governor whose previous experience had been outside the service with its regulations and established routine, London now sent someone more in tune with the C.O. and its way of doing things. Sir William Robinson was the younger brother of the Hong Kong governor whose report had prepared the way for the takeover of the straits by London in 1867. Private secretary to his brother at age twenty, he had remained in the colonial service from then on, an unbroken span of thirty-two years. A subordinate of his, who would himself govern the straits one day, wrote that Robinson "... may have been sent to prevent further experiments in the Malay states."<sup>36</sup> Be this as it may, there were no major explosions in Robinson's time—a year and a half. He did not interest himself in Malay states affairs to any considerable extent. Apart from receiving delegations of Chinese miners in Perak and Selangor soon after arrival, it appears that he confined himself to the colony and did not visit Malay rulers as often as his predecessors had done.<sup>37</sup> In matters of policy, he was the kind of governor who is approved by London because

he articulates the official line and keeps things quiet and liked by the more sensible of his officers because he leaves them alone as long as they do the same. In 1878, a Malay royal tried to bribe a British officer in Selangor. The resident promptly had the sultan remove the offender from the state council, and Robinson overruled the resident for using an alien standard so uncompromisingly and for taking the initiative himself rather than gently leading the sultan to see what had to be done.<sup>38</sup> Despite London's mythology, he knew very well what the real situation was: residents were there to rule. "All the same," he wrote "... the fiction (if such you prefer to call it) that the residents are merely advisers must be kept up."<sup>39</sup> He was equally frank with Meade in London two years later: "In theory we do not now interfere... except by way of advice, but as a matter of fact we do interfere considerably and the natives themselves would be exceedingly surprised if we refrained from doing so."<sup>40</sup>

Robinson's short governorship was a time of settling down and establishing a tacit concensus. For the remaining years of the century, the C.O. left the actual implementation of policy to senior officers on the spot, though it regularly intoned the platitude about ruling by advice. Residents and their assistants ruled directly because, after the little punitive campaigns in Perak, Selangor, and Sungei Ujong, there was no alternative. The Malays were in no position to resist. The Chinese were delighted to cooperate in preserving a peace that allowed their businesses to prosper.

Sir Frederick Weld, governor from 1880 to 1887, thought that in the absence of any practical direction from the C.O. it was up to governors to make policy within the very broad and vague framework of their instructions. He wanted a gradual process of "assimilation" in which the Straits Settlements and the Malay states would draw closer together and pursue similar courses of development.<sup>41</sup> Meade and his colleague Edward Wingfield saw a dilemma. The C.O.'s misty statements were hard on governors, yet if these were more specific and admitted openly that the Malay states were "... future British territory," an impulsive governor might go too far, as Jervis had wanted to do.<sup>42</sup> Kimberley, again serving as secretary of state, replied that Johore and Pahang would probably be given residents soon; but Weld should avoid annexation and follow India's lead in encouraging native rulers and in interfering only when misgovernment forced it.<sup>43</sup> To Weld, this sounded all right on paper. In practice, it did not work. "I doubt if Asiatics will ever learn to govern themselves; it is contrary to the genius of their race, of their history, of their religious systems... their desire is a mild, just and firm despotism; *that* we can give them."<sup>44</sup> If good men like Hugh Low in Perak were picked as residents, then it was only common sense to give them their heads. The *bendahara* of Pahang, aware of the stagnation of his state by

contrast with the thriving condition of his neighbors under British protection, had come to Singapore to see the governor of his own free will, something he had declined to do when invited by Ord, Clarke, and Jervois. Malay royals taken to England where they saw civilization for themselves, shepherded about by Low and other officers, returned more convinced than ever that their destiny lay in the direction of development under the imperial umbrella. When the straits were run by India, their government had been merely constabulary. Now the administration was closer to the people and was more concerned with their welfare. Weld was sure that natives saw the British as "friends and advisers" who brought efficiency and well-being, without trampling on their habits and feelings.<sup>45</sup>

In the C.O., there was a growing confidence in the straits government and much satisfaction over what it had accomplished. Before Weld's time, dispatches from Singapore had made the staff nervous and unsure. As his term neared its end, they felt that he had outstripped all his predecessors, that there was greater contentment among both the Malays and the Chinese in the protected states as well as the colony. The extension of British influence had been good for all concerned.<sup>46</sup>

As foreseen, Pahang, the biggest and poorest Malay state, duly entered the British sphere, in 1888, thereby extending administration to the east coast of the peninsula for the first time. Sungei Ujong and several of its small neighbors moved by successive steps to a closer association with one another in 1889 and 1895, when they were given the name of *Negri Sembilan* (the nine states) presided over by a single resident. In the latter year the four states now under British protection—Perak, Selangor, *Negri Sembilan*, and Pahang—were joined together as the *Federated Malay States*, still possessing their respective residents, but more closely centralized under a resident-general at Kuala Lumpur than they had ever been under the governor of the Straits Settlements at Singapore. The governor retained his over-all authority, but he now had two titles: governor in the colony, and high commissioner in the FMS. In 1897, the governor-high commissioner, and the resident-general met in Kuala Kangsar, residence of the sultan of Perak, with the rulers of all four states. This was the first "session of chiefs" in the British period, a gathering not unlike Indian *durbars*. The four residents were also there, as were the Malay and Chinese members of each state's council, the whole group being spoken of as a "federal council."<sup>47</sup> The session lasted four days. Among the topics discussed were interstate loans and indebtedness, tin exports, justice, communications, agriculture, land and immigration policy, revenues, and the relationship between traditional arrangements for local government and imported ones. Malay and Chinese members did speak up; but the agenda and conduct of the meeting were British in all

essentials including the presidency of the high commissioner, a loyal message to the Queen, and adoption of a rule that the group would meet only when called by its president. In many respects, the Straits Settlements and the federated states were a unified British colony, although the sovereignty of the states remained a legal fact.

As the century drew to a close, the horizon was dominated by economic development. In the C.O., there was no inclination to interfere at first. C. P. (later Sir Charles) Lucas, a future assistant undersecretary, wrote that London had no wish to dictate land systems "...to these nominally independent states,"<sup>48</sup> and the governor was right to do everything he could to attract European settlers and promote cultivation in an underpopulated country of great potential wealth. London did have questions. Whereas grants of 800 acres were considered large in Ceylon, grants of 10,000 acre allotments were not uncommon in Perak, which sometimes resulted in wasteful land speculation, with planters eventually having to give up grants that they lacked the capital and labor to exploit.<sup>49</sup> Not all members of the C.O. staff were convinced by the glowing reports from Malaya in the nineties. Though Lucas thought the governor's report made "pleasant reading," his superior, Edward Fairfield, noted the governor's private letter in which he admitted that Perak's prosperity depended on gambling farms rather than stable agriculture.<sup>50</sup> There was scepticism about Pahang, for years the subject of extravagant claims by straits businessmen calling at the C.O. Fairfield was reminded of Palmerston's *bon mot*: "If you want to be deceived about a country you should consult a man who has lived there for thirty years and speaks the language."<sup>51</sup> In Malaya, too, there were differences of opinion. The governor, Sir Charles Mitchell, though by no means the foe of business that Ord had been, remarked that any attempt to enforce sensible land regulations in Pahang was invariably met with indignant outcries from concessionaires and their friends in Singapore. But this was incidental. Sir Frank Swettenham, the resident-general, always tended to side with developers.<sup>52</sup> He strongly backed E. W. Birch, resident Perak, in recommending liberal concessions of land to applicants who were raising money in England for coffee and coconut estates and for rice mills. Mitchell himself deferred to unofficials in the Legislative Council and went out of his way to make clear that he and the C.O. supported the development aim wholeheartedly. Planters with good connections in England could count on a sympathetic hearing and practical help all along the line, from the secretary of state to the governor and resident-general and on down to the residents in the states where they held land.<sup>53</sup> Assistance given included land concessions on favorable terms, help with the supply of labor, and cost sharing on the building of roads and railways. The FMS Annual Reports for 1898-1899 contained unmistakable evidence of a continuing boom in tin. Revenues



were up. The government aided planters by ending export duties on coffee. Though Pahang's chronic debt increased slightly due to the cost of a road connecting it to Selangor, Negri Sembilan's had been completely retired. Everywhere there were high hopes for rubber—the miracle plant from South America that seemed ideally suited to Malaya's soil and climate. "This is a wonderful record," wrote Lucas.<sup>54</sup>

In the summer of 1903, the second gathering of chiefs took place, this time in Kuala Lumpur. A major topic of discussion was the competing claims of Malay and English to be the official language of the federation. The *yang di pertuan besar* (paramount chief) of Negri Sembilan argued that Malay was more appropriate, being the language of the common people as well as the ruling classes, and that its use verbally and in documents would conduce to the general prosperity and comfort of the population.<sup>55</sup> W. H. Treacher, the resident-general, politely disagreed. English was the language of the civil service, of large non-Malay portions of the population, of British India nearby, and of businessmen locally and in the great world of Europe and America. Office clerks, observed the resident Negri Sembilan, were not able to write Malay, nor could most Malays read it. The sultan of Perak agreed that both languages should continue to be used in their respective spheres. It was clear that English had won the battle and was on the rise everywhere.

As high commissioner, Swettenham voiced his gratification over achievements since Pangkor. Circumstances had demanded intervention, he said, and the British had come to the Malay states at the invitation of the rulers.

The Malay sultans and chiefs who are here today will bear me out in saying that we have faithfully and earnestly endeavoured to fulfil the somewhat difficult task we then undertook. The condition of all the people of the federated Malay states has improved, step by step, with the advancement of the country from roadless jungle to railways, telegraphs, schools, hospitals and the other accompaniments of scientific administration. The Malays have in all this been great gainers.<sup>56</sup>

How the Malays and the peninsula's other peoples felt is a complex subject to which attention will be given in the following chapters. That the royals themselves had come a long way from the surliness, the ignorance of British capacity, and the defiance of the 1870s there can be little doubt. No one could gainsay the resident-general when he remarked that "... the English are now the predominant power in these parts of the world."<sup>57</sup> In a single generation, Malaya had been politically and economically transformed.

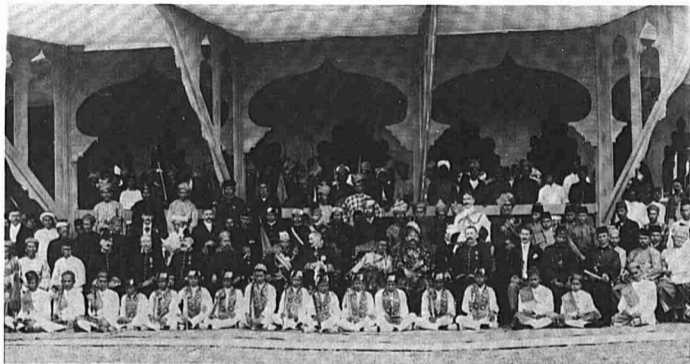


Plate 1. Conference of Chiefs, Kuala Lumpur, 1903. Seated left to right, beginning with uniformed European in cocked hat: H. C. (later Sir Henry) Belfield (resident Selangor), J. P. (later Sir John) Rodger (resident Perak), W. H. (later Sir William) Treacher (resident-general), sultan of Selangor, sultan of Perak, Sir Frank Swettenham (high commissioner), Yang di Pertuan Besar of Negri Sembilan, sultan of Pahang, W. Egerton (resident Negri Sembilan), D. G. Campbell (resident Pahang). *Courtesy of Royal Commonwealth Society.*

## Notes

1. See C. D. Cowan, *Nineteenth Century Malaya*, (London, 1967); H. H. Dodwell, "The Straits Settlements, 1815-1863," *The Cambridge History of the British Empire*, J. H. Rose et al., eds. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1940). And compare K. G. Tregonning, "Penang and the China Trade," *Malaysia in History* 5 (Feb. 1959): 8-12.
2. Compare Cowan, *Nineteenth Century Malaya*; C. M. Turnbull, *The Straits Settlements 1826-1867* (London: Athlone Press, 1972); S. W. Jones, *Public Administration in Malaya* (London: Oxford University Press, 1953).
3. See Sjovald Cunyngham-Brown, *The Traders* (London: Newman Neame, 1971), p. 70; A. Wright and T. H. Reid, *The Malay Peninsula* (London: T. F. Unwin, 1912), pp. 122-23.
4. Dodwell, p. 614.
5. The main questions were finances and defense. See R. B. Pugh, "The Colonial Office, 1801-1925," *The Cambridge History of the British Empire*, E. A. Benians et al., eds. (London: Cambridge University Press, 1959), p. 734. A major problem was that the straits had been a financial burden to India.
6. Minute, 20 Jan. 1859, 273/7.
7. See Cowan, chap. 1; and C. N. Parkinson, *British Intervention in Malaya 1867-1877* (Singapore: University of Malaya Press, 1960), chap. 1.
8. O. Marks, "The Association of British Malaya," *British Malaya* (May 1926): 31-32; H. P. Bryson, "The Association That Was Born Out of a Colonial Governor's Spending," *Malaysia* (May 1973); Charles Wurtzburg, "History of the Association," *Malaya*, Parts 1 and 2 (Feb.-Mar. 1952). See W. H. Read to the secretary of state, 9 May 1868, 273/16, charging Ord with having no policy and Ord's summing up of SSA complaints, undated, 1869, 273/43 and 44. See also Wright and Reid, pp. 201-202; and W. Makepeace, G. E. Brooke, and R. St. J. Braddell, eds., *One Hundred Years of Singapore* (London, 1921), in which the SSA's function is frankly described as "...guarding the interests of unofficial Singapore." (p. 299); and *Straits Produce* (the local equivalent of *Punch*), 2 (1870), in which the commercial interests pillory Ord.
9. To Carnarvon, 6 Apr. 1867, 273/10. And see Sir P. B. Maxwell, *Our Malay Conquests* (London: P. S. King, 1878).
10. See W. H. Read, *Play and Politics: Recollections of Malaya by an Old Resident* (London: Wells, Gardner, Darton & Co., 1901).
11. See reports of disturbances on the mainland, Singapore to India Office, 22 Feb. 1865, 273/9, and Capt. F. O. Mayne, R. N., to Ord, 11 Jan. 1868, 273/16.
12. To Sir F. Rogers, C.O., 3 Oct. 1868, 273/16.
13. To the secretary of state, 9 May 1868, 273/16. Read was in the Legislative Council at this point. He suggested that the secretary of state talk with William Napier, chairman of the SSA, and G. T. Knox, H. M. consul at Bangkok, as well as Lt. Col. R. Macpherson, colonial secretary, straits, the last two being in London on leave at the time.
14. See J. M. Gullick, *Indigenous Political Systems of Western Malaya* (London: Athlone, 1958), and his "The Malay Administrator," *Merdeka Outlook*, 1957. 1

thank Mr. Gullick for sending me a copy of this article. Compare Zahara binti Haji Mahmud, "The Period and the Nature of 'Traditional' Settlement in the Malay Peninsula," *JMBRAS* 43 (Dec. 1970).

15. See V. Purcell, *The Chinese in Malaya* (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1967) and W. Blythe, "Historical Sketch of Chinese Labour in Malaya," *JMBRAS* 20 (1947), and his *The Impact of Chinese Secret Societies in Malaya* (London: Oxford University Press, 1969). I am grateful to the late Mr. Blythe for a stimulating correspondence on this subject.

16. See Major J. F. A. McNair, *Perak and the Malays, (1878)* (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1972), by an Indian Army gunner who was private secretary to the governor of the straits in the 1850s and who was Ord's controller of convicts. Also F. Swettenham, "Some Account of the Independent Native States of the Malay Peninsula," *JMBRAS* 6, Part 1 (Dec. 1880). The Malays were thought to be dying out at this time.

17. Ord to secretary of state, 10 July 1873, 273/67.

18. See Khoo Kay Kim, "The Origin of British Administration in Malaya," *JMBRAS*, 39 (1966).

19. Minute, 29 Aug. 1873, on Ord's dispatch, n. 17 above.

20. Minute by Kimberley, 31 Aug. 1873, on Ord's dispatch, n. 17 above.

21. Ibid. Kimberley's final instructions were essentially to this effect. See J. R. M. Butler in Benians, *The Cambridge History*, p. 46.

22. See Khoo, "The Origin of British Administration"; Purcell, *The Chinese in Malaya*; Wright and Reid, *The Malay Peninsula*; Cowan, *Nineteenth Century Malaya*; W. D. McIntyre in C. D. Cowan and O. W. Wolters, *Southeast Asian History and Historiography* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1976); Cunyngnam-Brown, *The Traders*; Blythe, *Impact*; Parkinson, *British Intervention*; Read, *Play and Politics*; Jones, *Public Administration*; Turnbull, *Straits Settlements*; R. O. Winstedt, *Start with Alif* (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1969). On competition with other powers, see Kimberley, *ibid.*

23. Prominent among them in the 1870s was Lord Stanley of Alderley, an experienced Orientalist who embraced Islam and who repeatedly asked awkward questions in Parliament. See the minutes on his questions about administration in Malaya, 6 July 1874, 273/55 and his article in *The Times* (7 July 1874): 5.

24. Minute, 29 Aug. 1874, 273/76.

25. See Archibald Anson, *About Others and Myself* (London: Murray 1920), p. 288.

26. See Read, pp. 25-26. Abdullah had also appealed to Ord in the same sense. See F. A. Swettenham, *British Malaya* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1948), p. 175 and M. L. Wynne, *Triad and Tabut* (Singapore: Government Printer, 1941), p. 283.

27. See R. N. Jackson, *Pickering* (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1965), p. 21.

28. Minute to the undersecretary of state, India Office, 14 Oct. 1873, sent to the C. O., 273/72.

29. For postmortems on Pangkor, see Cowan, *Nineteenth Century Malaya*; R. H. Vetch, ed., *Life of Lt. Gen. the Hon. Sir Andrew Clarke, GCMG, CB, CIE* (New York: Dutton, 1950); Wynne, *Triad*; and Parkinson, *British Intervention*.

30. See Vetch, pp. 134-36. Kimberley, who had left office in the meantime, said later that he would have backed Clarke. See Cowan, pp. 197-211.

31. 6 Aug. 1874, 273/77.

32. Anson, *About Others*, p. 323. The question of hindsight wisdom arises. Anson was fond of posturing, and the C. O. was never impressed by him, especially at times when he took charge in the governor's absence. His consistent urging of direct rule, however, does lend credence to this particular claim.

33. See Cowan, pp. 229-37, and Butler, pp. 46-47. Carnarvon had consulted Ord through Herbert, asking for his advice on Jervis's policy. Ord was against it. See Ord to Carnarvon, 19 July 1876, printed in the *Selangor Gazette*, M. On Jervis's views, much can be learned from the diary of his private secretary, covering part of 1875. This was kindly shown to me by Professor R. W. Winks, of Yale University. See, especially, the entries of 22 June, 18 July, 3 Sept., and 5 Nov. Jervis dictated extensively. The diary is thus the governor's own, though transcribed by the private secretary.

34. Minute, 5 Jan. 1876, 273/81.

35. Malcolm's minute, 23 Nov. 1875, 273/81. Carnarvon, bewildered by events in Malaya, had ordered the study.

36. F. A. Swettenham, *Footprints in Malaya* (London: Hutchinson, 1942), p. 71.

37. Ibid. And see E. Sadka, *The Protected Malay States, 1874-1895* (Kuala Lumpur: University of Malaya Press, 1968), p. 148. Also Philip Loh, *The Malay States 1877-1895* (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1969), pp. 27-28.

38. Governor to secretary of state, 18 May 1878, 273/94.

39. Cited by Loh, p. 11 (to secretary of state, 13 June 1878, 273/93).

40. 21 Feb. 1880, 273/102.

41. Lady Lovat, *The Life of Sir Frederick Weld, GCMG* (London: Murray, 1914), preface by Sir Hugh Clifford, p. xiii. See also p. 313.

42. Meade's minute on Weld's dispatch, 21 Oct. 1880, 273/82. See Wingfield's minute, same dispatch, asking for clarity on policy.

43. Draft, 14 Jan. 1881; formal reply 11 Feb., 273/83.

44. To the secretary of state, 21 Oct. 1880, 273/83. Weld suggested changing the name of the Straits Settlements to "British Malaya." (To T. W. Bramston of the C.O., 8 Mar. 1885, 273/115.)

45. To the secretary of state, 13 Nov. 1886, 273/119.

46. See G. W. B. de Robeck's minute, 22 Nov. 1886, 273/119.

47. "Minutes of the Session of Chiefs of the Federated Malay States" (Taiping: Government Printer, 1897), p. 9.

48. Minute, 14 Dec. 1891, 272/176, commenting on the governor's dispatch of 28 Oct. 1891 and other papers.

49. Governor to secretary of state, 23 Mar. 1896, 273/213.

50. Minutes on Mitchell's dispatch, 22 Mar. 1894, 273/194.

51. Minute, 31 Oct. 1894, 273/198.

52. Governor to secretary of state, 23 Mar. 1896, 273/213.

53. See correspondence forwarded by Swettenham to Lucas, 15 June 1898, 273/240, including personal letters from Maj. Charles Lambton, owner of a coffee estate in Negri Sembilan, to the resident there, E. W. Birch, and from H. W.

Ashly, manager of the Cheviot estate, Seremban, to Birch. Lambton was also in direct touch with Lord Selborne, under secretary of state. Swettenham assured Lucas that the government would share the cost of a road to Lambton's estate. See also Swettenham to under secretary of state, 13 Mar. 1898, 273/245, on supporting a company that was building steam tramways in Negri Sembilan and between Selangor and Pahang.

54. Minute on annual reports, 15 May 1900, 273/261.

55. "Minutes of the Conference of Chiefs of the Federated Malay States" (Kuala Lumpur: Government Printer, 1903), p. 7.

56. *Ibid.*, p. 4.

57. *Ibid.*, p. 6.

THE ADMINISTRATION established at Penang by Captain Light in 1786 was typical of British India in all its essentials. Its purpose was the fostering and military protection of trade. The leaders, from Light on down, were merchants or the agents of merchant companies. It is significant, however, that the year of Penang's founding was also the year when Light's friend Warren Hastings went on trial in the House of Lords. For some time, London and the Indian government had been discussing the burning issue of the relationship between trade and administration and specifically the need to separate them in order to eliminate corruption. Two means of achieving this were to restrict commercial activity by government officers and to pay them adequately. Light won high salaries for his subordinates. They were allowed to own land, from which many derived considerable income, but they could not engage in trade directly.

Decent pay and hopes of profitable estates in a new and promising country made for a larger staff than Penang could justify to an Indian regime that had become acutely conscious of budgets, regulations, and accountability. In 1805, there was a reorganization. Along with Bombay and Madras, Penang became a presidency under the governor-general at Calcutta. In 1826, the three Straits Settlements were unified. This last step, together with the downgrading of the administering officer's title from governor to resident, indicated their diminished importance as direct trade between England and China increased. The headquarters moved in 1832 from Penang to Singapore—two years after the ending of the straits' status as an Indian presidency. Though the rank of governor was restored, the settlements were now a minor appendage of the Bengal government.

During their quarter century as a presidency, the straits recruited officers through nomination by directors of the company. Recruits signed covenants calling for the posting of bonds that would be forfeited if they left the service before the expiry of an agreed period. The first group in this so-called covenanted service numbered ten. By 1826, the total was fourteen—nine in Penang, three in Singapore, and two in Malacca. Training was provided from 1806 onwards in the company's college at Haileybury, an experience that was reckoned to be more valuable for the esprit

de corps and sense of responsibility bred there than for the worth of language instruction and other courses.<sup>1</sup> The experiment ended with Penang's presidency in 1830, as did covenants. Hard times brought retrenchment of staff. There was a general tightening up, including cancellation in 1840 of the right to own land. Officers of the Indian Civil Service, the elite corps of Britain's overseas cadres, were never interested in the straits, and, from 1830 to the end of company rule in 1867, recruits came mainly from the Indian army, with occasional entrants being nominated by company directors from business firms or from the clerical ranks in India. Generally speaking, the straits service in this period stood at the bottom of the imperial ladder, reflecting the stepchild status of the settlements it worked in. For governors, too, the straits were seen as the end of the line, a place with no future.<sup>2</sup> That reputation was to haunt the colony for the rest of the century.

If London and Calcutta had looked more favorably on the straits, her officers would still have been faced with the fact that their position was inferior to that of businessmen throughout the settlements. With higher incomes and correspondingly superior social standing, the traders were clearly the *raison d'être* of the whole enterprise, the people whose work administrators were there to facilitate. In addition, there were the court recorders, sent out from England, knighted, and paid more than governors were, filling independent positions and looking down on administrators as amateurs, undistinguished soldiers who were not practicing their own profession. Duties were anything but onerous. Governors and subordinate officers could be absent from their posts for lengthy periods without noticeably deleterious effects on efficiency. Clerks did the paperwork, had more continuous service than officers had, knew languages better, and were intimately connected with local communities. Officers functioned mainly as supervisors, overseeing police work, tax farms, and road maintenance, and dealing with piracy when it got out of hand. They ran a minimum, constabulary government in a poor colony under the tight and grudging control of a distant master.

The last governor under company rule was Colonel (later General Sir Orfeur) Cavenagh. His family had entered his name for Woolwich, but hearing that opportunities for advancement might be better in India than in the regular army, they sent him as a gentleman cadet, aged fourteen, to the company's military college at Addiscombe.<sup>3</sup> Passing out second in his class two years later in 1837, he went immediately to India, where he served without home leave until 1850, returning briefly in that year as a member of a Nepalese mission. With some of his brother officers in the Indian Political Service, he saw that interesting and rewarding work was to be found outside garrison duty. Postings in Indian princely states and Burma followed. He hoped that a senior position in Persia could be



secured after the expected takeover of that country following the Crimean War, but this did not transpire, and, instead, he continued to serve as fort major (representative of the governor-general) at Fort William. It was the mutiny that rescued him from wearying bureaucratic tasks. He was given the straits governorship in 1857 in recognition of his services in that conflict, during which he was wounded.

Cavenagh was popular with straits businessmen and with Chinese clan leaders as well, learning to manage the latter with a mixture of understanding and discipline, "...the iron hand with velvet glove," that proved effective.<sup>4</sup> His vigorous dealings with Malay states got him into trouble with Calcutta however, for bombarding Trengganu on the east coast, and for lecturing the sultan of Perak in 1862 on the need to control both his local chief in Larut and the unruly Chinese miners in that district. Early in his governorship, he and a number of his officers complained that the straits service, as then constituted, and its relationship to India were unsuited to the requirements of the moment. Contacts with the Malay states were close and were growing closer. Under the Indian system, it was impossible to get good men to go to the straits, where career prospects were dim. The governor-general understood this. India could not provide Chinese speakers, for example—a crying need in the straits—and there was talk of borrowing officers from the Chinese Consular Service.<sup>5</sup> By this time, it was evident that all concerned—the governor-general, Cavenagh and his officers, and the straits business community—wanted the settlements transferred to the C.O.<sup>6</sup>

Sir Hercules Robinson's report on the status of the straits administration, submitted in 1863, listed a total of seventeen European officers served by a clerical staff of 306.<sup>7</sup> The Europeans included the governor and four subordinates in Singapore, resident commissioners in Penang and Malacca, and a small number of clergymen, legal officers, engineers, military commanders, and wardens of the Indian convict establishment. By contrast with crown colonies such as Ceylon, Hong Kong, and even Mauritius, the settlements were understaffed. If the expected transfer came about, would each of the three units have its own legislative council, as sometimes happened in the West Indies? Would serving officers be permitted to continue? The latter query was forwarded directly by several of the officers themselves, impressive evidence that the Bengal government was unloved and that men serving in the straits were not confident of being able to find other employment.<sup>8</sup> A question to the same effect was put in the House of Commons, showing, as their successors were to do rather often, that straits civil servants were not timid about appealing to higher authority at home.<sup>9</sup> Robinson thought it would be unfortunate to dispense with the services of men who knew local languages and customs. He suggested liberal pension terms for the more talented of these as

inducements and recommended the setting up of a small number of cadetships in addition. The resulting service would thus have a blend of experience and new blood. Cavenagh thought that two of the first cadets ought to go to Hong Kong to learn Chinese and that one should stay in Singapore and learn Malay. All should be nominated by the secretary of state and then examined by the civil service commissioners in such subjects as handwriting, orthography, mathematics, latin, history, geography, science, and law.

As word of the impending transfer got abroad the C.O. began to receive inquiries about openings. From the British legation in Haiti came a plea, made by the chargé there, on behalf of his brother in Labuan.<sup>10</sup> The governor of Natal, who had previously served in Southeast Asia, applied for the governorship of the new colony.<sup>11</sup> Cavenagh himself wanted very much to stay. But the C.O. preferred a new broom, and one wielded by an experienced colonial governor of their own choosing. Cavenagh heard quite late in the day that someone else was coming, and his successor actually arrived before he got official advice as to the changeover. The C.O.'s patronizing view of the straits service was not influenced by the complimentary parts of Robinson's report.

This attitude, which was mild by comparison with their view of Malay states officers in the 1870s, was not confined to the Eastern colonies. Public men in mid-nineteenth-century England knew little of the empire and cared less. The permanent staff of the C.O. from the 1830s to the 1860s, headed by Stephen, Merivale, and Rogers, saw overseas possessions as a nuisance that would fade away in time.<sup>12</sup> But as the larger, European-colonized units such as Canada and Australia began to assert themselves and as economic competition from Germany and America increased, London's outlook changed. Colonies, whether settled by Europeans or not, were potential markets. As such, they and their peoples merited study. At the same time, the voices of religion, humanitarianism, and scholarship that had formerly opposed imperial adventures as exploitative now spoke of an obligation to protect and guide, especially in territories whose peoples did not have highly developed social institutions. Furthermore, the bringing of good government to such places might be expected to lower the costs of running them by helping trade and shifting more of the responsibility of administration onto natives. Later, it would be said that Britain had a "dual mandate," whereby improvement would be to the advantage of local peoples as well as the protecting power and the rest of the world. Whether or not this was a rationalization of economic imperatives, it was genuinely felt by civil servants in London who had no thought of personal gain. Imperialism had become respectable in an age that put a higher premium on respectability than on any other quality.

Dispatches from Singapore to London were addressed to the secretary of state, and replies were signed by him. But even Lords Kimberley and Carnarvon, who had more experience in the C.O. than most and who took a profound interest in the department's work, relied heavily on their permanent under secretaries and a few trusted subordinates. Carnarvon said frankly that Herman Merivale, permanent undersecretary from 1847 to 1860, virtually ran the office and dictated policy. I "... could if I pleased modify or change his instructions [sic]"; but in fact this was not done.<sup>13</sup> In the rare instances when he disagreed with Merivale, there was friendly discussion, and Carnarvon invariably came to see things Merivale's way. By the 1860s, the C.O. had been separated from the War Office. It became a much sought after place of career employment by university graduates of high caliber who had to pass stiff examinations. The aristocratic bias was unchanged from earlier days when patronage held undisputed sway. Sir Robert Herbert, permanent undersecretary from 1871 to 1892, was Carnarvon's cousin and closest friend at Eton and Oxford. His successor, the Honorable Sir Robert Meade, was, like Herbert, the son of a peer. But they and their C.O. colleagues were gifted, hard-working professionals, devoted to their jobs, and trusted by prime ministers and cabinet members who, as it happened, seldom interfered with daily business. If the C.O. was, as Carnarvon said, a "happy family" whose principal figures came from the charmed circle of the Victorian elect, this did not result in the kinds of nepotism and frivolity that plagued the army in the same period.<sup>14</sup> When colonial civil servants complained later on about their superiors in London, they referred to a lack of specific knowledge of conditions on the ground in far-off places and to insufficient imagination and perspective. The C.O.'s scrupulous attention to detail and constant, responsible supervision were all the more galling to governors in fact because they were exercised by talented, serious, and authoritative men. With the arrival of the telegraph in the 1870s, that supervision became closer and more immediate.

The governors in the last third of the century were a mixed group in background, in character, and in personal relations with the C.O. Before 1850, most had made their names in other fields and, at the time of appointment, had had little or no previous experience of colonial administration. John Bright's famous remark, made in 1858, that the colonies were "... a gigantic system of outdoor relief for the aristocracy of Great Britain..." would not have been impossible to substantiate.<sup>15</sup> In 1865, only eleven of the thirty-three governors were professionals.<sup>16</sup> Selection was not made by members of the C.O. staff, as happened later on, but by the prime minister and his cabinet. Important posts such as Canada were reserved for aristocrats. Others, however, went to army officers, high-ranking members of the Indian Civil Service, and occa-

sionally to members of Parliament. The grandson of an M.P., who was given a minor governorship after suffering defeat in his attempt at reelection, speaks of the appointment frankly as a "consolation prize" and dryly observes that "... imperial outposts did not then offer desirable careers and tended to attract civilian counterparts of Kipling's gentlemen troopers rather than the finer flower of Queen Victoria's island race."<sup>17</sup> We have seen that the first three straits governors were soldiers, Clarke and Jervois being distinguished in their profession and well connected at home. By the seventies both the posts and the candidates were improving. As the C.O. staff was by no means incompetent for being aristocratic, so it would be indulging in caricature to suggest that governors were useless because they knew people in official London. Sir Frederick Weld came from an old, established Catholic family. His mother was the daughter of a peer. Like so many younger sons he went out to the colonies because there was more opportunity there than in England. He started as a sheep farmer in New Zealand, entered local politics, and became a governor in Australia before moving on to the straits. His successor, Sir Cecil Clementi Smith, like his predecessor, Sir William Robinson, was a career colonial civil servant, but of a newer kind. Whereas Robinson had begun as a patronage appointee, Clementi Smith, a university man, rose through the ranks, starting as an interpreter in Hong Kong. He differed from all earlier straits governors in having had considerable previous service there—seven years as colonial secretary. The last nineteenth-century governor, Lieutenant Colonel Sir Charles Mitchell, on the other hand, was something of a throwback to former times, having entered colonial service after many years of soldiering.

The C.O.'s treatment of governors depended on circumstances of the moment, on each man's skill, and on London's appraisal of his performance. Ord, with all his faults, was the prisoner of an impossible situation, forced to sit by helplessly while the politics and economy of the Malay states deteriorated. The C.O. lectured him, gave him less than full support in his struggles with the business community, and finally replaced him with a man to whom they gave the authority they had consistently denied to Ord. Clarke had good relations with both London and the merchants, alarmed the C.O. by exceeding his instructions and left his successor to face the consequences of half measures and bad staffing. Jervois realized, as the C.O. did not, that order on the mainland demanded more than powerless advisers. But he, too, went beyond his authority, and when he reaped the whirlwind, London blamed him for provoking the Perak War and sent out a governor whose main qualifications in their eyes were caution, tact, and an instinct for prior consultation. Robinson and his successors were lucky in that the die had been cast before they arrived, the Malays had been cowed, and officers serving on

the mainland knew better than to proceed as the hapless Birch had done. By now, the C.O. understood that direct rule was unavoidable.<sup>18</sup> The method was the thing.

Well before they took over the straits, the C.O. gave thought to the building of a civil service of higher quality than the old one, a corps that would be able to manage the new colony more or less as other Eastern possessions were managed. Sir Hercules Robinson, an old hand at crown-colony government, naturally suggested procedures that were tried and true. The straits should follow Ceylon and Hong Kong in recruiting cadets through nomination by the secretary of state and examinations by the civil-service commissioners, thus combining patronage with the objective testing that was increasingly demanded in nineteenth-century England and which, along with training courses, had actually been used in overseas territories earlier than in the home country. Shortly before the formal takeover of the straits by the C.O., two cadets were appointed: the first being R. Godwin-Austen, son of a Guilford squire who was required to post a bond for his son. But Godwin-Austen died just before his ship was to have sailed, and the honor of being the first straits cadet to take up an appointment went to D. F. A. Hervey, an old Marburian.<sup>19</sup> The C.O. explained to the civil-service commission that the aim was to recruit "... an efficient staff of interpreters."<sup>20</sup> It was necessary to add later that straits cadets were not part of the imperial civil services and that, in taking part in their selection, the commissioners were simply doing an *ad hoc* job for the C.O., which retained full discretion in giving weight to marks supplied to them.<sup>21</sup> Applicants were examined in either Malay or Chinese and in English composition, precis writing, geography and history, and in two languages which they could choose from among Latin, Greek, French, and German.<sup>22</sup> Unlike company recruits, the new cadets were appointed to the straits service at large, not to a particular unit. Hervey arrived in 1867, followed in 1868 by A. M. Skinner and in 1870 by E. H. Watts and F. A. Swettenham.

The C.O. was deluged with applications from the start. Requests for nominations were so numerous that the office had its choice of four or five university men competing for a single nomination, which allowed them to consider other factors in addition to academic standing. Testimonials from hopeful parents and from dons spoke of family background, morals, leadership qualities, athletic ability, and experience in the tropics.<sup>23</sup> Not surprisingly, one or two serving officers applied on behalf of their sons—Major McNair, a senior engineer in the straits, and Colonel Anson, lieutenant governor of Penang—and won promises from a staff that was only too glad to see a name they recognized. More often than not, they had had to make the standard reply that the minister could not entertain applications from "... persons of whom he has no direct or indirect

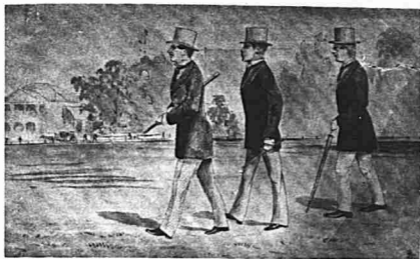


Plate 2. Three Civil Service Cadets, Straits Settlements, 1870s. Cartoon. *Courtesy of Malaysian National Archives.*

knowledge unless they be accompanied by recommendations from persons known to his lordship or by satisfactory testimonials of recent date."<sup>24</sup> Swettenham's way was paved by his brother, a Cambridge man who entered the Ceylon service two years before.<sup>25</sup> E. W. Birch, son of the murdered resident of Perak, was taken into the C.O. itself straight from Harrow at age nineteen and worked there until old enough to assume a cadetship. This was part of the arrangements for the care of Birch's children made by the Queen on Disraeli's advice at the time of the murder.<sup>26</sup> Application forms asked for educational details and for father's occupation. A majority of the cadets came from public schools and/or Oxford and Cambridge colleges or Trinity College Dublin. As time went on a university education became the expected norm, if not a stated requirement. There were many sons of clergymen, army officers, and schoolmasters, with businessmen, lawyers, and doctors appearing somewhat less often. One father was in the Ceylon service, one was an M.P., one was a clerk in holy orders, and another is listed as a landowner.<sup>27</sup>

The C.O. could enforce its own standards. They wanted good physical specimens who were gentlemen—that is, men of character and honor—and they looked for reasonable intelligence rather than brilliance of the academic kind.<sup>28</sup> They could be severe in rejecting applications of the traditional type from men in middle age, such as one from a former ADC to the governor of the Leewards who was recommended by "... such old

supporters in Parliament of the Conservative interest as Mr. Walpole."<sup>29</sup> Meanwhile they had to deal with the service they had inherited from the India Office. On the day Ord took over, all serving officers were assured that they could keep their positions until further notice.<sup>30</sup> The resident councillor at Singapore, Colonel R. Macpherson, who had come from the Madras artillery, was appointed colonial secretary—simply a change in title. When he died three years later, J. W. W. Birch was brought in from Ceylon. He had started as a midshipman in the navy and had risen through the ranks of the Ceylon service since 1847. Ceylon, the mother hen of the Eastern colonies, also supplied the first lieutenant governor of Malacca, W. W. Cairns. But in the case of Penang, a much more important post, Victorian patronage was found to be flourishing still. Colonel Anson, who received the lieutenant governorship there, was a Woolwich man with colonial service in Mauritius behind him and with relatives and friends in high places. His brother, Sir John, had been helpful before. When Anson called at the C.O. in 1867, he talked with Sir Frederick Rogers and with Carnarvon's private secretary and was offered the post.<sup>31</sup> Cairns remained in Malacca only a year and retired shortly after. But Anson stayed fifteen years, was acting governor several times, and gave the C.O. professionals no cause to abandon their faith in examination recruitment.<sup>32</sup>

Cairns was succeeded at Malacca by Captain E. W. Shaw, a navy man who had been private secretary to the governor of Antigua, thus representing, like Anson, the old military-cum-civil stream in colonial administration. He was well liked by Malay and Chinese residents in Malacca and performed efficiently during the Sungei Ujong troubles of 1874. The C.O. got the impression, however, that he did not understand the requirements of modern government and tended to regard his small satrapy as a petty governorship that called for nothing more than the easy going, benign paternalism of the West Indies.<sup>33</sup> He was never promoted and died at his post in 1879. More typical of those whom the C.O. had high hopes for was C. J. Irving, the first auditor-general of the straits. He had started in the land and emigration office of the C.O. and had worked as an auditor in Somerset House and in Mauritius. Though he had not consorted with the mighty at home or attended famous schools, he had Ord's confidence. He opposed intervention in the Malay states, thereby breasting a tidal wave in the seventies, but he was sent to Malacca as Shaw's successor, acted in the governor's absence occasionally, won a CMG, and ended his career as resident councillor Penang.<sup>34</sup>

Below these men, but above the several hundred office clerks, were the warrant officers, one might call them, of the straits establishment—the junior magistrates, interpreters, and assistant auditors—who were locally recruited for the most part, poorly paid, though often pensionable, and

effectively blocked from the better career posts. Though the C.O. had allowed such people to advance in the stronger colonies, they tried to build up the straits administration by making appointments from the United Kingdom. This was discouraging news for men who had labored long and hard at thankless, menial tasks in the hope that a day of recognition and opportunity might eventually come. One such was F. H. Gottlieb. The duke of Devonshire had recommended him to the C.O. in 1827, apologizing for interfering in promotions "... of the higher orders in the dockyards."<sup>35</sup> He became a police magistrate at Penang in 1871 and assistant protector of Indian immigrants six years later. In 1879, he was suspected of taking bribes. After being pronounced medically unfit for further service on grounds of senility, he retired in 1892 and lived out his last years in Singapore.

To the C.O. the root problem of service quality was that in the straits there had not been a clear distinction between professionals on the one hand, usually officers recruited in England, and locally hired hangers-on. Like the company regime before it, the new colonial government in Singapore was prone to slapdash methods, which allowed anyone at all to land in jobs that London wanted reserved for "educated gentlemen."<sup>36</sup> "They are rather fond in the straits of getting into the service through minor appointments their relatives who have failed or declined to go through the regular cadet examinations: witness the youngest Maxwell, the younger Plunkett, a younger McNair and now a young Ord."<sup>37</sup> The office admitted that poor salaries in the higher posts were part of the difficulty. If they expected to attract "... the same classes of English people which supply ... the permanent staff of the London offices," and if potential cadets did not have private means, as army officers did, then decent salaries were vital.<sup>38</sup> Cadets could hardly be expected to remain celibate; yet, as things were, they could not afford to marry, and they were almost certain to fall into debt.

What was needed was an across-the-board review of conditions of service and a reorganization on Ceylon lines with positions classified according to degrees of responsibility. During the 1870s, straits revenue had risen dramatically as a result of the general prosperity. The Legislative Council was not only willing to countenance higher salaries; its commercial members were pushing for them. With better pay and stricter control of the higher ranks by reserving them for cadets, there would be more opportunity for promotion and a respectable career.<sup>39</sup> By 1881, a comprehensive reorganization plan had been adopted, though its benefits would be a long time coming. The governor could not shunt aside the many officers inherited from the past. It was one thing to bring in Clementi Smith from Hong Kong and make him colonial secretary over the heads of everyone. What about the competing claims to the preretire-



ment post of resident councillor Penang of Major McNair, who was senior, and Irving, whom the governor admitted was better qualified and whom the C.O. wanted? Weld wished to put McNair in Penang, not because he was the most able candidate, but because this would get him out of Singapore, where there was an urgent need for new public works, the supervision of which was beyond McNair's abilities.<sup>40</sup> The solution was to give Penang to McNair on an acting basis for his last few months and then to put Irving in as substantive resident councillor. Tactics of this kind worked well enough on the whole. But the problem of seniority versus merit was never solved once and for all. Nor did Singapore ever entirely cure the indigestion caused by increasing numbers of examination cadets serving side-by-side with casually recruited officers who had been the best available in their day and had not done badly in the rough and ready conditions of more primitive times.

There was the further problem of what to do with officers—cadets or not—who proved unsatisfactory long after being confirmed in their appointments. In 1888, the C.O. received a complaint from A. J. Collier, an official of the telegraph company in Malacca, that the magistrate there, C. J. Skinner, an 1876 cadet, had seduced his wife and taken her to England with him on leave. Skinner, who had been invited to reside with the Colliers, had often read sermons to Mrs. Collier and had taken her to communion. At the time of Collier's letter he was trying to obtain a divorce for the lady in England, after which he planned to return with her to Malacca. The governor took a dim view of the affair, remarking to the C.O. that "many men are retained in the service because they cannot be got rid of."<sup>41</sup> Skinner applied for a transfer to another colony. Lucas and the secretary of state thought he ought to resign, but Meade pointed out that resignation would mean "absolute ruin," which would be a bit much since this sort of thing happened rather often and was usually kept dark.<sup>42</sup> Skinner should be allowed to return, but without his companion and only if blocked from further promotion and sent to a remote district. In the event he became acting colonial secretary in Singapore and retired a year later. Such cases, if rarely exposed to the light, pointed up the difficulty of recruiting qualified, dependable men who would be willing to serve on inadequate salaries in a punishing climate without the social amenities that were taken for granted at home.

From time to time, the C.O. told itself that matters might be improved if they exerted stricter control over promotions and postings of officers within the colony. The secretary of state had full authority legally. No action became final until his approval had been received. As they looked at governors' recommendations year by year and consulted their memory of each officer's record from recruitment onwards, the staff formed impressions of ability which they drew on in advising the secretary of state.

Lucas's comments on the senior men up for consideration in 1886 squared with governors' appraisals and career performance: Hervey was first in seniority but weak; E. E. Isemonger, who had entered the junior ranks of the home civil service in 1856, specializing in audit work, had transferred in 1867 to the straits, where his record had been solid rather than lustrous; W. E. Maxwell, son of Sir Peter Benson, was clearly superior, though somewhat fussy and not congenial with his colleagues; A. M. Skinner (not to be confused with C. J.) was thought very good; F. A. Swettenham was the best of all; N. Trotter, the postmaster-general, had "reached his level."<sup>43</sup> Short of objecting to patent outrages, however, there was little the C. O. could do. They grumbled about colonies throwing recommendations at them without sufficient justification; they could and did insist on fuller details, which had a good effect in making governors and their staffs think beyond the question of seniority. But periodic reviews, especially from a distance, could not be as effective as rigorous standards in recruitment and steadily improving conditions of service. Salaries were raised. Rewards were given for language competence and admission to the bar, the latter being designed in part to do away with the custom of giving high legal posts to local lawyers who continued in private practice.<sup>44</sup> It was hoped that time would do the rest.

The attitudes and opinions of the cadets themselves naturally differed from those of their far-away masters in London, if only because they grappled day-to-day with realities that C. O. staff members had to puzzle out of governors' dispatches. Arriving in 1871, Swettenham found the life pleasant enough.<sup>45</sup> He already knew people in Singapore and soon met more. The governor treated him kindly and told him exactly what was expected of him—namely, that he was to learn Malay well enough to act as a court interpreter. He proceeded to do so, ingratiating himself with the governor at the same time, and soon becoming an indispensable go-between, while also coming to know the leading lights of Singapore business, most of them sworn enemies of the governor. A hard worker, a shrewd judge of people and situations, and a convivial club-man in a rather calculating way, Swettenham made his mark early, and he saw how the land lay. The straits service was heavy at the top. An ambitious young man forced to wait his turn in its ranks would face long years of frustration. Swettenham was both resourceful and lucky. A year after arriving he met James Guthrie Davidson, Singapore's leading lawyer, who invited the green cadet, by now a passable Malay speaker, to accompany him on a business visit to Selangor. The Pangkor settlement, in which Swettenham was to play an important role, was only two years into the future. He used that time to deepen his knowledge of the Malays and their language, to strengthen his position as the governor's right-hand man, and to broaden his contacts in straits society. While his fellow cadets—two of whom

outranked him in length of service and one in marks on the entrance examination—slogged away at their language work and their lowly bureaucratic tasks, Swettenham charted his course towards a career in the Malay states.

E. W. Birch, landing in the straits seven years after Swettenham, had little of his colleague's drive. His strong point was affability. People liked him and often discounted his shortcomings or supported his career aims on that account.<sup>46</sup> Everyone knew that he was son of Perak's first resident, a former colonial secretary and a martyr in the imperial cause. Together with the fact that he had just come from two years in the C.O., this assured him of a notoriety that his contemporaries could hardly expect. On arrival, he stayed at Government House with the governor and Lady Robinson. A letter came the next day, conferring on him a life membership in the Cricket Club, of which his father had been president. He was a good athlete and soon found himself swimming happily with the social tide in a bustling community that gave high marks to those who excelled at tennis, rowing, riding, and shooting. He applied himself to his job—rent collecting on the islands around Singapore—and took part in the reorganization of the land office. Despite a rulebook approach to business firms in arrears on rent payments and to Chinese encroachers on crown land, he kept the friendship of both of those powerful groups.<sup>47</sup>

In Singapore, Birch caught the eye of William Maxwell who, as straits commissioner of lands, had studied land tenure in Australia and spent much of his time in the eighties laying the groundwork for a modern, regularized approach to property and taxation. Maxwell arranged for Birch to be sent to Malacca as magistrate and collector to start a comprehensive registration of customary lands there. This was an educating job—indeed, a proselytizing one—calling for patience, determination, and powers of persuasion with Malay communities inured to traditional systems whereby each farmer paid one-tenth of his crop in annual tax. Questions of ownership and disposability of land—all-important to Europeans—had hardly arisen. The results were chaotic. If the country was to be opened up and its inhabitants saved from the clutches of moneylenders and speculators, a complete reassessment was needed. Birch's work was fought by Malays who did not understand that the reform was for their own benefit, and by European lawyers willing to profit from public ignorance. A protest drafted by them and sent to the Queen caused a delay during which no rent was paid. Mass meetings organized by Birch, and registration *mukim* by *mukim* and *kampong* by *kampong*, produced the desired effect at last. But not without incident:

At the first rent collection we held at Tanjong Kling I told a few hundred Malays that the Queen's answer to the petition had arrived

and that it was ordered that they were to pay the new rent. A small dark Malay of about forty years of age, a man of some importance for he had several pieces of land, stood up and said that he had received a copy of the Queen's reply and also letters from Mr. Shelford and Mr. Guthrie Davidson and that the answer was not what I said it was. I told him to come over to where I was, where everyone could see him. I called on all the people to listen. Then I cursed him, that henceforth his wife should be barren, that if any of his family died they should not be buried by Mohammadans but that animals and birds should eat their flesh. I forbade the Mosque officials to attend a marriage or death in the family. Then I took him by the shoulders and turned him out of the big dining room, under the bungalow, and ordered him to leave the assemblage of people. He did so. The collection proceeded merrily, with many a quip and often a grumble turned into ridicule. I made no effort to collect this man's rent but two or three months later he brought the money to me when we were again at Tanjong Kling, and I gave him his receipts. I told him in the presence of the *penghulu* . . . that all I had said was cancelled and the poor fellow, who had undergone much misery and anxiety, was forgiven. He had been a sea lawyer and tried his little bluff. He became quite a friend afterwards.<sup>48</sup>

As land rents were the main source of revenue in Malacca, it was vital that the government's authority not be questioned in that sphere. Birch labored hard at establishing good relations with his *penghulus* (the district headmen), whose influence with the people was the cornerstone of local stability. A measure of his success, familiar to district officers all over the empire, were nocturnal visits from *penghulus* who gave him information on progress and advice on how best to approach the people.

There had been a catch-as-catch-can quality to some of Swettenham's and Birch's early postings. But as time passed and as experience was gained, conditions of service became more regularized. Cadets were a new phenomenon in Ord's time, and there was some discussion of how their services should be used. The governor, having come from an old, established colony and being conscious of a crying need for reform, saw the highly qualified examination recruits as the nucleus of an elite corps that would gradually replace their buccaneer seniors. As such, they should be carefully groomed, made to concentrate on languages, and slowly exposed to professional administration.<sup>49</sup> He disagreed with Anson, who wanted to employ the time-honored method of popping new arrivals straight into the mainstream of everyday work where they were desperately needed and where they would learn by doing. The trouble with this, Ord thought, was that the teachers in such classrooms were of the wrong

sort. Anson himself in Penang and his fellow lieutenant governor in Malacca continued to regard themselves as little governors, presiding with slow-paced dignity over minimum administrations with haphazard methods and questionable standards. In 1872, Swettenham had to be rushed into a collectorship at a moment's notice because the incumbent had just been put in jail for corruption.<sup>50</sup> Embezzlement by underpaid clerks was a constant problem. Ord's aim was to recruit more cadets as quickly as revenues would allow, train them properly, and give them positions of responsibility in which they would introduce professionalism rather than being influenced by the slipshod ways of their seniors. Promotions were to be seen as opportunities for hard, effective work, not as plums for time-servers.

Examinations in languages and law were provided for. Cadets would not be confirmed as career members of the service until these had been passed. The lieutenant governorships would lapse on the retirement of Anson and Shaw. All senior posts would be graded according to degree of importance, the higher ones being reserved for proven officers in the cadet service, as soon as there were enough of them to make this practicable. Land speculation and commercial activity by civil servants, much debated since the upheavals in eighteenth-century India, went on causing trouble until hard and fast rules were laid down and strictly enforced. Sir William Robinson was especially exercised about land dealings, as was Meade in the C.O., but Herbert, his superior, ruled that the most the office could reasonably do, in view of the widespread practice of landholding by civil servants throughout the colonies, was to insist that nonagricultural activities be permitted only if they did not interfere with official duties.<sup>51</sup> Regulations on the subject would gradually tighten. Meanwhile, it was hard to be overly strict about land ownership itself, and small farming by officers since Herbert and Weld themselves and many others had been personally involved in such activities, which in any case were not thought of as being intrinsically wrong.

Dealing with alcoholism and excessive indebtedness was more straightforward. The straits were still unhealthy enough by late century to claim the lives of robust young men and to subject long-service officers to greater strains than their homeside colleagues had to endure. Inevitably, some found solace in drink. By the same token, everyone had to admit that cadets would find it almost impossible to make ends meet, especially in the bigger towns, where social demands took a heavy toll of meager salaries. Discreet warnings were usually enough, though in extreme cases resignations had to be forced on offenders.<sup>52</sup>

Apart from raising salaries, which was periodically done, the government could enhance morale by assuring cadets that the future belonged to them. In the first decade of examination recruitment, however, junior

men often wondered if this were really so. There were frequent complaints that noncadets were getting preferment over them in postings and promotions. For governors and the C.O. the question posed a dilemma. On the one hand, they wanted a better service and were anxious to encourage the cadets. On the other hand, they could not suddenly turn over all the colony's senior posts to inexperienced juniors, elbowing aside the older men who may have lacked formal education but who were capable, tried, and effective. In 1887, a rule of thumb was adopted, that cadets would henceforth have prior claims. It was not long before the C.O. had cause to regret it. A too-literal adherence to the rule proved both impractical and unfair. Calling it "that monstrosity," Meade maintained that the cadet service should be seen not as a fetish but as an instrument for the public good, one that would advance slowly to a position of authority and esteem, won by accomplishment, not privilege.<sup>53</sup> At all events the pre-1867 service was fading away. By the time the first cadet—Hervey—retired in 1893, the straits were governed by a cadet service, which in social origins, bureaucratic structure, and daily work, was much the same as those of Ceylon, Hong Kong, and other crown colonies of long standing.

The civil services of the "protected native states" followed a similar course of development. When the first residents were posted in 1874, it was far from clear that this would happen. At that point, no one knew what kind of government was to be provided. Disorder had to be stopped. But the instrumentalities, organization, and techniques would all evolve in the crucible of hard experience. Such was the British imperial way. Indian and other precedents abounded, fresh in the minds of men who had known them at first hand and who were now available on the ground. At best, however, these supplied sets of assumptions about what had worked elsewhere. While they would not discount such notions, the first officers attached less importance to them than to the stubborn realities they saw all around them in Malaya. What made a profound impression was not the example of indirect rule in India or Ceylon but the murder of a resident who had pushed too hard. There was seen to be a need for men who would use "persuasion and not coercion."<sup>54</sup> Lord Stanley, always vigilant in the House of Lords, said that the first appointees were not of a class high enough to resist the blandishments of traders from the colony, while Swettenham, baking in the tropical sun, pointed out the difficulties of attracting men who would be adequate, not to mention ideal.<sup>55</sup> Salaries, climate, social deprivations, and hard work weighed heavily in a scale that was best balanced, he thought, by the satisfactions of adventure and pioneering.

The C.O. itself had only the vaguest of notions. Eight months after Pangkor, Meade suggested to the secretary of state that perhaps the governor ought to be asked what he thought about appointing residents.

Everything would be determined by the integrity and ability of these officers. When Clarke's list of appointees arrived early in 1875, Herbert and Meade were not impressed.<sup>56</sup> Davidson, whom they knew to be a shrewd lawyer, had business connections in Selangor, the state for which he was proposed as resident, and was therefore questionable. They had thought that Swettenham would be sent there since the sultan had specifically asked for him. On Birch, whom the governor proposed for Perak, they wanted details, including qualifications and drawbacks. Speedy, already keeping peace among the Chinese of Larut, was the only one they were inclined to confirm. Clarke's explanation is a revealing document.<sup>57</sup> It not only justifies the proposed appointments but, in the process, defines the basis of British government on the peninsula. Birch is endorsed for his intimate acquaintance with oriental life, his physical strength, and his judgment in dealing with natives. Swettenham, Speedy, and Tatham, the last named being proposed for assistant resident in Sungei Ujong, are praised for their close, up-to-the-minute knowledge.<sup>58</sup> In discussing Davidson, the governor identifies the central thrust of British activity in Malaya. Davidson's legal and diplomatic experience was vital, he wrote, and his personal relationship with Tunku Kudin, the real power in Selangor, had already assured peace and the continuation of that condition of commercial well-being Meade himself, four months earlier, had stressed as the *raison d'être* of intervention.<sup>59</sup> In short, the aim of government was the protection and nurturing of trade. What better method of furthering that than by appointing officers with long experience in the whole spectrum of the country's economic life, Malay, Chinese, and British? Clarke underscored this by appointing another straits lawyer, Thomas Braddell, then serving as attorney general, as Birch's successor in the office of colonial secretary, adding to it the position of secretary for native affairs. Though they never got around to confirming these appointments, the C.O. went along, noting that delay was not advisable and that the new governor, Jervois, could let them know in due course how the arrangements were working. Meanwhile, in a typically experimental, undogmatic way, the office had allowed the establishment of a precedent: in effect, governors would control appointments in the native states, though senior ones would be cleared with London as a matter of form. In exercising that prerogative, Clarke started out with a mixed bag. Perak's resident was the colonial secretary, who had come from the Royal Navy via Ceylon; Selangor got a prominent straits lawyer; Sungei Ujong, an army officer. One assistant resident was a free-booter and the other a straits cadet on secondment. During the next twenty years, the pattern of variety continued. Perak's subsequent residents included two men from public schools, one examination cadet, one patronage appointee, one pre-1867 cadet with legal training, one old-style civil servant from another colony,

and one university man, also from another colony. Selangor's were some of the same men, together with a merchant sailor, a public school man, and a cadet with a university education. Sungei Ujong-Negri Sembilan got a naval officer, a planter whose father was a peer, three public school men, two of whom were cadets and one a university man in addition. Pahang's first resident was a patronage appointee with a public school education. The acting resident who followed him, also a noncadet, was the grandson of a peer and privately educated.

As the functions of government grew, so did the need for subordinate officers such as collectors and magistrates in outlying districts. London was not involved in recruiting these at first, nor was the governor in Singapore. Residents did the best they could with limited revenues. Unable to pay sea passages, they hired men who were already on the scene, willing to work, and not in a position to fuss about pensions and other prerequisites that regular civil servants could and did insist on. By the same token, residents could hardly expect high standards of integrity and performance. Hugh Low, resident Perak from 1877 onwards, sent a man to the Dindings who had to be removed several years later on a charge involving financial irregularities.<sup>60</sup> He had better luck with another local recruit, R. D. Hewitt, a public school man serving in a minor capacity in nearby Province Wellesley, who was happy to better himself by joining the new Perak service. Appointed in 1879, he continued on into the early 1900s, rising to senior rank and turning in a satisfactory career performance. Two who did not last that long were G. T. Tickell and C. H. A. Turney. Tickell, an old Cheltonian, came out to Malaya on his own as an unabashed adventurer and started in Low's public-works department, later getting an administrative appointment from Swettenham in Selangor.<sup>61</sup> An outdoor type, sportsman, and *bon viveur*, he found the bureaucratic routine irksome and was looked on by his superiors as being rather more individualistic than was desired. Bad health forced his early retirement in 1890. Turney, a clerk in Labuan, entered the states as Hewitt had done, preferring a Selangor collectorship to a lowly *cul de sac* in a backwater. From 1875 onwards, he served in Klang and other Selangor districts, advancing to be senior D.O. of the state. Though he had no more liking for office routine than Tickell had and was eventually rusticated to Jugra for being late with his reports, he was a steady, able, and effective man who did the indispensable ground work in Klang that others built on in later years when more staff was available and workable guidelines of administration had been laid down.<sup>62</sup>

By the early nineties there were over fifty officers in the states. Career spans of twenty years had become the norm, a contrast with the short hitches of the earlier period when health hazards were greater. Over half were public-school men with a sprinkling of Oxford, Cambridge, Edin-



burgh, and Dublin graduates. There were still a few odd men out such as a famous Perak DO who was an Italian with a background in the Suez Canal Company. There was a former missionary in China, the son of a Ceylon chief justice, a pair of Etonians, an R.N. midshipman who had failed his examinations, and a Cambridge man who landed in the states because he had not passed the cadetship examinations. Eccentric methods of entry remained possible until quite late. A. R. Venning, later a resident and senior officer in the FMS secretariat, had been a planter and J.P. in Ceylon. He got a collector's job in Selangor during the eighties through personal contacts. J. R. O. Aldworth, like Tickell an old Cheltonian, also rose to a residency, having come out to Singapore in 1889 to look for a job. The governor told him he had been foolish and advised him to return to England immediately while he had the passage money. Instead, he went to Kuala Lumpur, where Tickell sent him to Swettenham, then resident, who made him an assistant DO at Rawang the same day.<sup>63</sup>

Regardless of where they came from or how they got their first appointments however the early officers were subjected from the start to an ever tightening service discipline and regularization. A good many resigned voluntarily after relatively short stints, either because they saw they were not up to it or because a more attractive alternative presented itself. Some who began in crisis times were obviously not the right men for the more mundane *métier* of tax collecting, court work, and burgeoning office correspondence. Speedy was eased out in 1877, having been spotted by everyone—from the commander of the forces in the Perak War to Low and the governor—as a misfit who had seen his day.<sup>64</sup> The C.O. pushed for improvement, suggesting when a rather dim resident died that he be replaced by someone from the cadet service.<sup>65</sup> Not surprisingly, this was resisted in Singapore, where it was realized that the claims of men already on the spot could not be ignored without damage to morale. But in responding to dispatches, London could keep up a steady pressure for more systematic methods and stricter standards. Charges of land jobbery were louder and more frequent in the native states than in the colony, if only because the former were so much bigger, with less population density and far greater opportunity for profiteering as development progressed. Low wanted stern regulations against land ownership and commercial activity by officers, especially in districts where they had administrative responsibilities. He sent a circular to all Perak officers asking for an account on both scores.<sup>66</sup> Only one replied—J. B. M. Leech, collector in Kinta. Leech and his sister owned a good deal of land in the district, it was discovered, as did the local engineer. Writing from Selangor, however, Swettenham strongly disagreed with Low. Weld, he said, had allowed land dealings, which were common in any case and were not prejudicial to the public interest.<sup>67</sup> In fact, the states stood to benefit

from good land management. If the proposed regulation had been in force over the past decade and a half since Pangkor, many able men would not have joined the services. Did other colonies have such rules? Did England itself? How could officers survive on their miniscule salaries without income from investments? Quite a few had died from the climate or drink, leaving their families destitute. If officers had a vested interest in the states, on the other hand, the latter would gain the former would not be open to temptation.

There were no strong reactions to this in London at the time, but a year and a half later the whole issue came up again. It was given a thorough airing that reveals much of how the services saw themselves and how the C. O. felt about standards in Malaya and about future needs. J. F. (later Sir Frederick) Dickson, colonial secretary and acting governor, had refused the request of J. P. (later Sir John) Rodger, resident Pahang, that he be allowed to go on leave. Rodger could not be spared, thought Dickson, nor were his suggestions about a replacement acceptable. When the C.O. intervened on Rodger's behalf, Dickson nominated Leech, the controversial D.O. Kinta, as his temporary successor, bringing the sharp retort from Rodger that Leech was a notorious land jobber and therefore unsuitable.<sup>68</sup> This put Dickson in an awkward position since he himself had told the C.O. that Leech had bought land "...in a way which no public servant should do..." and had only been "...whitewashed on the recommendation of an officer who is not supposed to have been himself altogether clear of land jobbing, i.e., Mr. Swettenham."<sup>69</sup> The C.O. agreed about Leech, noting that it did not think "...such a scratch-lot as the native-states officials, coming from goodness knows where, and appointed goodness knows how, are to be considered as entitled to the same preference as men regularly appointed to H. M. service after due examination and investigation of their antecedents, and subject from day to day to stringent regulation and constant supervision."<sup>70</sup> In short, Leech was small beer. But what about Swettenham? With Low retired, he was now resident Perak and, by general agreement in London, the most able and promising man in all the Malayan services. The governor, Sir Cecil Clementi Smith, asked Dickson to explain his remark. In turn, Dickson wrote to Swettenham, requesting an account of his land transactions in Selangor when he had been resident there and enclosing copies of deeds to town lots in Kuala Lumpur.<sup>71</sup> There was nothing new in this, as Swettenham had not only admitted such dealings earlier but had defended them, pointing out that the then governor, Weld, had authorized the transactions and suggested that Swettenham record the deeds in his wife's name. In the early eighties officers had been encouraged to buy land to build on, partly as an example that might instruct Malays towards a more systematic and stable attitude to landholding.

In the end, the C.O. took note of Weld's overly liberal, if not lax, interpretation of their instructions and of the well-known enmity between Dickson on the one hand and Swettenham and Smith on the other. They were not inclined to let either party enjoy a clear victory. Swettenham agreed with them that he had shown poor judgment. They were satisfied that he had done nothing dishonest and had learned a valuable lesson—one that would benefit the whole service. If the dispute had been messy, it had also cleared the air and strengthened the C.O.'s hand in demanding higher standards.

They had not always had an easy time with this. It was true that in some respects the difference between the straits service and that of the native states was more apparent than real. The C.O., in working for higher quality via standardization of the two, held that residents were really officers of the straits government, pensionable in much the same way cadets were, though they kept pretending well into the nineties that the sultans and not the governor controlled appointments. But Weld resisted amalgamation of the two services all through his long governorship. He saw a basic contrast between the types of government called for in the two areas and insisted that this necessitated different kinds of officers. "It is too much to expect young officers of the cadet . . . class to manage affairs such as those of Sri Menanti and Johol. They have neither the experience nor do they carry weight enough, and no amount of cramming or success at competitive examinations will teach a man how to manage natives and win their confidence."<sup>72</sup> Given his high opinion of Swettenham, this sounds odd, though in view of Weld's own background as a patronage appointee with lengthy experience in the outback, it makes a certain sense. His successor, Smith, however, was an exam wallah who saw eye to eye with Lucas and other C.O. professionals, themselves products of the Burlington Gardens system and believers in the rightness and efficiency of open competition. He looked to a service unity that would be reached by posting cadets to the native states.<sup>73</sup> Local hiring should be cut back and cadet recruitment increased.

There were difficulties. The better officers in the states naturally wanted their services to be upgraded by merging them into either the straits service or the wider colonial service controlled from London.<sup>74</sup> Just as naturally, straits officers opposed a merger, seeing it as a threat to their standards and to their career prospects. Several of the more senior cadet officers shrewdly allied themselves with unofficials in the Legislative Council and resisted an amalgamation bill as an unwarranted charge on the straits budget.<sup>75</sup> Was it fair to saddle the straits with the expense of salaries for native states officers when policy in those states was set by residents who were crown appointees under treaty? Giving in to this argument, the C.O. directed that the states go on paying salaries out of

their own revenues. But pensions and other terms of service were increasingly standardized; more and more cadets entered the services of the states, permanently or temporarily, and, in fact, the various units, despite legal distinctions, advanced together under the same governor and substantially the same system. From the eighties onwards the posture and attitudes of officers in the native states were recognizably akin to those of their colleagues in the straits. There were the familiar complaints about salaries and allowances, the usual applications for promotion made direct to the C.O. or, in some cases, to members of Parliament, and the same irritation with a C.O. that had final authority over careers without intimate, timely knowledge of realities in far places.

Nevertheless, anomalies continued. As of the mid-nineties, there were at least four distinct categories in which native states officers served, and several ways of entering. The residents in Perak and Sungei Ujong—Swettenham and Bland—were cadet officers on secondment. Rodger in Pahang was a servant of the British government, drawing a salary out of revenues in his state and pensionable from the same source. W. H. (later Sir William) Treacher in Selangor was paid similarly, but as a former member of the Labuan service and governor of North Borneo, he would draw his pension from H. M. colonial service. Most senior officers under the residents were on the fixed establishments of their states and pensionable as such; while below them were men on the temporary and provisional establishments, locally recruited and not pensionable. When the new governor, Sir Charles Mitchell, inquired about appointment procedures in the states, Swettenham told him that there was no formal system in Perak.<sup>76</sup> Local recruits were simply put to work, with no appointment letter. It was only recently that their existence had been noticed in the gazette. The appointment of W. D. Scott in 1891 shows how Selangor was still operating at that late date.<sup>77</sup> His father, founder of the firm of W. R. Scott and Company, Singapore, had not been doing well, and young Scott had to resign his army commission and go out to the straits to try his luck there. The C.O. had told him that appointments were up to the governor, who would resent any interference from them. Letters from leading merchants in the colony would be better. Armed with these, he presented himself at Government House, and, shortly afterwards, was made chief clerk in the Ulu Selangor district office. He retired in the 1920s as general adviser Johore, the highest position in the Unfederated Malay States. F. W. Douglas, son of Sir John, colonial secretary in the seventies, was at a London crammers in 1894, thinking of either the ICS or Ceylon. When, on inquiry at the C.O., he found that an appointment in Perak could be had without an examination, he jumped at it.<sup>78</sup> Family background had also helped E. A. Wise, who obtained a collectorship in Pahang in 1888. The C.O. noted that his father, a colonel, had distin-

guished himself in the Indian mutiny and that an uncle had died of wounds in the Crimea.<sup>79</sup> Though the boy had failed to pass into the navy from the training ship *Britannia*, he came highly recommended and, in fact, showed great promise up to the time of his death in the Pahang disturbances.

By 1895, the patronage system was still operating more or less unchanged in the native states. Since 1888, appointments of "junior officers" had been made, an attempt to provide the states by patronage with what the colony got through examinations, an elite corps of officers who would gradually take over the senior posts. Candidates had to have some means of entree to the secretary of state's roster. In 1895, the list included: C. J. McCausland, Mitchell's nephew; E. A. Dickson, son of Sir Frederick; H. J. N. Walker, son of a knight "in straightened circumstances"; and a second son of Weld's, the first being in the service already, about whom the duke of Norfolk had written to Mr. Chamberlain, the secretary of state.<sup>80</sup> In addition to a certificate of character from such people, candidates had to pass a medical examination and undergo an interview at the C.O. In family background and education the junior officers were comparable to the cadets. Most did as well in service, perhaps the most famous being Sir George Maxwell, chief secretary of the FMS in the 1920s. But with the federation of the protected states now in prospect and with patronage giving way to examination recruitment throughout the century, the C.O. began to consider that method for junior officers. Lucas, the main proponent of the idea, did not have smooth sailing.<sup>81</sup> At first, Fairfield saw no point in it since cadets were available for transfer to the states and since Mitchell, the governor, was opposed, due ostensibly to the uncertain future of the states at the moment. Fairfield asked why an element should be introduced that would give states cadres the air of a covenanted service. Meade and Chamberlain agreed; but Lucas prevailed, and, at the end of 1895, a telegram went to Mitchell saying that all states officers would be recruited by examination from then on.<sup>82</sup> This caught the governor by surprise and upset him considerably.<sup>83</sup> His own patronage list contained the names of several men with impressive qualifications. Walker had experience in the East and knew languages. So did Claud Severn, a Cambridge man, private secretary to Mitchell, and nephew of Sir James Ferguson, former governor of Bombay. At age twenty-six, he would be at a disadvantage competing with someone just out of the crammers. M. H. Whitley, about whom the secretary of state had letters from Lord George Hamilton and from an M.P., had already passed the ICS examinations but had failed in Hindustani. The C.O. agreed to let Severn and Whitley slip through, but then slammed the door, leaving outside the second son of Sir Frederick Weld and the son of E. E. Isemonger, who had entered the straits service in 1856 and had retired in 1891 as resident councillor Malacca.<sup>84</sup>

Mitchell and the residents accepted the dictat with regret.<sup>85</sup> They all wanted good officers and were not opposed to examinations as such. But they doubted that written tests alone, without some gauge of personality, character, and physical stamina, could identify men with the needed qualities for work that differed greatly from the daily routine in Whitehall. How could sympathy, understanding, self-respect, and common sense be assured if recruiters had only examination papers to guide them? Rodger, resident Selangor, said that officers in the native states could not do their jobs properly unless they were gentlemen. From Perak, Birch wrote that what Malays—especially aristocratic ones—appreciated was the well-mannered man whose family had connections with the East. Lister, in Negeri Sembilan, confined himself to urging that examinations be given only after nomination so that the other desired qualities, apart from intellectual ones, could be looked for. Wise of Pahang agreed, adding that the man with a practical turn of mind and the ability to get on with natives might not be able to demonstrate those attributes on paper. No doubt the governor and his residents were voicing attitudes of class and schooling that did not differ all that much from those of their correspondents in the C.O. The contrast came in the area of career experience. Mitchell, the son of a colonel, had been at the Royal Naval School in Portsmouth and had then served abroad for many years as a marine officer and colonial administrator. Rodger had wandered out to the East after Eton and Christ Church, Oxford. Lister, a Cheltonian and the son of a peer, had begun as a planter. Wise was at Marlborough and came from a distinguished military family. Birch, a Harovian, was a second-generation colonial civil servant.

In any case, the C.O. had made up its mind. There was a deeply ingrained assumption in Whitehall that examinations produced the best men. Nominations, with their emphasis on letters from family friends, could not be defended in an England that had drifted farther and farther from aristocratic notions of representation in government all through Victorian times. One concession was made, however, in response to a last-minute plea from Mitchell. He pointed out that if successful examination candidates could go on choosing the colonies they wished to be sent to, Malaya would suffer due to its poor reputation in England. Therefore, it was arranged that the C.O. would conduct interviews of those who passed and would assign cadets to the places it considered appropriate, matching each man's qualities with needs in the field.

Legally, the services were now united. In 1867, the first cadet had sat an examination that was unique and unprecedented in the history of the straits. Fifteen years later, the services were joined for recruitment purposes to those of Ceylon and Hong Kong. 1888 saw the establishment of junior-officer appointments for the native states. Now the wheel had

come full circle, with candidates for positions in the Straits Settlements and the FMS taking the same examinations as those given for the home civil service, the ICS, and the other Eastern colonies. The prestige of the Malayan services would soon rise, and their recently despised cadetships would be sought after in preference to positions in an India that was advancing towards domestic self-rule. In those circumstances, it would be strange to recall the early days when the new colony's destiny was in the hands of men from many walks of life and many parts of the world; some of them rough-edged, others adventurous or impecunious younger sons of families whose hereditary right to govern was no longer accepted at home. The pioneer phase in the making of Malaya's civil service was at an end.

### Notes

1. See L. A. Mills, *British Malaya 1824-1867* (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1966); C. M. Turnbull, *The Straits Settlements 1826-1867* (London: Athlone, 1972); Makepeace et al., *One Hundred Years of Singapore* (London: Murray, 1921), especially the chapter by Bernard Nunn.

2. The outstanding exception, which proved the rule, was the case of Sir George Bonham, who became governor of Hong Kong.

3. Gen. Sir O. Cavenagh, *Reminiscences of an Indian Official* (London: W. H. Allen, 1884). And see Cavenagh to secretary of state, 7 Aug. 1876, 273/89, and C.O. minute, 25 Mar. 1873, 273/74.

4. *Ibid.*, Cavenagh, p. 255.

5. Governor general, Lord Canning, on recruitment from the Chinese consular service, in Dodwell's chapter, Rose, *The Cambridge History of the British Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1940), p. 614. This refers to that part of the British consular service that was stationed in China.

6. Carnarvon to Sir E. Lytton, 20 Jan. 1859, 273/7.

7. Robinson to secretary of state, 19 Sept. 1863, 273/8.

8. G. W. Earl, assistant resident, Province Wellesley, to secretary of state, 10 Jan. 1864, 273/8. Robinson's report mentioned Capt. Young, assistant resident commissioner Malacca, who had had fifteen years in the Indian army, four of them in the straits, and who wished to stay. Others preferred to return to the Indian army from which they could draw pensions.

9. Mr. O'Reilly's question in the house is mentioned in C.O. minute, 8 Mar. 1866, 273/8.

10. To secretary of state, 13 Aug. 1866, 273/8.

11. J. Scott to secretary of state, 2 July 1866, 273/8.

12. See Sir Llewellyn Woodward, *The Age of Reform 1815-1870* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1962), pp. 363-74. An indication of the knowledge and outlook of public men is to be found in the pronouncements on imperial affairs of Lord Bryce, a well-informed and well-traveled man who, nonetheless, showed himself unaware of research being undertaken as late as the 1890s by such groups

as the Royal Geographic Society. See E. Ions, *James Bryce & American Democracy* (London: MacMillan, 1968).

13. Sir A. Hardinge, *The Life of Henry Howard Molyneux Herbert, Fourth Earl of Carnarvon, 1831-1890* (London: Oxford University Press, 1925), vol. 1, p. 136. Carnarvon was parliamentary undersecretary of state at the time. For the most part, secretaries of state merely initialed dispatches prepared by the staff. See R. B. Pugh, in Benians et al., *The Cambridge History of the British Empire* (London, 1959), also B. L. Blakely, *The Colonial Office 1868-1892* (Durham, N. C.: Duke University Press, 1972), and H. L. Hall, *The Colonial Office* (London, 1937). For glimpses of a permanent under secretary's life, see G. E. Mardin, *Letters of Lord Blachford* (Sir Frederick Rogers). (London: Murray, 1896). Sir Frederick was in that office from 1860 to 1871.

14. Hardinge, vol. 3, p. 318. What mattered was a point of view. This was bred in schools and university, and recruits from middle-class families tended to share the outlook of their aristocratic colleagues or to adopt it over the years of their careers. See the unpublished autobiography of Sir Ernest Birch, CRP. Sir Ernest came from fairly modest circumstances (see pp. 36 ff. above), but was at Harrow and later was taken into the C.O. at an unusually young age.

15. G. M. Trevelyan, *The Life of John Bright* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1913), p. 274.

16. Pugh, in Benians, p. 735. In 1850 there had been three.

17. Book I of J. Pope-Hennessy's *Verandah* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1864) is entitled *The Consolation Prize*. The second quote is on p. 18. Similar sentiments were expressed regularly down through the years. Lady Maud Cecil, daughter of a prime minister and wife of a high commissioner in South Africa, remarked in 1908: "Of course the best class of English don't come out to the colonies and those that do are apt to be frightful bounders." K. Rose, *The Later Cecils* (London, Weidenfeld & Nicolson 1975), p. 301.

18. "A constitution for Malta!" exclaimed the duke of Wellington; "I should as soon think of elections in an army or a parliament on board ship." (Benians, p. 1.)

19. Godwin-Austen's and Hervey's papers are in 273/16, March 1867. Hervey's father was Rev. Lord Charles Hervey, son of the Marquess of Bristol.

20. Sir F. Rogers to civil service commissioners, 3 Nov. 1868, 273/16.

21. R. Meade, minute, 10 Dec. 1870, 273/44. When the C.O. found that it might have room for only one additional cadet that year, the C.S.C. wrote back saying that both of the two applicants who had passed the obligatory part of the examination, E. H. Watts and F. A. Swettenham, deserved appointment. In this instance, the C.O. went along.

22. Annual Reports 13 and 14, 1867-69, C.S.C., Central Management Library, London. By 1876, the list included in addition pure mathematics, mixed maths, ancient and modern history, constitutional history, international law, political economy, geology, civil engineering and surveying, five of which could be chosen. See C.S.C. to under secretary of state, 15 Aug. 1876, 273/89; and the C.O.'s announcement, Oct. 1888, 273/157.

23. List of candidates and supporting papers, 13 Feb. 1872, 273/55.

24. Meade to E. M. Hollingsworth, 18 May 1872, 273/64. The McNair application is in the same volume, 30 May 1872. A Mrs. Schwabe, a friend of the wife of



Mr. Grant Duff in C.O., wrote on behalf of her nephew, who duly received a nomination: 12 July 1880, 273/106.

25. See Swettenham, *Footprints in Malaya* (London: Hutchinson, 1942), p. 13. He was recommended by W. P. Adam, later governor of Madras.

26. Prime minister's office to W. J. Sendall, 27 Nov. 1875, 273/82; also file dated 17 June 1878, 273/97.

27. See Lucas to Antrobus, 8 July 1881, 273/109, listing the cadets; personnel files of 27 Oct. 1883, 273/125 and 23 Aug. 1887, 273/149; list of cadets, 1888, 273/157, 1889, 273/164; file 25 Sept. 1891, 273/178; list of cadets, 1890, 273/171; and file 23 Dec. 1892, 273/185.

28. C.S.C. to secretary of state, 6 July 1876, 273/89, agreeing to physical examinations. Herbert minuted, 8 Mar. 1878, 273/97, regarding H. E. G. Cooper, "If he appears to be intelligent and a gentleman," he should be appointed despite indifferent marks on the examination.

29. Charles Hyde to secretary of state, 24 Jan. 1867, 273/16.

30. *Straits Settlements Gazette*, 1 Apr. 1867, C.S.C., Central Management Library, London. They were to receive the same emoluments and pensions promised by the India Office. See Rogers to under secretary of state, 16 July 1867, 273/16. And see C. N. Parkinson, *British Intervention in Malaya 1867-1877* (Singapore, 1960), p. 18 ff.

31. A. Anson, *About Others & Myself 1745-1920* (London: Murray, 1920), pp. 148-267. For Anson's connections in the peerage, see pp. 1-40.

32. "When Anson and Shaw leave we should appoint active men qualified to do the real work." (Minute by G. W. B. de Robeck, 17 May 1876, 273/84.) Also minute by secretary of state, 27 June 1871, 273/55; minutes on Anson's dispatch of 19 Apr. 1877, 273/91, and Sir W. Robinson, minute, 21 Feb. 1880, 273/102.

33. Minutes on Anson's Dispatch, 15 Apr. 1877, 273/91. And see Parkinson, *Intervention*, and I. L. Bird, *The Golden Chersonese* (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1967), pp. 126-27. When Shaw was absent in 1875, the acting lieutenant governor was Hon. C. B. Plunkett, superintendent of police, Singapore, a typical patronage appointee of these days. Shaw was the son-in-law of Sir Stephen Hill.

34. He was "not much of a society man" with the Europeans (governor to secretary of state, 18 Apr. 1879, 273/98). Irving had passed the civil-service examinations for posts at home in 1860 and served as amanuensis to the under secretary of state in the C.O. (273/111).

35. To Sir Thomas Tyrreth, 5 Oct. 1827, file 13 Apr. 1881, 273/108. See also minute by E. R. Wingfield, Apr. 1871, 273/54, and governor to secretary of state, 10 Oct. 1878, 273/95 and 8 July 1879, 273/99; also file 4 June 1892, 273/185.

36. Minute, 7 Apr. 1876, on governor's letter of 20 Oct. 1875 to secretary of state, 273/204.

37. *Ibid.*, minute by Meade, 10 May 1876. Lucas complained that this was "make-believe"; minute on file 13 June 1880, 273/103. He was annoyed in particular by the obvious use of nepotism in arranging better posts, for example, from Malacca to Singapore, by letting relatives know what posts were soon to be available due to retirements, and so on.

38. Governor to secretary of state, 24 Oct. 1879, 273/101. For an enlightening discussion of Victorian attitudes to gentlemanly qualities in relation to civil

services, see Anthony Trollope, *An Autobiography*, (1882) (New York: Oxford University Press, 1923), pp. 34-37. Trollope was in the postal service.

39. Lucas in the C.O. drew up a comprehensive plan of reform that was supported by Meade (Meade's minute 13 Mar 1880, 273/106). In the following year, the C.O. sent four new cadets, though the governor had asked for only two (file 8 July 1881, 273/109).

40. File, 30 June 1882, 273/115.

41. To secretary of state, 28 Sept. 1888, 273/154. The secretary of state would not support a governor in removing an officer unless provable charges were brought, usually a very difficult thing to do.

42. Lucas's minute, 12 Nov. 1888, 273/157, and Meade's, same date. Skinner returned via Texas, where he tried in vain to secure employment. He had resigned from the service in 1881 on grounds of ill health and had been allowed to rejoin.

43. File 27 Dec. 1886, 273/141. Trotter was still postmaster-general in 1903. Skinner, a member of the bar, had received a CMG at the end of a successful career. Isemonger was average at best and Hervey not much above that level, though he, too, received a CMG. Maxwell ended as governor of the Gold Coast and Swettenham as governor of the straits, both with knighthoods.

44. See file, 29 Dec. 1882, 273/117. In later years, cadets were encouraged to read law when on home leave and were given higher pay when admitted to the bar.

45. Swettenham, *Footprints in Malaya*, chap. 3.

46. Later, when he nearly came to grief in a case that will be discussed below, his old friends in the C.O. were ready to forgive him because he was so likeable that they did not believe him guilty of willful transgressions. See Lucas's minutes, file 24 June 1908, 273/340 and 29 May 1897, 273/229.

47. See his autobiography, CRP. Also governor to secretary of state, 16 Feb. 1895, 273/202, with Lucas's comments, and J. H. M. Robson, *Records and Recollections 1889-1934* (Kuala Lumpur: Kyle, Palmer & Co., 1934), p. 42.

48. Birch, "Autobiography," pp. 46-47. See also Cairns's report on Malacca, 3 Oct. 1868, 273/16, for a general description of society, economy, and administration.

49. To secretary of state, 12 June 1871, 273/55.

50. Ord to secretary of state, 30 June 1873, 273/66. The problem of dishonest clerks was a running sore from the beginning. See Fairfield to Lucas, 14 Sept. 1893, 273/191.

51. Governor to secretary of state, 10 May 1878, 273/93. See also file 4 Oct. 1882, 273/116 on Capt. McCallum, colonial engineer Singapore, whom the secretary of state permitted to buy crown land on the principle that it was in the public interest for him to live near the site of his work. W. E. Maxwell later accused McCallum of impropriety in negotiating for the government's purchase of land in which he had an interest. (Acting governor to secretary of state, 8 Aug. 1884, 273/129.) Sir Henry McCallum later governed Lagos, Newfoundland, and Natal.

52. F. A. Fitzjames, an 1889 cadet, died of cholera in 1893. E. A. Irving, auditor general, was prematurely retired in 1881 due to alcoholism. Indebtedness was the subject of a long memorandum by the colonial secretary sent by the governor to the secretary of state, 26 Oct. 1885, 273/136. A bill was passed in 1889 to prevent

officers who earned no more than \$150 a month from falling into the hands of moneylenders. There were many petitions for higher pay. See, for example, a memorial from straits officers, forwarded by the governor to the secretary of state, 12 June 1883, 273/121.

53. Minute on governor's dispatch, 16 Feb. 1895, 273/202.

54. S. W. Jones, *Public Administration in Malaya* (London: Oxford University Press, 1953), p. 22, discussing Swettenham's account in *British Malaya*. There were some specific borrowings from India in fact, such as a request for its government's rules on the acceptance of presents from native chiefs. See Government of India to C.O., 13 Apr. 1874, 273/76.

55. Stanley: file 6 July 1874, 273/77; Swettenham, *Footprints*, p. 83; and see Parkinson, p. 322.

56. Meade, 29 Aug. 1874, 273/76; and see governor to secretary of state, 30 Dec. 1874, 273/76.

57. Governor to secretary of state, 30 Dec. 1874, 273/76. The explanation bears the same date as the letter that lists the appointments, probably indicating that the governor's justification was sent in a separate dispatch but not in response to the C.O.'s request.

58. Capt. W. T. Tatham, R. N., was the senior military officer then serving in Sungei Ujong.

59. Tunku Dia Udin of Kedah, viceroy of Selangor under his father-in-law the sultan, was spoken of as Tunku Kudin at the time.

60. R. P. Bruce. See governor to secretary of state, 31 Dec. 1883, 273/123.

61. See Tickell's articles: "Early Days at Kuala Kangsar," *British Malaya* (July 1927); "Early Perak Days," *British Malaya* (Oct. 1927 and Nov. 1927); and "Early Days in Selangor," *British Malaya* (Jan. 1928). Also Robson, *Records*, pp. 16-17, and Tickell to under secretary of state, 2 Dec. 1890, 273/171.

62. Though Turney would later defend Douglas, the resident, from charges of corruption, there was no suggestion that he himself was involved. See Turney to governor, 6 Sept. 1882, 273/116.

63. Tickell, "Early Days in Selangor." See also high commissioner to secretary of state, 23 Dec. 1910, dispatches, M, and acting governor to secretary of state, 28 Dec. 1919, 273/489.

64. Jervois, private letter to Cotton, C.O., 17 Oct. 1876, 273/85.

65. File 13 Apr. 1881, 273/108, on the death of Capt. Murray in Sungei Ujong, minute by Lucas. Instead, the appointment went to W. F. B. Paul, assistant resident in Perak.

66. See Low's minute on the draft regulation, 20 Nov. 1888, 273/156. Leech resigned in 1895, after having been accused of land jobbery by Rodger, resident Pahang, in 1890. Though the accusation was not the immediate cause of the resignation, it was clear that Leech had no future.

67. Low's minute, 5 Dec. 1888. Swettenham was overreacting, as the C.O. realized full well. He knew that the point was conflict of interest. For a civil servant in London to invest in something that had nothing to do with his work was hardly the same thing as a resident investing in land in the state for whose land office he was responsible.

68. The correspondence is in 273/168, starting with Rodger's letter to Dickson, 7 Aug. 1890.

69. *Ibid.*, minute, 5 Nov. 1890.
70. *Ibid.*
71. *Ibid.*, 31 Oct. 1890. And see Swettenham's reply, 18 Nov. 1890, and minutes by Herbert, 30 Dec. 1890, and Meade, 25 June 1891.
72. Lady Lovat, *The Life of Sir Frederick Weld, GCMG* (London: Murray, 1914), p. 390.
73. To secretary of state, 5 Feb. 1888, 273/151, and 29 Apr. 1889, 273/159.
74. Memorial to secretary of state, 15 Sept. 1888, 273/154.
75. Governor to secretary of state, 20 Dec. 1889, 273/162.
76. Mitchell to secretary of state, 19 Nov. 1894, 273/198.
77. See his article, "Peringatan Senang," *British Malaya* (Aug. 1950). Scott's first job was local and not pensionable, but he worked his way up and was acting GA Johore in the 1920s.
78. Minute by Lucas, 12 Oct. 1894, 273/198. Douglas retired as DO Klang. He later became an employee of the sultan of Selangor, embraced Islam, and was made a *dato*'.
79. Low to Lucas, 5 July 1894, 273/201. Wise's brother, D. H. Wise, an old Marburian, was in the Perak service.
80. Minute by Edward Fairfield on file, 10 Nov. 1895, 273/210.
81. See minutes by Lucas and Fairfield on file, 6 Apr. 1895, 273/202.
82. See Fairfield's minute, 14 Dec. 1895, 273/207.
83. See his private letter to Lucas, 7 Jan. 1896, 273/207.
84. The most that could be said for young Isemonger, wrote Fairfield, was that he was the nephew of Sir William Maxwell, later governor of the Gold Coast. Isemonger pere he described as a "Q. H. B." (Queen's hard bargain), (minute, 10 Nov. 1895, 273/210). Sir Claud Severn ended his career as colonial secretary Hong Kong in 1926. Whitley was admitted to the bar and had a successful legal career in Malaya. Weld's son, only 18 at the time, was denied entrance on that ground.
85. Governor to secretary of state, 17 Jan. 1896, 273/212, enclosing comments by all four residents, J. P. (later Sir John) Rodger, E. W. (later Sir Ernest) Birch, Hon. Martin Lister, and D. H. Wise.

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## Founding the Residency System: Hugh Low in Perak

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THE FIRST year after Pangkor was a time of confusion in Perak. Initially, the British aimed at stopping internecine warfare among the Chinese in Larut, which was ruining trade, and putting an end to piracy, both Chinese and Malay, in the river estuaries and along the coasts. Giving Captain Speedy the title of assistant resident at Larut where he and his *sepoys* troops were already in position, and obtaining the agreement of the two Chinese factions to end their upheavals solved only one of the problems. Appointing Birch as resident and sending him to the lower reaches of the Perak River with rigid ideas of how to manage the Malays but without anything like sufficient force to compel obedience did not solve the other. On the contrary, it worsened a state of affairs in which most of the river chiefs were by no means agreed among themselves as to the personnel and role of the sultanate and in which none of them, including the British-chosen Abdullah, understood what it meant to have a resident. Indeed, the British themselves were unclear on everything from long-term policy to immediate aims and viable methods. On such questions there were widely varying views among officers in Perak, in the minds of governors Clarke and Jervois, and in the C.O.

Pangkor had exacerbated difficulties among the chiefs, but can hardly be said to have created them. At least as far back as the 1850s, the seeds of discord had been sown by continuous warfare inside Perak and with her neighbors.<sup>1</sup> Abdullah Muhammad Shah, sultan from 1851 to 1857, had tried to impose his will on the chiefs, his son Yusuf being his main military instrument. Such unity as was achieved had to be paid for in disaffection among the chiefs, to whom it meant a lessening of their local power. It could always be argued, in any case, that the sultanate was a spiritual and ceremonial office rather than a military-political paramountcy. Accordingly, the chiefs saw to it that future sultans—it was they who chose both sultans and heirs—would recognize and accommodate to a *de facto* oligarchy of chiefs, each preserving autonomy in his own neighborhood. To assure this, they departed from tradition, which provided for succession from three separate royal lines, each taking its turn, the sultanate going to the eldest son of a previous sultan, but only in the line whose turn it was.

In choosing an outsider, Ismail, first as a possible heir and then in 1871 as sultan, the chiefs passed over Yusuf as well as Abdullah. Ismail was acceptable because he was pliable and willing to keep to his own river headquarters at a distance from mining areas and ports. Abdullah they despised as a frivolous man, a cuckold, and a troublemaker. Yusuf, with his record as the imposer of military discipline, was looked on with hatred and fear, a man of parts who might try to lead if he got into a position of legitimacy. Thus, just before Pangkor, the chiefs had thrown away the moral right to stand on their own traditions and had created conditions of weakness and disunity at the very time when Chinese power and wealth had grown beyond their ability to deal with and when Britain was at last willing to intervene.

In making Abdullah sultan, the British were actually more careful of tradition than the chiefs had been. Similarly, the acceptance of the *mentri's* autonomy at Larut was an act that the chiefs could not logically quarrel with since Ismail had recognized it, too, being at all events in no position to challenge it. Otherwise, during the first nine and a half months after Pangkor there was very little change throughout the territories controlled by the various chiefs. Speedy was at Larut with his *sepoys*, watching over a state of affairs in which fighting and piracy had died down. But no resident had arrived to implement the engagement's most important provision: that the resident's advice "... must be asked and acted upon on all questions other than those touching Malay religion and custom."<sup>2</sup> Ismail was not a party to the engagement; nor was Yusuf. Most chiefs still laughed at Abdullah and looked on his sultanate as a paper thing. In the circumstances, it was not surprising that none of the Malay factions thought of the Pangkor Engagement as an instrument that had greatly altered their way of life or was likely to do so.

Into this euphoric atmosphere stepped J. W. W. Birch, early in November 1874. His residency was to last only one year followed by a military expedition involving considerable disruption and the wiping out of the small beginnings that he and his inadequate staff had been able to make. He cannot be regarded, therefore, as the founder of British administration of Perak. Rather, he was a lightning rod, the reaper of a whirlwind, that destroyed both him and his opponents and left his successors with a comparatively clean slate.

There has been much discussion of Birch's character. The C.O. were disturbed by allegations that he had tried to pressure tax farmers into making payments to certain officers in return for rights to the farms.<sup>3</sup> His personal indebtedness to Chinese moneylenders in Singapore was well known. Sir Peter Benson Maxwell later suggested that Birch's motives in freeing girls from the custody of Abdullah on the grounds that Abdullah was treating them as slaves had not been altogether altruistic.<sup>4</sup> Swetten-

ham, though not at pains to deny the unfortunate effects of Birch's high-handed methods with Malay chiefs, said that his personal qualities were admirable.<sup>5</sup> To McNair, he was a hero out and out.<sup>6</sup> With hindsight wisdom we may discern that, like all humans, he was the sum of his parts, not all of them presentable, and one of which—a tendency to intransigence—did not stand him in good stead when the time came to deal with chiefs in the rough-cut Eden of Victorian Malaya. It may be argued that old stagers like Davidson or Read in the business community or Anson or McNair among the civil servants might have proceeded differently. Certainly Swettenham—newer to the service than any of them—showed a feeling for Malay civilization that was incomparably more subtle than anything Birch ever revealed. Swettenham was not timid. But he knew when to be cautious. Birch seemed to court disaster.

Would another officer, more diplomatic and sensitive to Malay etiquette have been able to persuade the chiefs that their independence should end and that, in matters of war and money, they should now become the servants of the British? Considerable doubt is cast on such a possibility by the fact that, in planning to murder Birch, the conspirators, including Abdullah, expected the rest of the British to then accept defeat and leave the country. Birch's rigidity was not helpful. It would seem unlikely that even if he had had the sweetness and patience of a paragon, he would have been able to carry his objectives against the determined and resourceful opposition of men who had never known an overlord for long.

The immediate cause of the murder was the posting of notices about payment of taxes. Nothing could be done by Birch and his staff until a regular system of assessment and collection been put to work, a matter that all new administrations instinctively give first priority to. Abdullah and the other chiefs, for their part, were genuinely astonished to find that the British actually expected to set out the rules in this vital area and supervise collections and expenditures themselves. It would be hard to imagine a more dramatic example of misunderstanding between the two parties to the Pangkor Engagement. Birch's death in November 1875, and not the engagement itself, was the effective starting point of British rule in Perak. Illusions were now dispelled very quickly. On the British side it could no longer be denied that Abdullah was hopeless and that residents would have to rule, supported by troops. Forces from outside quickly and easily put an end to such resistance as the disorganized Malays could offer, showing the chiefs that, unlike their traditional enemies the Siamese or the men of Selangor, the British were irresistible. They meant to stay and transform the country. Little plots and alliances with set-piece feudal campaigns according to traditional forms in a never ending cycle of

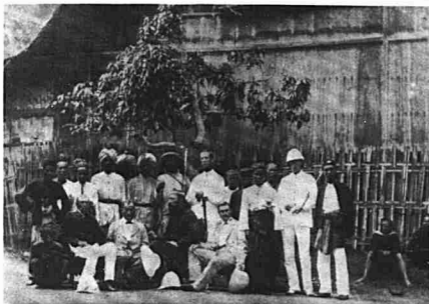


Plate 3. Kuala Kangsar, 1875. Seated left to right: J. W. W. Birch, Captain Stirling, R. N., Captain Speedy, Lieutenant McCallum, R. E. Standing left to right: Raja Basoh, Dein Mahomed, Captain Innes, R. E., Tunku Sulong, F. A. Swettenham, Dein Ismail. *Courtesy of Malaysian National Archives.*

accommodation and rearrangement were things of the past.<sup>7</sup> After inquiries in Singapore and Penang, it was decided to exile Abdullah and several of his followers. Ismail was captured and also removed from Perak, as was the *mentri*. Several of those convicted of direct involvement in the murder were hanged. Only Yusuf, having been *persona non grata* to the conspirators, was obviously guiltless, a circumstance, which, considered with his traditional claims, soon brought him to the position of regent in a country that found itself temporarily without a sultan. This however was a very different appointment to Abdullah's at Pangkor. Not only was Yusuf a creature of the British; in addition, everyone understood that he would reside where he was told to, that he would perform whatever administrative functions his European masters assigned to him, and that British orders would be backed up by military force in a drastically changed atmosphere. There was good reason to believe that the mass of the people either welcomed the British or stood apart. The ruling class was cowed, leaderless, and inclined to accept an accomplished fact.



The Perak War was over early in 1876. Davidson, resident Selangor, was appointed to Perak in April, though he did not take on his duties there until summer. While Davidson was a man of experience, tact, and ability, the C.O. was still reluctant to confirm him because of his financial relationships with Malay royals and Chinese in Selangor. The Perak appointment was made on a provisional basis only, subject to termination without notice, and with a salary that a man of Davidson's background could hardly look on with satisfaction. This fact, together with his preference for Selangor and his differences with the governor over policy, made him glad to leave. Though his residency did not officially end until early in 1877, he ceased to play an effective role several months before that. Perak's second resident, like her first, had only a brief tenure.<sup>8</sup> Three years after Pangkor, the foundations of government were still to be laid.

At the time of Davidson's appointment, the C.O. noted their doubts about it, grumbling that the governor was confronting them as usual with an uninspiring list of people whose main qualifications seemed to be availability on the spot. Meade thought that Perak deserved better, especially in view of the murder, and he suggested Hugh Low, a highly regarded Malay specialist who at that point had served for twenty-eight years in nearby Labuan.<sup>9</sup> When Davidson's residency foundered a few months later, Low was accordingly put into the position. At fifty-three years of age he may have seemed a strange choice since, unlike governors, he could not look forward to the comparative luxury of Singapore. But he had survived Labuan, and he had resources of experience, knowledge, and character that commended him to London.

After a private education and studies in botany reminiscent of his great contemporary, Darwin, he had journeyed to the tropics in search of orchids.<sup>10</sup> There he came to the notice of James Brooke, the white raja of Sarawak, who sent him to Labuan where he served as an administrative officer, continued his botanical work, and wrote a book about the island. He married Kate Napier, the nineteen-year-old Eurasian daughter of Labuan's first lieutenant governor. She died of jungle fever at twenty-two. Much later, in 1885, Low married the daughter of General Sir R. P. Douglas, baronet, in the meantime supporting a Sarawak girl by whom he had a daughter. Such arrangements were not uncommon in the islands, where European bachelors often lived for long periods without leave or the company of women from home. By his first wife he had a son, Brooke, and a daughter, Kittie, who married Sir John Pope-Hennessy, governor of Labuan and later of the West African settlements, the Bahamas, Barbados, Hong Kong, and Mauritius. Pope-Hennessy and Low did not get on. In fact, the governor's harsh treatment of Low and his unfavorable reports on him might have been expected to end Low's chances of advancement. But for the C.O.'s vivid awareness of Pope-Hennessy's

ebullient and querulous nature they could have. As it was they knew that Low was hard-working, trustworthy, respected by his colleagues, and possessed of unusual intelligence and imagination. Though he was a firm disciplinarian, his approach was tactful and he was much liked by the natives. He was fluent in Malay and was an avid student of the anthropological as well as the ecological side of the local scene. Most importantly of all he really liked the life. While sickness, alcoholism, and occasionally suicide took a steady toll of the tiny band of Europeans living out their lives in remote Labuan, Low created gardens, bought a plantation, tamed animals, and looked after his native family. He was no saint. The long frustration of his career ambition brought him much bitterness. But solitude as such was not unbearable. He turned it to advantage, savoring his exotic surroundings without cutting the frail bonds that still tied him to his own civilization. As late as 1914, G. E. (later Sir Geoffrey) Cator, DO Labuan, enjoyed fruit from trees planted by Low and heard accounts of his work from natives who remembered him with affection.

Pictures of Low taken shortly before his arrival in Perak show a dark man of medium height with a prominent, straight nose, heavy black eyebrows, a full mustache, and flowing muttonchop sideburn whiskers. The gaze is direct, with a gentleness in the eyes, almost, but not quite a twinkle. His voice was soft in ordinary conversation, descending to a mild gruffness when he was dealing with situations that he did not find altogether pleasant.

Before he reached Perak, Low knew from talks and papers what London and the governor expected of him in the realm of policy. The official line from 1875 onwards was that residents were to advise the native rulers and not interfere more than was necessary to promote peace, sound taxation, and orderly development.<sup>11</sup> It was realized in the C.O. that there was a contradiction in this. Birch's experience had shown that mere advice was inadequate and that European objectives could only be achieved by a firm hand. In correspondence with the governor a year after he had settled in, Low spoke with frankness and assurance. The situation was not an easy one. With the stronger chiefs in exile, he had to deal with an effete remnant. Everyone was watching him. Yusuf was universally hated, and, if Low gave any sign of not being able to control him, there would be chaos. As resident he was only too willing to carry out the governor's instructions about ruling through the chiefs—"duty is my only watchword"—but "... we must first create the government to be advised."<sup>12</sup> Eschewing false modesty, he stated bluntly that he had brought stability through the careful selection and close supervision of underlings. If it all failed, he would accept full responsibility. He thought progress had been good, and he was continuing to encourage Yusuf and the other chiefs, using a combination of courtesy and discipline. Robinson

was impressed. From Sungei Ujong he had got a one-sentence acknowledgement—military fashion—assuring him that his instructions would be complied with. By his polite, reasoned, and informative answer, Low showed himself to be both loyal and self-confident, a resident who acknowledged higher authority and won its approval, while at the same time running his own show. Among the three residents, he was clearly the most esteemed at headquarters. All of the four governors of Low's time thought highly of him and left him to his own devices.

Learning from the mistakes of Birch's and Davidson's residencies, the government decided on a reallocation of staff in Perak. The resident would live at Kuala Kangsar, well up the river, close to the major chiefs and to the principal Chinese mining communities. A junior officer, W. F. B. Paul, would do for Larut under these circumstances and Speedy, the assistant resident, would go to Durian Sabatang, a river port farther downstream, which, unlike Birch's island headquarters at Bandar Bahru, could be reached by steamers at low water.<sup>13</sup> On April 19, 1877, Low arrived in the Larut estuary and walked to Matang, several miles to the east, talking with Malays, Chinese, Klings (Indians), and Europeans as he went and gathering impressions of his new parish.<sup>14</sup> He inspected the jail and the prisoners and looked at the hospital—a spare room in the *mentri's* house, equipped with no medicines and run by a single Chinese dresser. Kota and Taiping he found disappointing, having read Speedy's reports and expecting to see thriving towns. He was not impressed with the clerical staff, who had no answers to the simplest questions on important matters, such as the number of coolies in the mines and the hours they worked. He instructed Paul to obtain such information immediately. He was displeased with the condition of the roads and even more so with the accounts, which had obviously been padded by the road supervisor.

With the C.O. and governor he saw that sound financial management was the key. Roughly five-eighths of the revenue came from duties on tin, one-eighth from opium farms, and small amounts from import duties.<sup>15</sup> Taxes were coming in fairly well; but the finances of the state were still precarious, and he was determined to economize while hoping for an upturn as a result of greater efficiency and popular confidence in the government. Though the residency had no furniture, he stopped a projected outlay under that heading. He rejected an urgent plea from the tax farmers for a raise in their percentages, and when Yusuf begged him to look into the matter of monies owed him by headmen he replied emphatically that putting the country in order came first—a task that would depend in no small part on Yusuf's own performance as regent under the resident's tutelage. He was hopeful that Yusuf and the chiefs would prove cooperative, noting that when he arrived in Kuala Kangsar, he was welcomed by Yusuf and the Dato' Temenggong, bitter enemies who had not

appeared together before, and by a band and a crowd of 400 Malays. Not all of the common people were friendly. "An old woman at the seventh milestone cursed and reviled the whiteman as I passed."<sup>16</sup> But when he held court in the marketplace of Larut and explained to the people that he had come to govern the state for their benefit, there was a good response. He promised employment as police and *penghulus* to those who deserved it. Everyone would have access to him. In a short time, he said, they would be able to trust him and would no longer miss the *mentri*. He knew that gaining the people's trust would not be possible if he insisted on European standards, as Birch had done. Rather, there must be a good deal of compromise. Slavery was repugnant to him. For the time being, however, he put a stop to the protection of runaways. He would get around to abolishing slavery in good time. "But I shall be of no use here if I do not first throughly acquire [the people's] confidence, and that cannot be done if my first acts [are] to show that I am determined to encourage the breach of what is at present so cherished an institution."<sup>17</sup> In Labuan, he had been called a reactionary for voicing such views. The criticism was wide of the mark, as Low's overall record shows. When the Tumonggong asked him to help in recovering escaped slaves, he refused, explaining that for the moment he would not get involved at all by harboring runaways as Birch had done, by outlawing the practice itself, or by helping the slavers.

His attitude towards Yusuf was similar. He had no illusions about the regent, who seemed to think of little more than milking the people, drawing his pension, and venting the spiteful feelings about his enemies that had built up throughout a long life of frustration. Yet, wrote Low, he "... is not a fool, so that perhaps one may do something with him."<sup>18</sup> The opportunity was there. Birch had been unable to persuade Abdullah to live in the same area as he did, not to mention the same *kampong*. With Yusuf's house only a step away, Low could see him whenever he liked, indeed, more than that, for the raja turned up every day with his followers, whether sent for or not. The two men had lengthy talks on every subject having to do with governing the state. Armed with seemingly unlimited patience and courtesy and having no family with him at the time, Low listened, gave back his own ideas and comments, and soon came to know Yusuf as well as he had ever known a Malay in his three decades of experience. He was pleased when Yusuf accompanied him on his first tour of Krian only ten days after his arrival in Perak. They went by elephant, stopping frequently to talk with headmen. When Low questioned *penghulus* about crops and asked their views on his contemplated tax arrangements, Yusuf joined in, making constructive observations and seeming to take a real interest in the resident's plans for a systematic and equitable land policy. Low was no flatterer. When Yusuf complained of *lèse majesté* on the part of people in districts formerly ruled by exiled

chiefs, Low replied that he could hardly expect love from his lifelong enemies, and he seized the chance to add a word on Yusuf's conduct in Kuala Kangsar. The people would look up to him if he would "... behave like a raja instead of going into the bazaar and making himself so common."<sup>19</sup> On the other hand, Yusuf and his wife gave themselves airs. When the raja suggested building an office for himself next to the residency, Low saw that this was meant to indicate that the regent was a permanent fixture and not just a chief on probation. Yusuf and Raja Idris, the second most important Perak royal and a future sultan, were forever issuing orders, some of them in the resident's name, without his permission. "I will have to have it out with my friend for this," wrote Low.<sup>20</sup> The two rajas wanted to order all Moslems, in the name of the resident and the regent, to attend the mosque regularly on pain of fines or imprisonment. Though the Pangkor Engagement said that he was not supposed to interfere with religion, Low could not be indifferent to what he saw as an injustice and one that overlapped into the civil sphere. He told them to change the order, saying instead that people who neglected their religion would be punished in the hereafter. Low later found that they had had it their way anyhow, though they issued the order on the regent's authority only, and he had to give them both a stern lecture on their prerogatives. In the first years, Idris was the more insubordinate of the two, grandly informing Low on one occasion that he knew the secretary of state had no intention of annoying Perak, which would be restored to the rajas soon, the British then being represented by a consul. Low smiled at this. He was sure that most of the common people were firmly opposed to a return of governing or magisterial powers to the raja class and that for this reason, not to mention others, it would be impossible to establish a real native government in the foreseeable future.

Despite the shortcomings of the royals however he did not lose sight of the long-term objective, which was to improve the native aristocracy along with the rest of society and the economy so that future generations of the ruling class would be able to play their part in running the country. He was unfailingly polite with everyone, including the families of deposed conspirators. Though the *mentri's* complicity in Birch's murder was undoubted in Larut, Low listened benignly to that chief's mother and gave a diplomatic, if evasive, reply when she asked his help in arranging the *mentri's* return. Requests for money were unending—"everyone tugs at the unfortunate resident for this scarce article"—and he used his powers in that area to press for the education of well-born boys.<sup>21</sup> He parried the request of one aristocratic lady for financial help with a promise of future consideration if she would send her son, a raja, to Singapore for schooling. That attempt did not succeed, but others did. He was aware that the boys themselves were often glad to go, though parents were usually

suspicious or hostile. He had an easier time in befriending neglected children or those who were sent by their parents to ask for money. The widow of the Maharajah Lela, hanged six months earlier for his part in Birch's murder, sent her nephew with a note asking for funds. "He is a very nice, honest-looking young fellow of about eighteen and better than most Malays."<sup>22</sup> Low kept the boy talking for an hour to put him at his ease and then sent him away with the money, much pleased.

In addition to his attempts at training Yusuf and Idris for high responsibilities, Low gave much attention to district and local leaders of various ranks and degrees of authority—*rajās*, *datos*, and *penghulus*. Swettenham, when devilling for Davidson in Perak, had urged that such people be encouraged and used because of their local influence and because it would be financially prohibitive to employ Europeans.<sup>23</sup> The tactic would compensate the ruling class for losses of power and wealth at the same time as it strengthened the hand of the British in the countryside. Low visited all of the major districts as soon as he could, talking with chiefs and *penghulus*, asking them detailed questions, and hearing their views about needs and possibilities. There was considerable variation in outlook. Everyone was polite, a characteristic of upper-class Malays. In some remote areas, however, the white man was neither understood nor wanted, while in districts closer to the coast or to Province Wellesley opposite Penang, Europeans had long been a familiar sight, and their government was seen as preferable to the chaos and rapacity of recent times. At Selama, the *penghulus* told Low that they and their people all wanted the English to govern. While working out a plan for comprehensive assessment and taxation he doled out small sums to headmen and chiefs, thereby tying them to the government and making them more amenable to his suggestions. Such dealings also gave him a chance to study the qualities of each man. He had high praise for many. Others were marked for close scrutiny and perhaps dismissal. It was a tricky business, in which everything depended on his own judgment and influence. On the one hand, he had to get things going immediately and therefore was bound to go along with existing arrangements in most cases. On the other hand, his knowledge of men and conditions was limited for the moment, and the possibility of "being made a tool of" was always present.<sup>24</sup> His approach was to collect the *rajās* nearby where he could watch them and to subject *penghulus* to an ever closer supervision, doing as much as he could himself and delegating the rest to his European staff, which he planned to expand as quickly as revenues would allow. This was not authentic "native government" in accordance with policy statements.<sup>25</sup> Circumstances did not permit such a thing. It was European rule with a native apparatus.

Low's personal influence was the cement that held the whole thing together. But he knew that in the long run there had to be some form of

institutionalization that would survive his departure, a structure that all elements—British and Oriental—would be part of. Well before intervention, the British had had experience with committees and councils in India and elsewhere that brought together representatives of the various social groups in each community. The prosperity and peace of the Straits Settlements had for years depended on such interracial bodies. On his way to Perak, Low discussed with the governor the need for a state council, a question on which there had been correspondence with the C.O.<sup>26</sup> During his first months in Kuala Kangsar, he talked about it in a preliminary way, finding that Yusuf and Idris already had firm ideas about what the council ought to be and do. Idris produced a letter from Jervois written two years before. The rajas naturally saw the body as one which they would dominate and use to win back complete control of a chiefly oligarchy, headed this time by themselves.<sup>27</sup> The group would be exclusively Malay, each member approved by Yusuf and Idris. Low listened. Then he gave them to understand in no uncertain terms that the council would be useless if it did not reflect the interests of all races and classes. He presented them with a list. At the head was Yusuf as regent of the state, then Low as resident, then, in turn, another European officer, Idris, the *temenggong*, the *karim* (district head) of Selama and the headmen of the two leading Chinese groups in Larut. Changes came later. As time went on, Low learned which Malay leaders were dependable and efficient rather than merely legitimate. Similarly, he found that it was the capitans China, not the heads of secret societies, who held the real power in Larut. Over the years, he imposed the rule that the criteria for membership would be effectiveness and acceptance as community leaders—benchmarks that could be checked periodically, with unsatisfactory men being downgraded or weeded out according to his reading of their performances. New men could be added on the basis of demonstrated talent, whether or not they had status of a traditional kind or, more importantly, whether or not they were cronies of Yusuf and Idris.

Chinese representation was a point on which no British officer familiar with economic realities on the west coast was willing to compromise. Low's hopes for an upsurge of prosperity—soon to be proven well founded—were based on the clever, industrious, and fast-growing Chinese community. They mined the tin that accounted for over half of the state's revenues and also ran the tax farms, on a percentage basis, that had produced income for the chiefs for years and now did the same under British supervision. Low did not regard this as ideal. Taxation would be regularized and placed under the direct control of British officers as soon as possible. Meanwhile, one had to make do. He looked to the early demise of Davidson's system of giving liberal advances to the tax farmers, which built up the power of certain wealthy shopkeepers. In its place, he

proposed a more formal leasing technique, still on terms favorable enough to attract the Chinese but designed to vest more power of inspection and renewal in the British. "I think I begin to see daylight through the thicket," he wrote.<sup>28</sup> Two years after arrival, he put forward a scheme involving duties on tin, tobacco, and spirits and monopolies on opium, pawn brokerage, and gambling houses that brought in more than \$360,000 in its first full year. The C.O. went along, remarking that the plan was a temporary expedient only, pending the growth of the European staff, and that London did not have the same responsibility for native states as it had for the colony.<sup>29</sup> Another reason why Low wanted to cooperate with Chinese businessmen was that they were the most important element of stability in communities that had not yet settled down completely after the wars of the early seventies. Violence was still common, as were wasteful and inefficient mining practices. Little could be done without large infusions of new capital, which depended, in turn, on Low's *ad hoc* support of the more powerful Chinese leaders, essentially on the latter's terms. When he went to Larut in 1879 to let tax farms, there was a riot.<sup>30</sup> At breakfast time, a mob of over 1,500 coolies surrounded his house, loudly demanding an end to taxes and the substitution of tin duties as the sole means of raising revenue. They refused to be mollified by his promise to consider their demands. *Sepoys* had to be called in, and many coolies were killed in the ensuing melee. The trouble had arisen from disagreements among Chinese leaders, the less sophisticated failing to see that higher duties and lower taxes would not necessarily be better for them in the long run. Ah Kwee, one of the two main capitans China, admonished the *towkays* who had stirred up the riot, pointing out that raising duties would result in higher costs per ball of *chandu* (prepared opium) to them, over and above their losses from death and destruction of property. They should have come to Low quietly, he said, in which case the resident would have agreed to their proposals (which he subsequently did anyhow) without the loss of face and banishment of their leaders that they would now have to endure. For the time being, Low saw no alternative to backing men like Ah Kwee.

In the same spirit, he did all he could to encourage European enterprise. With so many of his counterparts throughout the empire in Victorian times and later Low was ambivalent about this. The pristine character of Southeast Asian society appealed to his romantic and conservative side, contrasting sharply as that society did with industry's ugly face in Europe and with the grasping materialism of Chinese and European commerce in the straits. As a botanist and lover of nature, one who had lived all his mature life in the tropics, he knew from sad experience what mammon could do to a people that was technologically backward and that seemed more innocent and childlike than the vigorous intruders now pouring in



among them. Yet he was not blind to the cruelty and avarice of Malay chiefs, eager as they so often were to victimize their own people. He knew they lacked the power to resist outsiders, thousands of whom had established themselves long before the British appeared, as indeed the Malays themselves had done centuries before. His mandate as resident was to preside over an orderly, peaceful development that would provide justice and plenty for all races. The essential ingredient was control by officers who could be counted on to be disinterested and objective about the country's needs. He visited English estates along the Province Wellesley boundary that were engaged in brick- and tile-making. Their success made others want to take up land nearby. Low agreed to issue permits for this, holding down the number until there was enough money for more European officers to do the necessary surveying, taxing, and supervising. Walter Knaggs, an estate manager from the Province Wellesley side, crossed with several other Europeans into Selama, telling Low they were interested in planting coffee. He was sure their real interest was in tin.<sup>31</sup> But he gave them his blessing in the thought, later confirmed, that their endeavors would produce employment and revenue and would put vacant land to good use. Within a year, he had worked out a land-grant policy that would attract European planters by offering them generous terms without abdicating government control. A maximum of 10,000 acres would be granted free for the first five years, after which the resident, if satisfied that the planter was viable, would allow him to buy at fifty cents an acre or take a long lease at ten cents an acre on up to three times the amount of land then being successfully worked.<sup>32</sup> Provision was made for disposing of uncultivated land and for export duties on produce. The government reserved rights to all minerals, shores, and river banks and could repossess any land it liked for roads and similar use, without compensation. In London, the secretary of state, Lord Kimberley, allowed his staff to make such information available to businessmen who called at the office.<sup>33</sup> Younger officers would later criticize Low for being overly conservative, especially by contrast with Swettenham, his successor, in expenditures of public funds accumulated from land grants.<sup>34</sup> In the early years, some of his critics in England accused him of being the plaything of merchants and speculators. By the end of his residency, planters were prosperous, the state was rich, and its ultimate authority over lands both public and private was absolute.

Another issue, much talked of at the time, on which Low was severely criticized was slavery and in particular debt slavery. It is estimated that in the early seventies there were some 3,000 slaves in Perak, about one-sixteenth of the total Malay population.<sup>35</sup> The institution had become so common because chiefs were the only sources of money when ordinary people wanted to borrow, and because they manipulated debts in such a

way as to assure themselves of large numbers of more or less permanent retainers—the gauge of wealth, prestige, and power. Many chiefs treated slaves kindly, providing them with food and clothing, finding them wives, and in general, looking on them as members of the wider family. Others did not. In either case, slaves and their descendants had little or no chance of alleviating a condition of helplessness and dependence. They were chattels, whose labor, persons, and very lives were at a chief's disposal. No European could help being offended by such a spectacle, which he was bound to see as inhuman. But there was considerable divergence of view as to what ought to be done about it. Low was a gradualist who favored *laissez-faire* for the moment due to the weakness of the British and the need as he saw it to avoid abrupt changes of the sort that had brought Birch to grief. Even if he had had the power to abolish slavery at a single blow, it is doubtful that he would have been inclined to use it. Perhaps his long apprenticeship in sleepy Labuan, where there was little to do and where little was done, had left its mark. Perhaps the reason was deeper, an ingrained trait of character that caused him to see people, like plants, as organisms that would change at their own pace. Certainly he tended to play down the abuses and to emphasize the benign side, while never doubting that slavery had to go some day. The C.O. agreed with him.<sup>36</sup> So did McNair, an officer who had been in the East even longer than Low.<sup>37</sup> Others had their doubts. The wife of James Innes, collector at Durian Sabatang, wrote that in Selangor, where they had been posted before, slavery was discouraged, whereas in Low's Perak, officers were expected to catch runaways and return them to their masters.<sup>38</sup> When the Inneses visited him in Kuala Kangsar, the resident tried to persuade them that slavery was endemic, to which they replied that what they objected to was having to aid and abet it. Later, Mrs. Innes, whose book bears the mark of acute paranoia, accused Low of falsifying the issue when Innes wrote to newspapers about it, and of taking credit for eventually abolishing the institution in Perak. However this may be, Low stated his views when he first arrived, proceeded in accordance with them, and finally put an end to slavery in his own good time.

As he had cause to point out many times, a primary reason for his cautiousness in making reforms was the small size of the European staff and its erratic quality. The police, public-works staff, and clerks were a mixed lot. Some he found worthy of praise. Others were incompetent, or dishonest or both. With greater distances to cope with than he had been accustomed to in Labuan, it was hard to supervise his subordinates closely. Petty tyranny and fiddling of accounts were not uncommon. Salaries were low. The government did not pay passages from England, making local recruitment the general rule. It was not to be wondered at that some men would find Chinese bribes irresistible or that others would

carry more employees on their books than they actually had. Catching a road surveyor in the act, he wrote, "The man's mind is incapable of understanding that there is any harm in 'dewing' the government . . ."39 One of his first acts in Kuala Kangsar was to make a clean sweep of the office accounting staff: "Ordered the abolition of Mr. Peachey and his whole department."<sup>40</sup>

More serious was the question of upgrading the European administrative cadre—the backbone of any state's government, on whose qualifications it would stand or fall. When Low arrived, Speedy was senior, chronologically the first officer of the Malay states under British rule and a legendary soldier of fortune. Preceding Low by three years and himself an aspirant for the residency he was almost certain to constitute a ticklish problem for Low. His background was colorful in the extreme. The son of an army officer in India, where he was born in 1836, he first tried his luck in New Zealand. It was in the militia there that he acquired the title of "captain" that stayed with him all his life. Later he was with the British expedition to Ethiopia, from which he emerged with a good record and with the guardianship of the Emperor Theodore's son. Service in the Indian police followed, after which he accepted the superintendency of police in Penang, arriving there in 1871. Two years later, he took service with the *mentri* of Larut, going to India first to recruit *sepoys*. Throughout all these years of varied work and adventure in four continents there was a common denominator of individualism, a disinclination to immerse himself in organizations that might stifle initiative and subject him to the grind of everyday discipline. It is not hard to understand the pleasure he felt in his Larut command before Pangkor. Well paid, in charge of his own force in a district where no one could say him nay he lived the life of an independent prince, lording it over his remote domain, yet free to enjoy the comforts of cosmopolitan Penang, only seven hours away, whenever he liked. Photographs of the time reveal a commanding presence: black-bearded, six foot five in height, dressed in Abyssinian garb, calmly surveying a prospect over which his word was law.

Such a man could hardly look with satisfaction on Britain's takeover of Perak. His salary dropped by more than half, he was placed under the orders of another and was expected to undertake the duties of a civil servant. Reports came in that he was lazy, extravagant, and inefficient, his control in Larut no more than a myth.<sup>41</sup> Though Meade had thought of him as successor to Birch his reputation with Jervois had slipped so badly that by the autumn of 1876 the governor was calling for his assignment elsewhere. It has been argued that Jervois made Speedy a scapegoat for Perak's troubles, as he had done with Birch the year before.<sup>42</sup> Low, perhaps influenced by Jervois and perhaps seeing Speedy as a competitor, found fault with him from the beginning. His subordinates, doubtless

appointed "to please some Chinaman," were useless.<sup>43</sup> He was careless about important matters such as public health. He was disliked by both Chinese and Malays. His ordinance was in poor condition. His reports were meager and uninformative. When Low transferred him from bustling Larut to the dustbin of Durian Sabatang, where the morale of Innes and his wife had reached its nadir, he could see the handwriting on the wall. Having become comfortably well off through the death of his father-in-law, he could afford to leave, which he did in 1877, the year of Low's arrival. A man for the times in 1873, he had served his purpose.

The next most senior officer under Low was W. E. (later Sir William) Maxwell, son of Sir Peter Benson, and one of the best-known members of the most distinguished family of officials in British Malaya. A public-school man and a lawyer who had been in the service since 1865, he acted as resident pending Low's arrival. The new resident recognized Maxwell's ability immediately and praised him for showing exactly the qualities of professionalism that Speedy lacked. As magistrate, keeper of accounts and records, and writer of detailed reports, he was meticulous, accurate, and dependable. His honesty and gentlemanly posture were unquestioned. He was a brave man who went about unarmed. He knew the language and the country thoroughly and was a mine of relevant information. Low's only criticism was that he tended to be a bit more unbending than officers ought to be in a pioneer place, often taking a black-and-white view of grey situations. When attacked by a party of Chinese opium and spirit smugglers, he ordered the police to put the disturbance down with ferocity, killing two and wounding five, and he passed a much more severe sentence on the headman who had failed to control his coolies than Low thought practicable. He wanted to burn out the whole Chinese town as an object lesson. Nevertheless, Low thought him a splendid officer who needed to be spoken to about his shortcomings but otherwise encouraged. It was somewhat the same with W. F. B. Paul, an Etonian who had started in Sarawak, had served briefly on the Gold Coast, and had arrived in Perak just before Low. Paul took a *de-haut-en-bas* view of his job, thought the resident, expecting underlings to do the menial tasks. When Low jacked him up for poor hospital construction and Paul answered that this was the business of the Indian foreman, Low replied with emphasis that "... it was *his* business in the end."<sup>44</sup> Improvement came quickly. A few weeks later, Low noted that Paul was "much more active and interested in his work [and] said he never had anyone who would give him instructions before; he has not much inventive faculty."<sup>45</sup> As the years passed, Low pushed hard for the recruitment of officers who would be capable of taking initiative so that the resident would not have to do everything himself. He was not entirely happy with men sent out by the C.O., thinking that London could take more trouble to get hold of good

men than they seemed to be doing. He favored tighter regulations on land dealings by officers as administration became steadily more sophisticated. Greater system was wanted. But he remained convinced to the end that personal qualities were more important than bureaucratic ability.<sup>46</sup> Government was men, not machines.

At times he became discouraged with the slow pace of advance in Perak and yearned for "... a more lucrative position in Her Majesty's Service, a place where there were creature comforts and an end to the merciless strain of life in the tropics."<sup>47</sup> But his very success made the C.O. determined to keep him where he was. By the eighties they saw him as the equal of the average colonial governor and a giant among officers in Malaya and the straits. He received a knighthood six years before retirement, an honor unique in its timing. This helped. So did the flourishing state of the economy and the large surpluses of revenues that strengthened his hand. The cooperation of the Malay ruling classes was such that Yusuf was made sultan ten years after Low had taken over. Shortly after recommending this he drew up a report on the whole of his twelve-year stewardship, together with recommendations for the future in states not yet under British rule. There was no need for him to be reticent about his accomplishments, for the C.O. had repeatedly saluted them with enthusiasm. Economic development had been greatly helped by state loans to prospective planters, usually half of what they themselves were willing to put up, at 5 percent interest. Formerly worthless land was now under cultivation with benefit to European owners and native workers alike, but without loss of control by the government. Labor had been brought in from China and India, thus aiding overpopulated British India as well as Perak, a sparsely populated land whose Malay peoples were less inclined to work on estates and in mines than outsiders were. Low's system of ruling "... in the name of the rajas and by their assistance through [a resident] subordinate to the governor..." could not be improved on.<sup>48</sup> As the system grew and spread to other states, the governor should have a special officer to help him with states business as opposed to that of the colony, as Jervois had wanted. There should be a confederation of states, the richer ones aiding the poorer for the good of the whole country. The peoples of states nominally under Siam—Kelantan, Kedah, Perlis, and Trengganu—wanted British protection, though their rulers might hesitate at first, thinking that this might lessen their own authority. They would be reconciled to it as their revenues grew as a result of the exploitation of mineral resources now lying fallow. Siam's resistance could be got over by allowing her a portion of the profits. Bangkok had sent officers to study his methods in Perak. It would not be necessary to build big administrations in the new states; small staffs, with police would do until



Plate 4. Sir Hugh Low, Resident Perak, 1884. *Courtesy of Malaysian National Archives.*

Chinese immigrants arrived in substantial numbers. The key to success was selection of British officers. Residents should be of a quiet, conciliatory manner and should be sympathetic to rajas, whom they would have to restrain. They must be above suspicion as regards their personal interests, patient and just in their magisterial functions, and able linguists. As much as possible, they should be chosen from the trained cadres of the Malay states and Straits Settlements services.

The C.O. knew that they would not be able to persuade the Foreign and India offices on the extension of British sway in Malaya, at least for the moment. But they had no doubt that Low's memorandum presented an accurate picture of what had been done. If the profile of an ideal resident sketched by Low was remarkably like the man himself, this was as it should be, for everyone saw him as the model. Lucas in the C.O. wrote that Low's ability was "... far beyond that of an ordinary governor."<sup>49</sup> The growth of Malaya had been his doing more than anyone else's, and the office saw that he got a more generous pension than usual and the unprecedented honor, (for an officer below the rank of governor) of a GCMG. To Weld, who had been told by Yusuf that Perak's happy condition was entirely due to Low, he was "... a man after my own heart, a noble fellow with a true sense of duty, an Englishman of the best type."<sup>50</sup> Plaudits from colleagues, subordinates, and outsiders were in the same vein. The traveler, Isabel Bird [Mrs. Bishop], who visited him at Kuala Kangsar, wrote that his relations with the Malays were wonderful to behold.<sup>51</sup> While Mrs. Innes had commented sarcastically on the relative luxury of his house by contrast with the miserable shack she had had to put up with, Miss Bird emphasized its cheerful comfort, with rajas lounging on the verandah and the resident's pet monkeys gamboling about. Swettenham, not always the readiest man with saccharine observations on brother officers, wrote that Low's greatest achievement was the retirement of Perak's heavy debt, completed in six years, during which the resident impoverished himself by constantly handing out money from his own pocket to people he thought deserving.<sup>52</sup> Clifford, perhaps the most distinguished of his Perak officers, classed Low among the four or five indispensables of British Malaya.<sup>53</sup> And two voices from the business community singled out in Low "... those subtle qualities [of character] the exercise of which enables the stronger mind to sway the weaker."<sup>54</sup>

In 1877, Low found Perak debt-ridden and disorganized, held back by poor communications, a defeated, surly ruling class and a Chinese community not yet completely reconciled to discipline. Twelve years later, he left it rich and peaceful, its officer corps steadily improving and working in tandem with Malay subordinates who no longer questioned the determination and capacity of the British. He was aided by the example and experience of Birch, whose failure cleared the air and gave him his op-

portunity. The enormous potential of tin mines and agriculture was there to be realized. Low's achievement was to make use of the state's human and natural resources in a uniquely successful way. Though they all enjoyed similar advantages, none of the other residents—from Pangkor to federation—managed to equal him in personal influence and administrative efficiency. He was the founder of the residential system and its most brilliant exponent.

## Notes

1. See R. O. Winstedt and R. J. Wilkinson, "A History of Perak," *JMBRAS* XII, pt. I (June 1934): 1-180. On the sultanate, see the excellent anthropological study of J. M. Gullick, *Indigenous Political Systems of Western Malaya* (London: Athlone, 1958), chap. 3, and C. N. Parkinson, *British Intervention in Malaya 1867-1877* (Singapore: University of Malaya Press, 1960).

2. Eastern No. 35, C.O. 882-4/7233, p. 3.

3. Lord Stanley to the secretary of state, 14 Aug. 1874; 273/78, enclosing a letter to the *Times* from J. S. Atchison of Singapore, Davidson's law partner. See also Lucas's minute, 29 May 1897, 273/229, on Birch and his son.

4. Sir P. B. Maxwell, *Our Malay Conquests* (London: P. S. King, 1878), p. 29. See also Khoo Kay Kim, "J. W. W. Birch: A Victorian Moralizer in Perak's Augean Stable?" *Journal of the Historical Society* IV (1965-66); and J. W. W. Birch, *The Journals of J. W. W. Birch*, ed. P. L. Burns (Kuala Lumpur, 1976).

5. F. A. Swettenham, *Footprints in Malaya* (London: Hutchinson, 1942), p. 54. See also his Perak journal, July-October 1875, M.

6. J. F. McNair, *Perak and The Malays*, (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1972), pp. 453-54.

7. On the period immediately following the murder, see Swettenham's journals, November 1875-February 1876, M; J. de V. Allen, "Raja Mahmud of Selangor's Account of the Perak War, 1875," *Peninjau Sejarah* III; 63-70; Swettenham's report to the governor, 2 Oct. 1876, enclosed with governor to secretary of state, 23 May 1883, 273/120; and R. O. Winstedt, *Start with Alif* (Kuala Lumpur, 1969), p. 72 ff., including the remarks of Abdullah twenty-seven years later. Sir Peter Benson Maxwell argues that the murder was an isolated act and that Ismail, Abdullah et al. were unjustly treated (*Conquests*, pp. 79 ff.)

8. On Davidson's time in Perak, see Parkinson, p. 306 ff., Swettenham, *British Malaya* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1955), p. 225, and *Footprints*, p. 69. Bloomfield Douglas, resident Selangor, notes in his diary, entry of 4 June 1876, that the governor was careful to send Swettenham along to Perak so that he could "wet nurse" Davidson. I thank J. M. Gullick for sending me a copy of the diary.

9. Minute, 24 May 1876, 273/83. Low had acted as governor of Labuan and had served as colonial secretary there.

10. On Low's early years, see Pope-Hennessy, *Verandah* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1964), and Sir Geoffrey Cator, "Sir Hugh Low, GCMG," *Malaya*, Aug. 1958. Cator was resident Labuan and later resident Perak. See also A. Anson, *About Others & Myself 1745-1920* (London: Murray, 1920), p. 313, and Admiral Sir



H. Keppel, *A Sailor's Life Under Four Sovereigns*, 3 vols. (New York: Macmillan, 1899).

11. Secretary of state to governor, 1 June 1875, sent as a circular by the governor to the residents and reported by governor to the secretary of state, 13 June 1878, 273/94. And see minutes noting the ambiguity, for example "...the better the resident the more power will be put in his hands by the people in their own interests ..."

12. To Robinson, 28 May 1878, 273/94.

13. Governor to secretary of state, 28 Feb. 1877, 273/90.

14. Low's diary, 24 Apr. 1877, M.

15. Minute by Meade on governor to secretary of state, 28 Feb. 1877, 273/90.

16. Low's diary, 5 June 1877.

17. *Ibid.*, 26 Apr. 1877. And see Low's book, *Sarawak* (London: Bentley, 1848), chap. 4.

18. Low's diary, 24 Apr. 1877.

19. *Ibid.*, 14 May 1877. No doubt Yusuf found this a bit strange in view of his long experience as a virtual outcast up-country.

20. *Ibid.*, 7 June 1877.

21. *Ibid.*, 26 Apr. 1877.

22. *Ibid.*, 7 June 1877.

23. See his letter to the governor, 2 Oct. 1876, enclosed with governor to secretary of state, 23 May 1883, 273/120.

24. Low's diary, 11 June 1877.

25. *Ibid.*

26. Governor to secretary of state, 22 Mar. 1877, 273/190, responding to the C.O.'s suggestions. Selangor already had a "mixed council."

27. Low's diary, 14 and 21 May 1877.

28. *Ibid.*, 4 June 1877.

29. Governor to secretary of state, 5 Aug. 1879, 273/99, and minutes by Meade and Herbert.

30. Low's journal, enclosed with governor to secretary of state, 18 Oct. 1879, 273/100.

31. Low's diary, 2 June 1877. And see James C. Jackson, "Batang Padang Ninety Years Ago," *Malaya in History* 10 (Apr. 1965), describing Knaggs's Perak wanderings in Dec. 1875.

32. Low to colonial secretary, Singapore, 1 July 1878, 273/94. See also the journal of the officer in charge of Kinta, 14-31 Aug. 1878, 273/95. By 1889, all four states had adopted the land regulations that were originally worked out by W. E. Maxwell during Low's residency in 1879.

33. Minutes, 2 and 4 Oct. 1882 on file July 1882, 273/115.

34. See Rex Stevenson, *Cultivators and Administrators* (Kuala Lumpur, 1975), p. 43, citing C. D. Bowen, *DO Selama*, in 1889. "Mr. Swettenham has arrived ... now all the money old Low has been bottling up will begin to fly." Stevenson speaks of Low's schools also (pp. 56, 146-47). "I did not go in much for schools," mused Low many years later (H. Clifford, "life in the Malay Peninsula As It Was and Is," *Proceedings of the Royal Colonial Institute* 30 (1898-99): 394.

35. Winstedt and Wilkinson, pp. 91-92. See also Gullick, *Indigenous Political Systems of Western Malaya*, p. 98 ff.

36. See Herbert's and Meade's minutes on governor to secretary of state, 5 Aug. 1879, 273/99. Low's opinions, in addition to those cited above in note 17, are set out in his letters of 14 Dec. 1878 and 26 Apr. 1882 to colonial secretary, Singapore, cited in Isabel Bird, *The Golden Chersonese & The Way Thither* (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1967), pp. 375-79.
37. McNair, *Perak and the Malays*, p. 193.
38. Emily Innes, *The Chersonese with the Guilding Off.* (1885) (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1974), 81 ff., 136 ff., 235-41. On Mrs. Innes's outlook, see Gullick, "Captain Speedy of Larut," *JMBRAS* 26 (1953): 80.
39. Low's diary, 3 June 1877.
40. *Ibid.*, date illegible; follows 14 May 1877. Most of these men were Eurasians. J. J. Peachey was chief clerk, Malacca treasury, 1875.
41. Jervois, private letter to Cotton in the C.O., 17 Oct. 1876, 273/85. See also the diary of Jervois's private secretary, 3 Sept. 1875. (See also note 33, chap. 1.)
42. See Gullick, "Captain Speedy", pp. 5 and 69-74.
43. Low's diary, 14 May 1877.
44. *Ibid.*,
45. *Ibid.*, 4 June 1877.
46. See his memorandum on land dealings, 20 Nov. 1888, 273/156, and Lucas's minute on his memorandum of 6 July 1889, 273/164, where he says that Low "...attaches more importance to personal qualifications, as opposed to system, than an official mind would. See also Bird, p. 271, on Low's view of the C.O. Lucas constantly worked for more system in Perak after order had been established. See his minute on file, 3 Nov. 1884, 273/130.
47. To officer administering the government, 14 Feb. 1880, 273/102, applying for a promotion and transfer. And see the C.O.'s minutes on this application, praising Low as a first-rate man, the savior of Perak, who must be kept there for that reason. They raised his salary and talked of giving him a knighthood, which they did three years later.
48. Memorandum on the native states, 6 July 1889, 273/164, handed by Low to the C.O. after his retirement.
49. Minute on file, 18 Apr. 1888, 273/152.
50. Lady Lovat, *The Life of Sir Frederick Weld*, *GCMG* (London: Murray, 1914), p. 304. See also p. 299.
51. Bird, pp. 346-47.
52. F. A. Swettenham, *British Malaya*, p. 227. See also p. 225.
53. Lovat, p. xiii. See also Clifford's comments on Low's handling of superstition, in "The Familiar Spirit," *Malay Monochromes* (London, 1913).
54. A. Wright & T. H. Reid, *The Malay Peninsula* (London: T. F. Unwin, 1912), p. 133. For judgments from a later generation of officers, see Cator, "Sir Hugh Low," and Winstedt and Wilkinson, p. 117.

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## The Residents in Late Century: Variety, Growth, and Regularization

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ARRANGEMENTS MADE in Selangor and in the atomized polities farther south were similar to those made in Perak after Pangkor. Economic and political conditions all along the west coast were much the same, and it was natural for governors to try for accommodations which, *mutatis mutandis*, would be stamped out of a common mold. Selangor's chiefs, like Perak's, had fought among themselves for years, had vied for offices and power, and had not produced a stable or centralized government. As in Perak, there were strong, unruly Chinese communities engaged in the lucrative tin mining and planting that accounted for much of the area's wealth and dealt with by Malay chiefs as tax farmers and producers of income that was vital to their power on the rivers. British and Chinese capital from Singapore and Malacca had long found Selangor a receptive, profitable field, resulting in an interdependence that made it impossible for straits merchants to look with indifference on local disorder. The straits government itself had taken an active part in Selangor politics since the 1820s, being determined to keep Siam out and being repeatedly drawn into disputes among chiefs.

When Sir Andrew Clarke arrived as governor late in 1873, Selangor had just emerged from several years of confused fighting that had disrupted mining and trade in the Klang Valley. The civil war had involved all the important economic and political forces in the area: the British merchants; the straits military as suppressors of piracy; Yap Ah Loy, the able capitan China at Kuala Lumpur and his Chinese opponents; two warring Malay factions; and allies of both who had entered the fray from neighboring Pahang. When the smoke cleared, Sultan Abdul Samad was living in semiretirement at rural Langat, his son-in-law, Tunku Kudin of Kedah, held the real power at Klang, and Yap Ah Loy was securely reestablished as master of the principal mines in and around Kuala Lumpur. On the British side, the successful group was made up of Davidson, the powerful Guthrie firm, and Whampoa, Singapore's most eminent Chinese financier—all of whom had backed Kudin and Yap against rivals supported by Read, the Boustead firm, and Tan Kim Cheng. Matters had improved in the Klang Valley, but the sultan's sons were still making things difficult

along the coasts, operating from their father's base at Langat. In January 1874, there was an attack on a straits lighthouse off Selangor, which provided the pretext for a Pangkor-style meeting between Clarke and the sultan held at Langat in February and attended also by Kudin, now supported by the governor. It was clear that some sort of permanent British supervision would be needed eventually to prevent a recurrence of piracy. Birch and Swettenham made a reconnaissance through Selangor to Perak in March and April. When London's approval of Pangkor arrived in August, Clarke sent Swettenham to stay with the sultan at Langat, later giving him the title of assistant resident.<sup>1</sup> To no one's surprise, the young officer managed his assignment so diplomatically that the sultan asked for him as resident or, at any rate, signed a letter to that effect. This would have suited the C.O., already most favorably impressed by Swettenham.<sup>2</sup> But Clarke ultimately proposed Davidson, citing his intimate knowledge of the state and his influence with Kudin, and the C.O. went along.

Davidson and Swettenham did well at their posts in Klang and Langat since the war was over and Tunku Kudin and the sultan were entirely willing to accept advice. Unlike many of the Perak chiefs, the urbane Kudin knew the British, having worked closely with them for years. The sultan, while he had not been above a certain amount of intrigue in past years, preferred his quiet life of farming and opium-smoking in peaceful Langat. Swettenham's courtesy and knowledge of Malay custom made him easier to get on with than the chief's own family had been. His salary from the British was dependable, and the routine of administration was a thing he was willing to leave to Swettenham now as he had been willing to delegate it to Kudin before. Davidson arrived at Klang in January 1875. From then until the autumn, when Birch's murder brought about his abrupt transfer to Perak, the inauguration of his residency was as smooth and easy as Birch's was rough. On the other hand, not much had been accomplished. Even before the murder, Swettenham spent a good deal of time away from Langat, helping Birch in Perak and accompanying the governor on visits to Kelantan and Trengganu. He remained in Perak to assist the expeditionary force and then went to Singapore as assistant colonial secretary for the native states, not returning to Langat. Except for Turney at Klang and a small number of soldiers, the board had been swept clean. It was vital that Davidson be replaced quickly since it was not known how general the Perak disturbances might turn out to be. His successor therefore, like Low in Perak, would be required to build an administration virtually from the ground up.

As acting resident, the governor sent William Bloomfield Douglas, who had arrived in Singapore only the previous year and had been employed since then as a police magistrate.<sup>3</sup> Fifty-three years of age at the time, Douglas had at best a rudimentary knowledge of Malay, having

been employed many years before as master of Raja Brooke's schooner in Borneo waters. More recently, he had been government resident for the Northern Territory of Australia, which experience would certainly have looked appropriate on paper, especially to a governor who was hard pressed for staff in an emergency. Douglas was born in Wales. Little is known of the family beyond the fact that an uncle—a clergyman—married a sister of Raja Brooke. At twenty, Douglas joined the navy as a captain's steward, but he left the same year, at Hong Kong, to take service with Brooke. He returned to England, married, served in the coast guard, and then went back to sea in order to support a growing family. In the 1850s, when captain of a mail vessel on the Australian coast, he was made naval officer and harbor master at Adelaide, later becoming president of the marine board there. His subsequent duties involved magistracy and various kinds of government inspection work, after which in 1870, he was appointed to the Northern Territory. He was not a success: squandering money, ignoring instructions, quarrelling with subordinates, failing to control a gold rush, and being suspected of irregularities connected with his own investments. He had to be warned about his drinking. After a visit from the commissioner of crown lands, he resigned. His journey to the straits in 1874 was sponsored by the city of Adelaide, whose government he had convinced of Singapore's potential as a recruiting ground for Chinese miners. He did, in fact, arrange the emigration of coolies, but he himself remained in Singapore.

Douglas, like Low, kept a diary, which survives. In its voluminous pages, we are offered glimpses of the man, his fellows, and his world as seen by himself. From the start, he got on well with the sultan, who wanted him to rule and made no effort to obstruct the process. Indeed, he went so far as to say that if the British withdrew, he hoped Douglas would stay on as chief minister with a handsome salary and emoluments. He never demurred, always agreeing with the resident's proposals, including a move for himself from low-lying Langat to the hill of Jugra and the building of a new *astana*, or royal residence. He managed to preserve a simple dignity, whatever the circumstances—which were often less than royal. Once, when Douglas came to obtain his assent to the minutes of the latest meeting of the State Council, they met beside the road, out in the open. As Douglas was in a hurry, being on his way to Singapore, his highness, clad in a dirty old sarong, squatted on the roadside, nodding agreement as the minutes were read and then ordering his seal to be attached, after which Douglas departed, the whole interview having lasted no more than a few minutes. Even so, he was careful to ask the sultan's permission to leave the state. Again, Abdul Samad managed to respond without apparent loss of decorum, though both realized that the request was merely *pro forma*.

Tunku Kudin soon left, not caring for his new role as a rubber stamp. But he, too, maintained at least an outward cordiality with Douglas. He had no conception of finance as viewed by the British and suggested that Douglas spend the revenues as he liked, raising his own salary if it pleased him. They played whist together and were on easy terms with each other's families. Kudin had no more liking than Yusuf of Perak had for the idea of a mixed council including Chinese, proposing to Douglas that such a body be a showpiece only, the real power being exercised by a backroom executive council made up of the resident and himself. When Douglas rejected this he passed it off lightly. Nor did he persist when the resident was firm in judging his own claims to arrears of pay. With lesser rajas, including several who had been prominently involved in the wars, Douglas held endless and complicated talks. He had to decide which ones to keep on stipends as local rulers. It was not easy to dissuade lifelong warlords from old habits, demanding that they now agree to work together in a cause they could only see as alien. "I spoke in plain and very severe terms . . ."4 What bothered him more than anything was the ruling class's seeming disregard from the common people.

With the Chinese his main problem was to put across the view that government was to be cooperated with, not circumvented. Paying duty on their tin rather than bartering some of it for rice and opium was hardly popular. They naturally saw this as a net loss, a sacrifice that produced no advantage in return. There was still a great deal of violence within their communities and between them and the Malays. Tax farms and concessions on pawn shops and gambling houses had to be reviewed continuously, offering countless opportunities for misunderstandings. Having got their way by war and hard bargains all their lives, some of the leading *towkays* found settled government no easier to get used to than the rajas did. Yet, with Yap Ah Loy himself, some were beginning to see, as their countrymen in the straits had done, that peace was good for business. Douglas was delighted when the capitan China asked for extra police in Kuala Lumpur and even agreed to pay them himself. "This is a step in the right direction."<sup>5</sup>

With his subordinates he was stern, though willing to recognize competence when he found it. Two years after his arrival, there were only two European administrative officers: Turney, at Klang, and Innes, at Langat, the former having been a clerk in Labuan and the latter a treasurer in Sarawak.<sup>6</sup> Douglas and Turney got on. At first, the resident had good things to say about Innes as well. "The selection of Mr. Innes for this post has been a very fortunate one."<sup>7</sup> But later he ticked Innes off for wanting to write to Singapore over his head asking for a steam launch. "I told him he could not act independently of me and that if he attempted it [there] would be war . . ."<sup>8</sup> This was flint on steel. Innes was more than some-

what officious and inclined to prudery. Douglas, for his part, spoke in a more peremptory way than the case demanded—a characteristically impulsive thing for him to do. He had rough things to say about Gottlieb—“... a little humbug...”—about Evans, briefly a collector; and about a Mr. Gill, whom he sacked for drunkenness.<sup>9</sup> His impressions were not all that different from Low’s. But he lacked the subtlety of his Perak colleague in dealing with underlings who admittedly left something to be desired yet were, like Douglas himself, the best available in frontier times.

About his peers and officers above him in rank he had revealing things to say. Swettenham, who almost certainly wanted his job, did not treat him as he thought his superior station demanded. Douglas allowed himself a sneer at the younger man’s rationalization about being more useful to the governor in Singapore than he would be in the Selangor residency. He looked up to Davidson, expressing surprise that an established attorney would waste his time on a job in the godforsaken native states. When the colonial secretary, Mr. (later Sir John) Douglas, visited Selangor, the resident was proud to be able to remark that he had known Sir John’s brother in Mauritius, and he glowed with satisfaction when the colonial secretary assured him that his performance was satisfactory and his position secure. The happiest pages of his diary are filled with descriptions of visits to Malacca, whose miniscule European society made Singapore smile, but which seemed cosmopolitan in the extreme after Klang. He was lodged in the Stadt House, he talked with Murray and Trevenen from Sungei Ujong, and he was asked to dinner by the lieutenant governor and Mrs. Shaw. “A very nice little dinner . . . long yarns . . . it was so jolly.”<sup>10</sup>

Comments on Douglas by others are mixed. The C.O., not reassured by the governor’s reports, turned down the resident’s request for an increase in pay, though they raised Low and Maxwell.<sup>11</sup> The Inneses tended to be highly critical of all their superiors, Low included, picking at personal idiosyncracies and blaming higher authority for leaking roofs and unfavorable exchange rates. Douglas more than once forgot to bring them their mail when he visited Langat. He seemed unable to talk in a normal conversational tone, always shouting at people around him, and he monopolized the governor when that high personage toured Selangor, not letting the hypersensitive Innes get a word in. He surrounded himself with low-born cronies, including a cockney policeman. Isabel Bird presents a different Douglas: a tall, whitehaired man with a florid complexion and a strong voice, authoritative, a genial host, generous to visitors, and good to his family. The resident’s conduct with the sultan and in court, where he sat as magistrate, is described matter-of-factly, the impression being that Douglas knew his job and did it competently. His engineering knowledge was undoubted and valuable. Middlebrook’s his-

tory of Yap Ah Loy notes the resident's failure to get along with Raja Mahmud, observing in fairness that Murray in Sungei Ujong had the same problem. He is severe on Douglas for treating Malay royals and his own staff badly, however, and for trying to get the capitán China removed. Emily Sadka, author of a detailed study of the early residencies, considers him a disaster, seeing his administration as inexpert, corrupt, and inefficient, needing constant supervision and discipline from above.<sup>12</sup>

Perhaps the most revealing and authoritative picture is provided by J. M. Gullick, a scholar-administrator with extensive experience on the ground, who has carefully examined the sources used by the others and the diaries as well.<sup>13</sup> Gullick goes into considerable detail on Douglas's day-to-day work with the sultan, with lesser royals, with the Chinese, and with British officers. Douglas emerges as a hard-working resident, competent, diligent, thoroughly involved in the task of remaking Selangor. The sultan's liking for him is apparent, and even Tunku Kudin, who was made redundant by Douglas's direct dealings with the sultan, is seen to have borne the resident no grudge. Douglas's limitations are not blinked. But over-all, and bearing in mind the primitive conditions of the time, he passes muster.

In 1882, Innes resigned, presenting a list of detailed charges against the superior he had disliked intensely for at least five years. The core of Innes's case was that Douglas had mismanaged the land office and permitted wholesale jobbery in which Douglas himself participated. D. D. Daly, Douglas's son-in-law and superintendent of works, was made the arch villain of the piece, being described as incompetent at his job and thoroughly venal as well.<sup>14</sup> Weld had sent Swettenham to investigate similar charges, brought by a native a year before. The result in this new instance was inconclusive, a weak case presented by a witness who was anything but disinterested. Nevertheless, the governor wanted the resident out. He asked the C.O.'s approval of a plan whereby Douglas would be allowed to resign rather than being subjected to the disgrace of a public dismissal. London was not convinced that the case was strong enough. Innes himself was "disreputable," having sold goods to the sultan in a questionable way.<sup>15</sup> Moreover, as Philip Loh points out, Weld, after listening to the charges, was not sure in his own mind that Douglas was guilty. The C.O. certainly was not. They approved a gratuity for Douglas, who had not served long enough to qualify for a pension, and they agreed to say that his service in Selangor had been satisfactory, if asked by the Foreign Office, to which Douglas applied two years later for a consulate in West Africa. Turney wrote to the governor after Douglas resigned, enclosing letters from the sultan in which he expressed a great liking for the resident and a sense of sorrow and loss at this departure.<sup>16</sup> While this did not impress the C.O. greatly, neither were they convinced when Innes quoted the sultan



as having said that he did not order some of the things Douglas had imported for him. There had been ample evidence over the years that Oriental rulers gave Europeans the answers they thought were wanted.

History should not be too hard on Captain Bloomfield Douglas. Like Speedy—but for a longer time and in a more important job—he was a creature of circumstance. He was hired in difficult times because he was available, and highly qualified men were not. London's reticence was apt, for they had not understood the situation at the time of Pangkor and had not insisted on first-class officers. Nor could Government House in Singapore adopt a holier-than-thou posture. Jervois had bunged Douglas into Klang after he had been in the country only a little more than a year, on the police bench in Singapore. Weld visited Selangor many times while Douglas was there. If dealings in land were not proper at all, why did he merely advise Douglas's successor, Swettenham, to be discreet about his purchases, putting the deeds in his wife's name? There is no doubt that Douglas was one of the least satisfactory of the early residents. Low was a paragon. Murray, who died on the job in Sungei Ujong in 1881, was solid rather than spectacular. Paul, who followed him, was eased out after twelve years, more for lack of vigor than for anything reprehensible he had done. Lister, the first resident of the new state of Negri Sembilan, lived only two years after taking over and was, like Murray, a dependable, trusted officer. Swettenham and Clifford would scale the heights of fame in the colonial service, and their less-renowned brother officers—Rodger, Birch, and Treacher—would receive knighthoods and honor. Yet the case against Douglas was one on which a Scottish jury would doubtless have returned the verdict "not proven." It is hard to escape the conclusion that Swettenham's ambition to take over Douglas's job was an important factor, and that behind this lay Weld's steady determination to promote Malaya's prosperity by modernizing the governments of the states and encouraging European investment through dynamic administration.<sup>17</sup> In the service of such an aim, Douglas was a poor instrument. As always, it was agonizingly difficult to get rid of an incumbent. Innes's charges—weak, suspect, hypocritical—were nonetheless convenient, as was the indefensible conduct of Daly. During his six years in Selangor, Douglas had presided over the transition of the state from chaos to order and the beginning stages of development. If he did this less well than Low did in Perak, it must be admitted that the job had been done and would not have to be done over again by his successor.

One reason Douglas has not looked well in retrospect is that he was followed by Frank Swettenham. In the preceding pages, we have encountered Swettenham frequently, and this is significant. It is not possible to write of any important aspect of public affairs in Malaya from the 1870s

to the turn of the century without taking Swettenham into account. In depth of cultural knowledge, in scope of personal and official involvement, in achievement, power, and recognition, he is the giant among builders of British Malaya. A booming economy presented great opportunities. Swettenham, by contrast with the prototype civil servant, had the drive, the breadth, and the effrontery to seize them. An opportunist par excellence, he had the creative ability that mere climbers lack, the luck that eludes many able men, and the intelligence and energy without which dame fortune might have smiled on him in vain. He wrote a great deal. Much has been written about him, though when it is all considered together, it does not provide the makings of an adequate biography. We know that he was born in 1850 outside Belper, in Derbyshire, the youngest in a family that had sufficient means to send his two older brothers to Cambridge and Swettenham himself to St. Peter's School in York.<sup>18</sup> His own apologia is curiously vague about his father, who is described elsewhere as a lawyer and whose wanderings into and out of his family's life are shrouded in the mists of imprecision. Swettenham was defensive about his social origins, as so many were in a time of massive upward movement when those on the fringes of the middle classes were perhaps the least comfortable of all. He liked to speak of the country houses he frequented when on leave, the hounds he rode to, the fashionable people he knew.<sup>19</sup> It is not unreasonable to suppose that his ambition in Malaya was fired in part by the sure knowledge that he did not come from that world and that he would enter it, if at all, only through determined effort and as an arrivist. Beyond this, he was a lone wolf, from childhood on. His brothers and sisters were older, looking on him as mama's darling. At age ten, he went as a day boy to a boarding school, a notoriously awkward role for even the most gregarious. Swettenham was not that. He spent a certain amount of time in clubs, in talking shop with his brother officers, and in making himself pleasant to the right ladies. People did not think of him as backward or odd. Tall, darkly handsome, with a powerful build, piercing eyes, and a trim mustache, he was no wall flower. But he did not take naturally to the social round, as Ernest Birch did, preferring instead to be at the governor's side in the office, or on tour, or undertaking assignments at the courts of Malay chiefs and drafting the detailed reports on politics and finance that would make his name. He had many acquaintances and few, if any, close friends. In late career he was respected by many, feared by some, hated by a few. Hardly anyone speaks of having liked him. Those who did were governors, who found him a thoroughly dependable subordinate and expert, or chiefs, to whom he was a courteous, persuasive European with an astonishing grasp of their language and their ways.



Plate 5. F. A. Swettenham, Resident Selangor, c. 1884. *Courtesy of Malaysian National Archives.*

His most severe critics admit that Swettenham knew the Malays far better than the average officer did. Among his fellow governors, Clifford, who spent about a third less time in Malaya and whose service there was not continuous, was his only rival. The very considerable amount of information on Malay mentality and social organization that he gathered over a long period of time could not have been assembled by a man who was not fascinated by his subject. Swettenham is in the mainstream of British overseas civil servants, some trained in ethnography, most not, whose published and unpublished work constitutes one of the main sources of primary material available to professional scholars. A straits businessman who knew him well wrote that his undoubted materialism was balanced by an artistic temperament suited to the dreaming of dreams and by a vivid imagination of a kind not ordinarily permitted in Englishmen.<sup>20</sup> It was this that helped him see the Malay's love of drama, his boredom with the mundane character of the white man's daily preoccupations.<sup>21</sup> At first, wrote Swettenham, the Malays thought Europeans barbaric and had neither respect for them nor interest in them, despite their skill with guns and ships and the great wealth that they seemed able to accumulate. Not being of a servile nature and knowing and accepting his own limitations, the Malay saw no reason to imitate. If his life was primitive, it had a dignity which Europeans could not approach. The European's accent on privacy and individual rights by the same token, was incomprehensible to the Malay, a fatalist long inured to a feudal scheme of things that made self-assertion dangerous while at the same time providing a tolerable security to those who conformed. Poor communications, lack of money, and the endless round of petty warfare prevented the rise of an authority strong enough to alter the age-old rhythm. Yet Swettenham found that when challenged in some way, perhaps by an unusually competent leader organizing an expedition or by a raja willing to pay for craftsmanship in wood or silver, the Malay could shake himself from his lethargy and perform admirably.

He had a genuine liking for the Malays, some of whom he was as close to in his fashion as he was to anyone of his own kind. He saw their merits and appreciated them. On the other hand, there was never any question of his "going native," as some did, and he had no doubts about the superiority of European civilization in most respects and on balance. He was like the urban sophisticate who loves his weekend place in the country. The spell of Malaya, he wrote, lay in "... the undoubted charm of the people ... and the sense of mystery, of exclusiveness, of unspoiled nature and undescribed life, that arouse a new interest in the wearied children of the West."<sup>22</sup> But he had a practical turn of mind and did not tell himself, as so many of his countrymen did, that the East was ultimately inscrutable. "I

doubt whether the Eastern is any more difficult to understand than the Western, when once you have taken the trouble to study [them], . . . lie on the same floor with them, eat out of the same dish with them, fight with them and against them, join them in their sorrows and their joys, and, at last, win their confidence and regard . . ."<sup>23</sup>

As to the effect of European mastery on the Malays, Swettenham wanted some things changed and some left alone. Though members of the ruling class resented being displaced when the British came and showed little interest in sharing in the unfamiliar tasks of government as Europeans performed them, he thought most were malleable. In Selangor and Perak, he found rajas who cooperated willingly and well with British officers, as did most of the *penghulus*. The sweeping changes in daily life that were wrought by peace and prosperity were acceptable to the mass of the people, who saw that their own lot had improved with regard to land ownership, freedom from exploitation, and new opportunities in education and agriculture. At bottom however, he was sure the average Malay, of whatever class, remained as he had been before, and he was glad of it. Swettenham had his doubts about European education. With hundreds of his brother colonial officials all over the empire, he had an instinctive dislike of people who have moved part way out of their own societies but not all the way into others and who dwelt uncomfortably, as babus or yahoos, in a cultural twilight zone. Too often they displayed few of the redeeming characteristics of their adopted civilizations while retaining unattractive ones from their own. In the 1880s, he opposed European enterprises that seemed likely to take advantage of Malays. As late as the 1930s, he was still battling away, from his London base, against what he saw as undue interference in Malay affairs.

When the time came to appoint a resident Selangor in 1874, both London and the governor were inclined to name Swettenham. Ultimately, he was not appointed because of his youth, being only twenty-four at the time, and because of Davidson's close relationship with Tunku Kudin, the real power in the land. The governor reasoned that Swettenham's chance would come soon enough. Meanwhile, he would be valuable as assistant resident at the sultan's headquarters and as adviser on native states affairs in Singapore. With the departure of Dōuglas in 1882, there was no question that his moment had arrived. Among civil servants in Malaya he was unique. Low was older and held a more responsible position. But his prestige was associated primarily with Perak, whereas Swettenham had covered the whole peninsula, was a cadet in the straits service, and was better known in London. William Maxwell was slightly senior to Swettenham in age, length of service, and in official recognition, having received the CMG a year before Swettenham did. But his intensity of manner and uncompromising approach with colleagues and subordinates

—both British and Malay—made him hard to get on with and, correspondingly, harder to place, while Swettenham proved highly flexible and accommodating in a wide range of tasks. What strikes the historian is Swettenham's gift for picking out the important issues, trends, and jobs, for making himself expert, and for bringing his talents to the attention of the great. In 1870, though he had passed second out of some twenty candidates in the examination for cadetships, the C.O. was not inclined to appoint him, thinking they needed only one recruit that year. He was saved by the intervention of the civil service commissioners, who were so impressed by him that they persuaded the C.O. to make two appointments after all.<sup>24</sup> By 1877, he was playing on the C.O. cricket team when on leave, ingratiating himself with the very men who had to pass on governors' personnel recommendations and who often complained that they knew nothing of the officers mentioned mainly because most men never went near the C.O. on leave. Papers on Malay subjects, forwarded to London by governors who had no local knowledge, Jervois and Robinson in particular, were usually the work of Swettenham and were read with great interest in London, where familiarity with such matters was even less. "Very able," minuted a C.O. staff member on Swettenham's explanation of competing claims to the Johore sultanate.<sup>25</sup> When Weld wanted to interest the C.O. in expanding British influence at the expense of Siam, he based his case on a paper that he commissioned Swettenham to write.<sup>26</sup> From the beginning, his Selangor reports were applauded by the governor: "A very good and clear report . . . congratulations on the success which has attended your efforts in the state."<sup>27</sup> Among the permanent staff members in the C.O. he stood higher with Lucas than with some who were more senior. Meade and de Robeck knew very well that he had a reputation for being a wee bit slick. "A clever, energetic man . . ." wrote the latter.<sup>28</sup> "Mr. Swettenham represents the aggressive school of politicians in Malay native affairs . . ." added Meade.<sup>29</sup> He admitted, however, that this was just what was needed in Selangor after Douglas. In any case, Lucas would outlast the others. By the nineties Swettenham could not have had a more valuable friend at court.

It has been remarked that Weld's main reason for wanting Douglas out of Selangor was the resident's lackluster performance with regard to development. The governor was determined to exploit the resources of the states for their own benefit and that of the imperial power by attracting European investors and Chinese workers, as he had done in Australia before. Swettenham was the ideal overseer of such a plan: he knew the country and the people and was on good terms with Malay chiefs, Chinese headmen, and European traders. Among those who took up land in Selangor were: W. H. Read, the ubiquitous Singapore businessman; T. Heslop Hill, a planter who came from Ceylon, failed in Malaya, and

eventually became protector of labor there; and Martin Lister, another Ceylon emigre, who went on from an unsuccessful planting career in Malaya to become resident Negri Sembilan. All were well known to Swettenham, Lister being perhaps as close to him as anyone in the peninsula.<sup>30</sup> Such friendships were more significant in Selangor than in Perak because the former was the development state par excellence, with a small Malay population and a large, wealthy Chinese community. Ernest Birch, sent to do a report on the Selangor land system in 1890 and later acting resident, observed that "if a man is very keenly interested in the Malay people, Selangor is not the state he would choose for his sphere of work."<sup>31</sup> What made things hum in Swettenham's time and after was a vigorous elite group interested in tin mines, coffee and pepper estates, and the roads, bridges, railways, and harbors that were needed to get produce to market. With few European women about, society was spontaneously interracial. Merchants and government officials rubbed elbows with *towkays*, shopkeepers, and miners in clubs as well as in banks. A familiar face at the famous Spotted Dog (Selangor Club) was that of Thamboosamy Pillai, the Singapore-born Indian who went to Klang with Davidson, left a government clerkship to enter business, and became so prosperous and influential that when he died, his body was taken back to Singapore on the governor's yacht with much ceremony.

Swettenham threw himself into his first independent command with a will. Weld ruled with a light hand, giving residents their heads, especially those he trusted. It was up to Swettenham to decide important questions such as the gauge of the Kuala Lumpur-Klang railway in relation to revenues and expected traffic.<sup>32</sup> He reported that the sultan and council—somewhat disingenuously with regard to the sultan himself, perhaps—were eager to have this vital new link completed so that communication between the mines and the coast would be easier. Meetings of the council were often rather boring affairs wherein formal approval was given to measures already worked out privately by the resident and his business friends, some of whom were members. Swettenham's diaries and those of his subordinates are full of references to the economy and speak less often to the Malay subjects that are given so much prominence in Low's. He heard bankruptcy cases in court, settled land disputes, inspected the work of convicts laboring on roads to be used by agricultural estates, looked over a flooded mine belonging to the capitan China, wrote to the protector of Chinese about coolies, and had endless talks in the office with European visitors interested in mines and planting.<sup>33</sup> The Malays were not forgotten. He arranged to lend money to anyone willing to clear empty land so that uninhabited areas would fill up and contribute to the general prosperity. *Penghulus* were authorized to extend these loans after satisfying themselves that borrowers were capable. "The primary object

of all our land regulations [is] to obtain a populous, cultivated and settled country, inhabited by industrious and contented cultivators."<sup>34</sup>

As resident Selangor, Swettenham was a dynamo who saw the state's economic potential with vivid clarity and left no stone unturned in assuring that it would be realized. In that position and in subsequent ones, he established his reputation as "the father and founder of modern Malaya." He was honored by his superiors in government and even more so by the businessmen whom he did everything he could to help.<sup>35</sup> One of their spokesmen bemoaned the futility of a system that did not raise him to the House of Lords, and saluted him above all for recognizing that civil servants were there to promote the interests of the public by encouraging private enterprise.<sup>36</sup> On retirement he served as a director of rubber companies in England and received the gold medal of the Rubber Growers Association. His portrait, painted by John Sargent of the Royal Academy, was commissioned not by the government but by the Straits Settlements Association.

From the early years of his career, Swettenham had accompanied governors on their visits to Malay chiefs and had also been sent alone on missions to the states. In 1875, he represented Sir Andrew Clarke on a short journey into Pahang from the Selangor side and, later that same year, he joined Sir William Jervois on a journey to the Pahang coast, which had been visited by previous governors as well (by Cavenagh in the early sixties for example) and by straits businessmen. W. H. Read and his Chinese friends were sure that Pahang was potentially rich and therefore ought to come under British protection, as the west coast states had already done. Sir Frederick Weld was entirely responsive to this view. Having arrived after the establishment of the residency system on the west coast, he saw Pahang as a logical further extension, the success of which would be a fitting capstone to his governorship. Even if he had not cherished ambitions in that direction, however, he would not have been able to ignore Pahang because of its dynastic connections to Johore, immediately adjacent to Singapore and itself the object of British designs for years. In 1884, Weld reported to London on a scheme of Read's for nudging Pahang's ruler into accepting a British adviser.<sup>37</sup> This could be done, thought Read, by threatening to withdraw Johore's support of Ahmad, the Pahang chief who had been called *bendahara* since his seizure of power in the 1860s but who now assumed the title of sultan.<sup>38</sup> Ahmad had called on the governor in Singapore two years earlier. He was not inclined to give up his independence to either the Johore ruler or the British, though he was less naive about British power than the Perak chiefs had been. Weld's concern at this point was a rash of wildcat land speculation in Pahang and neighboring Jelebu and the granting of concessions by Ahmad to German, American, and Australian mining pros-



pectors.<sup>39</sup> There was heavy pressure on the governor from Singapore businessmen to protect what they had long regarded as their own sphere of influence. Swettenham was sent overland from Perak, where he was acting resident, and down the Pahang river to talk with Ahmad at his village of Pekan. Having known the sultan for some time, he understood very well that careful, patient persuasion was in order.<sup>40</sup> He contented himself with a promise that Ahmad would write to the governor and went on his way. Regardless of how Ahmad viewed the matter, it was assumed in London that the sultan had agreed to ask for a resident. "The gradual extension of British influence over the whole peninsula must be our almost inevitable policy," Weld had written, "and one from which we ought not to shrink."<sup>41</sup> The governor called on the sultan in June 1886. His reception, like Swettenham's, was friendly, but as usual the sultan was noncommittal about a British representative. The governor then determined on a more sustained effort. In January 1887, he sent Hugh Clifford, a member of the Perak service who had been with him on the east coast the previous year, with instructions to negotiate. After two months, during which nothing tangible had been achieved, Clifford's mission was strengthened by the arrival of the chief minister of Johore and at last, in April, the sultan agreed to ask for a treaty. Clifford became British agent. The following year, the sultan accepted the appointment of a resident, who arrived in 1889, thus bringing Pahang into line with the west coast states.<sup>42</sup>

Clifford is important in the story of British Malaya because he played a central role in the establishment of the residency system in Pahang, becoming himself its second resident, because, after a long absence, he returned to Malaya in the 1920s as governor, and because he contributed so much to the literature and romance of the country in the colonial era. He does not come near Low as a founding father or Swettenham as an administrative innovator and economic developer. Illness destroyed any possibility of his being a governor of high achievement. But his record in the eighties and nineties is worthy of attention, for it provides an illuminating picture of conditions on the ground and an intimate view of how a young officer saw them.

He was born in 1866, the eldest son of Maj. Gen. Hon. Sir H. H. Clifford, a younger son of the seventh baron Clifford of Chudleigh, in Devon.<sup>43</sup> With other Roman Catholic aristocrats of long lineage, the family occupied a somewhat equivocal position *vis-a-vis* the governing establishment—being distinguished, yet not fully privileged. Their rural base and their preoccupation with country life far from the center of government and industry kept them removed to an extent from the mainstream of public concerns in Victorian times. Moreover, being the son of a younger son, Clifford stood at one remove from such security of

place as did accrue to people in his grandfather's position. One must be careful about generalizing on the possible influence of backgrounds on careers. The trap of sociological caricature yawns wide. There is no doubt that Clifford was his own man. In particular instances, he consulted his experience, building bridges to his colleagues in Malaya and to natives without any necessary reference to his own or other people's antecedents. On the other hand, we do find him making judgments in Pahang that are logical enough when viewed against the backdrop of his boyhood. Occasionally, he is specific about it.

However this may be, the biographical facts are well known. He attended private classes conducted at Woburn Park by Msgr. William Joseph, later the thirteenth Lord Petre, who had been in New Zealand with members of his family. Though offered a queen's cadetship at Sandhurst, he accepted a position in the Perak service instead, arriving there at age seventeen. This was in 1883, when his father's first cousin, Sir Frederick Weld, was governor.<sup>44</sup> From 1887, when he went to Pahang on his diplomatic mission, until 1899, when he ceased to be its resident, he spent most of his time in that state or on Pahang business elsewhere. The exceptions were two home leaves and short stints in the Cocos and Keeling islands and in Selangor. The degree of responsibility he had in Pahang varied from his initial agency, which was not primarily administrative, through the superintendency of *Ulu* Pahang to the residency itself. On arrival he was two months short of his twenty-first birthday. He was thirty-three when his Pahang service came to an end.

His first years in the state were spent at Pekan, the sultan's village seven miles upriver from the coast, and in the *ulu*, based mainly at Kuala Lipis. In these times and during the more or less continuous disturbances from 1891 to 1895, he traveled widely, coming to know all parts of the state, as well as some of the back areas of its neighbors, Trengganu and Kelantan. Often, like Swettenham, he found that no white man had ever been seen before in some of the *kampongs* he reached. Fluent in Malay and physically strong, if not always well, he tackled his job with vigor, enthusiasm, and resource. The jungle, the mountains, and the great rivers appealed strongly to him, opening vistas of secret, wild beauty that Europe could not offer.

The beat of the paddles . . . made a rhythmical splashing, varied by the bump of wood upon wood as [they] told loudly against the boat's side. The damp night air . . . was cold and clammy; the myriad noises of the vast forest fell upon [one's] ears in musical cadence. Occasionally an elephant trumpeted very far away. Now and then in the darkness of the shadows . . . some unseen brute, disturbed by the passing of the boat, leaped from its drinking pool and crashed away through the underwood.<sup>45</sup>

He counted himself lucky to be out in the open, leading an active life, rather than being tucked away in the secretariat, dealing with files and dispatches, just as one did in London.<sup>46</sup> Later, when tortured by doubts as to the rightness and value of what he was doing or when sick or bored, he told himself that the excitement, the danger, and the challenge made it all worthwhile.

At first, he thought that Pahang before the British came was the best sort of Malay state, ruled by swashbuckling, impious privateers whose careless egotism differed from that of Europeans mainly in its unaffected openness and freedom from hypocrisy.<sup>47</sup> There was an unwashed innocence and honesty about the chiefs, and even the dissipated youths who hung about their courts, looking on a life of fighting and waste as their aristocratic birthright. But gradually his writings became more severe on the ruling classes. He came to hate their cruelty and their injustice to commoners, realizing, of course, that he was judging them by standards not their own. He saw them as "men who had been accustomed to regard their passions as things given to them solely to be gratified; who had never learned the hard lessons of self-control, self-discipline and self-denial."<sup>48</sup> He never lost sight of the coin's other side, being very much aware that the Malays had reservations about the British, whom they sometimes looked down on as efficient barbarians, ill-mannered, disrespectful of authority, sacrilegious.<sup>49</sup> But he frequently returned to the attack. At the end of his Pahang residency, he gave a talk at the Royal Colonial Institute in London in which he blasted the chiefs so unmercifully that both Low and Treacher, who were in the audience, felt obliged to remonstrate with him.<sup>50</sup> The burden of his remarks was that the Malays had no system of government worthy of the name before the British came; that they were utterly callous to human suffering, and that, even under close supervision, it had proved difficult to get the royals to take initiative in administration. In another place, he complained that Malay aristocrats got more courtesy from the British than they were accustomed to receive from their own kind and that they took advantage of this.<sup>51</sup> Their vaunted piety was apt to be skin deep, he said, and Islam sat lightly on many of them.<sup>52</sup>

Though there is ample evidence that he enjoyed himself in the early years and came to feel a genuine interest in the people, there can be no doubt about his priorities: Europe and Europeans stood first. His diaries of the eighties and nineties are full of references to the pleasure he took in the company of fellow officers, to happy days in Singapore away from the boredom and discomfort of Pahang, and, most of all, to the soaring joy of being back in England on leave. Mail from home was eagerly awaited. Books saved his peace of mind on many a wet and dreary day. An unhappy love affair was painful, yet he indulged in the bittersweet of rereading his own returned letters in preference to moving about in his parish at Kuala

Lipis.<sup>53</sup> Summing up the year 1893, he wrote that "by and large it has been bad," the only saving graces being two trips to Singapore and a jaunt to Trengganu and Kelantan with the governor.<sup>54</sup> The knowledge that home leave was still a long way off brought a *cri de coeur* that was to appear later in his published work: "How long, oh Lord, how long?"<sup>55</sup> It was all very well to speak about the ideal colonial service type: the young man with confidence in himself and his race, fearless, just and sensible, who can put up with exile, and who can be relied on to rule tropical peoples responsibly.<sup>56</sup> But such men did well in the *ulu* only if they had "...no insight, no sympathy, no imagination"—all three of which Clifford was cursed with.<sup>57</sup> Being so cursed, he could not expect to remain for long periods in isolation and yet retain his sanity.<sup>58</sup>

When he returned to the question of what Britain thought of her empire and what she proposed to do with it, however, he could write with petulance and paranoia about his otherwise longed-for homeland. The English public neither knew nor cared. The colonial office alternated between ignorant meddling and cool disdain. The straits government, though much closer to reality, did not understand the Malays and was pursuing a course that was not in their best interests. There was far too much red tape, a blind concern for economic well-being as defined by Europeans, and a tendency to rule through middlemen—Eurasians, Sikh police, and Indian clerks—who were hated by the people and who victimized them rather than providing the honest government that alone could justify alien rule.<sup>59</sup> White officers were too expensive, which was why the government depended on such people. In the future, he thought, it would be even worse, for as bureaucracy grew, young European recruits would know less and less about the Malays and would be more than ever the dupes of their all-powerful office staffs. Europe had defeated Malay civilization only to be itself defeated by its own *babu* minions. In his early days, he wanted the British to study their Malay charges and try to understand them. They were best left alone, undisturbed in their primitive state. Later on, writing from the distance of other continents and from decades of experience elsewhere, he faced the fact of Europe's victory and wrote that it was all for the best. The empire was a great force for good, more intelligent and more benign than the native regimes it had displaced. In this he was joined by his friend Joseph Conrad, who, like him, had seen European rule close up and who felt that England had nothing to apologize for.<sup>60</sup> Listening to Clifford, H. G. Wells, a novelist with very different views, remarked, "Almost thou persuadest me to be an imperialist."<sup>61</sup>

If Clifford's attitude toward the Malays included both romantic attachment and disapproval, and if his feelings about European rule were equally ambiguous, he was in good company. We have seen that Low had

been similarly puzzled. Swettenham was more practical and more unreservedly devoted to the aim of development than were the others, though he understood as well as anyone that big economic and social changes would alter forever many of the traditional attitudes and folkways that he appreciated in the Malays. It was only the simple minded who could escape the dilemmas of interracial government completely and only the most insensitive who could look with unmixed feelings on the phenomena of change in late-century Malaya. This was as true of the Malays perhaps as it was of the British.

From 1887, when Clifford took up his duties as agent in Pahang, until 1899, when he left it for the last time, the state played a cinderella role among the British protected units of the peninsula. Nothing was entirely satisfactory. The C.O. was critical and impatient, without being decisive or consistent. The officers in charge had neither Swettenham's strength and influence at headquarters nor Low's sophistication, long tenure, and prestige. There was no large Chinese population to provide the personnel of development. Yet the British and Chinese tycoons of Singapore and their outside competitors pressed hard for concessions giving them access to natural resources whose potential they greatly exaggerated and which they lacked the wherewithall to exploit. The east coast monsoon, the size of the state, and its primitive communications internally and with other British territory all made it harder to control than west coast areas. Nevertheless, as in the case of Perak in Birch's time, the British had to deal with large numbers of local chiefs who neither understood the new imperium nor willingly subordinated themselves and their remote districts to its unfamiliar and vacillating rule. Governors, as always, occupied an uncomfortable middle position with a powerful, demanding business community on their doorsteps and a conservative, superficially knowledgeable, and tight-fisted C.O. only hours away by cable. Small wonder that Pahang took longer to digest than its predecessors had and proved less viable to all concerned, native and alien.

The first resident was J. P. Rodger. He was a younger son of Robert Rodger of Hadlow Castle in Kent, and had been educated at Eton and Christ Church Oxford.<sup>62</sup> Armed with letters of introduction to Lady Jervois and others, he had come to the East in the early eighties and had accepted a position in Selangor. Lucas in the C.O. wrote that he had private means and that, having done social work in the east end of London, he was just the sort of man "to look after natives."<sup>63</sup> The straits businessmen did not agree, considering him somewhat absurd in manner and less sympathetic to commercial interests than men like Swettenham, whom they thought better suited to Malay administration.<sup>64</sup> Rodger angered concessionaires by demanding, in the government's name, that they behave responsibly and that they give up concessions they were

clearly unable to develop. Some of these men, including Fraser, who gave his name to the well-known hill station on the Pahang-Selangor border, had long dealt directly with the notoriously pliable Sultan Ahmad and naturally resented the presence of a resident bent on protecting the ruler in his own interests.<sup>65</sup> Late in 1891, an *ulu* chief, the *orang kaya* (district chief) of Semantan, who had been insubordinate to the sultan and to the British magistrate at Temerloh, rose in revolt, prompting a joint campaign against him by Rodger from Pekan and Clifford from Kuala Lipis and ending with the expulsion of the chief in 1892. The rebellion was revived shortly afterward, however, resulting in the murder of two Australian miners. Impatient with the cost of maintaining order and with its disappointing economic record, the C.O. wanted to give up Pahang.<sup>66</sup> But Swettenham, who was on leave in England, begged for time. The state was potentially rich in rice and minerals, he said, and would respond to good administration, more competent business representatives, and the building of a railway connecting Ulu Pahang to the Selangor coast. Chinese miners should be encouraged to settle in the state, and British mining inspectors should be appointed.<sup>67</sup>

When Rodger went on leave in 1893, the governor, reacting to business pressure and to his own misgivings about Rodger, agreed that the resident would not return to Pekan, thus in effect saddling him with the blame for Pahang's troubles. The C.O. were not convinced by this, pointing out that Rodger had been sent to make bricks but had been given no straw.<sup>68</sup> In 1894, with a new governor in Singapore and a new acting resident in Pahang, Clifford having just stepped down as acting resident, recommended that new arrangements be made whereby Selangor would take over Ulu Pahang, an agent would be stationed at the main east coast port of Kuantan, and most of the state would be allowed to revert to native rule.<sup>69</sup> But, no sooner had a dispatch to this effect been received in London when another arrived announcing a fresh outbreak of violence, the capture of a police station by rebels, and the sending of reinforcements.<sup>70</sup> A British officer, E. A. Wise, was killed. Mitchell, the new governor, now proposed that Rodger be kept on as resident, that the new road already begun from Kuala Kubu in Selangor be pushed through, and that the rebellion be suppressed. Faith in the future economic well-being of the state was confidentially reiterated, bringing the weary rejoinder from Fairfield in the C.O. that Mitchell was falling under the spell of "the inveterate Pahangites."<sup>71</sup> The voice of business was heard again, claiming that the success of the Pahang Corporation would be assured if the government would only act with firmness and restore order.<sup>72</sup> Clifford took charge, driving the rebels over the border into Trengganu. In October 1895, Lucas wondered, not for the first time, "... how long the farce [would] be allowed to go on."<sup>73</sup> He needn't have asked, for, in fact,

the rebellion was already over. After eight years and though it was still poor and worrisome, Pahang was at peace. Rodger continued officially as resident until 1896, though he did not actually preside in the last three years. Clifford accepted the governorship of North Borneo in 1899, returning briefly to Pahang as resident in 1901, and he then left Malaya, having had much sick leave in his last years and having been denied the Selangor residency by Swettenham, then governor, on the grounds that he was too junior.<sup>74</sup>

The taming of Pahang had been a long and tedious business, much more annoying for the governors of the late eighties and early nineties than Birch's Perak residency had been earlier or the uninspiring start made by Douglas in Selangor and the slow sweeping together of the units that eventually made up Negri Sembilan. But there were compensations. If the C.O. had been able to deflect its gaze from the violence, the disappointments, and the sordid failures that governors were compelled to report on, it would have found in other dispatches a record of steady progress at the district level. In the large this represented a solid achievement—one that more than made up for the expense of expeditionary forces and for the truncated careers of European officers and Malay rajas who did not last the course. In growing towns and in outlying districts all down the west coast, and soon in Pahang as well, a pattern of regularized administration was gradually being established. The difference did not seem great at first because the understaffed British employed rajas as magistrates and *penghulus*. But the fact that such middlemen took orders from the Europeans did not go unnoticed among the common people, who also observed that warfare stopped, that debt slaverly slowly dried up, and that government seemed to be more constructive and systematic than before. The journal of the collector in *Ulu Selangor* is illustrative. He toured constantly, spoke with everyone—Malay, European, and Chinese—inspected crops and mines, and checked his own clerks repeatedly and without advance notice.<sup>75</sup> He pushed the *penghulus* on road maintenance and continually urged permanent settlements rather than the habitual shifting cultivation that was wasteful and that kept everyone poor. He attended village festivities and invited the families of Malay shopkeepers to join him at lunch, but politely refused to accept New Year's presents of food brought to him on that day by representatives of a whole village. When the police told him that this would be taken as an insult, he compromised by staging an entertainment for all—Chinese as well as Malays—after which the food was shared all around. His colleague in Kuala Langat was full of praise for the enterprise of his parishioners, but blamed the state government for not allowing him enough money to use in making loans to settlers. He rejoiced over his progress at learning Malay and hearing cases. "They all look on the magistrate as the arbitrator

and rectifier of their wrongs so that my position is not a difficult one if friendliness is tempered with caution."<sup>76</sup>

As towns grew, it became harder for officers to manage everything themselves. W. E. Maxwell introduced sanitary boards and embryonic municipal councils in Selangor late in the eighties as a means of doing locally what state councils were already doing at their level.<sup>77</sup> Membership was interracial, under the chairmanship of the district officer (as the collector-magistrate came to be called), and duties gradually expanded from the clearing away of refuse and the maintenance of drains to all of the financial and administrative functions of nineteenth-century town government. Maxwell left no doubt as to what he expected of his officers. They were to take responsibility, not waiting for word from headquarters, for all aspects of daily work in their districts, including technical and professional, whether or not specialists were available. *Penghulus* were to be supervised closely, courts were to be run according to regulations and schools and hospitals were to be inspected regularly, and detailed reports prepared. Though he should not rule by fiat—he had no legislative power—he should have precise knowledge of everything that went on in his district; he was to be everywhere and all-knowing. "Without in any way departing from the reserve incumbent upon a British functionary," in short, he was to keep himself up to date on the life of his area and make it progress by his own example, competence, and drive.<sup>78</sup> Only a few years earlier, some officers had complained that they did not know what was wanted by their superiors. By the nineties many would wonder whether such hard taskmasters as Maxwell and Swettenham could ever be satisfied.

Maxwell also took the lead in land policy, perhaps the most vital question to be faced by government if the country was to prosper. The problem was to work out a system of public finance that would provide European and other investors and developers with sufficient security of tenure for their purposes without victimizing the peasantry. Traditionally, all land had been considered the sultan's property, peasants being permitted to farm parts of it in return for a portion of their crops. The Straits Settlements had imported an Indian procedure in the 1830s, legally at least, though it had not been used everywhere or uniformly. In 1880, Swettenham recommended that Ceylon's offer to send an officer to the straits be accepted so that her methods—then thought more appropriate—might be tried.<sup>79</sup> Instead, his bitterest rival, Maxwell, went to Australia in 1882 to study the Torrens system, which, as commissioner of lands, he then applied in the straits. It was essentially the same system that he brought to Selangor later, thus providing the basis for the 1891 land enactment, similar versions of which were adopted in the other three states. The system was designed to keep the rulers' support by paying



them fixed stipends while, at the same time, giving peasants more secure title to the land they tilled and providing the government with a regularized means of identifying, assessing, and taxing all holdings. Both within the states and among them, there was now a unifying force of great strength, a body of legislation that laid down rules for registration, rents, and alienation which gave state governments incomparably more control over society and economy than their native predecessors had ever had.<sup>80</sup> This, together with vastly improved communications, had the effect of further de-emphasizing local differences.

By the eighties it was clear that the states had become more important economically than the Straits Settlements and that, whereas conditions on the ground were increasingly similar among the states, there was in this respect a growing divergence between the states and the colony. Administratively, the position of the governor in Singapore had become somewhat awkward. In the straits, he was a typical crown-colony governor with sweeping executive powers, while *vis à vis* the states, his legal status was that of the crown's representative. Yet in fact it was to him that the residents reported, though they had a relationship to him not unlike his to the C.O. in that he normally left them to their own devices and, all being well, accepted their judgment on day-to-day administration. Anomalies proliferated. Weld proposed in 1885 that part of his salary be paid from state budgets since he spent a good deal of his time on their business and since they were richer than the colony, which therefor should not be saddled with all of the cost of what was in effect a joint executive.<sup>81</sup> In the C.O. there was discussion of the pros and cons. Lucas admitted that the prosperity of the states had put Malaya ahead of the other two Eastern colonies, but he felt that, for legal reasons, the governor's salary should remain a charge on the unit he formally headed. Meade agreed, wishing the governor to remain independent of the states, to which Herbert added that the next governor would probably not travel to the mainland as much as Weld had done. He had talked the matter over with Low, the premier resident. As governors gradually withdrew from states' business—which, in any case, they could not be nearly as familiar with as they were with that of the colony—Low would take over their supervisory functions as a kind of resident-in-chief. Though nothing came of this, Low and the C.O. kept it in mind, and it came up again in the memorandum Low wrote in the summer of 1889 shortly after his retirement.<sup>82</sup> There should be a confederation of the states, he thought, the richer helping the poorer. Swettenham proposed in April 1889, four years after Low's and Herbert's initial musings, the creation of a position called "chief resident," together with the realignment of responsibilities among the C.O., the governor, and the residents.<sup>83</sup> This would take account of the growing wealth and importance of the states, would provide a unified taxation and rail system,

and, as Low proposed, a means of helping the weaker units. In 1893, a change of governors being in prospect, discussion resumed in earnest. As in 1873, it was thought that fundamental changes might be effected more smoothly at a time when new faces were about to appear, offering as always an opportunity for reassignment of senior staff in accordance with the wishes of an incoming governor. Swettenham from his Perak residency produced another memorandum emphasizing the reality of direct rule and the need for more system and less individualism on the part of residents.<sup>84</sup> The governor, Sir Cecil Clementi Smith, reminded the secretary of state that he had written to him "long ago" about appointing a resident-general.<sup>85</sup> Federation was now a more pressing need than ever due to the chronic insolvency of Pahang and the refusal of business members of the Straits Legislative Council to vote for further loans, involving as they were sure to do, an increase of taxation in Singapore.<sup>86</sup> The anomalous position of the governor could be remedied by making him high commissioner in the states and governor in the colony, the resident-general relieving him of the bulk of administrative work in the states. Considerations of personality caused a flurry of interest for a time. It was assumed in all quarters that Swettenham would be resident-general, no one else having a remotely comparable claim. His influence with the rulers was decisive, thought Lucas, who was Swettenham's strongest ally in the C.O. Fairfield disagreed markedly, writing of Swettenham, "He is a headstrong man and I think the new office would turn his head."<sup>87</sup> He remembered Swettenham's involvement in land dealings, calling him the hero of the land-speculation party in the service. It would be better to appoint Maxwell, who had braved the wrath of the governor for opposing that group. Federation, thought Fairfield, would merely create greater opportunities for the Swettenham party. Meade concurred, pointing out that the plan of sending Swettenham around to talk the sultans into a federation would be a mere farce, for "these unhappy dummies will of course agree to anything that they are told to accept."<sup>88</sup> As a result of this controversy, the new governor, Mitchell, was sent out uninstructed. He was to investigate the circumstances on arrival and make recommendations. Meanwhile, from his residency in wealthy Perak, Swettenham offered a small loan to Pahang, promising more in future if needed.<sup>89</sup> As acting governor, Maxwell had the unpleasant duty of reporting this to London, knowing that it would underscore the most unanswerable point in the Swettenham-Lucas case—the financial advantage of a federation on their model.

Mitchell took his time. By contrast with the impulsive Clarke in 1874, he let fifteen months go by before making his proposals, which, however, were much the same as Smith's had been.<sup>90</sup> Personalities continued to impinge on logic. A complete union of the states and the colony, favored

by Maxwell, was rejected "for various reasons," including alleged prejudice against Swettenham, though some of the same arguments put forward in support of unity among the states applied equally to the wider collection of units.<sup>91</sup> Fairfield caved in, noting sourly that no doubt "... the numerous advocates of [federation] on the spot will take occasion to increase their own salaries."<sup>92</sup> It was just as well, for a month later the C.O. got a chief, Joseph Chamberlain, whose outlook was perfectly in tune with that of Lucas and Swettenham and who had little in common with the easygoing Meade or the meticulous Fairfield. Lucas did not bother Chamberlain with the mountain of files on the background. Fairfield observed that when the minister asked Sir Andrew Clarke—a *propos* a possible violation of Pangkor, whether it was not true that the sultans had readily agreed to the new arrangement, the former governor "... rolled with laughter and said yes, but you know what a native's consent amounts to when he is told that the government wants a thing consented to."<sup>93</sup>

Federation became a reality in 1896. One of its most important provisions was civil-service unity, an ending of the separate systems whereby officers had been recruited for the colony and the states. Lucas said that this and the saving of Pahang, in fact, were its two main justifications.<sup>94</sup> Be that as it may, the forces of regulatization and system within the states, which by the late eighties had made continued autonomy a barrier to efficiency and development, were undeniable. The maintenance of four distinct administrations in a small country under a single overall authority could not be defended. Nor does the excessive centralization that followed prove that parochialism had been a good thing or that government should not have adapted to changing conditions on the ground. As a later officer pointed out, the very success of the early residents killed state autonomy.<sup>95</sup> By the nineties the question was not whether reform was desirable but what kind would emerge.

Federation did not alter the influence of the rulers so much as it encased their regimes in a new and more comprehensive framework. The *darbar* of 1897—the first occasion on which all four chiefs met together—was mainly ceremonial. Mitchell had no intention of making it an annual affair because of the expense.<sup>96</sup> Nevertheless, Sultan Idris of Perak continued to show an interest in the letter of the law, as he had done when Low first arrived more than twenty years before. At the 1903 conference, he spoke again of Pangkor, reminding all present, including Swettenham, that residents were meant to be advisers and expressing the hope that each state would continue to manage its own business.<sup>97</sup> Outsiders were still told that the sultans' dignity was to be scrupulously upheld and "... the desire is that under European guidance their rule should not be purely nominal."<sup>98</sup> Swettenham went on insisting that it was the rulers, and not the British government, who appointed civil servants, European and other.<sup>99</sup>

But everyone from junior officers in the states to the minister in London knew that it was the residents who held the real power. When the sultan of Pahang tried to influence the posting of a new resident in 1901, Swettenham was emphatic. Though "... the Malay sultan of the old school [had] still to be reckoned with..."<sup>100</sup> opposition would not be tolerated, especially in so important a matter as the filling of a residency.

What did change was the social atmosphere in which Malay royals lived. It was found that younger men did not look on tradition the same way their elders did. In the early 1900s, a Malay who would soon enter the civil service remarked disapprovingly on the waste incident to festivities such as royal circumcisions, which disrupted all activity, including commerce and farming, for months. The regent of Pahang abolished the custom of common people having to squat down in the presence of royalty, not because he wished to, but because the influx of non-Malays made the custom untenable.<sup>101</sup> Moreover, after a generation of European rule, it was not only the social context of the sultans' authority that had changed out of all recognition but their own conditioning as well. Boys had been to school in the straits and were fluent in English, the younger ones being unable to recall a time when district administration and state-council routine were not controlled by the British. Raja Alang Iskandar of Perak, a future sultan, was sent to Oxford, where he stayed with the family of the master of Balliol and where he was visited by his father, Sultan Idris. Living in a completely European atmosphere for an extended period was a very different experience from spending a few months in Singapore and returning regularly to the familiar haunts of one's youth.<sup>102</sup> Older royals would change less, some never learning English. But even they were confronted with the inexorable demands of an alien civilization that had to be accommodated to. With Clifford as his guide, Idris went to London to attend the coronation of Edward VII. What struck Clifford was the strong impression made both ways—by Europe on the Malay party, and by them on English people whom they met. Neither side totally approved of the other. Idris was appalled by the filth of London, by the unrelenting onslaught of men on nature, and by the anthill existence that the city's teeming millions suffered in the place of life. And even as he gloried in the dignity and grace of the sultan, Clifford could not forget the cruelty of the regime that he and his kind had presided over in the recent past. Yet he was persuaded that between the two there were understanding and sympathy. "... the only bases upon which the rule of the alien in the East can stand and endure."<sup>103</sup> Condescending observations on the Malays came most often from the C.O. and from governors who spent short periods in Malaya, whereas the men of longer and deeper experience expressed over and again a regard that, if not uncritical, was grounded in affection and respect. In 1905, Ernest Birch remarked on the universal

sense of relief and rejoicing that greeted the news of Idris's recovery from an illness. And when news of Low's death arrived that same year, he added: "It may be truly said of [Low] that he was wrapped up in the welfare of Perak, and his names, affectionately pronounced as one word, often fall from the lips of the Perak Malay."<sup>104</sup>

At the turn of the century, people were conscious of an era drawing to a close, of a congenial atmosphere seeming to fade into the past. Birch wrote nostalgically,

It was a human administration. Everyone pulled together in work and in play, in every form of amusement so essential to the "mens sana in corpore sano." The unofficials, who were assisting to increase the prosperity of the country by mining and planting were the friends of the officials, not hesitating to represent their needs and partaking in all forms of sport. The Chinese knew that the Government officer was an approachable person and their readiness to conform to the mining and other regulations imposed upon them bore testimony to the wisdom of the orders issued. The Malays were always in touch with and never shrank from confiding in the officials for they knew that their best interests were the chief care of [the] administration.<sup>105</sup>

The head of the Kuala Lumpur sanitary board was horrified when a colleague wanted to start a club for Europeans only, which would compete with, and possibly submerge, the famous spotted dog. If that had happened, he thought, "... we should be a house divided against itself."<sup>106</sup>

Perhaps no event symbolized the ending of the pioneer phase more than Swettenham's departure in the autumn of 1903. To the end he was a hard driver. Though his genuine feeling for the Malays was undoubted he was not willing to accept them as they were or to leave their cultural evolution to chance. He said the only thing they had lost under British rule was the power to oppress, and he lamented that, despite the great benefits of an ordered society, they were still reluctant to exert themselves in any but the military sphere, now largely closed to them. The ease of their lives made it unnecessary for them "... to invent ideals either of conduct or attainment."<sup>107</sup> It was the same with administrative arrangements. Under his regime as resident-general and high commissioner, the federation had become so tightly centralized that some saw it as more of a union than a collection whose member states retained any semblance of individuality and autonomy.<sup>108</sup> His personal dealings in land and his investments in mining and rubber, before and after he left the country, continue to interest scholars, not all of whom consider such activity to have been entirely proper.<sup>109</sup> However one sees it, Swettenham made no secret of his firm belief in business enterprise as the necessary foundation of im-

perial strength. The affinity of business and government throughout the industrial world in late Victorian years was familiar enough, as was the authentic incredulity with which many political figures reacted when faced with the suggestion of conflicting interests. If Swettenham was careless of the consequences in these matters, he was in good company, as the careers of Lloyd George and many an American senator showed. It was instinctive with him to think on a grand scale and in rather a hurry at times. While on a visit to China in 1902, he and a fellow officer talked of the need for better coordination of Britain's efforts in that part of the world. He endorsed a plan for a new department in the C.O. that would do for East and Southeast Asia what the India Office did for the subcontinent. It would be headed by a council made up of ex-governors and others with experience, the chairman no doubt being Swettenham himself.<sup>110</sup> He saw no reason why Malaya should not be the basis of a new British empire of Southeast Asia, including Burma, the Philippines, and the Netherlands East Indies. And he responded with polite disdain when the secretary of state offered him the governorship of Kenya—a colony that he thought had little or no development potential.<sup>111</sup> This was wise. Swettenham and the other breakers of new ground who all left Malaya before or shortly after he did—Low, Maxwell, Rodger, Lister, Treacher, and Clifford—had enjoyed a measure of individual discretion at the residential level that would be hard to find elsewhere in Edwardian times. As the biggest man among them, and the most important civil servant in the history of British Malaya, Swettenham could hardly have been content with a position that offered less scope for starting new things and for holding the reins of total power in his own hands afterward. As the C.O. recognized, there was no one like him anywhere else in the colonies. His own career and the building of Malaya had run their courses together.

### Notes

1. See Birch's journal, March and April 1874, M. On the background, see also Ord to the secretary of state, 10 July 1873, 273/67; secretary of state to governor, 29 Nov. 1873, 273/74 on Kudin's tin concessions to Singapore merchants; governor to secretary of state, 7 Nov. 1874, 273/76, on the sultan's request for Swettenham. See also R. O. Winstedt, "A History of Selangor," *JMBRAS* XII (Oct. 1934).

2. Swettenham's memoranda on subjects such as Johore's status and land tenure in Perak were thought "very able" in London, where he was seen as a logical resident Selangor. See minutes on file 5 July 1878, 273/94, and Swettenham to governor, 13 Jan. 1879, sent on to the C.O., 273/98. It appears that Clarke, who first proposed Swettenham as resident Selangor, was dissuaded by advice in Singapore. See C. N. Parkinson, *British Intervention in Malaya 1867-77* (Singapore: University of Malaya Press, 1960) p. 184. See also Swettenham's journals, April-

Oct. 1875, M., on his talks with the sultan. On Davidson's residency, see S. M. Middlebrook, "Yap Ah Loy," *JMBRAS* XXIV (1951).

3. Douglas held the substantive rank of assistant resident at first. On his life, see P. L. Burns, *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, vol. 4 (1851-90) (Carlton, Victoria: Melbourne University Press, 1972), 92. I thank J. M. Gullick for a copy of this entry.

4. Douglas's diary, 8 Feb. 1877.

5. *Ibid.*, 25 July 1877.

6. See the Selangor staff list of 1877, *Malaysia in History* 12 (Mar. 1969): 21. Emily Innes, *The Cherones With the Guilding Off* (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1974) p. 1. says that the two others were Eurasians. The 1877 list has Robert P. Bruce at Kuala Selangor and L. E. Neubronner at Birmam. A Mr. Evans was also a collector in 1877.

7. Douglas's diary, 4 Aug. 1876.

8. *Ibid.*, 8 Dec. 1876.

9. Gottlieb, *ibid.*, 20 Nov. 1876. Gill's position is not given. The journals of Innes and other Selangor officers in these years are most useful. See Kuala Selangor journals of 1878, Roberts and Innes, and education report, Hawley, 1880, M.

10. Douglas's diary, 23 Sept. 1876.

11. Minute by secretary of state on requests to officer administering the government, 14 Feb. 1880, 273/102.

12. Emily Sadka, *The Protected Malay States 1874-1895* (Kuala Lumpur: University of Malaya Press, 1968), chaps. 5 and 6.

13. "Selangor 1876-1882, The Bloomfield Douglas Diary," *JMBRAS*, XLVIII (1975).

14. Governor to secretary of state, 17 June 1882, 273/115.

15. Minutes by Meade et al., 24 Nov. 1882, 273/115. See also Loh Fook Seng, *The Malay States 1877-1895* (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1969), p. 116 ff.

16. 6 Sept. 1882, 273/116. There would seem to be little doubt that the sultan and the resident did genuinely like one another. In 1879, Douglas recommended that the sultan be presented with a sword of honor for his cooperation in the ending of debt slavery. See file, 4 Apr. 1879, 273/98.

17. Weld's experience with the Selangor staff had been dismal. In the period 1880-1882, he had had to sack two-thirds of the service for various causes. See Lady Lovat, *The Life of Sir Frederick Weld, GCMG* (London: Murray, 1914), p. 356. The doing of this puts Weld in a weak position to criticize Douglas in the matter Middlebrook calls attention to (p. 94), that is, Douglas's severity with his subordinates.

On the Negri Sembilan officers, there is more to be said. Before being made resident in 1895, Lister had served as superintendent of old Negri Sembilan, beginning in 1887. Murray was praised by Robinson in a letter to Meade, 21 Feb. 1880, 273/102, for his handling of the Sungei Ujong succession. See also Murray to colonial secretary, Singapore, 15 Jan. 1880, 273/102. At first, the governor also commended Paul, to secretary of state, 14 Dec. 1882, 273/117. Three years later, the C.O. was inclined to remove him for his mishandling of a discrepancy in the

accounts; see minutes on file, 4 Feb. 1885, 273/133. Weld gradually tightened his hold on Sungei Ujong and its small neighbors, which were later joined to it, making Negri Sembilan. See governor to secretary of state, 19 Feb. 1886, and Rembau agreement, 11 Oct. 1887, 273/148. It was necessary to remove the *datu klana* (chief) of Sungei Ujong in 1889. See governor to secretary of state, 14 Feb. 1889, 273/158. By 1892, the economic development needs of Sungei Ujong were seen to be beyond Paul's capacity, as Selangor's had been thought beyond Douglas's, and Pahang's beyond Rodger's. See governor to secretary of state, 28 Nov. 1892, 273/183. It was thought that the area might be attached to Selangor. Paul was forcibly, though honorably, retired in 1893.

On Lister's views of administration, see his pamphlet, "The Negri Sembilan, Their Origin and Constitution," enclosed with the governor's dispatch to the secretary of state, 29 Jan. 1889, 273/158. By respecting tradition, he wrote, "... it is very easy to administer a large Malay population."

18. See F. A. Swettenham, *Footprints in Malaya* (London: Hutchinson, 1942), Professor Roff's introduction to *Stories and Sketches by Sir Frank Swettenham* (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1967), and Winstedt's article on Swettenham in the *Dictionary of National Biography, 1941-50*, 1959. I am indebted to the late Francis Carnell of the Institute of Commonwealth Studies, Oxford, for information on Swettenham, provided from personal knowledge, in 1959. The Birch memoir is also enlightening (p. 34). In his diary, Douglas speaks of Swettenham as "cheeky as usual" (p. 30). At the time, Douglas was Swettenham's superior, and the two were not on bad terms.

19. See Ann Fremantle, *The Three Cornered Heart* (New York: Viking, 1971), pp. 187-89, for an outside view of this aspect of Swettenham's life.

20. J. H. M. Robson, "Recollections and Reflections," *British Malaya*, Nov. 1926.

21. On Swettenham's views of the Malays, see his *British Malaya* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1955). *Footprints; Stories and Sketches* (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1967); "On the Native Races of the Straits Settlements and the Malay States," *Journal of the Anthropological Institute*, Nov. 1887: 221-27; "Some Account of the Independent Native States of the Malay Peninsula," *JMBRAS* 6 (Dec. 1880): 161-202; and J. de V. Allen, "Two Imperialists," *JMBRAS* 37 (1964): 41-73.

22. F. A. Swettenham, "A Love Filtre," *Stories and Sketches*, pp. 189-90. On Europe's superiority, see pp. 19 and 136.

23. F. A. Swettenham "Local Colour," *Stories and Sketches*, pp. 207-208.

24. C. S. C. to C. O., 20 June 1870, 273/44.

25. File, 5 July 1878, 273/94. See also Swettenham to Jervois, 27 Dec. 1876, 273/90, on swords of honor for sultans. His reference to the C. O. cricket team is in *Footprints*, p. 70. When the governor wanted to check a point on land tenure, he wrote direct to Swettenham, then in Perak, not to the resident. See Swettenham to governor, 13 Jan. 1879, 273/98. Though Jervois depended heavily on Swettenham, he was not uncritical, especially regarding Swettenham's work in Langat. See the diary of Jervois's private secretary, 1 Sept. 1875.

26. "Progress of Siamese Influence in the Malay Peninsula," forwarded to the C. O. by Weld, 7 June 1882, 273/118. In his diary, he notes that after a talk with the



governor in Malacca, he wrote a report for him on district administration (6 June 1883, M.).

27. Colonial secretary to Swettenham, conveying the governor's message, 19 Sept. 1883, Selangor secretariat files, M.

28. File, 23 Aug. 1882, 273/95.

29. *Ibid.*

30. They went to Pahang together in 1884 and later to China and Japan. One has the impression that Lister's social standing as the son of a peer was not irrelevant to Swettenham, though Lister was a notoriously pleasant man, much liked in Malaya. On Swettenham's unusually kind, almost deferential, treatment of Clifford, much his junior, see A. J. Stockwell, "Sir Hugh Clifford's Early Career," *JMBRAS* XLIX (1976). Once again, it is not perhaps irrelevant that Clifford was the grandson of a peer and was well connected in London.

31. Birch, memoirs, p. 55. See also M. Sheppard, "Early Kuala Lumpur," *Malaysia in History* 14 (April 1972).

32. See Swettenham to colonial secretary, 15 Oct. 1883, 273/123.

33. See his 1883 diary, M.

34. Acting resident Selangor to collectors, 25 Dec. 1883, M., written on Swettenham's instructions and during his temporary absence.

35. J. H. M. Robson, *Records & Recollections 1889-1934* (Kuala Lumpur: Kyle, Palmer & Co., 1934), p. 1.

36. *Ibid.*, citing Swettenham's talk before the Royal Colonial Institute in 1896.

37. To the secretary of state, 23 June 1884, 273/128.

38. See W. Linchan, "A History of Pahang," *JMBRAS* 14 (June 1936). On Read's checkered career as a meddler in Johore affairs, which resulted at one point in his suspension from the Legislative Council, see governor to secretary of state, 18 May 1878, 273/93, and 21 Feb. 1880, 273/102, and Anson to secretary of state, 27 Mar. 1880, 273/102.

39. Acting governor to secretary of state, 1 Oct. 1884, 273/130.

40. *Footprints*, pp. 89-90.

41. To secretary of state, 23 May 1885, 273/134. See also governor to secretary of state, 5 July 1885, 273/134, reporting that the sultan had advised the maharajah of Johore that he did not want a resident.

42. See Weld to secretary of state, 5 Jan. 1886, 273/143, in which the pro-British stand of the Raja Muda is discussed. Clifford's journal is enclosed with Weld's dispatch of 11 Apr. 1887, 273/144. The C.O. was wary of Weld's enthusiasm for a forward move: "Sir F. Weld has been impetuous again . . ." (file, 3 Aug. 1887, 273/146). But it went along. Much later, the sultan complained that the whole arrangement had been pushed through hurriedly and that his letter asking for assurances that religion and custom would not be interfered with had not been answered. See resident to resident-general, 19 Apr. 1900, 273/261.

43. Clifford's mother was the daughter of a professor of classics at London. See A. J. Stockwell, "Sir Hugh Clifford's Early Career," *JMBRAS* XLIX (1976). I thank Tan Sri Mubin Sheppard for allowing me to see a letter to him from Sir George Maxwell, 28 Nov. 1955, discussing Clifford's work in Pahang. J. A.

Harvey (notes, to H. P. Bryson, 18 Apr. 1970) who served in Pahang in the 1930s, remembers that Clifford's genealogy was still used by the royal family as the authoritative account of their history.

44. Clifford's health may not have been totally irrelevant in the decision to enter colonial service rather than the army. From his early years onwards he suffered from mental difficulties. He is known to have experienced cyclical insanity later. His diaries refer to a "trouble" and "the old agonies" (see "the sum," at the end of the 1893 diary and also entry of 30 May 1888, M.). I have benefited from many talks with the late W. H. Ingrams in the C.O., who knew Clifford well.

45. H. Clifford. *Bushwhacking* (New York: Harper, 1929), p. 161.

46. The thrill of taking risks was something he would not part with "...for anything on earth." *Stories by Sir Hugh Clifford* (Kuala Lumpur, 1966), p. 88.

47. See H. Clifford, *In Court and Kampong* (London: The Richards Press, 1897), pp. 15 and 188, and *Studies in Brown Humanity* (London, 1898), p. 122.

48. *Bushwhacking*, p. 168

49. See "The Spirit of the Tree," in *Brown Humanity; Bushwhacking*, pp. 210 and 219; *In Court and Kampong*, p. 249.

50. H. Clifford, "Life in the Malay Peninsula As It Was and Is," *Proceedings of the Royal Colonial Institute*, vol. 30 (1898-1899).

51. *Bushwhacking*, pp. 147-48.

52. See H. Clifford, "The Nature of an Oath," *Malay Monochromes* (London, 1913).

53. Clifford's diary, 22 Jan. 1893, M. Compare with *In Court and Kampong*, p. 248.

54. Clifford, "The Sum," 1893 diary, M.

55. *Ibid.* And see *Bushwhacking*, p. 221, and compare with *Brown Humanity*, p. 43.

56. H. Clifford, *In Days That Are Dead* (New York: Doubleday, 1926), pp. 27-28. Pages 28-29 are interesting as an autobiographical statement of reasons for entering colonial service.

57. *Bushwhacking*, p. 47.

58. *In Court and Kampong*, pp. 245 ff.

59. *Ibid.*, pp. 7 and 246. And see *Brown Humanity*, pp. 124-37; *In Days That Are Dead*, pp. 5-7; *Malay Monochromes*, pp. 311-12.

60. See *In Days That Are Dead* p. 156 and Conrad's review of *Studies in Brown Humanity* in *Notes on Life and Letters* (London: J.M. Dent, 1925), pp. 58-60. J. de V. Allen feels that Clifford was confused and ambivalent. See "Two Imperialists."

61. Clifford told this to Gerald Hawkins, then secretary to resident Pahang, when Clifford visited Lipis as governor (Hawkins to H. P. Bryson, 12 Feb. 1968).

62. I thank Dr. C. Gray of Yale University for access to his notes on the Rodger papers in the National Library of Wales. Rodger was offered a commission in the 13th Hussars in 1871. He was called to the bar in 1877.

63. Minute on Rodger's letter applying for the Pahang residency, 18 July 1888, 273/157.

64. See the notes of R. J. B. Clayton, an 1898 cadet, who served in Pahang, RCS. Also governor to secretary of state, 10 Mar. 1893, 273/186, reporting on the views of Mr. Shelford, an unofficial member of the Legislative Council.

65. See governor to secretary of state, 10 June 1889, 273/160; also Dickson to Swettenham, 10 Oct. 1890, 273/168, and minute by Lucas, 5 Dec. 1890, noting how Pahang businessmen seduced government officers. "Mr. Lockhart seems to have done his work with too much tenderness for the interests of the precious company." Lockhart was superintendent of police.

66. See minutes on governor to secretary of state, 6 Sept. 1892, 273/182; also Pahang Annual Report, 1892, M.

67. Swettenham's memorandum, 24 Nov. 1892, 273/185.

68. Minute by Lucas on governor to secretary of state, 10 Mar. 1893, 273/186.

69. Governor to secretary of state, 12 June 1894, 273/196.

70. Egerton, acting resident, to governor, 16 June 1894, 273/196.

71. Governor to secretary of state, 20 Oct. 1894, 273/198. Lucas thought Singapore was giving too much authority to Clifford who was not old enough and that this was part of the explanation of the trouble.

72. Arthur Griffard, secretary of the Pahang Corporation, to secretary of state, 20 July 1894, 273/200.

73. Minute, 7 Oct. 1895, 273/206, on the latest Pahang report. The troubles with concessionaires continued. See resident-general to high commissioner, 3 Aug. 1896, dispatches, M. Also governor to secretary of state, 23 Mar. 1896, 273/213.

74. Swettenham to secretary of state, 27 Oct. 1901, 273/274. Sir J. Anderson, Swettenham's successor as governor, was sounded on Clifford's possible return to Malaya in 1910 and rejected the idea. See Anderson to secretary of state, 27 July 1910, 273/362, minute by Collins.

75. McCarthy's journal, 3 Jan. 1884 ff., M.

76. George Bellamy's journal, Nov. 1887, M. Bellamy, a Trinity College Dublin graduate, arrived in 1884. For a discussion of deference given to early collectors by the Malays, see W. W. Skeat, *Malay Magic* (London: Macmillan, 1900).

77. See Birch's memoirs, chap. 9. Also *Selangor Government Gazette*, 23 Jan. 1891, 469/1. On the name "sanitary board," see Gerald Hawkins, "The Passing of the MCS," *Straits Times Annual*, 1967.

78. No. 105, "Minute by the Resident for the Guidance of District Officers," 16 May 1890, *Selangor Government Gazette*, 469/1.

79. Governor to secretary of state, 15 Dec. 1880, 273/105.

80. How the code worked in Selangor is treated by Ernest Birch, acting resident, in the *Selangor Gazette*, 7 July 1893, 469/3. See also Sir George Maxwell to N.R. Jarrett, 28 Mar. 1952, Bryson papers, RCS, on his father's system. Also J.L. Humphreys, British adviser Kedah, "Notes on Second Draft FMS Land Code, March 1925," 3 Sept. 1925, CRP; and Sir William Maxwell, "The Law and Customs of the Malays with Reference to the Tenure of Land," *JMBRAS* 12 (June 1884).

81. To the secretary of state, 24 July 1885, 273/138, minutes by Herbert, Meade, and Lucas.

82. 6 July 1889, 273/164. Low did not favor a highly centralized federal solution, however, and did not propose a single head residing in the states. Rather, he wanted a kind of secretary for native affairs in Singapore, which Swettenham had already been and which Jervois had favored in the 1870s.

83. Memorandum, S.P. 12, M.

84. 3 Feb. 1893, S.P. 12, M. In September, there was an exchange between Swettenham and the *Straits Times* in which Swettenham took quite different stands, however, and on which his journalist critics voiced fears that a super-resident in the states, independent of Singapore, would be bad since such an officer would be free to go his own way and the influence of business, normally exerted in the Legislative Council, would be weakened. See *Straits Times*, 29 Sept. to 5 Oct. 1893, S. P. 12 M.

85. Governor to secretary of state, 29 May 1893, 273/187. The secretary of state, Lord Ripon, had written to the governor, Smith, 19 May 1893, on the same subject. (Misc. 8, M.)

86. Governor to secretary of state, 10 June 1893, 273/188. And see his dispatch of 30 June 1893, Misc. 8, M., outlining his proposed federation scheme in detail. Pahang's poverty is discussed in Lucas's minute on governor to secretary of state, 28 June 1893, 273/188. Fairfield, who opposed the idea of federation, minuted on 17 Aug. 1893 that Lucas and Swettenham won out because Pahang could not be saved any other way. On legal aspects, see Lucas's minute of 30 Oct. 1893.

87. Minute, 17 Aug. 1893, on secretary of state's memorandum to governor, 19 May 1893, 273/188, commenting on Swettenham's memorandum.

88. Meade, minute, Dec. 1893, secretary of state to governor, 19 May 1893, 273/188. Fairfield went on to note that the proposal would result in a "...barbaric federation of the sultans and Mr. Swettenham," (11 Dec. 1893). Maxwell had written to Fairfield, 14 Nov. 1893, 273/187, that a federation binding the states to the colony would be better.

89. Maxwell to secretary of state, 4 Sept. 1893, 273/189.

90. Governor to secretary of state, 1 May 1895, 273/203. On this dispatch, Lucas minuted that Mitchell's plan was virtually identical with Smith's and that, in any case, the secretary of state was pretty well committed to it in advance of Mitchell's arrival (30 May 1895).

91. Lucas minute, Dispatch, 1 May 1895, 273/203. It should be noted in fairness to Swettenham that Maxwell as colonial secretary would have been in a position of greater power *vis a vis* Swettenham if the Maxwell proposal had been accepted.

92. *Ibid.*, minute, 30 May 1895.

93. *Ibid.*, minutes of 8 Nov. 1895 and 16 Nov. 1895. It should not be inferred that Lucas was in any way less moral than Fairfield. Their differences were on matters of substance.

94. *Ibid.*, 8 Nov. 1895.

95. S. W. Jones, *Public Administration in Malaya* (London: Oxford University Press, 1953), p. 32. See also Khoo Kay Kim, "The Federation of 1896: Its Origin," *Peninjua Serjarah* 1 (Dec. 1966), and A. C. Milner, "The Federal Decision: 1895," *JMBRAS* 43 (July 1970). The question of whose idea it was has stirred controversy. Swettenham always claimed it as his (*British Malaya*, p. 363; *Footprints*,

p. 104; "Minutes of the Conference of Chiefs," 1903, 20 July 1903, 3; Swettenham to secretary of state, 7 Dec. 1902, 273/284; Swettenham to T.C. Macnaghten of the C.O., 25 Dec. 1916, 273/455). Lucas wrote that there was no "friendly collusion" between him and Sir Cecil Clementi Smith, but that each had thought of the idea separately, (minute, 30 Oct. 1893 on file, 19 May 1893, 273/188). Sir Ernest Birch in chap. 9 of his memoirs notes that Sir F. Dickson, colonial secretary 1886-1891, wanted to be administrator of the states and that Sir. W. Maxwell had the same ambition. Smith favored putting one officer in charge of all four states. Swettenham undoubtedly put the idea into definite form. Sir George Maxwell ("The Administration of Malaya," *British Malaya*, May 1943) wrote that federation simply recognized the existing facts of communications and the economy.

96. To the secretary of state, 21 July 1897, 273/226.

97. Minutes, 23 July 1903, 25, M.

98. Memorandum on the FMS system, 11 July 1899, sent to the Foreign Office for use in answering an American request for information on colonial rule (273/253).

99. Governor to secretary of state, 6 Mar. 1897, 273/228.

100. Swettenham to secretary of state, 18 Apr. 1901, 273/272. The sultan was objecting to Clifford. He preferred Arthur Butler, whom he knew to be "soft and gentle and patient." But it was Clifford who got the appointment. Chamberlain's private secretary, H.F. Wilson, wrote that "...the sultan for all practical purposes equals the British resident." (Minute, 16 Oct. 1898, on Swettenham's letter to Lucas, 15 June 1898, 273/241.) Even the sultan of Johore, occupying a uniquely independent position, was given to understand in no uncertain terms that he was subordinate to the high commissioner (Lucas to sultan, 13 Aug. 1901, 273/277). As resident-general, Treacher opposed the appointment of Europeans to the personal staffs of sultans because it might give the rulers airs. (High commissioner to secretary of state, 12 Nov. 1902, 273/284.)

101. Diary of Mahmud bin Mat, chaps. 2 and 4, M.

102. See Mary Florence Smith, *Arthur Lionel Smith* (London: Murray, 1928). Mrs. Smith, wife of the master of Balliol, was a second mother to Raja Alang.

103. *Bushwhacking*, p. 180.

104. Annual Report, 1905, M.

105. Birch's memoirs, chap. 9, pp. 8-9.

106. G. T. Tickell, "Early Days in Selangor," *British Malaya* (Feb. 1928): 257. Robson, *Records*, p. 51, wrote that "Racial distinctions were unknown here in the early days."

107. To the secretary of state, 11 July 1903, 273/294.

108. Swettenham wrote to the secretary of state, 6 May 1903, 273/294, suggesting that the resident-general's secretary be designated federal secretary. This was turned down. Fiddian of the C.O. minuted: "Sir F. S. emphasizes the fact that the Malay states are federated *ad nauseam*." (24 June 1903, 273/294.) G.W. Johnson minuted, 20 Aug. 1902, 273/283, that Swettenham had organized the FMS so efficiently that it would run itself. He thought it might be well to abolish the high commissionership when Swettenham retired and have the resident-general correspond directly with the C.O.

109. See J. de V. Allen, "Johore 1901-1914," *JMBRAS* 45 (1972): 1-28 and J.H. Drabble, *Rubber in Malaya 1876-1922* (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1973). See also Loh, *The Malay States*, p. 66.

110. Swettenham to secretary of state, 12 Nov. 1902, 273/284, enclosing the memorandum of G. T. Hare of the Chinese Protectorate. The C.O. were amused. Nothing came of the idea in that form or at that time. See also Sir W. Treacher's "British Malaya With More Special Reference to the Federated Malay States," *Journal of the Society of the Arts* LV (22 Mar. 1907). One of Swettenham's main points was that the British were popular in Malaya whereas they were not in Egypt and India. See also *Footprints*, pp. 162-63.

111. *Footprints*, p. 142. He notes that most governors knew little about their colonies (p. 161), a consideration that could not have been far from his mind as he thought of his own career in relation to the possibility of going to Africa.

THE YEARS from federation in 1896 to the end of the First World War were a time of consolidation. Legally, the civil services of the colony and the Federated Malay States (FMS) were now one, with a common system of recruitment and with all officers being available for duty in any of the units. Nevertheless, original appointments were still made to the colony or to the FMS, and the legacy of separation continued on into the twenties and thirties in various ways. Some officers served all their time in the colony; others, in the FMS. Many resisted transfer from one to the other. Dissatisfactions arose over differences in rate of promotion, in cost of living, and in type of duty. Examination men, appointed as cadets, did not easily give up their sense of superiority over those who had joined the states services under the old patronage system or over men who had come in as junior officers from 1888 onwards. New arrangements had to be made to provide common means of judging language ability and legal competence.<sup>1</sup>

In the examination competition for Eastern cadetships during the summer of 1896, there were fourteen openings: three in Ceylon, five in the straits, and six in the FMS. Candidates were permitted to indicate choices. Officially, the C.O. made assignments according to needs in the various dependencies as they saw them, although in effect, these were almost invariably determined by examination marks. Ceylon had always been the most wanted colony, followed by Hong Kong, the straits, and the FMS in that order.<sup>2</sup> To London the continuation of such hierarchies among the territories was annoying. They were even less sympathetic to gradations within particular units, the Malayan congeries being the worst offenders. For their part Malaya's cadets felt that the C.O. was inconsistent in calling for high standards and imperial unity on the one hand and in resisting costly improvements on the other. They wanted a complete reorganization such as Ceylon had recently experienced.<sup>3</sup> Without this the C.O.'s wish that officers of the colony and the FMS be constantly reshuffled so as to reduce parochialism would entail serious morale problems. Swettenham felt, for example, that L. P. Ebdon, an FMS officer with a good record, would do well as resident councillor Malacca, but he knew there would be an uproar if Ebdon got the post since this would raise him over the heads of three other officers who, though less competent in

Swettenham's opinion, had entered the straits service as examination cadets, whereas Ebdon, having failed the examinations, had started as a patronage appointee in Selangor.<sup>4</sup> There was a feeling that requiring two languages rather than one, as formerly—a change the C.O. wanted as part of a general improvement in standards—would be unfair because it was not part of the older officers' contracts. Similarly, it was hard to get rid of certain outdated practices that were encased in the colonial regulations, one being the system whereby men about to go on leave made their own arrangements with brother officers for covering their work while they were away. This had been workable enough in times when there were very few officers and when leaves were infrequent. With a bigger service and a much wider range of administrative tasks to perform, a more regularized system was called for.

The C.O. complained that they lacked information on conditions in the various posts, which they would need if they were to advise applicants of what to expect. They had no tables of comparative seniority to use in judging governors' recommendations on promotions and postings, a serious disadvantage now that the secretary of state had decided to handle personally all cases of men drawing \$2,400 a year or more.<sup>5</sup> Heretofore, the office had depended on personal knowledge. When Ernest Birch was recommended for the Selangor residency, Lucas was on firm ground, having known Birch as a fellow junior in the C.O. twenty years before. He was well aware that Birch, like his father, was prone to chronic indebtedness, but that he was able, likeable, and popular. The recommendation was approved, though the dispatch, with a copy in Birch's file, stated that the minister would watch his progress and approve no further promotion unless the debts were settled.<sup>6</sup> In most other cases, approval had been pro forma. To remedy this, the services would be regraded, and all posts classified according to their importance. Passed cadets—that is, those who had passed their language and law examinations—would then be able to move directly into substantive posts instead of remaining for years in a pool awaiting the opening up of positions for which they were qualified but which were closed to them by a glut of senior men. Allowances would be assigned to certain jobs to offset glaring differences in costs of living. A major advantage of such a reform, from the C.O.'s point of view, would be a reduction in the independence of residents, who had traditionally made assignments according to whim. What was needed, London thought, was a government of rules, not of men.

Mitchell and Swettenham had mixed feelings about all this. Higher salaries they could favor, and more professionalism in certain respects. Good pay was one of the reasons for the prestige of the ICS.<sup>7</sup> But if the system became too machinelike, was there not a danger that the crucial human qualities would be crowded out? Mitchell never failed to empha-



size the importance of background in judging his officers. Of A. T. D. Berrington, senior magistrate in Perak, he wrote that, in addition to being a highly competent lawyer, the man had been at Clifton and Christ Church, was quiet and well bred, and had "... that somewhat rare quality [in a colony] of not being on too intimate terms with his subordinates."<sup>8</sup> Both Swettenham and his brother, Sir Alexander, acting high commissioner, stressed the importance of getting people who were "gentlemen in the truest sense of the word," as Raja Brooke had done to his benefit in Sarawak.<sup>9</sup> The governor and the resident-general still hoped for a return to the system of personal selection rather than examinations, at least for some of the less bureaucratic posts. India went on requiring tests in horsemanship, while Malaya had got no farther towards recognizing the importance of physical qualifications than chest measurements. Returning to arguments he had made before, Mitchell noted that if the tin economy faltered, there would be less money for salaries. Would poor states be able to attract the meritocracy of the universities? Malaya's officers "... were not as a rule highly educated and some were certainly not highly intelligent"; but they had done their work admirably, and government had been efficient until the C.O. had begun sending out men "... only slightly inferior to those selected for the [ICS]."<sup>10</sup> The result, he said, ramming the point home, had been frequent refusals of appointment or resignations of passed cadets. If this sort of thing were kept up, the country would soon have to depend on men of African or Asian descent, two of whom were already serving. What he wanted were "... young men of good physique and energetic and fearless disposition, of moderate [intellectual] attainments and if possible well brought up. High scholarship is not needed. When it goes with disinclination to give up luxuries it produces inefficiency. In the C.O. I tried to stress bodily training and personal character."<sup>11</sup> If examinations were absolutely necessary they should come after interviews, not before. The Foreign Office used this method.

The C.O. were not impressed. Malaya was well able to afford good salaries, as the recent large intakes showed. Physical examinations could easily be arranged. If written examinations had produced the world's finest cadres for India, they would do the same for Malaya. And if by chance an overly bookish type slipped through, he could be posted to the colony rather than to the FMS and could be given secretariat duties. Nor did the office think Malaya compared badly with other colonies any longer. On the contrary, it was beginning to rival Ceylon as a supplier of senior officers for smaller territories. Sir William Maxwell had left to become governor of the Gold Coast, followed by Sir Henry McCallum to Lagos in 1897. Sir Edward Merewether went to Malta as lieutenant governor in 1902, proceeding on to the governorships of Sierra Leone and

the Leewards. Having served as governor of North Borneo, Clifford departed in 1903 for a colonial secretaryship and four governorships. Swettenham was offered Kenya. Lecturing in the United States after his retirement in 1904, Rodger remarked that Malaya was then viewed as a "... training ground for governors of tropical colonies," especially ones with complicated political problems and a large potential for economic development.<sup>12</sup> These characteristics, together with Malaya's nearness to the Philippines, caused the United States government to send London a long list of questions about how Malaya was governed, further testimony to the rising prestige of the country at the turn of the century.<sup>13</sup> Though there was some condescension and amusement in the C.O.—"... they have first got to catch their hare before they call in an expert to help them cook it..."—the office was flattered by the request and admitted that the process of drafting answers had been informative for the British themselves. There was talk of sending Swettenham to Manila or having him speak with officials of the American Embassy in London during his next leave.<sup>14</sup>

For officers serving in Malaya, these were years of transition from a sense of inferiority to better morale and a realization that conditions had improved. The service's reputation in Britain was rising accordingly. It was a slow business, with many dips of the curve. At first, the dramatic increase in numbers of applications meant only that universities were turning out more graduates than before. In this buyer's market, it was not surprising that there would be more good men than there was room for at the top and that some would take positions they were not entirely suited to. Disappointment would follow, reflecting incompatibility of tastes and work and also a lack of information beforehand. In the late 1890s, there were four resignations of cadets who had barely started their careers in the FMS. The criticisms of the first two—A. S. Jackson and F. W. Cape—blossomed into a *cause célèbre*, with newspaper publicity in the straits and London, and denunciations and rebuttals back and forth for months. Jackson started off by explaining to his superior in Perak that the "relaxing climate" of Oxford had been bad for his health while there, that his doctor had recommended more bracing air, and that no one in the civil service commission or the C.O. could tell him whether or not Malaya offered that commodity.<sup>15</sup> He weakened his case, however, by writing in confidence to Treacher, the acting resident-general, admitting that his real reason was overwork at university and fear that his mind was being affected by worry and depression, conditions that were heightened by the strangeness and bad climate of Perak. His father reproached the C.O. for sending "educated young English gentlemen" to places which the office itself knew nothing of.<sup>16</sup> The son had been at Clifton and at University College Oxford, where he read classics. Failing to obtain a place in the

home civil service or the ICS, he had accepted Malaya without being told anything about it and, worse, without being allowed time to make inquiries before coming to a decision. The gentleman in the C.O. whose responsibility was to dispatch recruits to their colonies, he went on, had admitted having been instructed not to reveal how things really were. On arrival, his son had found that senior and inferior officers blocked the promotions of juniors, and that he was forced to associate with failed planters who were "lacking in education or refinement" and who had "no higher ambition than continual drunkenness and barefaced immorality."<sup>17</sup> A few weeks later Cape resigned from a post in Perak, confiding to the secretary to government that poor pay and dim prospects were the reasons, and remarking that he preferred a schoolmaster's job in England.<sup>18</sup> On returning home, the two wrote a letter to *The Times*, entitled "Honi soit qui mal y pense" and signed "Oxonian and Cantab.," setting forth their cases against the government. The letter was later printed in the *Malay Mail* as well.<sup>19</sup>

Treacher, by this time back in his post as resident Perak, wrote to Swettenham, the resident-general, with details of the resignations. Both young men had been treated kindly, he said, Cape being a distant relative of his. He admitted that the cost of living was a real source of grievance, but it was absurd to complain of hard conditions at the time. "There is practically no...roughing it [now]."<sup>20</sup> The two were young and apparently soft. No doubt they had made a mistake in leaving "...the social comforts of [England] to take part in the work of introducing civilization in a Malay state; it is not of such stuff that the men who have helped to make the [empire] were formed."<sup>21</sup> In the ensuing correspondence, it was discovered that the C.O. had not only been helpful about supplying information on Malaya, but had given the recruits the name of an FMS officer on leave, whom they had not got in touch with. It was conceded that more could be done in this sphere and that salaries ought to be higher. Swettenham used the case to renew his plea for a return to appointments by patronage, pointing out that written examinations could not identify physical stamina, character and the family background and breeding without which an officer would be unable to "...command the respect of the various people over whom he holds authority."<sup>22</sup> A. R. Venning, secretary to government in Perak, defended the senior men who had turned a wilderness into prosperous states, asking if they were now to make way for "young gentlemen from the universities" who seemed afraid to "mix in the affairs of a wicked world."<sup>23</sup>

In the following year, the third resignation was received, that of Richard Greentree, also a Perak cadet. A brilliant Balliol scholar, he had collapsed during his civil service examinations, suffering from nervous exhaustion, and had therefore placed far lower than his Oxford tutors had expected

him to do. In Malaya, his behavior was erratic. A member of the medical service examined him after charges were brought by the protector of Chinese that Greentree had abused his Chinese servant boys, following them about at all hours of the day and night and accusing them of engaging in sodomy. He was given to wild outbursts in which he struck himself on the head with a cane, sang to himself in the presence of others, and seemed to dwell in a fantasy world for days at a time. The fourth resignation—that of A. J. L. Darby, a Selangor cadet—came a year later. A son of the dean of Chester, Darby made complaints similar to those of Jackson and Cape, accusing the C.O. of misrepresentation and maintaining that it was wrong to expect men in their twenties, with an expensive education behind them, to be content with service conditions suited to boys of seventeen or eighteen coming out on patronage appointments.

Though the four cases and others coming later were exceptional in that the great majority of recruits did not resign, they compelled the C.O. and the FMS government to reconsider the need for greater care in selection of cadets, for making more information available to them, and for better remuneration. Recognizing a "... general feeling in the universities that the cadetships [were] not worth taking," the C.O. cooperated with Swettenham on changes in the regulations, including an easing of language requirements and the adding of an appendix with information on living costs, climate, and clothing, and suggestions of books to read.<sup>24</sup> The exchange rate between the pound and the straits dollar was adjusted. It was seen that written tests would have to be accompanied by interviews and more thorough physical examinations if cases like Greentree's were to be avoided. Meanwhile, Swettenham sent details on three 1898 cadets—Meadows Frost, G. J. Amery, and A. E. C. Franklin, whose backgrounds were much the same as those of their colleagues who had resigned but who were doing good work and were happy in their new environment. Amery, in Perak, and Franklin, in Negri Sembilan, were already up-country. Frost's only complaint was that he had landed in the secretariat. He wanted a post in the *ulu*, where he could be with the people and make better progress on their language. Swettenham added with relish that he had tried to help the young man to realize his commendable ambition, which contrasted so markedly with the sour comments of the much publicized Jackson and Cape, but that he could find no one willing to exchange a rural post for Frost's job in comfortable Kuala Lumpur.<sup>25</sup> There is ample evidence that this was not mere propaganda and that most recruits were attracted by the exotic, whose lure in fact had been one of the primary reasons for their coming. Some senior officers would still be anxious to cap their careers with a governorship elsewhere—Rodger applied for a transfer to Africa in 1900—and occasionally men seconded to positions outside the FMS elected to remain if the terms were right, such

as Arthur Keyser in Brunei in 1901. But the average junior or middle-ranking officer was content. Within a few years, the C.O. was to find that Malayan administrators were too well off financially to be interested in other colonies.<sup>26</sup>

The 1896-1914 in-take, unlike the Malay states recruits of the earlier period, typified the civil-service class in general, home, Indian and colonial. Most were from public schools and Oxford, Cambridge, or Dublin. Occasionally, a non-university man got in, usually after intensive study with one of the professional crammers in London who were also used by university graduates. Maurice Thunder was at Wren's and took seventieth place in the 1905 examinations, resigning soon after, and E. B. Williams, a Wellingtonian who joined in 1908, spent longer at Wren's than most cadets spent at their universities, managing to place eighty-seventh in his year. Archibald Campbell, 1901, was a St. Andrew's man with an additional degree from a German university. S. W. Jones, destined to go far, entered in 1911 from Manchester University, and G. R. Sykes, 1913, took his degree at Liverpool. A. H. de R. Fonseca, 1900, was a Eurasian with degrees from Bombay and Oxford. He served in the FMS, working mainly with Chinese and Indians. Haji H. G. Sarwar, an Indian, entered in 1896, as did a West Indian, E. L. Talma, both serving in the straits where, for the most part, they would not be called on to deal with Malays. The average degree class was a second, with slightly fewer thirds and an occasional first,<sup>27</sup> Swettenham's feeling that there was not likely to be any correlation between academic performance and success on the job would appear to be borne out by the records of four who took firsts at Oxford or Cambridge—L. McLean, G. Ouston, and F. E. Taylor, all 1900, and V. G. Ezechiel, 1907—whose careers were respectable rather than distinguished. Nor is there any reason to think that men coming to Malaya were all that different in ability from those going elsewhere, though it was often assumed they were inferior because they were usually at the bottom of the list of successful candidates annually. To have passed at all meant that one was among the top 100 to 120 applicants in the whole country. Those who did not place greatly outnumbered those who did, not to mention the thousands who did not sit the examinations at all. The difference in scores between ICS and Malayan cadets was, in many cases, very small. The time would soon come when Malaya would be preferred to India and Hong Kong. Within a decade or two, some would choose it over all the alternatives, including the home civil service. Meanwhile, the annual handful of young men who went to work in Whitehall or who sailed for the East showed by their career performances that good, bad, and indifferent results would obtain, without any particular reference to one's marks on those gruelling tests in Burlington Gardens. The real world was a vastly different and—some would have said—a harder taskmaster.

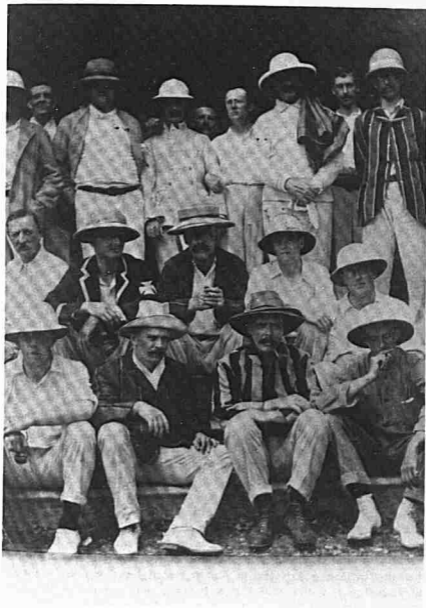


Plate 6. Kuala Kubu, 1903. Cricket group, Kuala Kubu vs. Kuala Lumpur. *Courtesy of Malaysian National Archives.*

Since the cadets were a tiny minority of the total number of graduates that swept out of British universities every year, it may be asked how it was that they set their feet on the path that led to Malaya. Some answered realistically, or cynically, that a man had to have a job, and that if one were not clever enough for grander posts, Malaya was an adequate second best. R. O. (later Sir Richard) Winstedt felt that way in 1902.<sup>28</sup> His fellow cadet of that year, M. B. Shelley, a scholarship student at Cambridge, "... worked twelve hours a day for a year" preparing for the examinations that would open up an honorable, if not an opulent, career.<sup>29</sup> J. E. Kempe, 1911, was frank to say that he would have preferred to stay in England, while W. D. Barron, also 1911, did not fancy the academic life and saw a government job simply as a matter of bread and butter.<sup>30</sup>

Others had family connections with the East. E. W. F. Gilman, 1899, was preceded in the straits by both sets of grandparents as far back as the 1830s. His father and he himself were born in the East, where the family firm was engaged in trade with China.<sup>31</sup> T. W. Clayton, 1900, wanted the ICS but was glad enough to accept the offer of a cadetship in the straits where he had a cousin.<sup>32</sup> The parents and an uncle of W. J. K. Stark, 1910, were in India, which was home to him more than Britain was.<sup>33</sup> W. R. Boyd, 1911, and his younger brother Robert, 1913, were born in India and naturally thought of working in that part of the world.<sup>34</sup> An uncle of J. M. Barron, 1914, wrote him from India, advising that he reject the offer of an ICS appointment he had just received and go instead to Malaya where the political prospects were more likely to assure a full career.<sup>35</sup>

For other men the economic need was there all right but it was not just any kind of work that would do. Though they may have had no contacts in the East, their families were of the sort that inclined to public service instinctively and by tradition, whether it be the civil services, the church, or the army. G. E. (later Sir Geoffrey) Cator, 1907, talked offhandedly of his family's lack of influence in the business world, as though he would have welcomed a job there if it had been otherwise. But he added that, as it was, they never thought of anything but government service for their Cambridge-educated son.<sup>36</sup> So, too, with A. F. (later Sir Arthur) Richards, 1908, the only member of the Malayan services who rose to the peerage. He had wanted to go abroad as long as he could remember. Clifton, his public school, had well-established traditions of imperial service, and by the time Richards got to Christ Church Oxford, he knew very well what he wanted to do with his life.<sup>37</sup> P. S. F. Nairn, who entered the Kelantan service in 1907 and later transferred to the FMS, was the son of a civil servant. His mother had been educated abroad, and, by the time he was ready for King's Canterbury, he had travelled widely on the Continent, learned German, and got interested in mountaineering. At Trinity Oxford, he came under the influence of Rev. Michael Furse, head of the

university's appointments committee and later bishop of Pretoria. A highly imaginative, intelligent, and athletic young man, Nairn loved poetry and classical literature and the fellowship one found in the common room and in the Alpine Club. Moved by the unspoken patriotism and sense of responsibility of his class he was thought ideally suited to tropical service. He failed to get into the Egyptian administration (there were 160 Oxford and Cambridge applicants for twelve positions his year), but he accepted a post on the staff of the British adviser to the raja of Kelantan, then under the nominal suzerainty of Siam.<sup>38</sup> J. V. G. Mills, 1911, had a background similar to Nairn's. After the passage of sixty years he was more outspoken about the spirit of the age they had grown up in than either had been in early career times. The average cadet, wrote Mills, came from the genteel and impecunious middle classes that had a high sense of discipline and duty. His father, a commander in the navy, served for a time as harbormaster of Port Swettenham, which was principally his creation. The family was imperially minded in the style of Joseph Chamberlain, considering the empire "a fine instrument for good in the world."<sup>39</sup> Sharing such sentiments, some of the others also had specific interests in the Orient. A. E. Coope, 1911, studied Buddhism at Oxford and hoped for a post in Burma.<sup>40</sup> M. C. Hay, 1913, had read Joseph Conrad and Hugh Clifford. He borrowed a Malay grammar from one of his Cambridge professors and was well along with the language by the time of his appointment.<sup>41</sup> His fellow 1913 cadet, A. G. Morkill, got interested earlier still. A missionary lectured at his prep school, showing lantern slides of South Sea islands.

Later at Charterhouse we used to debate such themes as whether colonies were like ripe fruit which must inevitable drop from the tree; there was also Kipling; a maternal uncle had managed a railway in India; a great aunt had been married to a PWD engineer and had been with him in the mutiny; a very remote collateral ancestor had been governor of a province under the East India Company . . . my father had given me a good example of public service and we were taught, and understood, that privileges involved obligations.<sup>42</sup>

At New College Oxford, the careers adviser poured cold water on his ambition to go to the East. "It [is] barrack life; you live in pajamas."<sup>43</sup> His family were horrified and did all they could to dissuade him. Neighbors were mobilized, pointing out to him that, as the eldest son, he had a duty to stay and manage the estate. Desperately, an appointment in the diplomatic service was produced. His mother accompanied him to Kew Gardens in hopes of finding out what kind of place her son was determined to go to. "Passing from a cool house full of ferns, then one slightly



warmer we eventually entered one where the steam and intense heat fogged our glasses and with difficulty we read on a plant, 'Federated Malay States.' 'Alan,' she exclaimed, 'you cannot go to a place like this.'"<sup>44</sup>

Once they had passed their written examinations and had been looked over by a C. O. doctor, recruits faced the major question—one that would be answered soon after their arrival in Malaya: which of the three streams would they be assigned to—Malay, Chinese, or Indian? In the early years, some were not aware of this important matter until told of it on arrival. It was some time before any particular system governed it, making some feel later on that selection had been too casual. Nearly everyone felt that the biggest group—Malay—stood first, offering the most varied and interesting work and the best chances of promotion. The Chinese languages were the most difficult and obviously were not every man's cup of tea. The Labor Department, whose officers spoke Indian tongues, was seen as the most confining of the three. Each year, as the new cadets arrived, the government ascertained how many were needed in each stream, and one way or another selections were made. In 1911, six cadets reached Perak together—J. E. Kempe, C. C. Brown, J. V. Cowgill, G. S. Hellings, H. R. Joynt, and A. E. Coope. They were immediately told by W. E. Pepys, the passed cadet who met them, that two would stay where they were and study Malay, two would go to China, and two to India. Telling them that they would be allowed to choose in order of their standings on the examinations the acting resident, Oliver Marks, left them to think it over.<sup>45</sup> Kempe, with the highest standing, knew that he did not want Tamil but was unsure of the other two languages. Brown, second, was equally indecisive. After much soul searching, they were called before the acting resident at noon on the following day. Kempe and Brown elected Malay. It was decided that Cowgill and Hellings should go to China and Joynt and Coope, to India. When N. A. (later Sir Newnham) Worley arrived in Kuala Lumpur three years later, he and two fellow cadets were treated to tests that they thought farcical.<sup>46</sup> One by one, they were paraded before the protector of Chinese, assisted by a senior Cantonese interpreter who spoke a few words, after which the protector asked if the cadet could distinguish among the tones of the words. The exercise seemed laughable because all had been told beforehand that Chinese was the most difficult language and that officers of the protectorate never reached the highest posts in the service. One cadet, who was an accomplished violinist but who did not fancy China, proved to be tone deaf. Another, an Ulsterman with a thick accent who liked the idea of going to China, heard the tones with perfect precision, but was soon brought back from Canton, where he had failed completely. Jarrett was at first disappointed to be assigned to India, though he did well and had a highly successful career. Stark's posting to India, where his family was, made

sense, and he welcomed it at the time. J. M. Barron volunteered for Tamil, never regretted it and rose to be controller of labor. In fact, most Chinese and Tamil cadets ultimately learned Malay, and many Malay speakers learned at least one additional language. The three streams were by no means sealed off from one another as regards postings, especially in the middle and senior years. Men specialized at first. Later on there was considerable homogeneity throughout the service, with senior officers being assigned to a wide variety of posts without respect to the departments they had served in initially and the languages they had learned as young cadets.

If this was true of the three language streams it was less true of the straits versus the FMS services, especially among more senior men. It was all very well to wave a wand in London and say that the services were now unified. Indigestibility persisted in Malaya. A straits officer resigned in 1896, citing miserably slow promotion due to the glut produced by unification.<sup>47</sup> Many stuck to the old view that officers had *de facto* tenure in their jobs and should not be transferred against their will. Somewhat inconsistently, the government held that this kind of provincialism was bad in so small a country, yet went on appointing cadets to the straits or the FMS, not to both. Some anomalies, such as the lack of pension rights in one or two of the states, were dealt with, but regrading of the whole service took a long time, much to the frustration of passed cadets. Most bothersome of all was the problem of men who had taken service under the old "junior officer" arrangement or who had been locally appointed and who were now looked on as anachronisms. Language and law examinations were designed for them so that they would have, in effect, the same qualifications cadets had. Nevertheless, the bias against those who had come in "by a side door" died hard.<sup>48</sup> No one denied their services to the country and their local knowledge, which was perhaps deeper than could be achieved by subsequent recruits due to improved communications and shorter postings. But some of them could not adjust to a more bureaucratic era. Bede Cox, who was Jarrett's DO in Klang beginning in 1913, refused to sit in court and left all the land office work to his subordinates. Having joined the service as a junior officer in 1888, he was a "back number," and the best Jarrett could say of him was that under his light hand, a new officer learned by doing.<sup>49</sup> A. T. Dew had started as a naval cadet in the 1860s and worked his way up in Perak. By 1908, he was still DO Lower Perak, with no prospect of becoming a resident. Ernest Birch had Dew and his contemporaries in mind when he wrote that "... the work now required of officers is of a kind which is not so readily accomplished by the older men."<sup>50</sup>

Of these, the best known by far was Captain Hubert Berkeley, the rusty buckle of Malaya, whose service began in 1886 and spanned forty years, twenty-seven of them in one district—Upper Perak. Born in 1864,

Berkeley came from an ancient Catholic family—his grandfather was the earl of Kenmare—and he eventually inherited an estate near Droitwich, in Worcestershire, where he retired at the end of his unique Malayan career. After service as a midshipman in the Royal Navy, he came to the East and was made a police inspector in the Dindings on the Perak coast. His first appointment to his beloved Perak Hulu came in 1891. The district, one of the biggest in the country, lay on the Siamese frontier, which Berkeley had a hand in demarcating to Perak's advantage. Its population, almost entirely Malay, was small. One of the DO's achievements was to found new settlements for Malays in its northern reaches, sometimes allowing retired criminals to live there on a probationary system overseen by him. He undertook irrigation projects, being much interested in the cultivation of wet *padi* and convinced that sound agriculture was the principal, if not the only fit basis of Malay life. He started a rice mill and labored mightily to increase the district's production of fruit and vegetables. Rubber and tin, the passions of other Perak districts, he disapproved of as harbingers of the same inhuman materialism that had ruined England. He knew every *penghulu* and village head in the district and hundreds of his people by name and sight—as many as three generations of them by the end of his time in the mid-1920s. What he had created by then was a self-contained feudal satrapy, leisurely in its pace of life, traditional, and rural, ignorant of and indifferent to the humming, interracial society to the south, with its swift, efficient communications and bustling development economy. Berkeley hated roads, machines, lawyers, moneylenders, and newspapers. He traveled throughout his parish on foot, by horse, or elephant, as the terrain required, bathed in streams and hot springs, and entertained himself and his guests with performances of Oriental drama. In the Christmas season, the party often included fifteen to twenty Europeans, a thousand or more Malays, and smaller numbers of Chinese and Indians.

To protect his hilly domain from the detested philistines of the towns and valleys below, he had to preserve his own long tenure of office, which he did by persuading his superiors to periodically upgrade his position so as to keep pace with his promotions and increases of pay.<sup>51</sup> He had to see that no one interfered with him. In the role of master and sole arbiter he was well cast. Within the district he was loved, respected, and obeyed. On one occasion—there were precious few—a European lawyer had the temerity to enter the district to defend a man accused of thievery. Sitting as magistrate, Berkeley listened impatiently for a minute or two as evidence was produced. Then he said, "I do not want to hear any more; he's guilty."<sup>52</sup> The lawyer protested that he had not yet spoken in the man's defense, and Berkeley replied, "Of course he's guilty. He always was a cattle thief as were his father and grandfather before him."<sup>53</sup> When Sir William Taylor, the acting governor, announced his intention to visit the district early in the century, Berkeley sent a message that the bridge at the



Plate 7. Grik, 24 December 1924. Left to right: To' Muda Meor Yahya bin Ngah Muhammad Amin (ADO Lenggong), W. E. M. Martin (forest officer, Kuala Kangsar), Captain Hubert Berkeley (DO Perak Hulu), J. G. Crawford (ADO Kroh), Hon. A. N. Kenion (Lawyer, Ipoh), Enche Mat Saman bin Mat Seh (deputy ADC Grik). Standing at back: Enche Meor Ahmad bin Ngah Muhammad Amin (penghulu Temelong). *Courtesy of Malaysian National Archives.*

forty-second mile was out. In fact, there never was a bridge, or any need for one, at the forty-second mile. On another occasion, a resident planned to drive up to the DO's headquarters at Grik. Berkeley got wind of it, and, when the resident's car reached a point about a third of the way along, it was stopped by a huge tree felled across the road.<sup>54</sup> Not a man could be found to help move it, and the resident, like the acting governor, had to give up. But another resident, Lieutenant Colonel W. J. P. Hume, did manage to reach Grik. A rather fussy, self-esteeming man, he noticed that many thoroughfares in the little place had names, "Downing Street" with Berkeley's office on it, "Piccadilly," "Rotten Row," and "Berkeley Square," where several roads met at the main *padang*. "How is it, Berkeley, that there is no road or street named after me?" he asked.<sup>55</sup> Berkeley promised to put that right at once, and so he did. Subsequent visitors, if they chanced to wander in that direction, might have noticed a narrow alley running for a few yards between two shop houses and then petering out in thick undergrowth. A rough wooden sign announced it to the world as "Hume Mews."

Berkeley's grand airs—even when outside his district, he traveled with his own uniformed guards and large private tent—and his defiance of higher authority did not please everyone. If he disliked an official letter he simply ignored it. But as was said of him by one of his subordinates who

cannot be accused of a conservative bias he was a real gentleman who always supported those in need, usually out of his own pocket, and who was totally beneficent in his admittedly autocratic rule.<sup>56</sup> Morkill, who followed him, could see the good in what he had done, though he was aware that only if all economic and social development were thought to be wrong could Berkeley's regime be justified. In any case, Upper Perak began to feel the hot breath of modernization soon after Berkeley left. He was one of the last of a dying breed.

As the personality of the services changed, so did the numbers and the characteristics of administration. The C.O. kept a watching brief on tendencies to inflate the various cadres, always questioning requests for approval of new appointments. Growth had been startling. In the period 1867 to 1895, the average annual in-take was just over four officers. From then until 1914, it nearly tripled. By 1904, there were 180 in the combined straits and FMS services.<sup>57</sup> The 1911 and 1913 groups were extraordinarily large—twenty-one and twenty—though the total did not rise as dramatically in the last prewar years as it had done in the two decades previous, due in part to attrition and to the practice of reclassifying certain posts downward. At the beginning of the war it stood at about 220. The reason for London's concern was that these figures contrasted markedly with those of other colonies, such as Hong Kong in the East and the newer ones in West Africa. Governors were able to defend the increases, however, by pointing to Malaya's spectacular economic record. Tin and rubber production depended on efficient systems of land administration, which, in turn, demanded ever larger numbers of European officers to oversee the servicing of applications, the checking of surveys, and the levying and collecting of premiums. In 1901, a mining conference held in Perak revealed that staff shortages had caused many applications to lie unattended for as long as nine years.<sup>58</sup> Shortly afterward, when the rubber boom was at its height, local administrations in Johore and elsewhere fell years behind in the vital work of controlling land alienation. DOs were expected to manage land work along with all their other tasks. With perhaps a third of the total strength on leave at any given time, the alternative being an exhausted force incapable of efficiency, it is hard to see how the country could have done with a smaller service. On reflection, the C.O. had to admit that there were two sides to prosperity: it created the need for big administrations, and it produced the revenues to maintain them.

As the atmosphere that officers worked in became steadily more commercial, the government grew more and more bureaucratic. One of Swettenham's last acts was yet another classification, with men being appointed to classes rather than to particular posts, thereby ending once and for all the proprietary rights to their positions that older officers had

cherished. Lucas agreed, though he wanted the top appointments handled *ad hoc* so that outsiders could be brought in, when appropriate, to fill the colonial secretaryship or the resident generalship.<sup>59</sup> Titles were modernized. Secretaries to government in the states became secretaries to residents. Magistrates-collectors became district officers. Moves from one post to another occurred much more frequently, resulting in a condition of discontinuity, or "musical chairs," that was the bane of colonial governments in many parts of the world. In 1900, Rodger, substantive resident Selangor and acting resident Perak, went on leave. Birch, resident Negri Sembilan, left at the same time. Treacher, resident Perak, returned from leave and resumed his post, but only for two months, after which he became acting resident-general as Swettenham went on leave. Lieutenant Colonel Walker, commander of the Malay States Guides, then took over as acting resident Perak. Belfield, who had formerly acted in Selangor, took that post again. Wise, secretary to the resident-general, went to Negri Sembilan, and his predecessor, Butler, to Pahang. These moves, of course, necessitated many more in the lower ranks. In his first seven years, R. J. B. Clayton, an 1898 cadet, had fourteen official changes of job and nine transfers of station. This unsatisfactory state of affairs would be talked about to the end but never rectified. To the men in charge, it was a question of balancing needs and consequences. Under the old system, there had been a risk of stagnation and of government by personal whim. Under the new, it was possible to lapse into factory methods where men became interchangeable parts, where individual talent counted for little, and where no one stayed long enough in any one place to learn what the people were like.

Other indications of increasing bureaucracy were the endless flow of petitions asking for higher pay, the constant grumbling about slow promotions or promotions made on some basis other than seniority, and a tendency of everyone from residents to Eurasian clerks to adopt a stance that reminded the C.O. of labor unions.<sup>60</sup> There was no doubt that the fluctuation of the straits dollar worked to the disadvantage of the services more often than not, and that salaries failed to keep pace with the cost of living over the long run. The dilemma on promotions was not unlike that on postings, in that neither system—in this case, seniority versus merit—was faultless. The evils of unadorned seniority were obvious: the automatic promotion of everyone, regardless of qualifications, and the certain frustration of able juniors. And if the criterion was merit, subjectivity and favoritism would be given full rein. The C.O. wanted a merit system, which meant, in practice, that it had to accept the judgments of governors.<sup>61</sup> Over the years, in fact, both approaches were used. Seniority was the normal rule, but there was frequent recognition of serious shortcomings and exceptional talent alike.

One of the most notable advantages of greater professionalism, especially from London's point of view, was a further lessening of the easy-going nineteenth-century practice of landowning and commercial activity by civil servants. Regulations had tightened steadily from the eighties onwards. By 1900 it was understood that officers could not take part in the running of businesses and could not invest in companies with which they dealt in the course of their official duties. But there were still loop holes allowing men to own land such as plots on which they grew vegetables and fruit for their own consumption. It was difficult to make hard and fast rules about investments when these did not apply to members of the C.O. The crux was whether or not there was likely to be a conflict of interest. "The matter is one affecting the honor of the service," said a circular of 1907.<sup>62</sup> Officers must be above suspicion. Though prohibitions were not absolute, which all agreed would be unfair, full publicity was given to the regulations from the recruitment stage forwards and in cases of doubt, officers were to put questions to their superiors. It was thought that the threat of exposure would be enough to prevent abuses. When he became resident-general in 1902, Treacher was asked to sell his shares in the Raub mines. The C.O. forbade retired governors taking directorships in companies that had interests in colonies where they had served.<sup>63</sup>

But old habits lingered on. In 1907, Ernest Birch, resident Perak, got into trouble with the high commissioner, Sir John Anderson, when he and the sultan agreed to the setting up of a mining exhibition that was a publicity effort by private companies and that had not been cleared with Kuala Lumpur. Having served in the C.O., Anderson was sensitive to matters that his predecessors, particularly Swettenham, had looked on quite differently. He accused Birch of a serious indiscretion, of being either the dupe or the accomplice of the companies.<sup>64</sup> Through private correspondence involving a former governor, Sir Cecil Clementi Smith, a friend of Birch's, and others, the matter was inflated beyond its importance. A special meeting was held in the C.O. to discuss the resident's conduct and his overall record. It was found that Birch, who was popular with the business community, had often come under fire from his superiors for laxity of this kind. As governor of North Borneo, a quasi-commercial position, he had accepted a piece of land and a house in return for some tin-bearing land wanted by his benefactor. Against regulations, he had allowed two government doctors to continue inspecting brothels for private remuneration and had turned a blind eye on the illegal activities of a Chinese connected with the case. In none of these instances had he been willfully dishonest. Nor, on the other hand, had he shown the judgment expected of so senior an officer. There was some sentiment for demanding his early retirement. In the end, the parliamentary under secretary,

Winston Churchill, spoke with Birch, making clear that he would be allowed to return to Malaya on probation only. He was not made acting resident-general when the incumbent went on leave, though, as the senior resident, he was the logical choice. But he remained in the Perak residency until his normal retirement time in 1910, after which he was knighted.<sup>65</sup> Like Berkeley in his sphere, Birch represented an earlier time when things were less formal and when the rough expedients of pioneers went unnoticed.

The characteristic of the middle years that was destined to assume greater long-term importance than any other was a concern for bringing Malays into the civil services on a footing that would eventually make them the equals of the British. The trend was gradual. Its origins are found in the earliest years of administration on the west coast when Europeans were thin on the ground. At that time, the official line was that Britain ruled through, not over, native officeholders. Low did both, in fact, continuing to employ *penghulus* who had been part of the Perak system before the British arrived, but subjecting them to close supervision, giving them tasks that were new to them and building them into a much more centralized government than the state had ever had before. Above them was the aristocratic class—royal and nonroyal—with hereditary titles and privileges in each local area. To the more important of these Low gave stipends and membership on the State Council, while territorial chiefs who were not of royal blood eventually got minor posts as magistrates or superintendents of *penghulus* in addition to salaries. The ruling class, as a whole, was thus compensated for loss of power and, at the same time, made dependent on and beholden to the British. It was slow going. Years passed before such officeholders could be accurately described as administrative officers in the same sense as locally appointed Europeans were. Selangor collectors urged local *datos* to take better care of roads and bridle paths and when approached with various kinds of requests later on they were able to remind them of jobs not done so that the connection between authority and rewards became clear. In 1887, Bellamy, collector in Kuala Langat, was able to report favorably on the efficiency of a raja whom he and the sultan had put in charge of road work.<sup>66</sup> Four years later, Campbell in Ulu Selangor was still discouraged by the high-handedness and undependability of two *penghulus* in his district, but he noted with satisfaction that "Haji Mat Saleh of Rawang has done excellent work and has collected a great deal of revenue; he is energetic, willing and outspoken, which is a comfort in a Malay."<sup>67</sup> In backward Pahang, Clifford had little good to say of *penghulus* at first, but he soldiered on doggedly, spending many days talking with them in their own areas and at headquarters. Improvement came in time.



By the nineties the cost of maintaining a large European officer corps was causing concern, despite Malay's remarkable prosperity. In London and in the FMS, it was observed that India and Ceylon had had success with subordinate native officers, saving money at the same time as they gave local elites a sense of participation.<sup>68</sup> For Malaya, the opening of the civil services to native officers could be taken as a belated honoring of pledges given at Pangkor and elsewhere. The most prominent residents in Selangor after Swettenham's time—Maxwell, Rodger, and Treacher—had strong views on the matter. They agreed with the majority of their colleagues, including Swettenham and Birch, that most Malays would do well to remain agriculturalists, and they had no more liking for *babus* than the others had. But they and Rodger in particular, argued that the moral progress of the Malays called for education in English, not in the vernacular only, so that Malay leaders could participate on equal terms with other Orientals and with the British in governing the states.<sup>69</sup> What concerned Rodger, Treacher, Robson, and other public men in Selangor was that the Malays, who were in any case becoming a minority in these years, would fall so far behind the Chinese and the Indians that they would be in danger of becoming a helpless rural proletariat in their own country. Since English was, in effect, the administrative language of the FMS as well as the colony, the training of young Malay males in that tongue would be a necessary first step towards preparing them for government service. A certain amount had been done already: Klang's Malay vernacular school had opened in 1875, followed by another in Langkat soon after. As far back as 1823, Raffles had favored education for the sons of chiefs, a time-honored practice in many parts of the empire. In 1876, Jervois arranged for the enrollment of Raja Mansur and Raja Chulan, sons of Sultan Abdullah, in the Raffles Institution at Singapore. Low saw to the departure of Mansur in W. E. Maxwell's care the following year.<sup>70</sup> Though he could see the sense of this for high-born youths, he said that he "did not go in much for schools" otherwise, being convinced that the British should not push too hard with European ideas in a country only recently occupied and still partly hostile to the conquerors.<sup>71</sup> In all the west coast states, boys had to be dragooned into attending school. Standards were not high. The native master at Klang employed his boys at cutting firewood and running errands, and it is not surprising that they were often truant, being encouraged in this by their parents.<sup>72</sup> Considerable progress had been made by the 1890s, although it was uneven regionally and with regard to type of school. Swettenham's vigorous administration in Selangor helped increase the number of vernacular pupils in that state, but there was only one English school there, while in Perak, by the time of Low's departure, there were seven. Sultan Idris returned from his visit to England convinced of the need for English education. He started classes in his *astana*

and gave his support to the new institution, eventually called the Clifford School, which opened at Kuala Kangsar shortly afterward. Once Swettenham had left the Selangor residency, a similar effort was made there, warmly endorsed by the new resident, W. E. Maxwell. Grants-in-aid were provided to the English schools.<sup>73</sup>

All of these efforts had been on a small scale relative to the need for clerical staff and other subordinates in a civil service that would be adequate to the challenges of spiraling economic development. Swettenham remained opposed to English instruction for peasant boys. But on the subject of Malays being threatened by their Chinese and Indian competitors, he could be moved, and he was not against the employment of more Malays in lower positions, especially as this would keep administrative costs down. In 1899, the scholarships started in Selangor by Rodger several years earlier were increased in number. Perak, where Rodger was then resident, followed suit. When Swettenham became high commissioner in 1901, leaving the office of resident-general to the more liberal Treacher, there was a friendlier attitude in Kuala Lumpur towards the question of training Malays and bringing them into the services, even if the numbers holding posts that could be called administrative was still small. Arriving at totals is a matter of definitions. The 1904 civil list contained the names of nine Malays, all but one being in Perak. Four of the Perak officers were sons of ex-Sultan Abdullah. Five of the nine were settlement officers, a rank that had not been considered to be on the same plane with cadets and junior officers when held by Europeans, although some Malays had been raised from it to district-officer rank. Not included among the nine were Malay officers in Negri Sembilan and Pahang, though their duties as magistrates or settlement officers were much the same as those of men in Selangor and Perak whose names do appear. Below these were some 1,400 Malays, exclusive of police, who were serving as magistrates, *penghulus*, and clerical workers.<sup>74</sup> Promotion to higher levels, even those listed as officers along with the Europeans, was difficult because few Malays could qualify in law.

This was the situation as of the second chiefs' conference in 1903. Swettenham, who had only a few months left in Malaya, was still reluctant about any large-scale influx of Malay officers, and went on saying that the Malays were not interested in government service. Arguing on the other side of the question, but always gently in deference to the great man, were Treacher and Rodger, both of whom would retire the following year, and Sultan Idris, who would go on for another thirteen years and who tended to be the most outspoken as well as the most distinguished of the rulers. These three spoke for themselves and also for an increasing number of young Malays—both aristocrats and commoners—who were not satisfied with things as they were. Three Malay clerks in the Perak

Engineering Department wrote to their superior in 1903 asking that Malays be exempted from higher-standard English requirements for advancement in the civil service and pointing out that such arrangements had already been made for Moslems in India.<sup>75</sup> In that country, they said, there was a similar problem in that Hindus had taken to European education more readily than Moslems had, as was true of Chinese and Indians by contrast with Malays in the FMS. Rodger and Treacher were sympathetic. The former drew attention to what had been done in Ceylon, India, and the Netherlands East Indies and suggested the need for a special school where Malay aristocrats could be prepared for government service.<sup>76</sup> Swettenham saw no need for an additional school, noting that the Malacca [English] school was adequate, though perhaps a new program could be started there to answer particular requirements.<sup>77</sup> But he looked to an increase in the number of Malay settlement officers, possibly by promotion of *penghulus*, rather than to any significant growth in the ranks of Malay officers in the civil service as such, repeating to the end his line about Malay aristocrats not being interested and commoners not being suitable. It is interesting that throughout these discussions the progressive role was played by Rodger, the English aristocrat, and the conservative one, by Swettenham, the son of an unknown solicitor from the Midlands.

At this point, the hands of the liberals were strengthened by R. J. Wilkinson's appointment as inspector of schools, FMS. Wilkinson, an 1889 cadet, was one of the most remarkable men in the history of the colonial services, in which he had a highly unconventional career. His father and a brother were in the consular service. He had lived in Spain and the Levant, and he knew German, Spanish, Italian, and Greek, as well as French, in which he passed highest in the entrance examinations his year. At Cambridge, he was president of the union and a history exhibitor. He received five major prizes. He had hoped for a consular position in China, and, six years after reaching Malaya, he was still trying for a transfer there, having in the meantime passed the Hokkien examinations in addition to those in Malay.<sup>78</sup> Later, he became a resident and colonial secretary, administering the government on several occasions. He ended his career as governor of Sierra Leone. Wilkinson was sure that the existing schools would not answer the need.<sup>79</sup> In any case, they were not up to the level of good secondary schools in England, and Malay boys entering them were at a disadvantage because most of the pupils were Chinese or Indian and had had a long head start in English. Typically Malay boys, no matter how bright they were, quickly became discouraged and withdrew. He recommended the establishment of a special school for them not because he favored the isolation of aristocrats as in the Netherlands Indies—on the contrary, he was a thoroughgoing democrat in these matters and wanted the new institution to be open to all qualified

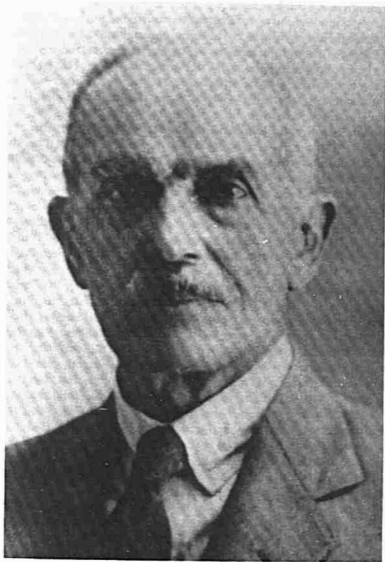


Plate 8. R. J. Wilkinson, Resident Negri Sembilan, c. 1910. *Courtesy of Malaysian National Archives.*

boys—but because this would be less expensive and more efficient than providing special classes in existing schools. He agreed with the sultan of Perak that sending boys to England would denationalize them. The course should last five years, boys beginning at age ten. The most promising graduates should go into the regular civil service and others into clerical jobs. Treacher supported Wilkinson in this plan for the germ of an eventual Oxford of the FMS, observing that all the residents favored it, as did the departing Swettenham, who had come around to the idea, he said, that any qualified Malay should be allowed to enter the service.<sup>80</sup> The new high commissioner, Sir John Anderson, approved the scheme for Malay College at Kuala Kangsar soon after he arrived in 1904, but without enthusiasm and with the reservations voiced earlier by Sir William Taylor, Treacher's successor as resident-general.<sup>81</sup> As originally constituted the school was to admit sons of the upper classes only, a defeat for Wilkinson's view, though later it did take boys from ordinary families. Anderson allowed the college to begin in January 1905, on a three-year experimental basis only, and in rough temporary buildings. Emulating the set-up and procedures of English public schools, it succeeded despite these initial drawbacks largely because of the perseverance of two long-term headmasters, William Hargreaves, 1905–1918, and C. Bazell, 1923–1938, who befriended the boys, kept up a high standard, and instilled the notion that privilege meant responsibility, not license. By 1910, the permanence of the school was recognized in high places. Enrollment stood at 139 in 1920.<sup>82</sup>

During the decade from the opening of the college to the outbreak of war in Europe, there was a constant effort to bring more Malays into subordinate positions of both the civil service and the technical departments. In 1910, a scheme for the selection of "Malay assistants" was instituted whereby Malay College graduates who had passed standard VII (roughly equivalent to secondary school graduates) could be tested in such subjects as official correspondence and treasury work after which they would be confirmed as Malay assistants class III. They could then advance as far as assistant district-officer rank, though their salaries were the same as those drawn by clerks. Some who did enter this Malay Administrative Service (MAS) found the work menial and did not serve out full careers, though others stayed on, eventually proceeding to the civil service as equals of European officers. The government was careful to keep them out of posts where they would have been called on to exercise authority over non-Malays, just as it had kept non-European officers out of predominantly Malay districts before. By 1915 there were twenty-five Malays holding local appointments in the civil service apart from the MAS; a small group, no doubt, some members of which had to contend with prejudice. But it was a start, and one that put Malaya ahead of many

other colonies.<sup>83</sup> Furthermore, it was timely. When the war brought an end to recruitment in England and drained the service of some of its best younger men, the government naturally thought of filling the gaps with Malays. Conditions of service in the MAS were slightly liberalized, and provision was made for the appointment of Malays to class V of the European service itself, though at first those so promoted were to serve as supernumeraries only and would not rank with cadets in calculating seniority.<sup>84</sup> There would be further loosening up after the war and a tripling of the number of Malay officers in the service from 1915 to 1935. In retrospect, it would seem to some officers, Malay and British, that what had taken place was a quiet revolution.

In the last years before the war, the major dissatisfactions of the FMS services, for years a bar to morale, were at last given a full official airing. Virtually all members in classes V through II inclusive—that is, nearly everyone but those holding a handful of the most senior posts—signed a memorial addressed to the high commissioner in 1909.<sup>85</sup> They pointed to the failure of the sterling salary scheme begun six years before; to the disproportionate numbers of junior men by contrast with the Ceylon and Hong Kong services; to the disadvantageous position of post-1896 cadets as regards retirement income; to the superior terms of service enjoyed by officers in the colony; and to the fact that the economic boom in the FMS gave her ample revenue to set these matters right.

In forwarding this to London, Sir John Anderson agreed that the memorialists had a strong case.<sup>86</sup> It was undeniable that housing and salaries made normal family life impossible for junior men (most officers marrying late or not at all), and that this caused many to take native mistresses. The fact that the memorial was signed by men of undoubted integrity, some of whom would rise to the top—Wilkinson, Adams, Winstedt, Caldecott, Belfield, Peel, Cator, Richards—put it outside the category of ordinary grumbling. This time the C.O. was sympathetic. They conceded that they had too little knowledge of conditions in the colonies. It would be well, thought Churchill, if a member of the staff went out to Malaya and made a study on the ground.<sup>87</sup> The man selected was R. E. (later Sir Reginald) Stubbs, a future governor of Hong Kong. Predictably, his report was a compromise that went further than the treasury liked and not far enough to suit the FMS officers.<sup>88</sup> Its importance lay in the updated classification it embodied, together with recommendations for Malay officers in certain posts heretofore reserved for cadets, and the ending of inequities between the colony and the FMS. The purely legal unity provided for at the time of federation was now replaced with something more real.

The war took away forty-five of the younger officers—about 20 per cent of the total strength—eleven of whom were killed in action.<sup>89</sup> In

1915, the governor estimated that he could manage with only one recruit, though this would necessitate a large intake the following year. In the event, he asked for none in 1916, though the C.O. sent one "to keep the competition alive."<sup>90</sup> A trickle of local applications came in, such as one from the headmaster of the Malay school in Malacca. But a policy of recruiting no one but veterans was thought of from the start. The governor recommended that the age limit be raised at the end of the war to allow the entry of men whose careers had been interrupted by military service. The result was an understaffed and overworked cadre in Malaya, some of whose members stayed on beyond the usual retirement age and all of whom endured material hardship due to inflation during and after the war. Morale suffered, bringing a recommendation from the governor that all qualified officers be moved up automatically to the next higher class. If something of the sort were not done quickly, he wrote, dissatisfaction in Malaya would be communicated to the universities at home, damaging postwar recruitment of "the right class of officer."<sup>91</sup> Agreeing, the C.O. paid the service a compliment that would have astonished its long-suffering nineteenth-century predecessors. "We should pay our excellent service well, as we can afford to do. The service of the straits settlements and the FMS is becoming more and more a nursery ground for first-rate officers in the crown colonies generally."<sup>92</sup> The business community added its voice, demanding better treatment of the service. F. G. Harvey of the Planters' Association told the governor that morale was an economic issue, not just a matter of altruism.<sup>93</sup> A doctor who attended a meeting of Harvey's United Malays Council said that low salaries and the failure of the government to pay for leave passages meant abnormally high marriage ages and also fewer children than the empire would need to compete with Germany after the war. The planters wanted a commission appointed to look into the whole question of conditions of service more thoroughly than Stubbs had done. Such an inquiry had already been proposed by the governor, in fact, after years of public discussion. It was agreed that the commission would consist of two members of the service itself, two businessmen, and a neutral chairman. For this delicate role the chief justice of the straits, Sir John Bucknill, was selected.<sup>94</sup> The services were represented by H. (later Sir Hayes) Marriott, a straits cadet of 1896, and Oliver Marks, who entered the Perak service in 1891 and after retirement became secretary of the British Association of Malaya in London. R. J. Addie and A. K. E. Hampshire spoke for the unofficials. Beginning work late in 1918 the Bucknill Commission submitted its report the following April. The document was 243 pages long, not counting eighty-five pages of testimony from officials and unofficials, making it the most searching and detailed study of the services up to that time.<sup>95</sup>

In tracing the history of the services, the report noted that conditions in India and Ceylon now differed substantially from those in backward Malaya, raising a question whether officers for the home civil service and for all of the Eastern dependencies should continue to be recruited in the same way. Malaya had got men who were virtually indistinguishable from the others in social background and ability. Yet it paid them less well, while expecting them to maintain the same standards of dignity and propriety as their more fortunate brothers did elsewhere. The sterling scheme of 1903—posting salaries in pounds and paying in the straits dollar equivalent—had been bad for the service because the dollar was pegged arbitrarily, without reference to market value. It was all very well to talk about personal honor and the prestige of careers in public service. All could agree that Malaya was "no place for men without character, principles and determination."<sup>96</sup> But the hard realities of everyday life could not be blinked. Servants expected more from government officers than from other employers. The climate took a heavy toll. Ill health and suicide were more common in Malaya than in Hong Kong where there was a bracing winter season. Having wives and children in Malaya—even if it could be afforded, was not advisable from the standpoints of education, health, and social amenities.

Hitting hard at the legacy of federation, the report spoke of a widespread feeling that the FMS government was overcentralized and that an unhealthy divisiveness had developed, cutting secretariat men off from their colleagues in outstations, breeding a bureaucratic mentality, and discouraging imagination and initiative. Middle-ranking and junior officers had become disaffected. Their plight was everywhere recognized by planters, journalists, professional men, and bankers—both European and Asian—who voiced their sympathy in legislative councils and in the press, to the detriment of public confidence in government. What was needed was a decentralization of authority that returned to residents, district officers, and department heads the reasonable discretion and latitude their predecessors had known before 1895. Detailed recommendations as to raises in pay and emoluments were put forward. Employment of more Asians was urged.

Administrative officers who testified criticized backdoor influence in promotions and suggested the need for more objectivity. Some felt that seniority was all right as a general rule but that merit should determine promotion to the most responsible posts. The inefficient should be made to retire early. Motor cars were being used too much, causing laziness and loss of touch with the people. Berkeley said that he had kept three horses for thirty years and that the horse allowance was insufficient. The prestige of the service had fallen since the turn of the century, said one; to which



another added, more in sorrow than anger, that he would not advise a young man to join the Malayan service as things were.

In London, the reaction to the report was favorable. It was assumed that "this gigantic production" could not be ignored, and that its recommendations, in the large, would have to be accepted sooner or later.<sup>97</sup> With the war over and a new governor making ready to take up his appointment, the time for new departures was opportune.

In retrospect, the middle period may be seen as the most uncomfortable and the most productive of the three. Building from the ground up, the function of a pioneer time, is a more straightforward, uncomplicated business than is realignment or the job of refining and continuing, that would occupy the services in the 1920s and 1930s. In the nineties, the government had been a collection of ill-digested lumps. Each had made sense in its day and each had done good work. By 1919, the hardest phase of adjustment was over. With the passing years, there were many retirements of men who would not have been happy in the new cadres with their overwhelming majority of university graduates—all of them innocent of what Low had faced in the Kuala Kangsar of the seventies, Douglas at Klang and Swettenham at Kuala Lumpur in the eighties, Murray and Paul in Sungei Ujong, Rodger and Clifford in Pahang. Nor would the young soldiers who arrived in the early twenties find it odd that one's brother officer in the district might turn out to be a Malay. They had no worries about self-esteem, looking over their shoulders at the ICS and the cadets of Ceylon and Hong Kong who had bested them by a few points at Burlington Gardens. The organization that would now call itself the Malayan Civil Service had come of age.

### Notes

1. See resident-general to high commissioner, 11 Aug. 1896, M., on arrangements for testing junior officers. And see high commissioner to secretary of state, 10 June 1896, M., on the complaint of W. J. Mahony on "want of promotion" in the Perak service.

2. Secretary of state to governor, 25 June 1896, M.; J. S. Mason, an 1896 recruit, was told that he would be posted to the FMS, not, as in previous cases, to a particular state, (file, 10 Oct. 1896, 273/222).

3. Acting governor to secretary of state, 27 Aug. 1900, 273/258, forwarding a memorial signed by nearly all the top civil servants in both the colony and the FMS.

4. Swettenham to secretary of state, 31 Jan. 1902, 273/278; and 27 Oct. 1901, 273/273, in which he notes the secretary of state's wish "to move officers about in the colony and the FMS."

5. Figures will be given in straits dollars unless otherwise noted.

6. Minute by Lucas on file, 29 May 1897, 273/229.

7. Resident-general to acting high commissioner, 24 Dec. 1898, 1225, M.
8. To Lord Amphill, private secretary to Chamberlain, 31 Aug. 1897, 273/229.
9. Sir Alexander Swettenham to secretary of state, 9 Dec. 1898, 273/241.
10. To secretary of state, Feb. 1899, 273/250.
11. *Ibid.* Clifford, on leave at the time, was asked about this by Sir William Hamilton in the C.O. He said that riding tests were no longer appropriate and might let in men who could ride but do nothing else.
12. Text of an address in Boston, Mass., n.d., Rodger papers, National Library of Wales.
13. File, 25 May 1899, 273/253. The questions went also to France and the Netherlands. See also A.L. Lowell and H.M. Stevens, *Colonial Civil Service* (New York: Macmillan, 1900), preface. Among the questions asked was one dealing with recruitment and training.
14. The reference to "catching their hare" concerns the Philippine insurrection. Minute by Wingfield, *ibid.*, 25 May 1899, 273/253.
15. Jackson to secretary to government, Perak, 19 Feb. 1898, 273/239.
16. A. R. Jackson, solicitor, to C.O., 22 Apr. 1898, 273/239.
17. *Ibid.*
18. Cape to R. G. Watson, secretary to government, Perak, 4 May 1898, 273/241.
19. *The Times*, 25 Oct. 1898; and *Malay Mail*, 22 Nov. 1898, sent by acting high commissioner to secretary of state, 23 Nov. 1898, 273/241.
20. Dispatch 1105, 1898, M.
21. *Ibid.*
22. To high commissioner, 23 Nov. 1898, 273/241.
23. N.d., in file, 25 Oct. 1898, 273/244, on cadets' letter to *The Times*.
24. *Ibid.*, minute by T. C. Macnaghten. The books suggested were Isabel Bird, *The Golden Chersonese* and *The Way Thither* and H. C. Belfield, *Handbook of the FMS* (London, 1904). Belfield was in the FMS service. The handbook was written for planters originally and issued by the Emigrants Information Office in London.
25. Swettenham to high commissioner, 30 Sept. 1899, 273/252.
26. Governor to secretary of state, 3 Jan. 1912, 273/381. W. G. Maxwell declined the colonial secretaryship of British Guiana. William Peel was not interested in a small governorship, mentioned to him in 1927 by the C.O. (Memoirs, p. 125.)
27. In 1900, for example, there were five seconds, three thirds, three firsts, and a gold medal, Trinity College Dublin. In the period 1905-1908, of those listing degrees, there were eight seconds, one third, and one first. See CSC to C.O., 8 Jan. 1901, 273/276, and *The Oxford Magazine Supplement*, 1906-1908.
28. R. O. Winsted, *Start from Alif*. (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1969), pp. 18-20.
29. Letter to his daughter, Mrs. Michael Good, 25 Jan. 1926. I thank Mrs. Good for kindly allowing me to read her late father's letters from Malaya, 1922-1935.
30. Kempe's diary, 31 Dec. 1911, Taiping, CRP. Barron to H. P. Bryson, 5 July 1969. F. K. Wilson, 1914, faced the same alternatives and preferred government to academe (letter to author, 23 Dec. 1974).

31. Gilman's memoirs, CRP.
32. Interview by H. P. Bryson, 28 Feb. 1969.
33. *Ibid.*, 20 June 1969.
34. R. Boyd to author, 30 Mar. 1975
35. Notes to H. P. Bryson, 14 Apr. 1969.
36. Interview, 25 Sept. 1970. There were about six applicants for every available job his year, said Cator. He added that he got Malaya because he was not clever enough for the ICS.
37. Interview by A. H. M. Kirk-Greene, 22 Feb. 1969, CRP.
38. See *Poems, Letters and Memories of Philip Sidney Nairn*, ed. E. R. Eddison (London: Privately Printed, 1916). Nairn died in Negri Sembilan in 1914.
39. To author, 1 Feb. 1975. In his eighties, Mills who retired to Switzerland, was awarded a D. Litt. by Oxford for his work on China. Jarrett wrote in much the same spirit: In his day "The Empire was still the Empire." (To H. P. Bryson, 2 May 1969.)
40. To author, 25 Feb. 1975.
41. To H. P. Bryson, 29 July 1969, mentioning Professor Skeat. Also to author, 13 July 1975.
42. Morkill's recollections, to H.P. Bryson, 13 Dec. 1969. Also to author, 23 July 1974.
43. Morkill's recollections, *ibid.*
44. *Ibid.*
45. Kempe's diary, 14 Dec. 1911.
46. Worley to H. P. Bryson, n.d., acknowledged 28 Dec. 1970.
47. F. J. Hallifax to resident councillor of Penang, 29 Aug. 1896, 273/217. He subsequently withdrew the resignation, but only because a promised job in Kashmir fell through.
48. Comment by E. Birch on letter from resident-general to high commissioner, 11 Aug. 1896, 232/96, M.
49. Jarrett's recollections, 2 May 1969.
50. Comments on Dew's letter to secretary of state, 13 Sept. 1908, dispatches, M.
51. On Berkeley's system, see the diary of Sir Mahmud bin Mat, one of his successors (M.), the notes of another successor, W. F. N. Churchill, "District Officers Extraordinary," RCS, and a memoir, "Malay Curry," by K. R. Blackwell, one of his ADOs (CRP). For details of the regrading of the district to suit Berkeley's convenience, I am indebted to the late Sir David Watherston, formerly head of the Malayan Establishment Office (to author, 7 Oct. 1974). Berkeley's diaries, which are not terribly helpful, are in the RCS. See also the papers of J. S. W. Reid, CRP. Reid was another of Berkeley's ADOs.
52. Churchill, p. 7.
53. *Ibid.*
54. I have seen two written accounts of this story, one in Churchill and another in "Anecdotes About Hubert Berkeley," microfilm, M. Verbal accounts abound.
55. Churchill, p. 6.
56. Reid, in "Anecdotes."

57. This figure is taken from the 1903 Straits Settlements list and the 1904 FMS list. C.O. figures sometimes differ. The difference stems from varying interpretations of the word "officer." In London, it meant one appointed by the secretary of state, whereas in Malaya, all who held administrative appointments were so designated.

58. Report of the mining conference, Ipoh, 1901, M.

59. Swettenham to the secretary of state, 24 June 1903, 273/291. Lucas was also concerned about such posts as resident councillor Malacca, which had become a sinecure, claimed as a right by senior officers of small talents, and backed by their friends in business. See R. E. Stubbs to secretary of state, 16 May 1910, 273/357.

60. See governor to secretary of state, 23 Mar. 1905, 273/311, on the "serious public evil" of petitions. Fiddes in the C.O. minuted on Stubbs to secretary of state, 3 June 1905, 273/311, "The persistent petitioning of these people is somewhat disgusting."

61. See acting governor to secretary of state, 20 Jan. 1900, 273/260 and high commissioner to secretary of state, 23 Dec. 1910, dispatches, M.

62. Number 4, 1907, M. See also G.O. 111, n.d., M.; Swettenham to secretary of state, 28 Dec. 1900, 273/266; Lucas's minute, 26 Jan. 1901; and file, 23 Mar. 1910, 273/360, with minute by Churchill, 17 Apr. 1910; Kempe still owned land in Pekan in 1919 (diary, p.89).

63. Dispatch, 15 Mar. 1913, 273/396.

64. Anderson to Birch, 14 Nov. 1907 and 11 Feb. 1908, 273/340.

65. Birch hoped for the directorship of the Malay States Information Agency on retirement (J. H. M. Robson, *Records and Recollections 1889-1954* [Kuala Lumpur: Kyle Palmer and Co. 1934], p. 106), but he did not receive it. He later became mayor of Bexhill.

66. Journal of George Bellamy, Nov. 1887, M. See also McCarthy's journal, Ulu Selangor, Dec. 1883, M. Low praises Datu Kandar Ma'sin of Telok Batu similarly (diary, 31 May 1877, M.).

67. J. A. G. Campbell, Annual Report, 1891, M.

68. In 1894, Treacher called attention to the need to educate native officers. See W. R. Roff, *The Origins of Malay Nationalism* (Kuala Lumpur: University of Malaya Press, 1967), pp. 24-25. Lucas made the same point in the C.O. (memorandum, 8 Nov. 1895, 273/203) in the context of general plans for modernizing and unifying the services of the colony and the FMS.

69. See Rex Stevenson, *Cultivators and Administrators* (Kuala Lumpur, 1975), pp. 70-71. In his Boston talk (Rodger Papers, National Library of Wales), Rodger said that Malay boys who went to England for schooling wanted to be professional men only and disdained menial tasks. These were few in number. But unless more became surveyors and artisans as well as skilled agriculturalists, the Malay community would be left behind by the Chinese and Indians.

70. Low's diary, 24 Apr. 1877, M. The boys were later moved to the [English] high school in Malacca. See also Gullick, "The Malay Administrator," *Merdeka Outlook*, 1975.

71. Cited by Clifford, "Life in the Malay Peninsula As It Was and Is," *Proceedings of the Royal Colonial Institute*, vol. 30, 1898-1899, p. 394.

72. See Hawley, treasurer at Klang, to resident, Douglas, 15 Dec. 1879, and Douglas's reply, 19 Aug. 1880, Selangor secretariat files, M. Also Belfield's report to Swettenham on Selangor education, 17 Aug. 1887, Selangor secretariat files.

73. See *Selangor Government Gazette*, 17 Jan. 1896, M. By this time, Selangor had two English schools, the Victoria Institution in Kuala Lumpur and the Klang Anglo-Chinese School.

74. Minutes of the conference of chiefs, Kuala Lumpur, 1903, p. 9. The figures given here reflect the same dispositions as do those in the 1904 civil list, which was one year behind events. As resident-general, Treacher sent a circular to all administrative officers in 1902 (#68, M.) urging more employment of Malays and pointing to the excessive cost of European staff.

75. Mahomed Aba, Inche Teh, and Mahomed Cassim to acting state engineer, Taiping, 6 June 1903, 273/303.

76. To resident-general, 6 Aug. 1903, 273/303.

77. To resident-general, 16 Sept. 1903, 273/303.

78. See minutes on dispatch from acting governor to secretary of state, 29 July 1895, 273/205.

79. Wilkinson to Treacher, 12 Dec. 1903, 273/303. See also Roff, p. 100 for references to other letters of Wilkinson's on the subject.

80. Treacher to acting high commissioner, 12 Mar. 1904, 273/303.

81. See Taylor to Treacher, 28 Mar. 1904, 273/303, Treacher to Taylor, 12 Apr. 1904, Anderson to Treacher, 26 Apr. 1904, Treacher to Anderson, 30 July 1904, memorandum by Wilkinson, April 1904, and Anderson to secretary of state, 17 Sept. 1904.

82. See Gullick, "The Malay Administrator," N. J. Ryan, "The Malay College 1905-1963," *Malaya in History* 8 (Apr. 1964), and "The Malay College Kuala Kangsar, 1905-1941," M.A. thesis, Khasnor bte. Johan, University of Malaya, 1969.

83. In 1912, the acting secretary to resident Perak tried to have a Malay officer, Raja Abdul Aziz, gazetted as ADO but was overruled. (Chief secretary to high commissioner, Perak files, 673, 1912, M.) In the subsequent correspondence, the acting secretary to resident, C. W. Harrison, citing the recommendations of Captain Berkeley and E. C. H. Wolff, pointed out that the Malay officer had performed admirably and that he would become discouraged if treated differently from European officers. The chief secretary and the high commissioner took a rulebook view of the question.

84. Secretary of state to high commissioner, 23 May 1917, 916, M. See also Roff, pp. 107-8.

85. Memorial of 2 May 1909, M., signed by 87 officers.

86. 13 Jan. 1910, 273/360.

87. Minute by Churchill, dated 19 Feb. 1910, *ibid.*

88. "Report by Mr. R. E. Stubbs on the Salaries and Classification of the Cadet Service in the Malay Peninsula," 13 Jan. 1911, Proceedings of the Federal Council, M. See also Stubb's minute, 10 July 1911, on acting governor to secretary of state, 26 Apr. 1911, 273/370.

89. See W. Makepeace, G. E. Brooke, and R. St. J. Braddell, eds., *One Hundred Years of Singapore* (Singapore, 1921), p. 123. The governor offered commissions

on terms named by the home government. Predictably the response was overwhelming. Many had to be turned away on medical grounds. One Irish officer, C. D. Ahearne, who later had a distinguished career, declined to volunteer, saying he had no use for the British army (Jarrett to Bryson, 2 May 1969). At this point, social qualifications were still important in army recruitment. Applicants for commissions were required to give fathers' occupations along with their own and their educational backgrounds. See chief secretary's circular #26, 29 Dec. 1914, M.

90. Minute, 24 Feb. 1916, on governor's dispatch, 26 Jan. 1916, 273/440. See also governor to secretary of state, 8 Apr. 1915, 273/422.

91. To secretary of state, 12 Nov. 1917, 273/461.

92. A. E. Collins, minute, 17 Jan. 1918, 273/461.

93. Harvey to governor, 15 June 1918, 273/469.

94. Bucknill offered his services in 1915, having performed a similar task—an inquiry into Chinese labor in South Africa—in 1906.

95. "Report of the Commissions Appointed by H. E. the Governor of the Straits Settlements and the High Commissioner of the Federated Malay States to Enquire into Certain Matters Relating to the Public Service..." (Singapore, 1919). The commission was joined in the course of its work by two more members, C. J. Saunders, an 1891 cadet from the Chinese Protectorate, and F. M. Elliot, an unofficial. A similar study by C. S. Liston of the ICS, made essentially the same points as were made in the Bucknill Report. ("Report on the Administration of the FMS, 1919," M.)

96. "Report of the Commissions," p. 160.

97. Minute by A. E. Collins, 6 June 1919, on the report (273/483). L.C.M.S. Amery, parliamentary under secretary, wrote to the secretary of state, Lord Milner, 17 Dec. 1919, recommending acceptance on the whole (Bucknill Report, Part VI).

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## 6 The Chinese Protectorate

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IT IS an axiom of Southeast Asian history that modern Malaya as an economic phenomenon was the creature of Chinese labor together with European capital and supervision. The Chinese did not wait for the British to arrive. Some were in the straits during Portuguese times and earlier. But generally speaking, their numbers were small and their activities tended to be restricted to coastal areas where European commerce and military strength had created the conditions of stability without which they could not hope for more than a subsistence life. Large-scale immigration took place in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries following in the wake of British initiative. When Chinese farmers and laborers went beyond the Straits Settlements into the western Malay states ahead of British political control, however, they brought with them the dilemma of great economic promise and equally great social disruption, thereby drawing the British into areas that London and Calcutta preferred to leave alone. Once it had been found impossible to maintain prosperity without governmental intervention, the British faced the most important social-economic question of their hegemony: how to reap the benefits of Chinese labor while, at the same time, subjecting the unruly newcomers to a necessary, but unwelcome, discipline. The response was to build up a corps of administrative officers trained in Chinese languages and given the special task of overseeing Chinese communities in Malaya. Formally constituted in the 1870s, the organization they served in was called the Chinese Protectorate. Their numbers were never large. When war came in 1941, the Chinese outnumbered the Malays. Yet, out of 184 officers in the administrative services as a whole, only thirty-three—approximately eighteen percent—had begun as members of the protectorate. The effective force was still smaller at any given time because, as they became senior, most officers left the protectorate for more general duties.

The first Chinese to arrive in Malaya were mainly Hokkiens from Fukien Province, small traders, fishermen, and farmers, who settled in Malacca from the 1500s onwards in much the same way as their countrymen were doing in other parts of Southeast Asia at the time, drawn overseas by opportunities in underpopulated lands where their industry and skill could be put to greater advantage than would be possible at home.<sup>1</sup> These were the advance guard of the so-called straits Chinese, as distinct from the waves of laborers who would come later. They were self-employed. They eventually brought their womenfolk and settled

down, founding little communities that were prosperous and permanent. Some intermarried with Malays. Most kept to their own villages, where they were valued by Malays and Europeans alike for their hard work and their contributions to the economy. The arrival of the British at Penang in the 1780s and Singapore a generation later attracted Chinese traders and planters, mostly Hokkiens or Teochius from Swatow, who saw that in British ports commerce was incomparably superior to what could be expected in places controlled by the slow-moving Malays with their never ending warfare. Agriculture prospered from the start. Chinese headmen planted gambier, pepper, sugar, and coffee and gradually brought in laborers on a *sinkheh*, or indenture, system. Others were apprenticed to artisans in the shops of Penang and Singapore. In the first four decades of the nineteenth century, labor came mainly from Kwangtung or Kwangsi. The Cantonese, and also the Hakkas from all three provinces, Kwangtung, Kwangsi, and Fukien and the Hainanese from the big island off Kwangtung, were of hardy peasant stock, used to long days of work for small wages. Emigration meant escape from famine at home, and a chance of employment abroad that would give them something to send back to their families. Until mid-century, numbers remained small — 100 to 200 a year to Singapore and perhaps ten times that many to Penang. Then, events in China and overseas conspired to increase the volume dramatically. The Taiping Rebellion broke out in 1851, further weakening an already hard-pressed Manchu government that had never been strong in the southern provinces from which immigrants came. The long, drawn out Taiping campaigns and coincident Hakka-Cantonese fighting put heavy strains on rural life at the very time when tin mining in Malaya and railroad building in America had made emigration easier and more desirable than ever.

The coolies who now flooded into the Straits Settlements and the western Malay states were linguistically heterogeneous. They came from many different "tribes" or ethnic groupings and from a wide spectrum of districts. They differed from the straits Chinese in being exclusively male, in being dependent on their employers, and in looking on Malaya as a foreign country where they would work for a certain length of time before returning home. All had in common, however, a profound distrust of government as such and a traditional inclination to organize themselves into fraternal societies or triads to which they gave their primary loyalty. These secret societies had been strong in China itself where government was a distant and alien thing whose light hand could do little more than tax and occasionally oppress. They were that much stronger in Malaya, where they did not have to compete with the powerful binding force of wives and families in the framework of long-established village government. In the straits and among the mining and planting communities of the west



coast states, the societies were business houses, churches, and social clubs all rolled into one, the center of the coolie's life, giving him security and threatening him with sanctions if he dared to disobey. They would have seemed ideal organizations for the British to work through, in the best traditions of indirect rule. Seeing no alternative the straits government tried to do this. The straits Chinese, having a stake in order and working hand-in-glove with European merchants, were cooperative. Though they tended to despise the coolies as aliens and social and economic inferiors, they were members of the same societies that systematically enlisted immigrants as soon as they arrived. But tribal, provincial, and linguistic affiliations throughout the straits and Malaya presented a complicated picture, with much splintering, mixing, and overlapping. The British found themselves dealing with a number of separate societies, some of whose local affiliates were completely autonomous. Moreover, as the waves of immigrants got bigger the small straits regime, with its minute police force and paucity of officers able to speak Chinese languages, had a difficult time keeping order. There were strikes and riots in Singapore and Penang in the 1850s and 1860s. So audacious had the societies become that many Malays, including *penghulus*, had been intimidated into joining, as had lower government employes such as police peons. In trying to cope with disturbances that often took hundreds of Chinese lives in battles between competing societies and brought commerce to a halt, the government was hampered by its own weakness, by Calcutta's reluctance to sanction strong measures, and by the ability of Chinese merchants to defend themselves in English courts. Wealthy Chinese, such as the famous Whampoa of Singapore, sometimes took the side of their countrymen in resisting the disciplining of the societies, and, at other times, begged the governor to restore order in the interests of trade. In the mid-1860s, as London held the governor back while completing arrangements for the transfer of the straits to the C.O., the resident councillor Penang renewed his efforts to control societies by making their headmen subordinate to the government. Some were sworn in as special constables.<sup>2</sup> But such moves were sporadic and they were completely ineffective outside the straits where, in such places as Larut and the Klang Valley, Chinese communities were laws unto themselves and were closely associated with their brothers in the straits. After decades of fighting against the Chinese, some Malay royals had come to terms with them, using them as tax farmers, frequenting their gambling houses, buying their opium, and enlisting them as allies in their own wars. Abdullah of Perak and the *mentri* of Larut ended by opposing one another, each with a society on his side. Abdullah was aided by the mainly Cantonese Ghee Hins, and the *mentri* with the Hakkas of the Hai San Society. Such divisions also included prominent British and straits Chinese merchants. Society politics had

become so enmeshed with straits commerce that ultimately a vigorous new governor, Sir Andrew Clarke, was persuaded that the well-being of his colony depended on putting a stop to the chaos.<sup>3</sup> One of the reasons suggested for the hasty and unfortunate choice of Abdullah as sultan, when Clarke paid his brief visit to Pangkor in 1874, was that Malay affairs in general were a tail wagged by the dog of Chinese tin mining with its central importance to Britain's whole position in the area. The masterminds of Pangkor were the Singapore businessman W. H. Read, and his Hokkien partner, Tan Kim Cheng, a member of the Ghee Hin Society.

The last straits governor under India, Cavenagh, and the first under the C. O., Ord, could do little about Chinese disturbances, being restrained by their superiors and often frustrated by European lawyers and merchants with their ambivalent attitudes to the commercially valuable, but turbulent, Chinese. Cavenagh deplored the leniency of the ordinary criminal laws that worked well enough in England and among the established European, Chinese, and Indian business communities of the straits but were more or less useless in combating what amounted to private government in the societies. While waiting for authority to use sterner measures, he urged that two of the three new cadets he had asked for be sent to China for language study.<sup>4</sup> This and similar requests by Ord came to nothing. But when he was on leave in England during 1871, Ord was allowed to engage an interpreter, William Pickering, who had had nine years of experience in China, mostly in Formosa and on the Fukien coast. It was Pickering who accompanied Ord to Penang and Larut in 1873 and who was employed by Clarke a year later to negotiate the settlement between the Ghee Hins and the Hai Sans that was capped by Pangkor. Pickering's arrival in the straits in 1872 signaled the beginning of a new phase in the colony's dealings with its growing Chinese community. Until then, although some officers could manage one or another of the Chinese languages, none was a specialist and the government depended on Chinese for court and other interpreting. Among the pioneers of the civil services, Pickering stands high, though the recognition he received was not up to the importance of the work he and his department were to accomplish.

He was born in a Derbyshire family then living near Nottingham.<sup>5</sup> His father was agent to a coalmaster's association and a devout churchman in a family that had produced several clergymen. Pickering was the only son among eight children. At age sixteen, he was apprenticed aboard a ship that voyaged to Burma, Malaya, and Siam. Six years later, he had risen to be third mate on a Liverpool tea clipper. Robust, intelligent, and ambitious, he saw that shore jobs on the China coast during the 1860s—when European activity was increasing yearly—offered better chances of advancement than could be had at sea and also a more varied and satisfying

life. His facility in Hokkien came to the notice of Sir Robert Hart, head of the Chinese Maritime Customs, who appointed him to that service in 1862. Three years later, he was put in charge of the service's office at Taiwanfoo in Formosa, where a year afterwards he took a position with the firm of McPhail and Company, dealers in camphor. His five years in Formosa were busy and full of interest. He soon added Mandarin to his languages, acquiring also a rich fund of anthropological knowledge on his travels throughout the island. He was particularly fascinated by aboriginal groups living in remote areas unknown to Chinese officials, not to mention Europeans. Pickering's keen wit was sharpened by insatiable curiosity about people. Naturally gregarious, yet happy to wander by himself, he talked with everyone from mountain tribesmen to scholarly mandarins in large towns, making sketches as he went and writing down notes of what he saw. The Chinese, British, and American governments all sought him out, valuing his expertise on communities and districts that no one else knew. His attitude toward the races and the ways they interacted is reminiscent of Swettenham's. The exotic intrigued him. But he never thought of becoming a cultural convert. Having sprung from the borderlands of the lower and the middle classes at home and always aspiring to the status of gentleman, he knew where he stood. His liking for individual Chinese and for many social groups was genuine, though he hated the barbarism and cruelty that his wanderings made him aware of and he was delighted when an American naval force from Japan arrived in Formosa to avenge the murders of Europeans by criminals whom the Chinese could not or would not punish on their own. "The Chinaman," he thought, "is an unfathomable creature, a mixture of every best and every worst quality in human nature."<sup>6</sup> He was sorry that Britain did not annex Formosa to save its inhabitants from the iniquity and bungling of their own government. In retirement many years later, he observed that he had devoted his life from age eighteen onwards to studying the Chinese and working for their betterment, "... while at the same time I have kept up my interest in European affairs and have always remembered first of all that I was an Englishman."<sup>7</sup>

In Malaya, Pickering was the ideal helpmate to a government long beset by Chinese problems and ill-equipped to deal with them. Previously, the police and the navy had played a fruitless game of hide and seek with the Chinese, trying to get evidence of lawlessness by the societies in the straits and chasing uncatchable war junks in the labyrinth of rivers, creeks, and islands on the coast. Now, Pickering walked into stockades and talked directly with leaders in mining communities.<sup>8</sup> With the arrival of the hard-driving Clarke, who enjoyed a measure of C.O. support never accorded the unhappy Ord, Pickering became the spearhead of an energetic approach that combined negotiation with military force. Backed by

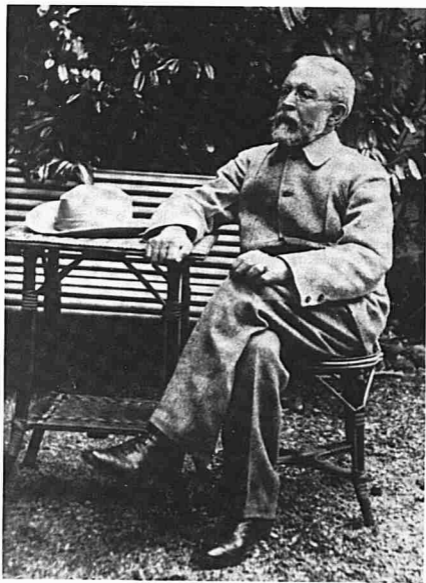


Plate 9. William Pickering, Protector of Chinese. *Courtesy of Royal Commonwealth Society.*

the governor and by secret society leaders in the straits, he urged an end to the fighting that had ruined trade and impoverished the Chinese themselves. From his Formosa experience he knew that the mailed fist was more effective if kept in velvet and waved with humor. Over and again, he marched through the streets of mining towns, playing his bagpipes, before sitting down for talks with leaders. They found his language facility, his friendly manner, and his commonsense irresistible, especially when it was seen that he spoke for the mighty in their own societies. It was seldom easy. With Perak settled and the Selangor civil war over, there was still Sungei Ujong. Pickering took an active part with Colonel Samuel Dunlop, inspector general of police, and his troops in the storming of stockades whose commanders, both Malay and Chinese, would not listen to talk, however sensible. For his part in the taking of Rasa on the Linggi late in 1874, he was recommended for the Victoria Cross. By the end of the year, his reputation with the governor and with Chinese leaders was far above that of a mere interpreter. He had served with Dunlop, Swettenham, and secret society leaders on a special commission to assure peace in Perak and had met with success. Those in authority now saw him as the indispensable expert without whose advice it would be unthinkable to proceed in Chinese affairs.

But that advice was not always taken. Pickering was sure that the societies would never settle down and become really controllable unless a system were adopted like that of the Dutch in Java whereby there was a complete registration of society members and the organization of all Chinese communities into wards, with clan leaders responsible to the government for the good behavior of their people. Making the societies illegal and smashing up their meetings with police raids would only make matters worse. As though to underscore his point, the Chinese of Singapore staged a riot in 1876 that wrecked a post office and resulted in several of their number being shot by the police. A commission was then appointed to look into the larger question of immigration and to make recommendations on how to manage it as well as the societies. It admitted that the government had too little knowledge of the Chinese and no effective means of dealing with them from day to day. Chinese-speaking officers should be posted in Singapore and Penang with the sole duty of overseeing Chinese matters, said the commission. They would be called protectors of Chinese. Legislation was passed, setting up machinery for dealing with immigration and also, very importantly, with "crimping," the luring away of newly arrived coolies by agents of the Dutch and others. The protectors were charged with seeing to it that coolies were not victimized by those who recruited them, by those who received them on arrival, and by others seeking to take them out of the colony against their will.<sup>9</sup> Since all of their possible tormentors were fellow countrymen, it is

clear that, from the beginning, the Chinese Protectorate was a British instrument created to protect immigrants from exploitation and abuse by their own kind. Pickering, the first protector, set up his office in a Chinese shop house in Canal Road, Singapore, on May 3, 1877. Ernest Karl, who later moved to Penang, was assistant protector.

Though his duties were now prescribed by law and his office was an official department of the central government, Pickering occupied a uniquely personal position in the eyes of the Chinese. Everywhere he was known as the "Tai Jin," Hokkien for great man, and his place of work was called the "pi-ki-ling"—a phoneticization of his own name. Not only did he have the prestige of a mandarin in China, due to his status as a member of the government; he also played an intimate role as a trusted community ombudsman—one to whom ordinary people brought their troubles and disputes. Like an Arab *qadi* (magistrate), he held court. But he was more than a magistrate. He used his extensive knowledge of social and family life and was able to get to the bottom of complicated wrangles that would have baffled an officer of less experience. He kept his dignity and did not think of bidding for popularity by trying to please all comers. Yet, even when his judgments were hard—as the case often demanded in a rough community—he was seen to be fair, benign, and incorruptible. His views were definite, too much so to suit his superiors, who thought him intractable on some occasions. But the Chinese saw that his standards were not arbitrary and that he had their best interests in mind, albeit in ways they found strange at first. Singapore did not become law-abiding overnight. Yet there was now a connecting link between the government and the throngs of newcomers who had hardly known a political authority at home and who, but for the Tai Jin, would have been helpless pawns in the hands of their longer-established countrymen.

Two men—Pickering and Karl—among thousands of Chinese could do very little, even with police help. Governors from Ord's time onwards badgered the C.O. for more staff. When Clarke asked for two extra cadets who would be sent to Fukien for language training, however, London sniffed at "...this...rather sudden proposal."<sup>10</sup> If the straits wanted Chinese speakers, it might be better to amalgamate their service with Hong Kong's. The sort of work Pickering did, while valuable, was not seen as on quite the same level with the usual administrative tasks for which gentlemen were recruited from the universities. Karl had started in the straits as an office clerk and was allowed to rise only because he knew languages spoken by few others. Failing to get along with Pickering he resigned in 1885. The second protectorate recruit, N. B. Dennys, also entered by a side door. Holding a Ph.D. from a German university, he began in the paymaster's department of the navy. After passing a civil-service examination, he went to Peking as a student interpreter, rising in

the consular service during the 1860s in Peking, Tientsin, Canton, and Amoy. He wrote pamphlets and books on Chinese subjects and edited a newspaper in Hong Kong after leaving the consular service. He was appointed assistant protector under Pickering in 1877, but, like Karl, he did not get on terribly well with the protector and left in 1880, eventually becoming protector in North Borneo. Jervois pressed for cadets as his predecessors had done. When his successor, Robinson, did the same, London at last agreed.<sup>11</sup> Francis Powell, a St. Andrew's man, arrived in 1878. He served under Pickering and in Penang for a year, then proceeded to Amoy to learn Hokkien, after which he returned and became the protector's most trusted and efficient subordinate and eventual successor. His fellow 1878 cadet, H. E. G. Cooper, was less successful and left the service under pressure in 1881.

No one was especially happy with the practice of sending men to China since there was no supervision available at that distance. Robinson discussed with the C.O. the possibility of giving language instruction at the Raffles Institution in Singapore, for cadets and also for locally recruited Englishmen. India and the Netherlands had similar schemes. There was also talk of teaching cadets at Oxford or the University of London. Meanwhile, Pickering got another recruit, William Cowan, a noncadet, who, like Pickering, began his Chinese studies informally at eighteen. Joining the Singapore staff in 1881, he left two years later to accept the protectorship in Perak at twice his straits salary. He ended just before the 1914 war as protector for all of the federated states.<sup>12</sup>

Pickering's term as protector lasted a decade. By the mid-eighties he had become a respected and prominent member of Singapore society, elected to the vice presidency of the straits branch of the Royal Asiatic Society, and made a CMG. Though he never felt that governors considered him quite the equal of the other department heads, and though his ideas did not always find favor, his importance and that of his office were universally recognized and it is likely that, under normal circumstances, he would have had more years of useful work. But in the summer of 1887, he was attacked at his office by a Teochiu carpenter who appeared to have been mentally disturbed. He threw the metal head of an axe at the protector's face, hitting him in the forehead. After a short leave in Ceylon and a longer one in England, Pickering was examined by a C.O. doctor who doubted that he was fully recovered. There were further examinations and extensions of leave. During this time, he wrote an intemperate memorandum to the undersecretary of state, dealing with subjects on which he was bitterly opposed to the governor. This did him no good. By 1890, his condition had not improved, and he was finally retired. It was a sad ending to a distinguished career. For all his inflexibility at times and his tendency to authoritarian excess he gave extraordinarily valuable

service in a complex area calling for unusual qualifications. As the inspired builder of a wholly new department, he was unique. His example, style, and influence remained stamped on the protectorate for many years. Perhaps in the rough circumstances of a pioneer time his knowledgeable, but somewhat detached, attitude towards the Chinese was of more use to the government and to the Chinese themselves than a more affectionate or romantic one would have been.

In the period from the founding of the protectorate to the ending of indentures in 1914, officers devoted most of their time to supervising immigration, attempting to control societies, and maintaining conditions of order in which economic development could proceed smoothly. As early as 1823, Raffles had tried to protect indentured coolies—called "little pigs" by Chinese brokers—by limiting passage charges and having magistrates watch over employers to see that they did not keep laborers in permanent debt. At the other end, the Chinese government made efforts—though sporadically and with indifferent results—to punish recruiters who took advantage by luring coolies into gambling houses. But the great need for labor and the ignorance and dependence of coolies had predictable results: a system of slave labor under another name. Whether they paid for their own passages or borrowed the money from recruiters in China, new arrivals fell immediately into the hands of Chinese contractors in the straits who got them jobs with such employers as Chinese tin miners or European planters. Once they reached their places of work, most drifted naturally into the established round—charging food at stores run by employers, going to gambling houses, brothels, and opium dens after work—which involved further borrowing and long-term indebtedness. Crimping of newly arrived coolies however finally led to attempts by the government to control the immigration system itself. Though they realized that their own enterprises stood to lose by this kidnapping of potential workers, straits businessmen—both European and Chinese—opposed government control in the fear that close supervision would dry up the supply or make existing labor uneconomic. But official inquiries made in the seventies and eighties revealed such scandalous practices that ordinances were passed. These slowly brought improvement. Nevertheless, reform was always at sword's point with the demand for labor, and in 1890, yet another commission of inquiry found abuses still rife and machinery of control woefully inadequate.<sup>13</sup> The commissioners, including representatives of business and government, recommended the setting up of government recruiting in place of private, obtaining the cooperation of the Chinese authorities in the provinces from which coolies came; and, most importantly, increasing the size of the protectorate staff so that it could effectively supervise the new mechanisms. The resulting ordinance extended the work of the protectorate from the colony to the states, where



there had been only minimum activity. Even Malacca had no protectorate officer of its own until 1911. C. A. Schultz began in Perak in 1883, but as an employee of that government, not of the protectorate. Selangor got an officer in 1890, and Negri Sembilan, in 1914, followed by Kedah and Johore. Pahang, with its relatively small Chinese population, came along belatedly in 1938. Though the commission's recommendation of government depots was not accepted, inspection did improve, as did liaison with the Chinese government. Crimping, which had been made possible largely by the machinations of Europeans operating from Hong Kong, was greatly reduced.<sup>14</sup>

Changes in the immigration system in the last years before 1914 came about as a result of the rubber boom in that period. With the demand for labor now greater than ever it was clear that the old indenture method, with its high cost due to the profiteering of middlemen and inefficiency, was vulnerable on economic as well as moral grounds. By the same token, health conditions on many estates were so bad that laborers often worked at 50 percent of capacity, or less. These facts, together with the abandonment of indentures by Chinese mine owners and their adoption of private recruiting, lessened opposition to new legislation whereby indentures officially ceased in 1914. Licensing and inspection of rooming houses and fixing the terms of immigrants' indebtedness, provided for in the new laws, strengthened the hands of the protectorate and gave it heavy additional burdens.

Battling the societies was the protectorate's other main occupation. Experienced men disagreed on the wisdom of this. Low and Pickering thought suppression was both impossible and impolitic; it would be better to keep them in the open and clean them up, which Low tried to do by putting their leaders on his State Council. This proved unworkable, causing the resident to change his mind, because the societies were too big and too chaotic in the early years, their traditions being entirely antithetical to the aims of government as seen by Europeans. Pickering used similar methods, taking the same view of societies as he did of prostitution and opium: that endemic institutions could only be molded, not eradicated. He was overruled by Sir Cecil Clementi Smith, whose years in Hong Kong had convinced him that compromise was self-defeating. The attack on Pickering played into the governor's hands, and in 1890, with the first protector retired, a new ordinance came into effect making all societies illegal unless they were registered, and giving the governor power to dissolve them.<sup>15</sup> The threat of banishment was effective since all Chinese knew that life was harder in China than in Malaya, and since their home government was more severe with societies than the British were. Chinese advisory boards came into existence, bodies on which leading Chinese served, using their influence constructively and acting as go-

between. No one was so naive as to think that the societies were finished. But the protectorate was stronger now as it dealt with the more obvious cases of blackmailing immigrants and operating unlicensed brothels. Officers worked with police in raiding the headquarters of unregistered societies, often obtaining records that gave courts all they needed to banish offenders.<sup>16</sup> There were ups and downs. Following the revolution of 1911 in China, gangs of ex-soldiers descended on Malaya, where they revived a brand of street thuggery that had not been seen for years. During the 1914 war, an informer who guided a protectorate officer to a society initiation ceremony in Perak was murdered for his pains.<sup>17</sup> But by the 1920s, society memberships had declined. Chinese Nationalist and Communist political activists were competing for the attention of their countrymen in Malaya. Meanwhile, prosperity, the arrival of women in large numbers and a tendency to make one's home permanently in the new land had cut deeply into the attractions of brotherhoods that had been everything to new immigrants in the nineteenth century.

Watching over a less violent community did not mean less work for the protectorate. On the contrary. Many of the women who came to Malaya from China in the eighties and nineties, whether they were unattached or following husbands who had gone on ahead to find work, ended in brothels for much the same reason that males ended in secret societies: they were poor, ignorant, and defenseless. Older women who ran brothels found them easy marks, and many who had not been prostitutes at home became so in Malaya by default. Protectorate officers tried to warn women on arrival, boarding junks and checking their documents.<sup>18</sup> This had little effect as the women had no experience of Europeans and naturally trusted their own kind, whose initial approach was friendly and helpful. Keeping track of the houses was more productive, an activity based on acceptance of the inevitable, in the best Pickering tradition. G. T. Hare, the most distinguished of the first protector's successors, maintained close touch with European doctors who regularly inspected brothels and treated the inmates. He also had up before him the owners of all 192 of Singapore's Chinese brothels, warning them that infractions of the rules would result in police investigation.<sup>19</sup>

Opium was managed in a similarly pragmatic way. From earliest times, it was a major producer of revenue. By the interwar years, it still accounted for about half of the colony's income. Since it was farmed—that is, retailed—by the Chinese and mostly consumed by them, the protectorate was deeply involved in its regulation.<sup>20</sup> Officers saw to it that importation was carefully supervised, that duty was paid, that *chandu* (opium that had been prepared for smoking) was of good quality, and that dens were orderly. In the FMS with their large tin and rubber revenues it was less important as a money earner than in the straits; but the "truck"

system, whereby coolies were paid in opium and other goods at company stores, did assume the proportions of a major problem. When the secretary of state ordered the system abolished, seeing it as debt slavery, the residents vigorously defended it as vital to the economy. There was parliamentary pressure to get rid of opium and gambling farms as well. Truck was much mitigated by the labor code of 1912, opium having become a government monopoly two years earlier.<sup>21</sup>

By the turn of the century, most of the old capitans China had disappeared. Many of their functions had, by that time, been taken over by the protectorate. Changes in outlook among immigrants were striking, most now seeing themselves more or less as the straits Chinese had traditionally done—as permanent fixtures with a stake in a country that had used them well. Their countrymen in Siam looked on them with envy, as they well knew. Problems remained. The corrupt and exclusive Teochiu clans in Johore held the state back by keeping out the enterprising Cantonese and Hakkas from Singapore. But in the protectorate, there was a growing confidence that such difficulties could be overcome, that the government had both the right and the strength to make changes rather than simply adapting itself as its weaker predecessor had been forced to do. In this it had increasing support from the straits Chinese on the Legislative Council whose views on order and prosperity had become more and more akin to those of their European colleagues.<sup>22</sup>

Such confidence and the capacity that lay behind it had not come easily or soon. In Pickering's time, morale suffered from a feeling that one was part of a stepchild branch of the service. As late as the first decade of the twentieth century, members of the European community in Singapore thought of protectorate officers as "eccentric or dotty."<sup>23</sup> The protector deeply wanted respectability for his office and a bigger staff so that its complicated work could be done more efficiently. When begging for additional hands in 1881, he pointed out that immigration was running at 6,000 a year and that he had only four assistants—Karl, Powell, Cooper and Dennys. It was vital, he said, that each new recruit should "... be an [sic] European and a gentleman, above suspicion as to what is well known to be the great danger in departments dealing with a venal and corrupt Asiatic population."<sup>24</sup> No sooner had this been written than two of the officers—Dennys and Cooper—left under a cloud: Cooper for assaulting a Chinese woman in Amoy, where he was studying the language. This was disappointing to the C.O. as well as to Pickering, as Cooper had seemed a gentlemanly sort, whose father was a general. Karl left four years later, also under fire. And William Portley, appointed to a cadetship in 1881 after serving as a clerk in Whitehall, was charged with financial impropriety after six years in the straits. Sir Cecil Clementi Smith, himself trained in a Chinese language, complained that some of the

cadets of the late eighties were letting their Chinese slide and said that the poor record of the staff was understandable since protectorate work had "a numbing effect" and was "repugnant to those who come from the class in life from which cadets are selected."<sup>25</sup> It might be better, he thought, to appoint men of lower social standing and education, staffing the protectorate with clerks, exactly the reverse of what Pickering wanted. This did not happen. Cadets continued to be posted to the protectorate, most of them able men, though morale in the nineties and afterwards was low enough to confirm the governor's appraisal of job frustrations. C. C. Wray, a Haileybury graduate who entered the service in 1881, became so disgruntled that when the C.O. approached him during one of his leaves in England and asked for information on prostitution, which it needed to answer questions in the House of Commons, he at first refused to provide it.<sup>26</sup> Some liked the work well enough, occasionally because of unusual backgrounds. H. C. Ridges, a Cambridge man, had been a missionary in China before joining the Selangor service in 1884. His transfer to the protectorate made sense, given his language skill, and he rose to be protector despite doubts in high places as to his administrative ability. R. Nettell, forced to resign on medical advice in 1900, told the C.O. that he enjoyed the work and was sorry to go, which surprised them as they were by then so used to hearing comments to the opposite effect. Part of the difficulty came from the language requirement. Powell, the outstanding success of the early in-take, wrote that cadets' dislike of studying Chinese was only to be expected since it was far more difficult than Malay and took so long that protectorate officers suffered financially and were promoted more slowly than their brothers in the Malay stream. Instruction in the straits had been tried but was given up because students did not have the spoken language all around them as did cadets learning Malay.

Though most causes of unhappiness were eventually removed, the protectorate remained unpopular. Hare, an 1884 cadet who had been an exhibitor at Wadham, was praised by no less a perfectionist than Swettenham, and became the first secretary for Chinese affairs, FMS. Nonetheless, he tried several times to transfer to the consular service, as did Wilkinson. Both were kept for Malaya by the personal intervention of the governor in 1895, though a third cadet, G. J. L. Litton, an Etonian and double first from Oriel, escaped, going directly from language study in Canton into the consular service.<sup>27</sup> When in 1899 the rule was ended which had formerly required cadets to post a bond that would be forfeited if they left the service early, the governor feared that recruits might learn a Chinese language at Malaya's expense and then market that valuable commodity to other civil services or businesses in a time when European enterprise was flooding into China.<sup>28</sup> E. D. C. Wolfe, an 1898 cadet, promptly did so. As late as 1918, W. T. Chapman, a Cambridge man and a

lawyer, tried to obtain a judgeship, but was considered too useful in the protectorate, becoming secretary for Chinese affairs, FMS, the following year.<sup>29</sup> Officers of long experience were not always satisfied with standards of work in the protectorate or with the support it got from higher authority. Ridges, when acting protector in Perak in 1910, accused the Kuala Lumpur office of being out of touch with conditions in the districts. Inspecting sugar estates in Krian, he was appalled at the negligence and abuses he found, including blindness due to eye disease and unspeakable cruelty in lodging houses.<sup>30</sup>

But times were changing. By 1914, the protectorate had weathered its hardest years. Gambling farms had been abolished. The secretariat had taken over the work of revenue farms formerly supervised by the protectorate, as well as the *chandu* monopoly. The ending of indentures meant less time spent on registration. Police officers were helping with the control of pawnbroking shops, with secret societies, and with the protection of women and girls. In other fields, the work was greater than ever. Brothels continued to proliferate. New educational and charitable institutions grew in number and in complexity, calling for more specialized work by protectorate officers, as did the investigation of banks to shield the credit market from dishonest practices by some Chinese houses.<sup>31</sup> The staff in 1914 consisted of eight officers: the secretary for Chinese affairs now responsible for both the colony and the FMS; two more men in both Penang and in Singapore; one protector each for Perak and for Selangor-Negri Sembilan; and one assistant based in the latter state. Johore accepted the advice of the Singapore office, as did the states taken over from Siam in 1909. A long overdue upgrading of the senior officers' positions came after the war, partly in response to the demands of leading Chinese who insisted that the protector was a big man and ought to be treated as such.<sup>32</sup>

It was a somewhat more bureaucratic and less eccentric service therefore that received the first postwar cadets, a department still thought of as different, but not quite the pariah it had been in Pickering's time or Hare's. W. D. Horne, a 1920 cadet, who had taken first-class honors in classics at Aberdeen, wanted to learn Chinese and was happy to volunteer for the protectorate. On the boat out, a 1921 cadet, Victor Purcell, whose writings later made him perhaps the best known of the interwar protectorate officers, told a fellow cadet that his main reason for coming to the East was to gather material for books.<sup>33</sup> On arrival, he and his nine colleagues learned that five would study Malay and five, Chinese. He asked what the study of Chinese involved and was told that cadets would spend six months working on the language in Malaya, after which those who showed promise would proceed to China, where they would spend two years completing the course. He immediately volunteered, feeling that China's civilization was in the same class as those of Greece and Rome

whereas Malaya's was "comparatively unevolved" and lacking in interest.<sup>34</sup> He was not in the least put off when a senior officer in the secretariat told him that he had ruined his career. It was a question of one's interests. To Purcell, who eventually took a doctorate and returned to his beloved Cambridge, the idea of a governorship and presiding over vast commercial expansion as Swettenham had done was one that held no fascination at all. He was the only volunteer in the group. W. J. Thorogood was anything but happy at being assigned to do Chinese, which happened somewhat informally. He and another cadet were asked on arrival in Taiping whether either of them played cricket. Thorogood did not and the other did. Since the officer under whom one of them would work at Batu Gajah wanted a cricketer for his team, the cadet with that qualification was put into the Malay stream and Thorogood into the Chinese.<sup>35</sup> Rowland Oakeley and his brother cadets of 1931 had much the same kinds of experiences.<sup>36</sup> When he and two others reached Singapore, they were told that two of them would do Chinese. One, Geoffrey Davis, volunteered for the protectorate at once. Hearing that marriage would be a bar to language study in China, the third cadet discovered that he was virtually engaged, and the outmaneuvered Oakeley drew China *faute de femme*. Davis and Oakeley were then asked whether they wanted to study Cantonese or Hokkien—a choice that meant nothing to them at the time. A telephone call to Kuala Lumpur turned up the news that Oakeley's friend J. T. Rea was headed for Amoy to study Hokkien, whereas Davis's chum Noel Alexander was going to Canton. That settled things to everyone's satisfaction. A year later, R. N. Broome and G. A. G. Walker were left to sort out between them who would go to the protectorate and who would do Malay, only one of their class of nine having volunteered for China. Broome gave in to the passionate pleas of his friend and never regretted it.<sup>37</sup> In fact, he and many of his protectorate colleagues of the thirties regarded themselves as an elite corps, partly for Purcell's reason—that China's culture was esteemed above Malaya's. His brother cadet of 1932, R. W. I. Band, on the other hand was disappointed at first, having cherished hopes of a district officer's life. Two years in China were some compensation, though he thought later that some of the protectorate's work was of doubtful value.<sup>38</sup>

For most, the two-year hitch in China was an exotic high point in a career whose middle years involved a good deal of the humdrum. At the *yamen* (language school) in Canton, one met people from other services—police officers from Malaya, Hong Kong cadets—and sampled as much of a bustling international society as one liked. In the early twenties Purcell lived for a time on the European-dominated island of Shameen—a charming, sleepy anachronism that evoked memories of treaty port days.<sup>39</sup> He soon moved into Canton itself, taking a Chinese mistress and otherwise

immersing himself in the life of the country he had come to learn about. He turned his back momentarily on Europe and even more so on the twilight zone of Europe-in-China, with its clubs, its high living, its philistinism, snobbery, and superficiality. As long as men worked hard at the language—Purcell learned both Cantonese and Mandarin—they could do as they liked with their time. He made friends with a young Chinese civil servant, learning as other visitors to China were to do all the way through to the late forties that educated Chinese lived in an agony of ambivalence, loving and hating the Europe that was torturing and cherishing their country, a demon which they could neither escape nor live with comfortably. For this part, Purcell found much to admire and much to condemn. Though they were in some ways the most materialistic of people, seeming to value money above life, the Chinese appeared to take little interest in the substance of their rich civilization—architectural monuments, in particular—and lived amid scenes of ugliness and squalor that made Purcell long for the order, dignity, and magnificence of Europe's public aspect. He alone of the cadets joined the European Club and moved into the British legation where one night Jascha Heifetz gave a recital. "Listening to him playing Haydn and Mozart I was reminded that however much I might become attached to Chinese civilization, my basic loyalty was to the West."<sup>40</sup>

Difficulties with the Chinese government closed Canton for a time, and, in the late twenties cadets studied Cantonese in Portuguese Macao. Though he and T. P. F. (later Sir Percy) McNeice liked Macao—a dusty, pleasant backwater—R. P. Bingham was more aware of his Britishness there than in Malaya. Surrounded by Portuguese officialdom, European diplomats, and the hot commercial competition of Japanese, Americans, and Germans, they were pushed into a chauvinism not otherwise characteristic of the world's most experienced and relaxed overseas wanderers. "Every Britisher out here is an ardent imperialist and we always insist on having British goods."<sup>41</sup> *The Illustrated London News* and other periodicals from home were eagerly awaited. They worked hard at their language study, but found the Chinese Club dull and spent off-hours with their own kind. Weekend visits to Hong Kong for examinations twice a year and for tennis matches and moonlight swimming parties on its lovely beaches were a relief from the daily grind with one's Chinese tutor. "The view from the Peak is absolutely perfect [with a] sunset which painted all the distant hills a deep purple colour and rimmed the sky a rosy red from end to end."<sup>42</sup>

Life in Amoy did not differ greatly. Oakeley and Rea lived on Kulangsu in the international settlement under the nominal authority of the British consul, who left them to themselves on good behavior. They hired teachers who spoke no English and labored eight hours a day, six days a

week on Hokkien, the tongue that was spoken by more Chinese in Malaya than any other. Socializing was not as spectacular as it could be in Hong Kong or as varied as it was in Canton since Amoy was smaller and more remote. But they managed frequent rugger matches, hockey was popular, and British warships called now and again. Getting into the hinterlands would have been interesting. In 1931, however, that was not possible, with the Japanese to the north, the Nationalists in control of Amoy, and the Communists roaming the countryside. When he left for Malaya after twenty-six months, Oakeley felt fairly sure of the language. He was grateful for discipline that taught him how to study, a thing he thought he had left behind in Oxford forever.

Many in Malaya felt that the protectorate cadets were made to work far too intensely. Eye strain from memorizing Chinese characters was a common complaint. Some observers outside the protectorate thought its officers tended to become solemn and introspective as a result of the relentless and lengthy work that filled their early years, demanding as it did a more solitary existence than men in the Malay stream had to endure.<sup>43</sup> This together with slower promotions and the fact that protectorate men, not having done land office work, were not eligible for senior posts such as residencies, undoubtedly created morale problems. McNeice, who did go on to more general work after the 1939 war and who was knighted for outstanding service, used the word "excuse" to describe the land office argument.<sup>44</sup> J. D. H. Neill, a postwar cadet who was the last to be sent to Amoy, was one of the many who felt—rightly or wrongly—that there was a general prejudice in the Malay stream, a tendency to see protectorate officers as too specialized. He cites a case of a protectorate man being denied a position on the east coast even though he spoke Malay better than the officer who got it.<sup>45</sup> Some saw the work as less absorbing over the long run than other tasks and left the protectorate as soon as they could. N. A. (later Sir Newnham) Worley, a 1914 cadet, transferred to the legal side at the beginning of the 1930s and ended his career as chief justice of Bermuda. Though he enjoyed himself in Canton and was grateful for the chance it gave him to gain some knowledge of Chinese mentality and customs, he found day-to-day work somewhat tedious.<sup>46</sup> In 1930, the governor, himself a Chinese speaker with a Hong Kong background, took steps to upgrade protectorate posts as a means of stopping the drain to other branches.<sup>47</sup> This did not involve large numbers. Protectorate officers obtained senior secretariat jobs in their last years in any case, or other desirable positions, such as resident councillorships in Penang or Malacca. It was mainly in their beginning years that men grumbled about boring, repetitive duties. Even at that stage many liked what they did.

During the interwar years, the protectorate continued its traditional work in many fields, took on some that was new and addressed itself to a



Chinese community much changed from its nineteenth-century ancestor. Immigration rushed or trickled, according to tin and rubber trends and to politics in China: in 1921, there was a dip due to a decrease in American and British demand for tin; then a sharp rise on the wave of a rubber boom; a drop again after the 1929 slump; a further decrease resulting from immigration restriction in 1933; a rush of coolies, many with wives, after the Japanese attack on China in 1937; and finally, a series of quota reductions down to 500 a month from 1938 onwards.<sup>48</sup> There was considerable unemployment in the late twenties and early thirties and a good deal of repatriation at the expense of the Malayan government, which meant extra work for protectorate officers in the management of relief camps. Restricted immigration and the establishment of quotas was partly economic and partly political, a response to anti-British propaganda campaigns run in Malaya by Chinese Nationalists and Communists. The period also witnessed shifts in employment patterns. Traditionally, Chinese laborers preferred work in tin mines to work on rubber estates. But in the twenties, some estates changed from Indian to Chinese labor, British managers having seen that "... a Chinese is a more skilled tapper than a Tamil," and also a harder worker.<sup>49</sup>

Oakeley was assigned to immigration work in Singapore during the mid-thirties. His job was to board ships as they arrived from China and check all passengers wanting to come ashore. These were then taken to the immigration office, where documents were issued and where they were met by lodging-house keepers who acted as travel agents. Oakeley recalls that these were the years when females were encouraged to come to Malaya by exempting them from quotas, thereby reducing the sexual imbalance that had caused so much trouble in the past.<sup>50</sup> Earlier, he had worked on the selection of unemployed coolies for repatriation, picking out those who seemed least able to take care of themselves. Each was given a ticket entitling him to a place on the open deck where he could put down his sleeping mat. Food was free, and everyone got enough cash on arrival in China to pay his way home. Steamers could take as many as 2,000 to 3,000 at a time in this way, the tropical climate making deck passage pleasant enough on voyages that lasted only a few days.

Surveillance and registration of secret societies went on as always. Officers were sure, as Pickering had been, that suppression was impossible and that the most one could do was keep watch and deal with flagrant cases of gangsterism as they came up. Most of these involved hardened criminals who used society names without being really connected with them.<sup>51</sup> S. E. King, working in Singapore in the mid-twenties, reported constant trouble with armed gangs of unemployed coolies roaming the streets, fighting each other and others in broad daylight, engaging in robberies, and running extortion rackets that victimized brothels and

shops. The police dealt with this sort of thing more than the protectorate did, though there was close cooperation between the two. In the Malay states, the protectorate worked similarly with district officers. There, the societies had been entrenched so long that it was not easy to get information on their activities. DOs suspected that Malay royals were often involved, and they knew that there was much intimidation of *penghulus*.<sup>52</sup> Occasionally, a Chinese detective in the police would get clues leading to arrests. A Chinese picked up in Selangor was carrying his society's books at the time. This resulted in a solid court case and a number of banishments.<sup>53</sup> Raids on society ceremonies, made possible by tips to the police or the protectorate, sometimes produced valuable information and sometimes not. Shortly after his arrival in Singapore, Bingham got a call from the protector, Raymond Ingham, telling him that news had come of an initiation to be held that night in an illegal triad.<sup>54</sup> They drove to a police station, where they were joined by an inspector and seven men. Leaving their cars, the party tramped single file into the jungle, led by the informer. When at last they reached the house where the ceremony was to have been held, they found it empty. Going on they were dismayed to hear two shots, knowing that this was a signal for the triad meeting to disperse. But half an hour later, they were rewarded by the sight of some twenty men gathered in a clearing lit by candles. An alarm was belatedly given and there was a mad rush to destroy documents and other evidence. Outnumbered better than two to one and operating in darkness, the raiders were able to capture five, one of whom was taken by the delighted Bingham. Subsequent convictions made the raid a success.

Another time-honored protectorate function was looking out for women and girls who needed help. Down to the twenties brothels were legal, subject to disease control and keeping a lid on rowdiness. Women were allowed to enter the country for the purpose of working in brothels, and protectorate officers checked at ports of entry to be sure they were doing so of their own free will. After the houses were abolished—"some thought wrongly"—in 1927 the job was to raid lodging houses and coffee shops that were being used as meeting places, to come to grips with the gangsters who frequented such places, and to harass those who were making a profit off illegal prostitution.<sup>55</sup> The Singapore protectorate also ran a girl's home—the *Po Leung Kuk*, or protect virtue house, there being similar ones in the FMS. As always with such efforts, it was an uphill battle since many victims did not see themselves that way. This was true also of the *mui tsai*, or little younger sisters, who supposedly occupied a kind of *au pair* position with Chinese families and who became a major concern of the protectorate because so many of them were virtually enslaved. Since the *mui tsai* system was embedded in Chinese domestic practice, poorer families traditionally saving their daughters from starva-

tion by placing them with wealthy ones as wards-servants, the Malayan government at first took the view that if the girls were decently treated there should be no interference. In case of abuse, they could be taken to the *Po Leung Kuk*. However, Hong Kong had abolished *mui tsai*, and the C.O. brought pressure on Malaya to do the same after Parliament had taken an interest in the early thirties. Eventually, legislation was passed giving the protectorate powers of inspection and control. Lady inspectors were appointed, including at least two who later married protectorate officers, Mrs. G. W. Webb and Mrs. J. A. Black.<sup>56</sup>

At the heart of all protectorate concerns, historically and morally, was the *Taijen* in Singapore—Pickering's creation—which, by the twenties, still served its original purpose of providing the Chinese community with an open forum for airing any and all complaints and problems. One of Bingham's first jobs was to assist W. G. Stirling in holding court there. No better introduction could be provided, as Stirling was a remarkable man with a unique prestige in the community he served. Alec Dixon, a police officer, described the drab, unidentified building in the heart of Chinatown where Stirling held forth as "... a municipal architect's design for a non-conformist church in darkest Yorkshire."<sup>57</sup> It was bare and gloomy; a big, cheerless room that could hold perhaps 1,000, with Stirling's chair and table on a dais at the back and a stool to one side for the interpreter, who was there to help if any complainant's language was one of those the officer did not know. Being Chinese, he could also act as a sort of cultural broker if need be. Stirling, who had a Chinese wife, was not a regular officer of the protectorate, having begun in 1909 as an assistant in the government monopolies department at Malacca. By the twenties he was still called an extra assistant protector. When Dixon visited him one morning he was hearing the history of a Cantonese *sinkeh* who had emigrated the year before and who was at the time a squatter growing vegetables for the market in a village nearby. His wife was with him. They explained that pigs owned by a wealthy neighbor were ruining their vegetable garden and those of their friends. When they had gone to protest, the pig farmer told them the beasts were being fattened for an important *toukay* of Johore Bahru. He threatened them all with beatings if they interfered with his pigs.

Stirling listened attentively. When he had heard the whole story he questioned the squatter closely in sonorous Cantonese, scribbling the answers in his dog-eared record book. Presently he leaned back in his chair, took off his spectacles and polished them carefully with a large silk handkerchief, staring fixedly as he did so at a far corner of the dingy ceiling.

"Hm. He's not keen on giving the name of that pig fellow," he said, peering at the man on the high stool.

"Perhaps he is a kongsi [secret society] man," the interpreter suggested.

Stirling grunted sceptically. Then he said, "very well, I'll have another go at him."

He talked to the squatter for some minutes without apparent effect; then, with a gesture of finality he threw down his pen and lit a cigarette.

Silence. The Chinese appeared to be reconsidering his position, wondering perhaps why he had been so foolish as to tell his tale to this inquisitive foreign devil. He turned to his wife and talked to her in a low voice. She nodded vigorously and whispered something in his ear.

The Chinese stared . . . at Stirling. Again the woman coaxed him. He looked this way and that uncertainly and I saw that his flat brown face was shining with sweat. After more wifely coaxing he shuffled closer to the rail and leaning over muttered a Chinese name.

Stirling scrawled the name in characters on a slip of paper and held it up for the man to see. The squatter frowned at the paper and after some hesitation nodded assent.

Stirling closed his record book and put on his spectacles. Then he addressed the couple in Cantonese, speaking with such fluent ease that I was filled with envy and admiration . . . The squatter and his wife listened intently, nodding agreement every now and again and occasionally giving vent to Chinese grunts of satisfaction. When Stirling had finished speaking they exchanged hasty, birdlike glances, smiled their relief and thanks and went off nodding and gesticulating like children on their way to a party.<sup>58</sup>

Ten years later, Oakeley had the same job. On an average day, there would be thirty to fifty people waiting to see him: a man whose wife had run off and who wanted the Taijen to get her back; some workers who had not been paid; a woman claiming maintenance from her husband; a mother wanting her daughter put in the *Po Leung Kuk*; a man seeking a hawker's license. He issued "notices," which had no legal force but which usually produced the desired result—the appearance in court of the offending parties. Though some officers thought all this a terrible waste of time, Oakeley valued it. Besides providing an excellent safety valve for society, the court and his experience there gave him insights into Chinese thinking that would have been hard to come by otherwise; it improved his colloquial immeasurably and gave him good training for later work in the arbitration of labor disputes.

Protectorate officers were also involved in a host of special tasks in the interwar years. Some were appointed deputy controllers of labor to deal with Chinese, as opposed to Indian, workers, their services being especially useful in the thirties when labor unions and strikes became familiar in a country that had not known them before.<sup>59</sup> A protectorate man was usually appointed district officer on Christmas Island lying hundreds of

miles away on the other side of Java, because its labor force, engaged in mining phosphate, was Chinese.<sup>60</sup> As the various Chinese communities in the colony and the FMS settled down, their school facilities greatly increased, adding to the protectorate's inspection duties. This might have been a fairly routine business had it not been for the propaganda activities of the Chinese nationalist government (KMT) beginning in the early twenties, a campaign designed to subvert British control and enlist the loyalties of Malaya's Chinese to the homeland. Agitators used night schools for their purposes. This caused divisions among the Chinese at first, appealing more to recent arrivals and young people than to those who had been in the country longer and saw it as their home, the place where they had prospered. When the KMT was outlawed a decade later, most Chinese welcomed the move, criticizing the British only for waiting so long to deal with the troublemakers.<sup>61</sup> The Chinese Communists tried the same tactics, beginning in the mid-twenties. Horne remembers finding the phrase "down with British imperialism" in Chinese characters on the blackboards of night schools when he visited them in off-hours.<sup>62</sup> Communist agents infiltrated secret societies as well as schools, and the Malayan [Chinese] Communist party was in fact dealt with by the courts as a secret society, its members being regularly banished for subversive activity. Internal splits hampered the party, as did troubles in China. It became fairly strong in Penang from time to time and its work among students and teachers increased in the late thirties. But the protectorate and the police watched it closely. They always had the support of Chinese business leaders, from whom it was not easy to hide the party's doings.<sup>63</sup> One reason for the relative lack of success of both the KMT and the Communists in these years was that the highly efficient detective branch of the police was largely Chinese.<sup>64</sup>

Reflecting back on the interwar years and before, a prominent member of the Malay stream of the service remarked that Malaya's Chinese had contributed much to the development of the country and had benefited accordingly.<sup>65</sup> It was their work and the tin and opium revenues made possible by their presence that had laid the foundations of the country's prosperity. Thanks to the protectorate and the police, they had been shielded from their own worst impulses and antisocial elements and thus allowed to reap great rewards from their labors. A protectorate officer, on the other hand, musing on the lessons of the same years from the dismal vantage point of a Japanese prison on Singapore island, had his doubts about what he and his colleagues had accomplished. Though he thought that much of value had been done in the labor field, it struck him that many of the routine jobs could have been done by clerks, leaving officers free to work with the Chinese on projects of social education and self-help. Although Chinese outnumbered Malays, the government had pur-

sued a policy of "Malaya for the Malays," thereby "fostering an effete race at the expense of a virile."<sup>66</sup> This had driven the Chinese to look to their home country for support rather than to the British, whom they had been only too glad to follow in earlier times. Others put the accent on what the Chinese themselves had done in Malaya and what they had been interested in. Tan Cheng Lock, a prominent straits Chinese with several generations of family wealth behind him, noted matter-of-factly that the Chinese in Malaya had not sought political power because "...they were more interested in commerce and earning a livelihood."<sup>67</sup> Later on he had second thoughts and accused the British of having deliberately applied a policy of divide and rule, doing this out of fear that China and India would pose a threat to Britain's hegemony in Southeast Asia. Dr. Khoo Kay Kim, head of the history department in the University of Malaya, does not share this view. He points out that there was more disunity in Malaya before the British came than there was at the time of their departure.<sup>68</sup> And M. J. Hayward, a 1929 cadet of the Malay stream, puts a gloss on Tan's original point, viewing the matter in a wide context of what everyone was doing and thinking in Malaya before the Japanese conquest. The Malays wanted development kept to a pace that would assure the integrity of their own culture. "The immigrant races equally welcomed change, but being cosmopolitan minded, and thus obsessed with the accumulation of wealth and [being] without political purpose, they had no reservation about a speed limit. There was never any question of a Chinese takeover because at no time in history have the Chinese living outside their own country ever envisaged more than China-town life..."<sup>69</sup>

All this would have sounded rather academic to the British, the Malays, and the Chinese in the interwar years. An independent Malaya, without British referees, was not foreseen by the majority in any racial group, much less actively planned for. The protectorate, in any case, was an instrument for keeping the peace while the country prospered. It controlled the self-destructive impulses of the Chinese in Malaya just enough, decade by decade, so that each new wave of immigrants could settle in and acquire a stake in the general well-being.

### Notes

1. See W. Blythe, "Historical Sketch of Chinese Labour in Malaya," *JMBRAS* 20 (1947), and his *The Impact of Chinese Secret Societies in Malaya* (London: Oxford University Press, 1969); V. Purcell, *The Chinese in Malaya* (Kuala Lumpur, 1967); and his "Chinese Settlement in Malacca," *JMBRAS* 20 (1947); and A. E. Coope, "The Kangchu System in Johore," *JMBRAS* 14 (1936).

2. See Straits Settlements Annual Report, 1861-1862, National Library, Singapore. On later arrangements, see the printed report on Chinese affairs, 1872-73, 273/65.

3. An interesting picture of straits society in these years, illustrating the close relations between the British and the Chinese, is to be found in H. Keppel, *A Sailor's Life Under Four Sovereigns*, 3 vols., (New York: Macmillan, 1899). I: 323; II: 80, 116; and III: 14, 232, 317.
4. Sir H. Robinson, report to the C.O., 25 Jan. 1864, 273/81, especially enclosure 12.
5. See R. N. Jackson, *Pickering* (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1965), and Pickering's own book, *Pioneering in Formosa* (London, 1898). Also E. C. S. Adkins, "Malayan Portraits," *Malaya*, Sept. 1953.
6. Pickering, pp. 212-13.
7. Jackson, p. ix, citing an article of Pickering's in the *Pall Mall Gazette*, 1895.
8. Ord to secretary of state, 10 July 1873, 273/67.
9. Blythe, notes on the origins of the protectorate, to H. P. Bryson, 26 Nov. 1970.
10. Minute by Meade, on governor to secretary of state, 12 June 1874, 273/76.
11. Jervois to secretary of state, 29 Nov. 1876, 273/85. Robinson to secretary of state, 6 Feb. 1878, 273/93.
12. Cowan had been agent for the Transvaal government in China.
13. "Report of the Commission of Enquiry into Conditions of Labour in the Straits Settlements and the Protected Malay States," 1890. M. European businessmen in Penang were behind a petition signed by hundreds of Chinese protesting the suppression of societies and claiming that this would hurt the labor supply. See governor to secretary of state, 25 Apr. 1889, 273/159.
14. See memorandum on immigration written by G. T. Hare, secretary for Chinese affairs, and sent to the Foreign Office, 22 Feb. 1900, by H. M. consul, Canton, 273/264. Immigration figures, 1901-05, and details of protectorate work are given in the report of the secretary for Chinese affairs, W. D. Barnes, 1905, M. The indenture system still worked virtually unchanged and the demand for labor had greatly increased due to railway building.
15. The report and draft bill are in 273/153, pp. 482 ff., 1888. See also Protectorate Annual Report, 1889, M. And C. F. Yong, "Emergence of Chinese Community Leaders in Singapore, 1890-1914," The Flinders University, 1 Nov. 1974. I am grateful to Dr. Yong for his comments on Chinese affairs to these years.
16. See acting protector Singapore, G. C. Wray, to colonial secretary, 3 Mar. 1892, 273/180; also Hare to Swettenham on suppression in the FMS, 18 July 1898, 273/245.
17. "Some Malay Memories," by A. B. Jordan, a 1913 cadet, sent to H. P. Bryson, 14 Aug. 1969. I thank Rev. Jordan for his help on this period.
18. See Pickering's report for 1883, 27 June 1883, 273/121 and the report of W. Evans, acting protector, 12 Sept. 1894, 273/197. Also Annual Report of the Negri Sembilan protectorate, 1916, M., by J. V. Mills.
19. Hare's report, 12 Sept. 1894, 273/203. By 1900, Singapore had 10 European brothels, 236 Chinese, 48 Japanese, 9 Tamil, and 8 Malay, housing a total of 1,233 prostitutes. See report by A. H. Capper, acting protector, 24 July 1900, 273/258. On male homosexual prostitution, mainly by Hainanese boys, see C. M. Turnbull, *A History of Singapore* (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1977), p. 87.

20. Mitchell wrote to Fairfield in the C.O. (23 Mar. 1894, 273/194) of opium and gambling as natural activities to the Chinese and profitable to the government. Lucas felt that "opium and Chinamen go together and opium licenses ... are all-important to the revenue." (Minute, 26 Aug. 1894, on Mitchell to secretary of state, 8 Mar. 1894, 273/194.) See also Protectorate Annual Reports, 1905 and 1917, M.

21. H. C. Belfield, resident Selangor, to resident-general, 29 Mar. 1907, 273/330. See 273/332, p. 528 ff. for correspondence between Sir Henry Cotton, M.P., and Winston Churchill.

22. See Hare's report, enclosed with Swettenham to secretary of state, 3 Aug. 1903, 273/294. Also the remarks of Towkay Eu Tong Seng in the Federal Council, proceedings, 1912, B113.

23. Miss L. Newton, "Friends in the Civil Service," to author, 28 Sept. 1974.

24. Memorandum of Jan. 1881, governor to secretary of state, 14 Jan. 1881, 273/107.

25. To secretary of state, 28 Sept. 1888, 273/154.

26. Wray to Fairfield, 25 Oct. 1894, 273/201. Wray was protector, straits, at the time. At the other extreme was R. G. Watson, an 1883 cadet, who became resident-general in 1910.

27. Hare did succeed in being seconded to Wei Hai Wei briefly. Another cadet, R. Walter, also seconded there, did not return.

28. Governor to secretary of state, dispatch 94, 1900, M.

29. Purcell cites Chapman, Walter Peacock, and A. M. Goodman as examples of protectorate officers in the Pickering tradition. See *The Memoirs of a Malayan Official* (London, 1965), p. 161. I am grateful to Dr. J. V. Mills for further information on Chapman (to author, 24 Feb. 1975).

30. "Report of the Commission Appointed to Enquire into the Conditions of Indentured Labour in the FMS," 1910, M., 26. Many coolies had been forced to submit to homosexual intercourse. One had died after being compelled to eat excrement. On Ridges in Selangor, see W. A. H. Stratton Brown, "Long Ago in Selangor," CRP.

31. Governor to secretary of state, 29 Jan. 1914, 273/406.

32. Governor to secretary of state, 4 July 1919, 273/483.

33. H. P. Bryson to G. Hawkins, 12 May 1966.

34. Purcell, *Memoirs*, p. 95.

35. "Experiences in the MCS," by H. P. Bryson, who was the cricketer in question. Thorogood ended in the Labor Department learning Tamil. The senior ADO of Batu Gajah was T. S. (later Sir Theodore) Adams.

36. Recollections provided to author by Mr. Oakeley in 1975.

37. Broome to H. P. Bryson, 12 Mar. 1970, and supplemented in correspondence with author. As a sort of postscript, he reports that A. J. Gracie, who had served in the establishments office, once accused him of actually enjoying his time in the protectorate, a remark that says much about attitudes of Malay-stream men towards the protectorate. (Talk with author, London, 26 Oct. 1973.) Broome questioned the value of tone tests given in England before departure. The results of these did not reach Malaya until after assignments had been made. On the other hand, A. B. Cobden-Ramsay, a 1927 cadet, says he escaped the protectorate because of tone deafness (to author, 28 Feb. 1974). C. H. Whitton, 1929, had the



same experience (to H. P. Bryson, 10 Dec. 1969). Oakeley entered the protectorate despite tone deafness.

38. To H. P. Bryson, 12 Sept. 1969.

39. Purcell's description of life on Shameen in the 1920s brings back memories of my own experiences there in the 1940s. Little had changed.

40. Purcell, *Memoirs*, p. 148.

41. To his mother, 2 Sept. 1926. I thank Mr. Bingham for the loan of his letters.

42. *Ibid.*, 6 Oct. 1926.

43. See memorandum 691, 1922, P/PESU 1, M. Also George Bilainkin, *Hail Penang* (London: Sampson, Low, Marston & Co., 1932), p. 199.

44. To H. P. Bryson, 23 Aug. 1969.

45. Letter from Neill to H. P. Bryson, 11 June 1969, enlarged on in a talk with author in Singapore, 19 July 1973. And see his book, *Elegant Flower* (London, 1956). This question is the subject of a long correspondence between H. P. Bryson and his brother officers: Neill, Harvey, Helps, Reid, Cunyngham-Brown, Falconer, and Cator.

46. Worley to H. P. Bryson, n.d., acknowledged 28 Dec. 1970.

47. Governor to secretary of state, 25 Sept. 1930, 717/73.

48. Purcell, *Memoirs*, pp. 220-21. See also W. Blythe, "Historical Sketch of Chinese Labor in Malaya," *JMBRAS* 20 (1947): 101 ff., and FMS Annual Report, 1930, M.

49. Reports of the Indian Immigration Committee, M. The planter quoted was C. R. Thurston, meeting of 16 July 1930.

50. Oakeley's recollections, p. 5. Later a quota was applied to women as well. Oakeley estimates that men still outnumbered women about six to one at this time. Purcell, *The Chinese in Malaya*, p. 174, puts it at three to one.

51. Blythe, *Chinese Secret Societies*, pp. 307-10. I am much indebted to Dr. Khoo Kay Kim for a helpful discussion of this subject, Kuala Lumpur, 11 July 1973.

52. See the reports of A. M. Goodman, protector in Perak, 1922; Berkeley on societies in Upper Perak, 1921; Adams on Kuala Kangsar, 1928; de Moubray on Telok Anson, 1933; Cator, resident Perak, 1933; and Watherston, ADO Kuala Kangsar, 1933, in M. L. Wynne, *Triad and Tabut* (Singapore: Government Printer, 1941).

53. Chinese Protectorate, Kuala Lumpur, file 610, 1922, M. See also Negri Sembilan State Council minutes, file 947, 1921, for details of banishments.

54. To his mother, 5 Mar. 1926.

55. Oakeley, recollections, p. 6.

56. I thank J. T. Rea for information on this subject.

57. "The Chinese Protectorate," RCS, p. 1. Also Miss L. Newton, "Friends in the Civil Service."

58. "The Chinese Protectorate," pp. 6-7.

59. See *Monthly Review of Chinese Affairs* 51 (Nov. 1934), by A. B. Jordan, secretary for Chinese affairs, Malaya. Also governor to secretary of state, 7 Dec. 1934, 273/597 and Jordan's report 52, Dec. 1934.

60. See Bingham to his mother, 21 Jan. 1931; McNeice to H. P. Bryson, 23 Aug. 1969; and Purcell, *Memoirs*, p. 177 ff.

61. See memorandum by Goodman, 18 Apr. 1921, 717/12; also Yong (n. 15 above) and Annual Report on Chinese affairs, 1930, M. London negotiated with China through its legation there, obtaining assurances that the propaganda would be stopped. The banning of the KMT came when it was seen that this had not been done. See also governor to secretary of state, 14 Apr. 1932, 273/583/7428.

62. To author, 16 Nov. 1974. See also "Review of Communist Activities in Malaya, 1936," supplement #1 of 1937, S. S. Police Special Branch, *Political Intelligence Journal*, 273/630/50147.

63. A useful indication of attitudes among establishment Chinese is found in the remarks of their leaders in legislative bodies. See, for example, those of Choo Kia Peng, San Ah Wing, and Lim Bock Kee in the proceedings of the Federal Council during the 1920s and 1930s. See also the Tan Cheng Lock Papers, M., and Lim Yew Hock, speech to the British European Association, *Malaya*, Aug. 1957.

64. See S. W. Jones, *Public Administration in Malaya* (London: Oxford University Press, 1953), p. 73.

65. *Ibid.*, p. 36.

66. Bingham to his father, from Changi Prison, 9 July 1942.

67. "National Unity in Malaya," Tan Cheng Lock Papers, M. There is no date, but this paper was written in the 1940s.

68. Interview, Kuala Lumpur, 11 July 1973.

69. To author, 13 Dec. 1974. Mr. Hayward goes on to compare the Chinese domestic view of the rest of the world with that of the Romans—a "we and barbarians" attitude.

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## 7 Indian Immigrants and the Labor Department

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ALTHOUGH INDIAN immigration to Malaya lagged well behind Chinese—there were fewer than 750,000 Indians in the country by 1941 as against more than 2,300,000 Chinese—workers from the subcontinent played a major role in development, especially in the production of rubber, the most spectacular money earner from the early 1900s onwards. Like the Chinese, they eventually settled down in Malaya. Their contributions to the country's life, cultural, political and economic, have been considerable. British officers who learned Indian languages—twenty-eight out of 184 in 1941—were not concerned primarily with keeping order within immigrant communities as the Chinese Protectorate did, but with looking after the interests of Indian laborers, who were traditionally more submissive than the Chinese, by seeing to it that recruitment in India was humane and that employers paid fair wages and maintained decent living conditions for workers on estates in Malaya.<sup>1</sup>

India's trade relations with Malaya before the nineteenth century had been of importance to both. Hindu, and later Moslem, traders used Malaya as an emporium of China commerce, much as Europeans were to do later, and gained political influence along the west coast. During the Portuguese and Dutch periods, they suffered a decline due to the monopolistic practices of the Europeans. But Indian communities survived in Malacca, some of their people being called "klings" after the name of the kingdom of Kalinga on the Coromandel coast. Others, mainly Hindus, were known as "chetties," a term later synonymous with moneylenders, though originally it referred to a caste, many of whose members were engaged in commerce. To the north, in Kedah, there were settlements of Chulias, Moslems from the Coromandel coast of south India, who had great influence among the Malays because of their wealth and the relatively high state of their civilization. Captain Light's arrival at Penang in the 1780s signaled a lessening of their commercial predominance, though their trade went on, and there was an important Indian element in Penang and Province Wellesley from the start of British rule. As British control spread from Penang to Singapore and Malacca, the number of Indians journeying to the straits for one reason or another increased, while the activities that brought them changed from the lucrative trading of former years to smaller commerce and agriculture. This was an extension of what was happening in India itself, of which the straits were now a part.

In the first half of the nineteenth century, European coffee and sugar estates in Malaya outgrew the local supply of labor at the same time as India was experiencing an unprecedented growth of population together with conditions of rural depression that made people willing to migrate. Malaya's need for agricultural labor was not unique; other colonies felt it too, and in the same period. Their combined appeals to the government of India, coming at a time when starvation seemed the only alternative to emigration, resulted in various arrangements whereby people were permitted to leave, subject to government approval. Some Malayan estate owners recruited through their own agents who were sent to India for the purpose. Others contracted with self-employed brokers. Workers usually indentured themselves for five years. Abuses were common, and shortly before the transfer of the straits from India to the C.O., emigration was banned by act of Parliament. The ban was not fully effective, however. The flow of workers continued, accompanied by erratic correspondence between the Indian and straits governments about the relative demands of commerce and humanity. In 1871, the governor, Sir Harry Ord, forwarded to London a memorial from planters in Penang and Province Wellesley, complaining bitterly that after fifty years of relatively uncontrolled immigration, India had suddenly implemented the legal ban, with disastrous results for the straits economy.<sup>2</sup> Due to poor soil, said the planters, estates could not be run at a profit without cheap labor. Neither the Malays nor the Chinese were willing to work for so little, nor would many engage in planting even if wages were higher. This put a premium on Indians. Rejecting both the stringent control governing immigration into the West Indies and the freedom that Ceylon benefited from, the governor proposed a compromise: if India would allow reasonably unrestricted recruitment of workers, the straits would designate a protector to receive and look after them. During the seventies immigration proceeded legally and more or less normally, while planters' representatives called regularly at the C.O. to protest the severity of controls, and the government of India criticized the straits with equal vehemence for permitting what amounted to slave labor.<sup>3</sup> An Indian army officer, Captain Hatchell, came to Penang briefly as protector of immigrants. When he returned to India, F. H. Gottlieb, a locally recruited officer of the straits service, took over the work, his appointment being subject to the approval of the Indian government.<sup>4</sup> Gottlieb knew Tamil—the language of most of the workers. His duties included inspection of estates on Penang and the mainland, a difficult job as he was only a second-class magistrate with limited powers, there were many estates, and planters were not easily influenced. No one was satisfied with these patchwork expedients. The planters protested that they were being interfered with unnecessarily; the government of India that immigrants were not properly cared for; straits officers that they had neither enough time for the work nor the

interested support of their superiors; and Pickering that his officers in the protectorate were being discriminated against in being given far more work to do than was undertaken by protectors of Indians. The C.O. was gratified by the growing prosperity of the Malayan dependencies but doubtful of the ability of the straits government to adequately supervise estate labor.<sup>5</sup> Meanwhile, the law of supply and demand took its course. Low in Perak and Sir Frederick Weld at Government House in Singapore agreed that labor from outside was vital, that Indians were preferable to the unruly Chinese, and that, over the years, they would be a useful counterweight to that troublesome race.

For the most part, the welfare of the workers was the concern, not of specialists, but of district officers and supervisors of public works projects such as road building, which, in fact, involved more Indians over the long run than estate work did. Civil servants appointed sporadically in the seventies and eighties as protectors or immigration officers dealt with the terms of recruitment, with transportation from India to Malaya, and with the reception of workers on arrival. In 1883, a cadet, H. A. Thompson, was sent to India to learn Tamil.<sup>6</sup> An ordinance passed the following year called for a permanent immigration agent at Penang. During most of the remaining years of the nineteenth century, however, the officer holding this post was a member of the Chinese Protectorate. His title was eventually changed to superintendent of immigrants, giving him responsibility for both Chinese and Indians, and he had assistants in the Malay states.<sup>7</sup> From the earliest years, officers found themselves wedged uncomfortably in between European planters, with their natural concern for profits, and the growing numbers of laborers, whose working conditions were their primary concern. Whether posted briefly at Negapatam, one of the ports of embarkation in India, at the receiving station in Penang, or in one of the major sugar-growing districts of Province Wellesley or Perak, they became familiar with practices that they could not regard with approval. Some of the recruitment was done by *kanganys*, Indian estate foremen, who went back to India to collect workers in villages they themselves had come from. Often, but not always, these men were humane enough. In other cases, employers dealt with brokers who had no connection with the estates, who were in business to round up whatever number of laborers a contract called for and who used methods of misrepresentation and force that ended in kidnapping plain and simple. Since workers came alone, unaccompanied by their families, women were transported to Malaya for service as prostitutes on the estates. Provisions for seeing to the health of immigrants were primitive or nonexistent. Conditions on shipboard and the onerous circumstances of work were such that many arrived in no fit state to undertake heavy labor, others broke down soon afterward, and mortality was high.<sup>8</sup> Nevertheless, so many came that the straits govern-

ment discontinued its subsidies to shipping lines early in the nineties. A commission appointed in 1896 to look into the whole question of Indian immigration recommended free, rather than indentured, recruitment. This resulted in a new ordinance designed to provide better protection for workers. By this time, employers had recognized that long indentures and bad conditions on estates were self-defeating. Planters served on the commission along with administrative officers.<sup>9</sup> Considerable agreement was reached on the enlightened self-interest of improved working conditions and on the increased importance of Indian labor at a time when it was feared that Malaya's tin deposits were running out, making agriculture all the more vital. Reassured by the action of the straits government, India undertook to place no further obstacle in the way of emigration, provided that workers did not use Malaya as a jumping-off point for countries with less satisfactory records.<sup>10</sup>

As for the workers themselves, by the late nineties many had learned how valuable they were and how to profit from that knowledge. Returning to India was becoming less attractive. Laborers found that they could work as much or as little as they pleased and that managers were helpless to interfere. They left for better jobs, sometimes on their own and sometimes as a result of crimping by other employers. They wandered off to work for short periods, harvesting rice for Malays who paid them in kind, then went back to their coffee or sugar estates where their hapless masters had no alternative to welcoming them home. Some lived in villages completely populated by Indians with their own houses and gardens, taking work on nearby estates or with the public works department, as the spirit moved.<sup>11</sup> Not all were so independent or so fortunate. And most still returned to India. But by the turn of the century, the average laborer was no longer leading the life of slavery by another name that so many of his mid-century predecessors had led.

If living conditions had changed for the better by the early 1900s, the numbers of immigrants arriving annually had altered even more, jumping from 28,000 in 1901 to 42,00 in 1905. The explanation was rubber. As a product important enough for large-scale commercial exploitation, rubber came to be a major concern of the straits government in the nineties. Plants taken from Brazil to Kew Gardens in London were experimented with there and then sent on to India, Ceylon, and Singapore, the first arriving in the straits in the seventies.<sup>12</sup> Some were planted in the residency garden at Kuala Kangsar, where Low, with his long-standing interest in naturalism, tended them with particular care. Martin Lister, later to become resident, wanted seeds for his agricultural estate in Negri Sembilan as early as 1881. A few years later, he joined T. Heslop Hill, whom he had known in Ceylon, in setting out plants in Selangor, first at Weld Hill. Commercial plantings were made at Kajang in the nineties. As

residents Perak, both Low and Swettenham did all they could to encourage planters, believing, as Swettenham said, that "... revenue and prosperity follow the liberal but prudently-directed expenditure of public funds..."<sup>13</sup> The government would grant land to planters on favorable terms, help with the supply of labor, maintain good communications, advertise the advantages of planting in the United Kingdom, and then hope to benefit from the large revenues and general prosperity that resulted from a thriving rubber industry. In this it was supported and urged on by the C.O., and occasionally taken to task for not doing enough.<sup>14</sup> At first, it was thought, by Swettenham and others in the government, that relatively small estates run by individual planters would be best. Accordingly, the government stuck to its policy of granting title to limited amounts of land and of enforcing the rule that land unplanted within the agreed period would revert to the government. The newly formed United Planters' Association was not slow to point out in protest that success would depend on large acreage and ultimately on financing by corporations.<sup>15</sup> Swettenham soon agreed, it being seen by the late nineties that coffee was losing out and that rubber was the country's great hope. The difficulty was that no return could be expected for several years while the trees were maturing. It was clearly impossible for small planters to meet expenses on their own, the solution being agency houses such as Harrisons and Crosfield, Guthries, and Barlows, which linked the London money market with Malayan estates.

Midway through the first decade of the twentieth century, rubber had become so important to the economy that the great unifying organizations, the Planters' Association of Malaya and the Rubber Growers' Association, occupied positions not unlike those of similar ones in Britain and America, powerful combines that dealt with the government on equal terms or better. It would be inaccurate to say that the political authority had become their servant. They continued to complain for years afterwards that it did not listen to them enough.<sup>16</sup> But their influence in Malaya was greater than that of nineteenth-century merchants, and their links with the government were strong. Swettenham and Treacher were both members of the RGA after retirement. In 1909, Treacher became manager of Guthries's new estate in Negri Sembilan, and he and Swettenham joined the boards of companies. Sir Eric Macfadyen, who came out as a cadet in 1902, left the service to go into planting and later became chairman of the PAM.<sup>17</sup> What had happened was that the industry and, to a considerable extent, the government had both become identified with a prosperity that depended on a single product. For the remaining years of the British period, they would have differences—some of them drastic—on what was needed. Yet no one denied that rubber was the biggest thing that had come into the country's life since the China trade.<sup>18</sup>

This became apparent to administrative officers soon enough. DOs had firm instructions from their residents on what kind of planting to encourage and by whom.<sup>19</sup> The poor and inexperienced would only waste their time and money on a crop that was too complicated for them. Interplanting with tapioca—a Chinese idea meant to compensate for the lack of profit from rubber in the first years—had to be forbidden since the two crops were not compatible. Planting by Malays was to be fostered as one means of promoting their interests at a time when they were everywhere being outdone by the Chinese. In the last years before the 1914 war demand for rubber land rose fairly steadily. The DO Kuala Pilah reported that applications for land from Malays were so numerous that he had had to close his books twice in one year.<sup>20</sup> It was the same with the Chinese. Land formerly in rice and gambier was increasingly being converted to rubber. By 1916, over 170,000 acres in Negri Sembilan were in rubber. DOs worried that the food supply would become inadequate in some districts where the men devoted all their time to the new product, leaving the tending of traditional crops to their women. Mining suffered as well.

The inspection work of DOs and immigration officers increased apace. A. S. Haynes, a 1901 cadet, learned Tamil while posted to the immigration office in Penang, and used it when looking into working conditions on estates there and in Perak during the early years of rubber growing.<sup>21</sup> He saw that standards of medical service, housing, and food were erratic, some estates treating laborers well, and others not. Education in basic hygiene was a problem everywhere; laborers would not use latrines or take quinine. Some estate managers had a genuine liking for their workers, were liked in return, and were able to influence them towards sound practices. John Whitham of the Midlands Estate in Selangor, a famous raconteur, spoke Tamil like a native and was always surrounded by laborers wanting to tell him their troubles and hear his stories.<sup>22</sup> At the other extreme was a Perak estate whose whole European staff had to be changed because their ill treatment of coolies had become so notorious. Two men were prosecuted in court, and another left the country in disgrace.<sup>23</sup> Relations between DOs and planters in these years tended to be thornier than they were later when the industry had settled down. In a time of high risks and deferred returns, planters understandably tried to keep expenses down, and civil servants with their nagging about workers' rights and strict terms of land grants were a nuisance. Most planters were from roughly the same social background as administrative officers. Both frequented the same clubs, played games together, and joined the same military units. But the aims of the two groups were not the same, and conflict was inevitable.<sup>24</sup> J. W. C. Ellis, a 1908 cadet who spoke Javanese, was called on to investigate complaints by Javanese workers on a Negri Sembilan estate in 1917. The men were in desperately bad physical condi-



tion when they appeared and said that they had been severely beaten, overworked, underpaid, and given hardly any medical attention.<sup>25</sup> When Ellis's report charging the estate manager with gross inhumanity was hushed up by his superiors in response to political pressure, Ellis shot himself. W. J. K. Stark, posted to Jebebu as DO in 1913, discovered that the district was completely dominated by a planter, Athelstane Braddon, whom everyone called "the Abang" (elder brother). In addition to his holdings of rubber land and mines, Braddon owned the local club. When he heard that Stark was about to try one of his Chinese employees for an infraction of the mining regulations, he hinted to the DO that it would be well for the man to be let off as he, the Abang, knew people in high places. After finding the accused guilty, Stark proceeded to convict him. Braddon paid the man's fine, and all parted friends.<sup>26</sup> Another case, heard by a young ADO in Klang, was not settled so amicably. The officer, N. R. Jarrett, had been in Malaya less than two years when he was confronted with the case of a young planter who was accused of having raped a Chinese girl. The planting community and their highly placed European lawyer tried to browbeat the young "beak," as administrator-magistrates were called. On the other side was an enormous crowd of Chinese threatening to riot if the planter was let off. Jarrett and his minuscule band of Malay and Sikh police stood firm. The planter was committed by Jarrett for trial in Kuala Lumpur, where the high court sat, and escorted to the railway station through a howling mob.<sup>27</sup>

By this time, the regular administrative service was beginning to receive help on labor problems from a new branch set up to do in the field of Indian immigration what the Chinese Protectorate had long done in its sphere. Since the seventies the reception of workers had been overseen by officers temporarily posted to ports of debarkation and at collection points in India. Their welfare on estates had been one of the normal concerns of district officers. For some time, however, the swollen numbers of immigrants brought on by the rubber economy had made it obvious that improvisations would not be enough over the long pull. The planters themselves took the initiative in calling for a more specialized organization with officers trained in Indian languages and made responsible for supervising recruitment and working conditions. The Labor Commission of 1890 was made up of nine European planters, one Chinese, and two civil servants—Powell of the Chinese Protectorate and Swettenham. The commission persuaded one of their number, T. Heslop Hill, to take on the recruiting job.<sup>28</sup> Having arrived in the straits in 1877 after ten years in Ceylon where a blight had wiped out his coffee plantations, Hill had suffered a second disappointment in Johore and Selangor. This time it was a fall in coffee prices that ruined him, after which Swettenham took him on as a maker of roads in all three of the west coast states. He had great

success in managing Indian workers on the roads, and, in return, he was granted extensive lands on which he planted coffee and, later, rubber. By the late nineties, the bottom had fallen out of the coffee market. Since rubber had still to prove itself, Hill sold his extensive holdings in Perak and Selangor to Guthries. This time he emerged solvent and still possessed of a marketable fund of experience as a manager of labor. For a time he did recruiting work in India as a sort of free lance for the planters. In 1896, two cadets were sent to India for language training—A. V. Brown and E. L. Talma, a West Indian. At that point, the straits were employing Dr. Hardaker, formerly of the Madras Medical Service, as their agent in Negapatam, joining with the FMS government in advancing passage money to immigrants, helping the penniless on arrival, but leaving actual recruitment to Hill and the planters.<sup>29</sup> The governments were still reluctant to move into the labor field officially, not being confident that the planting economy was sound. Civil servants who had done labor work in Malaya were therefore unsure of their prospects. E. G. Broadrick, the most senior of them, who was to end his career as chief secretary, FMS, applied in 1897 for labor work in the Caribbean or Mauritius.<sup>30</sup> But desertions of workers from Malayan estates and public works forces to better-paid jobs in Kedah and the Dutch islands was worrying. Planters petitioned for more discipline, catching the government once again in the dilemma of prejudicing the economy by doing too little or taking on a burden of supervision for which it did not have enough staff. Could decent treatment of workers be assured in a free market? Broadrick thought not and recommended the setting up of a special department within the government to oversee all aspects, from recruitment in India to daily life on Malayan estates. The governor decided that the only way he would be able to deal with so complex and important a problem was to visit India and see for himself.<sup>31</sup> The mills of civil service change ground slowly, however, while immigration steadily rose, and attempts were made to deal with labor conditions by means of new ordinances and by *ad hoc* expedients such as the replacement in 1900 of the unsatisfactory Dr. Hardaker by Dr. E. C. Foston, a Tamil-speaking surgeon from Province Wellesley.<sup>32</sup> Responding to mounting pressure from the planters, yet another commission was appointed in the same year. Chaired by Belfield, resident Selangor, it included the planter, E. V. Carey; T. Pillai, an Indian employer; a government surgeon; and two state engineers. All the classical problems were aired once again, the voices of the PWD and the planters being raised in protest against crimping and ruinous expenses and those of the administration and the medical profession urging proper care of workers as a matter of self-interest as well as common decency. When the surgeon member chastised the railway engineer for insufficient precautions against malaria at Kajang, the latter replied, "I am afraid the

expense would be prohibitive."<sup>33</sup> A compromise was agreed to whereby Hill would be appointed protector of labor—at first, the suggested title was protector of Indians—and arrangements would be made for improved conditions on estates, but without the creation of any startlingly new administrative structure. Since Hill was to go on with his private business at the same time, the C.O. were not entirely happy with this. But they accepted Swettenham's assurance that there was no one in the civil service with comparable experience, and they hoped that Hill would not be a cat's paw of the planters.<sup>34</sup> The appointment was on a trial basis only, and Hill's post was not pensionable.

In 1901, E. W. F. Gilman, an 1899 cadet, went to India to study Tamil and, on return, submitted on his own initiative a report dealing with all phases of immigration and labor work.<sup>35</sup> Due to rising prosperity in India, the number of laborers leaving for Malaya had dropped, and the number returning home from there had risen. Yet, with rubber on the upsurge, the demand for labor was higher than ever. Gilman's suggestions for a modernized recruitment office at Negapatam coincided with renewed pleas from the planters that a Malayan officer spend at least half of every year in India to stop the fraudulent recruitment propaganda that was hurting Malaya's reputation and to take steps to right the imbalance between male and female immigrants so that workers would be more inclined to make the country their permanent home. They also urged that land in Malaya be granted to workers on favorable terms after they had completed their indentures. Gilman went back to India in 1903 and 1904, and two years later took Hill's place as acting protector in India while the older man was on leave. This was the end of the line for Hill, who had failed to please either the government or the planters. Both had demanded much of him and had given him less organizational support than the rubber boom called for. He was succeeded by L. H. Clayton of the Chinese Protectorate. Clayton, who had been given responsibility for both Chinese and Indians in Penang, received authority for the FMS as well as the colony, and, in 1907, assumed the title of superintendent of Indian immigrants.<sup>36</sup> With the superintendent doing the office work from Penang and Gilman serving as emigration agent in India, there was now the basis for a more continuous and systematic approach. Gilman was able to make detailed suggestions to the resident-general, Sir William Taylor, who visited India in 1906. The most important of these was that a fund be established to provide passage money for immigrants. This would be supported by a levy on employers in Malaya, amounts being determined by the number of days their employees worked. An improved *kangany* system of recruitment would eliminate the worst abuses of brokerage and the crimping that fed off free immigration. In March 1907, a new immigration committee started a series of meetings in Penang. As with

previous bodies, it included civil servants and representatives of the planting community, as well as the medical and railway services.<sup>37</sup> It was this group that set out the original terms of the new office's work and maintained a watching brief on progress year to year.

Matters might have rested here—organizationally at least—if it had not been for a fresh inquiry at a much higher level. In 1909, the secretary of state appointed a committee to look into Indian immigration to all British territories due to the unusual amount of public interest the subject was generating in these years of political restiveness in India itself.<sup>38</sup> One of the resulting recommendations was that bodies set up to deal with immigration be headed by senior officers as an indication of the seriousness of the work. Accordingly, the Penang office was raised in 1911 to the status of a full-scale bureau called the Labor Department. J. R. O. Aldworth, who had been in service since 1889, was appointed protector, his title being changed to controller in 1912, in which year Gilman became his deputy. In the same period and for the same reason—an outcry in the House of Commons—the indenture system of recruitment was abolished.<sup>39</sup>

1911 was thus the official founding date of the Labor Department. From then on there would be more system and regularity in postings to work involving Indian immigrants than there had been before, the establishment of a definitive labor stream comparable to the Chinese one. A glance at the careers of men who had been involved in some aspects of labor work before that year shows considerable variation in training, in types of duty, and in continuity. Some learned Indian languages and some did not. Some who did went to India for that training and some did not. Some learned a language but had little or no subsequent labor experience or took part incidentally, their main jobs being of the routine administrative kind. And others, with or without languages, held labor posts from time to time in the course of careers that were mostly devoted to other work.<sup>40</sup> Even after 1911, the department was like the protectorate in that men assigned to it would do other kinds of work eventually, as they became senior. It never became an *imperium in imperio*, sealed off from the rest of the service. As was true of the protectorate, many of its officers knew Malay and other non-Indian languages and were comparable to their brothers of the Malay stream as regards general qualifications.

The remaining years before the war—when recruitment of cadets stopped—were a time of adjustment to the new setup. Eleven cadets joined the department in the last four prewar years, a testimony to the importance of the rubber boom and the determination of government and planters alike to see that the labor supply was adequate and the workers cared for. The reputation of the labor stream remained the lowest of the three, although, as with the protectorate, the attitudes of new cadets varied considerably. In 1902, Winstedt had tried unsuccessfully to get into

labor work because he had a passion for languages and liked the thought of visiting India.<sup>41</sup> Stark volunteered due to family background in India but regretted it afterward. G. A. de C. de Moubray, entering in 1912, finally talked the chief secretary into giving him an ADO's job seven years later and never went back to labor work.<sup>42</sup> In 1913, Jarrett was "somewhat dashed" to be told he was posted to labor, though he came to like the people and became a strong partisan of theirs, not only in dealing with Malayan planters, but also with the British in India.<sup>43</sup> Madras Europeans seemed racially haughty, and he did not like what he heard of the "heaven-born" ICS. J. M. Barron, who had a mixture of duties in Malaya, always considered labor work the most interesting of all.<sup>44</sup> But M. C. Hay, a 1913 cadet, "wangled out" after only a year and got himself sent to Lipis as ADO.<sup>45</sup>

By now, Gilman was thought of as the father of the department, having been in labor work for over a decade and having had more to do with establishing the ground rules than anybody else. He took juniors into the office at Penang to teach them the rudiments of the bureaucratic side and out to nearby estates for inspection work, leaving them to manage on their own as soon as he felt they understood what to look for and ask about. Many Penang coolies were Hindustani speakers, which was frustrating for some cadets but not for Stark, who remembered it from his youth. He persuaded planters in Province Wellesley to improve workers' housing and to set aside land that they could use for growing vegetables and fruit for their own consumption. Later, he wrote a manual of advice for cadets, a monograph on laborers' customs and living conditions, and an article criticizing such practices as giving excessive doses of cod liver oil. He shared Gilman's determined aim of reducing malaria and intestinal complaints among workers and was overjoyed when the death rate from malaria dropped from 6 to 3 percent in the interwar years.

Most officers got on well with employers, especially as the primitive conditions of the pioneer time gradually faded away. But the tension was always there in the background. The conviction persisted among some managers that workers were not used to decent housing in their own country, and Gilman's campaigns for improved coolie lines were often effectively resisted. The controller finally won out over the protests of the director of the PWD and his allies among the planters. Slowly, the old back-to-back barracks gave way to well-built lines with good roofs, larger rooms, privacy for parents, and better sanitary facilities.

During the interwar years, the rubber industry grew in complexity and in importance to the country as the government struggled to control and exploit an increasingly unwieldy giant. By the end of the 1914 war rubber's primacy over other products had been established beyond doubt, and so had the dangers of a boom-bust economy that was heavily de-

pendent on it. The planters and their principals in London naturally disliked the idea of government control, while continuing to expect maximum government help. Yet they realized that in a cut-throat international market, subject to sudden and drastic fluctuations in demand and therefore in prices, some sort of planning and continuous management was the alternative to disaster. Beginning with the Stevenson scheme for rubber restriction in the early twenties there was a series of experiments by which the government groped for a solution that would keep production in line with demand without abandoning the field to their Dutch and other competitors. By the thirties considerable agreement on quotas had been reached among the main producing countries, and within Malaya itself there was no longer any serious opposition to the principle that all phases from planting to stockpiling and marketing had to be supervised and controlled.<sup>46</sup> Organizations founded to do research on diseases and on the science of rubber growing got a measure of support from government and industry that would have amazed the embattled forestry department of earlier years. A new post—controller of rubber—was set up, the holder always being a senior officer.<sup>47</sup> All the way down the ranks, through residents to district officers, the central importance of rubber was a daily reality. Despite the industry's dependence on big estates, thousands of small holders—Malay, Chinese, and Indian—vied with one another for land to plant on. Rubber clashed with food crops, the government sometimes evicting squatters to make way for the former and at other times discouraging *kampong* dwellers from planting so much of it that they had too little food to live on.<sup>48</sup>

Immigration from India during the twenties and thirties followed world economic trends generally, rising to 95,000 a year right after the war, falling to less than half of that after the slump of the early twenties; climbing again to over 100,000 in the late twenties; dropping very low after the great depression, then recovering in the thirties, and stopping almost completely after 1938 due to the saturation of the market. Gilman visited India several times more, negotiating with the Indian government on conditions in Malaya, which were such that enticement was no longer necessary and workers flocked in voluntarily. As with the Chinese, a certain amount of repatriation was arranged in lean times.<sup>49</sup> The Indian government in these years of steady advance towards self-rule was concerned not only with the living conditions of workers in Malaya but also with their political rights. It asked in the early twenties whether Indians would have the same access to positions in government service as natives had, receiving the reply that, while all races were eligible for clerical employment, the higher posts were reserved for Europeans and, in accordance with treaties, for Malays in the FMS.<sup>50</sup> The question of putting Indians on state councils and on the Federal Council came up at the same

time, becoming entangled in battles between the high commissioner and the chief secretary.<sup>51</sup> In 1928, the first Indian, S. N. Veerasamy, did join the Federal Council. In general, his posture there was comparable to those of Chinese members of similar bodies all the way back to Low's time in Perak. He spoke out in defense of his compatriots but took very different views from those of politicians and others representing the country his people had come from. The glory of Malaya, he said, was that "... men of diverse races and creeds live in peace, in unison and in harmony..."<sup>52</sup> The thirties saw a good deal of jousting between political figures from India and defenders of the Malayan status quo. Rt. Hon. V. S. S. Sastri, a leader of the Liberal party in India, visited Malaya for three weeks in 1936, producing a report on labor conditions that contained criticism and recommendations for improvement but was on the whole favorably disposed to the Labor Department and to the planters.<sup>53</sup> Macfadyen and other spokesmen of the rubber industry resented what they saw as interference from outside by people who neither possessed adequate knowledge of circumstances in Malaya nor represented Indian opinion there. On the other side, K. A. Neelakandha Aiyer of the Central Indian Association of Malaya criticized both the government and the planters, calling the department an agent of the estates, but holding that even so, it was a better protector of workers than the "politician ridden" Indian government.<sup>54</sup> He thought that the growing tendency of the workers to organize into labor unions would be their salvation and he wished they were as good at this sort of cooperative effort as the Chinese were.

In this gradually changing atmosphere, the role of the Labor Department shifted from what it had been in the first years of the rubber boom. At that time, it had supervised recruitment in India and had acted as both a protector and a controller of workers once they got to Malaya. Since Indians lived for the most part on the estates where they worked rather than in towns and villages that were part of society, as the Chinese did, the management of their affairs was initially an easier and more comprehensive business than was the corresponding role of the Chinese Protectorate. Then in the twenties, Indian members of estate staffs began to form associations, followed soon after by Indians in the clerical ranks of the civil services.<sup>55</sup> By the mid-thirties, there was a movement towards freer employment as the country's Indian population, now far larger than before, thought less of going back to the home country and concentrated more on improving their position in the adopted one.<sup>56</sup> With the return of prosperity, Indians along with Chinese became more aware of their power as a work force on which the economy depended. The ending of immigration made that power more obvious, and, though a strike in 1937 by rubber tappers ended in failure when the police rounded up its leaders,

the government realized that a corner had been turned. In future there would be less control and more mediation.

The department's staff, soon to be confronted with this unprecedented course of events, was small and well organized and was distributed according to the size of Indian communities. As controller in the twenties Gilman was based on Penang, where he had a deputy and an assistant. Another deputy controller was posted to Kuala Lumpur, the future head office. Assistant controllers were at Ipoh in Perak, at Seremban in Negri Sembilan, and at Klang in Selangor. The Seremban officer was responsible for Malacca as well. Johore had its own controller, as did Kedah, whose office also looked after Perlis. In addition to the European officers, there were Indian extra-assistant controllers at Kuala Lumpur, Klang, and Ipoh.

Cadets newly assigned to the department sometimes spent a few months in one of these offices learning the routine and studying a language on the side and in other cases went to India fairly soon, where, as in Malaya, there was a mixture of labor work and language study. J. S. H. Cunyngham-Brown, a 1930 cadet, had three months as private secretary to Gilman in Penang, where the "father of the department" was then serving as resident councillor prior to retirement. With three decades of gruelling work behind him, Gilman enjoyed his brief stints as resident Selangor and then as head man in Penang.<sup>57</sup> A hard taskmaster, though kind to juniors, he made Cunyngham-Brown work four hours a day on Malay, a language he himself knew well enough to teach to cadets in London after retirement, and on colonial regulations and law in addition to his duties as private secretary. He pointed out to the younger man that a second language was essential in the increasingly complex interracial circumstances of Malaya, his own first language having been Tamil. As controller, he had seen more clearly than most senior officers, and earlier, that if there was to be peace among the races, immigrants would have to have social justice, if not complete political equality, as well as decent living arrangements. He pushed for the hiring of more Indians in clerical jobs, for better education, and for full cooperation between labor officers and enlightened planters with ideas similar to his. For Cunyngham-Brown, this exposure to a benign and incomparably informed outlook was more than enough to counterbalance the department's low prestige. Besides, his background was anything but typical, and his view of a worthwhile career was not unlike Purcell's in placing more value on interesting work and a full life than on organizational success as such.<sup>58</sup> His father was a psychiatrist and his mother a French lady. Both parents were international in outlook, living partly in England and partly in Paris. At Blundell's he was in the mainstream of middle-class life, with a taste for games and the experience of being a monitor. But this was offset by



summer vacations when he could run about naked on remote French beaches, go fishing and sailing, and talk a different language. Turning his back on a medical career, he went to Australia and became a fruit picker while waiting to join the crew of a square rigger. After a long voyage in her he knew an overseas job was for him. The diplomatic service was too expensive and India too uncertain. Malaya fitted the bill perfectly. Once there, his talks with Gilman and the fact that he had relatives in south India made labor the obvious choice. "This would give me all the advantages of the ICS for . . . a year or so—plains for hacking about on horseback, an open hill country to scramble about in and the chance of some 'shikar'—and all this without fear of Indianization hanging over one's head. It would be having the best of both worlds."<sup>59</sup> Because the Malayan government wanted to help recruitment by stirring up a little competition with the Tamils, Cunyngham-Brown was sent to a Telegu-speaking village on the Coromandel coast between Calcutta and Madras. There he spent an idyllic year learning Telegu, making plans for new receiving camps, and living in the primitive splendor of the old Dutch Club. He came to know the peasants, occasionally met local aristocrats, and walked fifteen miles to the nearest district headquarters when he wanted to talk to the collector.

Life at Tamil-speaking Negapatam to the south was more typical. C. W. Shorland, a 1925 cadet, spent the better part of a year in nearby Coimbatore, learning the ropes from A. R. do Fonseca of the Labor Department and from Renesamy Ayer, a landowner whose brother, Gopal, an extra-assistant controller, had started Shorland on Tamil in the Kuala Lumpur office.<sup>60</sup> Cunyngham-Brown was sent to Negapatam in 1933 as acting emigration agent for Malaya, learning Tamil, overseeing the repatriation of workers, and being treated to a local view of India in the throes of nationalist politics. Having criticized Malaya for not taking more emigrants before, the young swa-rajists (nationalists) now blasted it for bringing back those for whom there was no work. Bricks were thrown at his windows, and abuse heaped on Tamil families headed for the railroad station. "Such is the way of politics the world over."<sup>61</sup> He avoided Europeans and concentrated on the job. Mahatma Gandhi came one day to address the crowds—in English, for he spoke no Tamil—and rode off two hours later in an open Cadillac, seated on bags of money collected at his huge open-air meeting. That sort of diversion was rare. Cunyngham-Brown spent most of his time studying Tamil and supervising the camps, seeing that workers were properly housed and fed and provided with money for the journey to their home villages.

Back in Malaya, officers put in long days inspecting estates, talking with workers, urging improvements, and investigating complaints. J. M.

Barron remembered that malaria and dysentery were major problems, particularly on newly planted estates some distance from the coasts. Being able to listen patiently to workers and to inquire into the small details of their daily lives was essential. When he had been on the job for a time he had got to the root of the trouble and had a notion of how to attack it. Disease was not entirely a matter of poor nutrition or bad hygiene. Often the workers understood perfectly well what food was good for them, but failed to take care of themselves because they were overly frugal and sent more money back to India than they could afford, leaving themselves with too little to live on. When wages went up, in response to the promptings of labor officers, health improved accordingly. Meanwhile, malarial research went forward, and medical specialists worked hand-in-glove with the department on ways of improving workers' diet and getting them to cooperate. Breaking into the cycle of ignorance and despair that resulted in an abnormally high suicide rate, similarly, was a matter of bringing general improvement, after which common sense and self-respect could be depended on to do the rest. Higher wages, better housing and medical facilities, schools for estate children, and something approaching normal family life after generations of the opposite were more effective in cutting down on excessive consumption of toddy than all the sympathy and sermonizing a Tamil-speaking officer was capable of. What he could do while working for improvements was make himself conspicuous on estates and convince workers that he had their best interests at heart. The presents of fruit and vegetables and flowers that came to his door were signs of progress. So were the medical reports of later years and the response of estate laborers when the government began cooperative societies in the thirties. DOs and labor officers worried that workers would go on throwing away their savings on expensive weddings and funerals.<sup>62</sup> Many did. But this kind of waste was, in itself, a sign of change for the better.

In their attempts to help, officers always came up against the planters in one way or another. No matter how much good will there was on both sides—and there was always an impressive supply—the separate concerns of the two groups remained. Running an enterprise for profit in a tricky international market was simply not the same as being charged with promoting the public good, even when all could agree, in principle, that prosperity was essential to everyone and that healthy, contented workers were the mainstay of successful estates. It might have seemed, again, that since both the planter and the labor officer were white men in the East, joined together in a European society in the midst of an Oriental one, they would not find it hard to get along. The type of man wanted by estates sounded very like what the C.O. looked for in cadets: a good education, a

solid family background, tact, character, and common sense, a capacity for hard work, and a liking for sport and the open air.<sup>63</sup> In the years from the rubber boom to the Great Depression, young men joining the staffs of rubber companies and those entering the civil service were often leaving home for the same reasons: the inability to find employment in Britain, a wander lust, or the example of relatives or friends who had gone before. On the job, many had in common a paternalistic outlook that reflected similar work situations. A planter writing in the interwar years could have been speaking for DOs and labor men when he wrote, "You had to know your Indian labour force backwards, all their relations and enemies; you listened to their woes, married them and divorced them—the lot. They said, 'You are our Father and our Mother,' and you were too."<sup>64</sup> Planters, like civil servants, had to pass language examinations, given in later years by senior officers of the Labor Department. When the slump came, both groups were affected. There was retrenchment in the civil service and a much greater job loss on estates. If, before that, planters had had more money than administrative officers the ill feeling occasionally engendered by this now gave way to sympathy and a desire to help. Quite a few ex-planters down on their luck found refuge in the lower echelons of the civil service.

There was also the historical fact that planters and government officers had worked together on building the organization that became the Labor Department. It was only natural that they should do this, for the planter—before and after rubber—and the official had always been "good friends on close visiting terms," something that could not always be said of officials and the mining community, many of whose leaders were not of the same social cut as the other two groups.<sup>65</sup> Oliver Marks, controller of labor after the war, began as a planter, then entered the civil service, rose to be a resident, and then served after retirement as secretary of the British Association of Malaya in London. He spoke *ex officio* at the first meeting of the Planters' General Labor Committee in 1920, conveying the views of the high commissioner and promising cooperation in assuring an adequate supply of labor for rubber estates.<sup>66</sup> Far from opposing him, the planters were foremost among those insisting that his position should be second only to that of the chief secretary. Consistently supporting a strong Labor Department, they were outspokenly opposed to breaking the department up into regional sections when the decentralization battles were raging in the interwar years.

Needless to say, however, the rubber interests wanted not just a vigorous department as such, but one that took substantially the same view of the economy that they took. When that did not happen—as was bound to be the case with officers who were assiduous in enforcing codes

that governed the living conditions of workers—there was sure to be controversy. At the center of this was C. D. Ahearne, a 1910 cadet, who was the most distinguished of Gilman's successors. Ahearne was not so rabidly anti-establishment that he played a purely eccentric role in a country where cooperation between business and government was of the essence. He became federal secretary and, after retirement, chaired the Malayan Planting Industries Employers' Association. But there was a quixotic strain in his character, combined with a deep sympathy for the down-trodden and a suspicion of the English that calls to mind his famous countryman, Sir Roger Casement. Schooled at Our Lady's Mount and at Trinity College Dublin, Ahearne was typical of those Edwardian Irish who served the empire perforce but never ceased to resent their own country's subordinate position in it. In 1914, when his fellow members of the service were moving heaven and earth to get into uniform, he openly cursed the British army and refused to have anything to do with it.<sup>67</sup> During the visit of the under secretary of state for the colonies in the late twenties he scouted that august personage in a way that would have been unthinkable to the average officer. When Mr. Ormsby-Gore asked him jokingly why his face was so shiny, he shot back, "What evil do you see reflected in it?"<sup>68</sup> Long after he had left Malaya, planters gazing into their *stengahs* could still wax hot on the subject of "Paddy" Ahearne and his outrageously pro-Tamil policies.<sup>69</sup> His rigidity and thoroughness were legendary. In the 1930s when he was controller, he personally visited six Negri Sembilan estates to look into complaints of inadequate pay, and then informed the planters' association that conditions were even worse than he had been told. Agreeing, the resident remarked that if the estates could only make a profit by such means "... they had better not survive."<sup>70</sup>

Officers of lower rank came into daily contact with planters on estates when investigating protests or on routine inspections to check on living conditions. On one occasion, Barron found that a manager had refused, on religious grounds, to let his workers blood a new machine that, in its first hour of operation, had killed a tapper. A three-day strike followed, and the manager lost his job, after which the workers demanded that Barron be present at all their ceremonies. "I smelt from the garlands for a week in consequence," he recalled.<sup>71</sup> Planters occasionally complained direct to the C.O. that it was unfair to expect estates to assume responsibility for all the care and maintenance of their labor, and they brought social pressure on the department's officers locally in an attempt to get a relaxation of standards.<sup>72</sup> DOs faced much the same sort of thing in places where there was no labor officer—a never ending struggle between men who had rules to enforce and men who thought they stood to lose if

enforcement were strict.<sup>73</sup> A subtle change occurred by the late thirties as the department's role altered from control to arbitration of disputes between management and labor. But even then, with immigration stopped and workers defending themselves through unions, employers still tended to see the department as a friend to labor. Along with members of the Chinese Protectorate and civil servants doing other kinds of specialist work such as founding cooperative societies, labor officers were looked on by many as "cranks," outlanders who knew strange tongues and customs and who were not quite respectable.<sup>74</sup> It was no wonder that quite a few edged their way out of the department as soon as they could or breathed a sigh of relief when they had attained enough seniority to qualify for a secretariat job. Shorland fought clear by taking bar examinations on leave and passing in Malay so that he would be acceptable for general duty.

The smallest of the three streams, labor had its detractors within the department as well as from outside. Noting its diminutive size, some post-1945 critics have tended to dismiss it as ineffective—at best, a noisy spaniel snapping harmlessly at the heels of big rubber or, at worst, a willing pointer and retriever for them. The fact that the department took an active part in recruitment of labor in India lends a certain plausibility to this. But the constant sensitivity of planters to the strictures of the department and the eagerness of estate workers to bring their troubles to labor officers suggest that, over the long run, there was a formative and restraining influence that was out of proportion to the numbers of the staff. From the late nineteenth century to the 1930s, the "proletariat"—as one Indian scholar calls it—evolved from a helpless, inchoate mass into a community that was better off than its relatives in India and possessed of stronger instruments for advancing its economic and social interests.<sup>75</sup> The Labor Department did not itself forge those weapons any more than the planters prevented it. What it did was hold the balance while the immigrants and their families matured and prospered and finally chose to make Malaya their home.

### Notes

1. As in the case of the Chinese Protectorate, these figures refer to officers who began their careers in the labor stream, not to the number actually doing labor work as of 1941, which was considerably smaller, senior men having gone on to more general duties. On the background of Indians in Malaya, see S. Arasaratham, *Indians in Malaysia and Singapore* (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1970), and K. S. Sandhu, *Indians in Malaya* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1969).

2. To secretary of state, 15 May 1871, 273/55. In the period 1867-1869, approximately 3,400 workers a year came to the straits from India.

3. See Herbert's minute on file, 17 July 1874, 273/78 and the legislation sent with the governor's dispatch of 5 Aug. 1874, 273/77.
4. Governor to secretary of state, 10 Oct. 1878, 273/95 and 8 July 1879, 273/98. On Gottlieb's career, see chap. 2, p. 33. In 1877, the Indian and straits governments agreed that both would support officers to be posted to Negapatam near Madras to oversee emigration. In fact, this operated erratically. In 1879, India agreed to supply another officer for Penang. See India Office to C.O., 24 Oct. 1879, 273/101.
5. See Pickering's memorandum, 8 Jan. 1881, 273/107 and Meade's minute on file, 4 July 1882, 273/114. The latter voices apprehension about immigration to Johore, which was not then under straits control.
6. Governor to secretary of state, 2 Aug. 1883, 273/122. He died of tuberculosis in 1889.
7. See J. N. Parmer, *Colonial Labor Policy and Administration* (New York: J. J. Augustin, 1960).
8. See Annual Report, Labor Department, 1935, M., with historical tracing. Also governor to secretary of state, 29 Feb. 1892, 273/179 on shipping subsidy.
9. Governor to secretary of state, 1 Sept. 1896, 273/217, enclosing the commission's report. It was headed by A. M. Skinner of the straits service. Other members were N. Trotter and R. G. Watson of the service and the planters, Hon. John Turner of Penang and E. V. Carey of Klang.
10. See correspondence, file 281, 1896, M., between Simla and Singapore.
11. See G. E. Turner, a 1931 labor cadet, "A Perak Coffee Planter's Report on the Tamil Labourer in Malaya in 1902," *Malayan Historical Journal* 2 (July 1955). This report, for which I thank Mr. Turner, was written by H. A. Haviland and refers to the 1890s.
12. See J. C. Jackson, *Planters and Speculators* (Kuala Lumpur: University of Malaya Press, 1968), and J. H. Drabble, *Rubber in Malaya* (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1973). Also the report of Sir W. T. Dyer, Kew Gardens, to Meade, 2 Aug. 1886, 273/142. For the part played by H. N. "Mad" Ridley in early experiments, see S. Cunyngham-Brown, *The Traders* (London: Newman Neame Ltd., 1971), pp. 162-63.
13. F. A. Swettenham, *British Malaya* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1955), p. 294.
14. Governor to secretary of state, 18 June 1897, 273/225. The Straits Forestry Department was the victim of retrenchment in 1884. In the 1890s, Kew urged more support for rubber research in Singapore, where, as of 1899, there was only one scientific officer. See Dyer to Lucas, 24 Apr. 1899, 273/254.
15. See E. V. Carey, chairman, UPA, to secretary of state, 20 Dec. 1901, 273/282. India, he said, had planted 10,000 acres in Burma at government expense, more than had been planted in the whole of Malaya, all by private concerns. See also FMS Annual Report, 1903, M., and Cunyngham-Brown, *The Traders*.
16. See RGA to secretary of state, July 1908, M., in which they complain that the C.O. has declined to receive its delegation. See also chief secretary to resident Negri Sembilan, 565, 17 Feb. 1914, M., on loans.
17. He had been president of the union at Oxford. Later, he was, *inter alia*, a member of the Federal Council, president of the Institute of the Rubber Industry, and a Liberal M.P.

18. As examples of differences between the government and the rubber industry, see Macfadyen in the Federal Council, Proceedings, 1912, B74-77, M., and Drabble, p. 105.

19. See DO Kuala Pilah to resident, 18 Oct. 1905, Negri Sembilan 4850, M.; DO Port Dickson to resident Negri Sembilan 4986, 1905, M.; report of the Seremban land office, 522, 1914, M.; and Annual Report Kuala Pilah by the DO, Winstedt, 561, 1914, M.

20. Annual Report, 1916, M.

21. See "Report of the Commission Appointed to Enquire into the Conditions of Indentured Labour in the FMS," 1910, M; Haynes was B. A. Kelantan in 1930 and retired with a CMG in 1934 as acting colonial secretary.

22. C. R. Harrison, "The Last of the Creepers," *Malaya in History* 7 (Sept. 1961).

23. "Report of the Commission."

24. See notes of W. D. Barron to H. P. Bryson, 5 July 1969 and also Leopold Ainsworth, *The Confessions of a Planter in Malaya* (London: Witherby, 1933), and Sir Bruce Lockhart, *Memoirs of a British Agent* (New York: Putnam, 1932).

25. J. M. Barron to H. P. Bryson, 14 Apr. 1969. See also Stark to Bryson, n.d., received 20 June 1969. Ellis's report was filed against T. R. Hubback of the Hoscote estate.

26. Stark, "Jelebu Memories," 1913-1914, RCS.

27. Jarrett to H. P. Bryson, 2 May 1969. Jarrett notes that planter-civil service relations were not bad in general, though planters in military units liked to make trouble for civil servants with stripes.

28. On Hill's background, see Cunyngham-Brown, *The Traders* and F. A. Swettenham, *Footprints in Malaya* (London: Hutchinson, 1942).

29. Governor to secretary of state, 13 Jan. 1897, 273/224.

30. Governor to secretary of state, 4 July 1897, 273/226.

31. Governor to secretary of state, 3 Aug. 1897, 273/226, and 16 Aug. 1897; and secretary of state to governor, approving India visit, 24 Sept. 1897.

32. Officer administering the government to secretary of state, 5 Sept. 1900, 273/258.

33. Exchange between Dr. Braddon and Mr. Fryer, report, Indian Immigration Commission, 1900, M., 17. Braddon had been immigration agent in Negri Sembilan since 1890.

34. Swettenham to secretary of state, 22 June 1901, 273/273, and 23 June 1903, 273/294.

35. See Gilman's autobiography, CRP, and Swettenham to secretary of state, 11 June 1903, 273/291. See also FMS Annual Report, 1903, M.

36. Resident-general to high commissioner, 2 Feb. 1906, 273/320, and governor to secretary of state, 7 Feb. 1907, 273/330. Hill's friend Swettenham left Malaya for good in 1903. Hill was not looked on favorably by Taylor, a conventional bureaucrat who had not had Swettenham's experience with planters on the frontier.

37. See the minutes of the committee, 1907 ff., M. Also G. E. Turner, "Indian Immigration," *Malayan Historical Journal* 1 (Dec. 1954), and Charles Wilson, "Indians in Malaya," RCS. Clayton chaired the committee, whose other mem-

bers were Hon. John Turner of Penang; Francis Pears of the Muar estate; F. D. Osborne of the mines in Ipoh; Eric Maxwell, an Ipoh lawyer; C. M. Cummings, a Negri Sembilan planter; R. W. Harrison of Selangor, the general manager of the FMS railways; and the Perak state surgeon—the last two serving *ex officio*.

38. See Cmd. 5192 *Report of the Committee on Emigration from India to the Crown Colonies and Protectorates*, 1910. And see FMS Annual Report, 1911, M.

39. See Sandhu, pp. 76–86. The system had been found less satisfactory than a well-run *kangany* system and also uneconomic. It may be doubted that it would have survived in any case.

40. For example:

Year of App't.	Name	Languages	Career
1887	E. G. Broadrick	Tamil	mainly nonlabor
1888	Sir L. Woodward	Tamil, Hindustani	mainly nonlabor
1891	C. J. Saunders	Chinese langs.	incidental labor work
1892	A. W. Just	Malay	incidental labor work
1895	L. H. Clayton	Chinese langs.	incidental labor work
1896	A. V. Brown	Tamil (in India)	labor & other
1896	E. L. Talma	Tamil (in India)	labor & other
1897	Sir W. Peel	Malay	incidental labor work
1899	W. S. Gibson	Cantonese	incidental labor work
1899	E. W. F. Gilman	Tamil (in India)	mainly labor
1901	A. S. Haynes	Malay, Tamil	labor & other
1902	G. A. J. Smith-Steinmetz	Tamil	labor & other
1902	M. B. Shelley	Tamil	mainly nonlabor
1903	H. G. R. Leonard	Tamil, Telegu, Malay	labor & other
1903	J. W. Goldthorpe	Malay, Tamil	mainly nonlabor
1903	W. H. Lee-Warner	Malay, Tamil	no exclusively labor duty
1907	Sir A. Caldecott	Tamil	incidental labor work
1907	V. G. Ezechuel	Tamil	labor & other
1908	W. Bartley	Malay, Javanese	labor & other
1910	C. D. Ahearne	Tamil (in India)	labor & other
1910	H. C. Bathurst	Tamil, Telegu	labor & other

41. R. O. Winstedt, *Start from Alif* (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1969), p. 95.

42. To I. Lloyd-Phillips, 17 Jan. 1967, Bryson papers.

43. To H. P. Bryson, 2 May 1969.

44. To H. P. Bryson, 14 Apr. 1965.

45. Taped interview, H. P. Bryson; n.d.; tape in author's possession.

46. See the proceedings of the Federal Council, 1918 ff., M., Drabble, *Rubber*, Sir L. Guillemard, *Trivial Fond Records* (London: Methuen, 1937), and *British Malaya*, 1926 ff., for example, H. Eric Miller, "Rubber: Past History and Future Policy," May 1926.

47. See FMS Annual Reports, 1918 ff. and Sir W. Peel's memoirs, CRP; also the letters of another holder of the office, M. B. Shelley, for example, 9 Nov. 1926, in which he says that the main responsibility was to keep supply and demand in balance and "... see that ... planters don't cheat by sending out more rubber than they are allowed to."



48. See the petition of Perak Chinese to secretary of state, 25 Dec. 1920, 717/8; also circular #1, Jan. 1921, M.; A. S. Jelf to residents on local restriction of rubber; Selangor secretariat file 109, 1921, M.; Perak file 1811, 1934, M.; and discussion of land alienation for rubber, residents conference, file 1235, 1930, M.

49. See file 692, 1922 M. Also proceedings of the Federal Council, 1927, B114, M.; A. R. Dalal, ICS, to H. Marriott, colonial secretary, straits, 13 Oct. 1927, 273/549 and Marriott to Dalal, 1 Feb. 1928. Ahearn's report for 1932 is in the proceedings of the Federal Council, M.

50. See R. B. Ewbank, ICS, to colonial secretary, 30 Jan. 1923, 273/521 and draft reply sent by governor to secretary of state, 18 Mar. 1923, 273/521. The governor, Guillemard, was in favor of opening technical and professional positions to Indians as well.

51. See W. G. Maxwell, chief secretary, longhand letter to A. E. Collins in the C.O., 26 Sept. 1923, 717/32. Also high commissioner to secretary of state, 6 Nov. 1927, 717/58. There was also correspondence between Clifford and the viceroy. P. K. Nambyar was put on the Straits Legislative Council earlier.

52. Proceedings, 1932, B19, M. See also Charles Wilson, "Indians in Malaya," 3 pp., RCS. On Nehru's favorable impression of Malaya in the 1930s, see Charles Gamba, *The Origins of Trade Unionism in Malaya* (Singapore: D. Moore, 1959).

53. Proceedings of the Federal Council, 1937, C97, M. Cunyngnam-Brown accompanied Sastri on an inspection of estates in Selangor. When Sastri asked Cunyngnam-Brown what he thought about the housing lines and the latter answered "they ought to be blown up," Sastri replied that they were bad all right but what was good about the setup in Malaya was that labor officers knew this and were trying to help. (Interview, Penang, 23 June 1973.)

54. K. A. Neelakandha Aiyer, *Indian Problems in Malaya* (Kuala Lumpur, India Office, 1938). On the other side, see G. L. Peet, *Malayan Exile* (Kuala Lumpur, Straits Times Press, 1933) by a journalist who felt, with the planters, that Indians in Malaya were better off than their brothers at home.

55. A high percentage of Indians in government service came from Ceylon.

56. See M. R. Stevenson, "Organized Labour, Government and Employers in Malaya, 1935-1948," thesis, University of Malaya; also Annual Report, Labor Department, 1935, M.

57. Gilman's autobiography, CRP. For comments on Gilman that contrast with Cunyngnam-Brown's favorable ones, see taped discussion between H. P. Bryson and Stark, n.d., tape in author's possession. In this, Gilman is called "peculiar and weak," and it is said that he was tough on his juniors.

58. I am indebted to Mr. Cunyngnam-Brown for enjoyable talks in Penang in 1973 when he kindly allowed me to read his autobiography in typescript and for responding to questions by letter.

59. S. Cunyngnam-Brown, *Crowded Hour* (London: Murray, 1975), p. 54.

60. Notes to H. P. Bryson, 30 Aug. 1969.

61. *Crowded Hour*, p. 59.

62. See the report of the conference of the cooperative societies, Kuala Lumpur, Apr. 1933, pp. 24-25, by L. D. Gammans, CRP. This may be usefully compared with the Kuala Pilah Annual Report for 1920, A. Morkill, DO, file 593, 1921, M.

love of the country that helped ingratiate him with the sultan, who asked that he be made a member of his council. Thinking that such a move would help bring reform, the high commissioner agreed. Maxwell was given the title *mushir*, an obscurity meant to cover over the fact that it was illegal for a non-Moslem to be on the council. Since Maxwell could not serve as agent and council member at the same time, a new agent was appointed in 1915. This was J. L. Humphreys, a 1905 cadet. The presence of two officers in the same small community—one of them the British agent and the other his predecessor and an intimate of the sultan—was awkward, to say the least. It would have taken something like saintliness on both their parts to preserve good relations. Inevitably there was strain. This, coupled with Maxwell's inability to do as much from inside as had been hoped, led to his reassignment the following year. Humphreys had the field to himself from 1916 onwards, remaining in Trengganu until 1925, a longevity of tenure comparable to Low's in Perak and Murray's and Paul's in Sungei Ujong. It was in Humphreys's time that Trengganu turned the corner; he was the founder of its modern statehood. A memorial in the form of a sundial, erected near the government offices, survived the 1941 war, as did an oil portrait carefully preserved during the Japanese occupation and hung again in the secretariat afterward.

In 1918, a commission under the chief justice, Sir John Bucknill, was sent to look into charges of maladministration and injustice in the state. These were brought by Humphreys to whom complaints had been made by Malays and by European miners. The commission recommended that reforms be instituted through closer British control of the kind already provided for in the other unfederated states. Sultan Zainal, whose relations with Humphreys were good but who had been under constant pressure from his courtiers, died shortly after the commission completed its work. The new sultan, Muhammad, being young and inexperienced, was in an even more uncomfortable position than his father had occupied. A new treaty raising the agent to the rank of adviser was prepared, but when the sultan was summoned to Singapore for the signing, he declined on a plea of ill health. Convinced that he had been put up to this by those of his courtiers who were opposed to tighter British control, Singapore instructed Humphreys to deliver an ultimatum. Muhammad then came to Government House, accompanied by four of the anti-British faction but by none of his council, which unanimously favored the new arrangement.<sup>52</sup> Humphreys was sure that most of the civil service of the state was also on the side of reform. Having no option, the sultan gave in and shortly afterward abdicated in favor of his brother Sulaiman. With Muhammad living in exile at Singapore, Humphreys, now British adviser with full power, was at last in a position to move forward.

His first thought was of the need for British officers to help him.<sup>53</sup> Up to this time, he had been all alone in the state, compelled to rely on a civil service that was completely Malay. In addition to being adviser, he was food controller, judge of the appeal court, and director of public works. Singapore sent an assistant adviser in 1920—Major H. S. Paterson, a 1913 cadet with an excellent war record who was serving at the time as ADO Kuantan just down the coast.<sup>54</sup> The BA asked for the loan of Pepys also because of his Kelantan service and his brief experience in Trengganu as acting BA during Humphreys's leave, but this was at first refused by W. G. Maxwell, chief secretary FMS, and his under secretary, A. S. Jelf, who felt that too much *ulu* did not look well on a man's record, Pepys having had more than enough already. Singapore agreed. M. E. Sherwood, the high commissioner's secretary, remarked that "... it is not very fair to keep an officer always in the wilds."<sup>55</sup> But Pepys did not see it in that light at all. He and Humphreys met on leave in England and were able to arrange matters so that Pepys would be briefly posted to Trengganu in order to start organizing the land office, which he did in 1922. Humphreys was careful to call him co-commissioner along with a Malay officer, which had "... the advantage of giving reasonably full European control without ousting the Malay."<sup>56</sup>

The BA built up his European staff with great care and fastidiousness, writing privately to the secretary to the high commissioner about the qualities he wanted. It was vital to have a European for public works, not only because "... the country is practically without roads and public buildings," but also because the headship of that department had always been wide open to venality.<sup>57</sup> It was not just any engineer who would satisfy him. The man must be a gentleman, capable of dealing tactfully with the Malays, young enough to be content with a modest salary, but not a raw recruit with no experience. Over the initial opposition of the high commissioner, Sir Lawrence Guillemard, who thought a Malay should be appointed, he secured the services of a Cambridge-educated professional, D. H. Laidlaw. In bringing off this coup, he had to overcome the sultan's reluctance too, for his highness instinctively preferred a Malay. A medical officer, Dr. A. B. Jesse Cooper, was brought in on secondment from the straits service. As police commissioner, he got a thirty-year-old officer rejoicing in the name of Ernest Cheers who spoke Malay and also Hokkien, a desirable qualification in a state that was attracting more Chinese every year. District administration was remodeled, some smaller units being combined into bigger ones. He took infinite pains in the selection of Malay officers. The sultan was determined to dress his service in special uniforms, partly to impress the Prince of Wales, who would be visiting soon. This did not especially appeal to the BA, but

he agreed in order to please the ruler and as a *quid pro quo* won agreement to things he thought important, such as night classes in English for Malay officers and the posting of a DO in Ulu Trengganu, which up to then had been run, badly, from the capital. He also gave in on little points, making no protest when the sultan declined to invite the high commissioner to the ceremony of his installation. Meanwhile, modernization went on. The telegraph line inched its way north from Dungun; school attendance increased; and the BA's hold on finance steadily tightened. Humphreys attended all meetings of the State Council. Nothing escaped his notice, and attempts to embarrass him became fewer as it was found that he was not easily outmaneuvered. One day on arrival at the meeting, he found everyone wearing long faces. A woman had been accused of adultery, they said. It was a very serious crime; the charge was backed by evidence, and what did the BA propose to do? Humphreys had the woman brought forward. Then he took the whole council and the accused as well out to the site of a road-building operation where there were piles of stones to be used for metalling. The Holy Koran, he reminded them, prescribed that adulterers should be stoned to death. As the responsible authorities, they would no doubt wish to administer the punishment. He left them to it, and nothing more was heard of the matter.<sup>58</sup>

Humphreys got on well with Sultan Sulaiman, who soon saw that the BA wanted European officers only because Malays were not yet able to manage all the tasks of modernization and that local men would be trained as quickly as possible. The BA's deep knowledge of the state and his tact in dealing with everyone from the ruler on down were well known. When the high commissioner came to invest the sultan with the KCMG in 1923, Humphreys interpreted the rather inept remarks of his excellency in such a way as to avoid giving offense to the ruler. Though this may have seemed to be a matter of propriety and nothing more, it was important to Sulaiman and the *tungkus*, who saw it as further evidence that the BA could be trusted to defer to their sensibilities. As they listened the next day to speeches given by the high commissioner and then by Humphreys, they could not help noticing a contrast between the banality and coldness of the former's remarks, made in a language most of them did not know, and the exquisite intimacy and warmth of the BA's words, delivered in his faultless Malay.<sup>59</sup> It was hard for the high commissioner to appear as anything but an Olympian potentate from afar. Humphreys was a friend, familiar, local, and considerate.

His reputation depended in large part on his habit of being always on view and closely involved in everything that went on in the public sphere. On a visit to Kemaman, he greeted everyone—Malay, Chinese, and European—and never seemed to be in a hurry.<sup>60</sup> He played chess (the

Malay kind) with the local *tungku*. Traveling upriver, he stopped frequently for talks on administrative matters with Malay officers, all of whom he knew, having worked with them for years. At a small river port where he would not ordinarily have paused, he found that vaccinations were in progress and so went ashore and spent several hours talking with the dresser, with some old men who came up to welcome him, and with crowds of children that trooped around him wherever he went. He stayed with a European mine manager, then walked ten miles farther to visit a village that could not be reached by boat, shooting snipe on the way and exchanging good humored banter with his Malay guides all the while. He spent hours inspecting police stations and government buildings, no matter how modest, as well as *padi* and crops, then climbed an 800-foot hill to have his tea in a cool place after a sweltering morning in the valley. The next day, he and his party walked for twelve hours, with two brief halts for food and rest, through hilly country near Bukit Bandi, which rises 1,700 feet from the valley bottom. Humphreys wanted a close look at European and Japanese mines in the area, enterprises of great importance to the state's economy. On return to Kuala Trengganu, he discussed Kemaman's affairs in detail with the sultan and council, backed by a fund of personal knowledge that few FMS residents had of their states in those days. There were endless little meetings with Malay and European officers during which every subject of economic or administrative importance was gone over. These dovetailed with social ones that the BA liked to use as a means of getting the races together informally. On Christmas afternoon, he gave a sit-down party for Malay chiefs and the British staff and presented trophies won in sporting events that year.

Humphreys's report for 1925—his last year in Trengganu—dwelt on the state's fiscal health, graced by a surplus of over \$1,000,000, due in large part to mining and rubber.<sup>61</sup> He had praise for the civil service, noting, in particular, the work of the state commissioner, Dato' Jaya Perkasa. The sultan's son and another boy had entered the Malay College in Perak. Six more boys were at school in Taiping. The European staff had grown to seven. But he did not depart from his rule that the appointment of British officers would be made only in those departments that could not yet be run by Malays. At the end of his time, Malays were in full executive charge of treasury, audit, customs and excise, and education, and the courts were completely Malay-administered. Malays and British sat together on the supreme court and the land court. The court of appeal was made up of three judges—two Malays and the BA as president.

Humphreys's successors varied from him and from one another in their views of what needed doing and in their approaches. C. C. Brown was regarded as the quintessential Malayophile, a linguist and antiquarian of local lore who strongly preferred service on the east coast but who was

more of a scholar than an administrator. "Precise, pedantic . . . always very proper in dress and manner [he was] quite unable to cope with a very wild Christmas party at his residency in 1934."<sup>62</sup> He went to the extreme of making his British staff speak Malay in meetings when no Malays were present. Jarrett, too, was fond of life in the unfederated states and wanted them to enjoy a maximum of autonomy. His relations with the sultan were excellent, both in council meetings and on the golf course, where they often played together. Sulaiman took a tolerant view of the abdication of Edward VIII, which Jarrett thought might be a rather awkward thing to explain to him, partly because the sultan's own son had had difficulties involving a young lady at Oxford. But Jarrett stood up for the British prerogative in Trengganu and for modernization. This brought him up against Dato' Amar more than once. The *mentri besar* disapproved of Europeans who wore shorts, a matter that the BA thought to be well outside his province. In the court of appeals, Dato' Amar could be depended on to shave the fine points of Islamic law yet finer by the hour and to find reasons for opposing things the BA wanted to do. He extended this tediousness to the golf course. Once when Jarrett and the sultan were unsure whose turn it was to putt, they were so incautious as to refer the matter to Dato' Amar, who gave them a long lecture on the judgment of Solomon in a case involving the claims of two women to the same child, concluding, after a seemingly interminable wait, that there was as much to be said on the one side as there was on the other.<sup>63</sup> Kempe, Brown's brother-in-law, was different still. Like Brown, he was an unusually fluent Malay speaker. But his manner was as hearty and off-hand as Brown's was fussy, and he did enjoy a glass rather often. The Malays loved him, seeing that he genuinely liked being in the more informal atmosphere of the east coast even though his pride was slightly hurt at the thought of ending his career as BA Trengganu rather than as a resident in the FMS.<sup>64</sup> He was never one to mince words. On arrival as BA, he immediately clashed with Dato' Amar over the remission of sentences on prisoners in the goal. Kempe thought two would be enough, and the *mentri* held out for three as it was the sultan's birthday and the king's jubilee as well.<sup>65</sup> Kempe was less tolerant of mixed parties than Humphreys and Brown had been, looking forward to the company of his own kind after hours. In council meetings, he was not inclined to give in to the reactionary element and got his way more often than not. Having been away from the state for a decade, he was astonished at the progress of Europeanism in everything from administrative reform to the taste of the ruler for radios and other gadgets. British intervention was everywhere apparent, even in such matters as the marriage of the sultan's daughter to a son of Kedah's ruler. Yet he continued to value the special character of the east coast, where he had more satisfaction in indulging his passion for bird

watching, where there was more natural beauty and less man-made ugliness, and where Malays kept up with the pace of advance rather than being engulfed by both modernization and the pressure of other races.<sup>66</sup>

Junior men serving as assistant advisers in Besut to the north of Kuala Trengganu and in Kemaman to the south also varied in their views of east-coast life. The first AA Kemaman, J. V. Cowgill, a 1911 cadet in the Chinese Protectorate, arrived there in 1924. He worked in cooperation with Enche Muda (later Dato' Jaya), the Malay DO who was styled state commissioner. Cowgill's main function at first was to show the flag by being present and overseeing the administration. His task was made easier by the departure of the only other Europeans in the district, a handful of Australian miners at Bandi. With a good war record behind him and much service in Malay areas, including the post of DO Kuantan next door, Cowgill did well, as did several of those who followed after him such as A. L. Birse. But in 1932 there was a tragedy. G. E. Clayton, who came to Malaya after the war and who, like Cowgill, had been decorated for gallantry under fire, found the solitude oppressive and, after only a short time in the post, he shot himself. His successor, a Chinese Protectorate man with little facility in Malay, sent in his resignation after only a week and was succeeded in the autumn of 1932 by M. C. ff. Sheppard. A 1927 cadet, Sheppard was as well suited to the place as Clayton had been miscast for it. It was the same with his successor, A. B. Cobden-Ramsey, who loved Kemaman, "... one of the last raw and undeveloped areas in Malaya where one could stamp one's own personality" on things.<sup>67</sup> For bachelors who were not overly reliant on clubs and European society, it was a paradise of vast, empty beaches and tiny *kampongs* dreaming under a tropical sun, peopled by *ra'ayat* who were as attractive as they were shy and suspicious of outsiders. Education was almost unknown. Poverty was everywhere; and superstition reigned supreme, despite all the puritanical zeal of Dato' Amar, who was bent on burning animism out of people's souls with the white heat of cleansing Islam.<sup>68</sup> With such parishioners to look after, and little in the way of guidance or help from their superior over a hundred miles away to the north, young officers had their work cut out for them. They also had something like a free hand.

When Sheppard arrived, Kemaman had had only eight years of exposure to European supervision. There was still room for interpretation within the general description of responsibility laid down by the BA. He was to go in double harness with the state commissioner, not ruling directly, but urging and warning gently so as to be sure that his Malay colleague was following the British line. By virtue of his office, he was joint member of the special courts in Kemaman and Dungun. He was collector of land revenue and, under the BA, deputy immigration officer and deputy controller of mines. Since the BA usually made only one

annual visit of inspection, however, he had full discretion in both areas *de facto*. In consultation with the state commissioner, he often undertook surprise calls on the treasuries at Kemaman, Kemasik, and Dungun. Supposedly he was to do this only at the suggestion of Dato' Jaya, though, as often as not, that did not happen, for the state commissioner usually said nothing "unless reminded."<sup>69</sup> When court cases involved Malays only, it was the state commissioner who announced decisions, with Sheppard doing so if Europeans were. Malay officers were not trained in law, making it necessary for AAs to assume more responsibility than was called for officially. In complicated matters, such as settlement or forestry, the AA spoke up as much as was needed *ad hoc*. He was a member of the town board, providing the motive power in redistributing lots. Had he not taken an interest in the Chinese schools, no one would have. Imports and exports had to be watched carefully, making it imperative that he call regularly on iron mines, saw mills, and customs houses. He inspected all motor vehicles, oversaw the vaccination work of the Malay assistant dresser, and personally officiated at European burials. Though he sat in the same one-room office with the state commissioner, he put a high priority on touring, especially to the neighboring district of Dungun, leaving Dato' Jaya alone in Kemaman much more than was done with Malay officers elsewhere. Tours to *kampongs* in remote valleys of the *ulu* were important from his own point of view and also as a means of showing British interest and intent for the notice of the inhabitants. He made a habit of taking newspapers along for the clerk at Jabor, which was not connected by road to Kemaman, being closer to Kuantan in Pahang. He spent longer there than in posts nearer to hand in order to cheer the man up and make him see that headquarters knew he existed. He exercised control over native entertainments, which Malays tended to spend more money on than they could afford, and over European films that presented white men as no more than "crooks, bandits, and lotharios," an image the government was not anxious to project.<sup>70</sup> The Kemaman Boy Scout troop, twenty-three strong, depended completely on his encouragement.

He thought long and hard about ways of reducing xenophobia, which was still strong and was holding back development. As a means of widening people's horizons, he did all he could to support the Government servants club, especially in sporting events, which he saw as a useful antidote to gossip and intrigue. Everyone watched the AA. He had a burden and a responsibility that were unique. Dilemmas abounded. If he kept his distance from *kampung* dwellers—something no west coast DO would dream of doing—he could not hope to befriend them and influence them away from parochialism and superstition. But if he was too bold in his approach—entering the houses of *ra'ayat* to greet them personally—he knew that a sexual motive would be suspected. In the event, he used every



possible pretext for exchanging a word, asking quietly and not in a prying way about weather and crops, boats, fishing, coconuts, and rubber. He rode his bike whenever trails allowed, knowing that his example would be followed, that more paths would be made, and more visiting done back and forth between villages that had remained ingrown for generations. Visiting a school workshop where boys made brooms, he suggested that more apprentices be taken on so that an export trade could be built up.<sup>71</sup>

As in the FMS, land office work was central to everything. And as on the west coast, land reform was not understood at first. In the antiforeign atmosphere of Trengganu, it took a long time to persuade people that government control—which ultimately meant British control—was in their interest. Due to the relatively short-term postings of officers after Humphreys's time, both BAs and lands commissioners, a certain amount of confusion had arisen, and no clear policy had evolved with straight-forward rules and consistent implementation year by year so that Malay officers and peasants alike could see in actual practice that secure title and fair rents were to everyone's advantage. The regulation of shifting cultivation was a sore point, causing peasants to resent what they saw as interference with their rights and possibly a plot by the foreigners to cheat them out of their land and exploit their labor. In 1928, a religious leader whom the British considered a fanatic stirred up *ra'ayat* in Ulu Trengganu, urging them to follow him in a holy war that would rid the country of the foreigner and leave them in possession of the lands they tilled. Whether secret societies, red flag, *sharikat-ul-Islam*, were behind the trouble and whether the sultan and his government were implicated are matters of dispute.<sup>72</sup> In any case, a police station was seized by the rebels. Dato' Amar declined British offers of help and sent police—all of whom were Malays, including officers—upriver to investigate. Talks were held with the rebels on that occasion and again shortly afterward when the sultan himself took part. At the second meeting, held at Kuala Berang, the number of peasants assembled was estimated at 2,000. The talks proved inconclusive, and, as in Kelantan thirteen years before, a Malay DO was chased out of his headquarters. About 1,000 peasants then marched on Kuala Trengganu. They were intercepted by police who fired on them after they had refused to lay down their arms. Eleven were killed, including the military leader. Other leaders, most prominently Haji Abdul Rahman, who was thought to have started the revolt, were rounded up, and order was quickly restored.

By the time Sheppard arrived in Kemaman four years later, progress had been made in straightening the system out and in educating people on its aims and workings. Yet most peasants still lacked title to their land, many being disinclined to apply for it unless a claim was made by someone else. Large areas remained to be surveyed. As collector, the AA had to

do almost all the work himself, there being no trained Malay staff to help as there was in the FMS. Court work connected with land cases was considerable, as was the job of supervising land records in Dungun. He had to manage the auctioning off of land on which rents had not been paid. As the Chinese population grew, there was a heavy increase in work on mining and rubber land.

There were compensations. The capacity of Malay officers rose steadily. So did that feeling of trust between them and their European colleagues. Dato' Jaya, who left Kemaman in the 1930s, had been a rare bird among the early state commissioners, meeting his British fellow officers more than half way in the whole range of administrative chores and even sharing a *stengah* in the evening—a gesture that could not be expected of every good Moslem.<sup>73</sup> Some of the Malay DOs were typical of the new generation in preferring towns and disliking the *ulu*, whose people in turn saw them as heretics, men who were neither this nor that.<sup>74</sup> For most, however, the British had praise. There was something very right about young Malays taking responsibility for giving their country a more just and efficient government than it had had before. Admittedly, there was strangeness in this meeting of East and West. M. J. Hayward, AA Besut, thought the atmosphere was something like what it must have been in sixteenth-century Mexico, a combination of material poverty, cultural vigor, and strong alien challenge.<sup>75</sup> But the disruptive effects were not severe. Large Malay majorities gave a stability and continuity that the west coast lacked. Although British officers worked for modernization, the pressure was more gentle than it was in booming Selangor or in Negri Sembilan. And in all the years from the arrival of the first advisers to the beginning of the Japanese war, the east coast worked its wiles on men who were not immune to great natural beauty, a soothing climate, and the subtleties of ruling by persuasion. In 1936, after a year and a half in the straits, Sheppard worked his way back. He reached Kemaman at dusk on a lovely evening in February. There was his beach, as uncluttered and beguiling as ever, still miraculously neglected by "... a nation whose youth has been spent on holiday at Margate, Broadstairs, Filey or Bude."<sup>76</sup> He could hardly believe his good fortune at being back in Trengganu again.

### Notes

1. See C. D. Cowan, *Nineteenth Century Malaya* (London: Oxford University Press, 1961); W. H. Reid, *Play & Politics* (London: Wells, Gardner, Darton & Co., 1901); L. A. Mills, *British Malaya 1824-1867* (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1966); and P. B. Maxwell, *Our Malay Conquests* (London: P. S. King, 1878).

2. See Annual Reports, 1861-1862, Singapore National Library. Also O. Cavenagh, *Reminiscences of an Indian Official* (London: W. H. Allen, 1884), and M.

C. ff. Sheppard, "A Short History of Trengganu," *JMBRAS* 22, pt. 3 (June 1949). Ord thought of using the sultan of Trengganu as an amicus in attempts to settle the Johore-Pahang disputes (S. S. 12, 1867, M). This plan, to which the sultan readily agreed, was another indication of the close, continuing relations with Singapore that east coast royals maintained and of their recognition of Britain's special position in the area.

3. See governor to secretary of state, 18 May 1878, 273/93 and Swettenham's memorandum on Johore, 5 July 1878, 273/94. Also P. B. Maxwell, pp. 111-12. On Read's intrigues, see Anson to secretary of state, 27 Mar. 1880, 273/102.

4. See Swettenham's journal, 19 July 1875, M.

5. See governor to secretary of state, 10 Jan. 1883, 273/124. "Sir F. Weld has been impetuous again," (file, 3 Aug. 1887, 273/146). In 1885, Meade had agreed with the India Office that Siam's claim to Trengganu was nominal only. The straits government's wish to go forward was justifiable, though the maintenance of good relations with Siam precluded this. (G. A. Godley, India Office, to C.O., 15 Apr. 1885, 273/137 and Meade's minute, 25 Apr. 1885.) The Foreign Office rejected the governor's suggestion of a consul in Kedah (F.O. to C.O., 15 July 1887, 273/150). See also J. Chandran, "British Foreign Policy and the Extraterritoriality Question in Siam 1891-1900," *JMBRAS* 38 (July 1966).

6. To secretary of state, 3 Dec. 1888, 273/156.

7. File, 8 Oct. 1888, 273/158.

8. File, 27 June 1889, 273/160, and governor to secretary of state, 23 Nov. 1889, 273/162.

9. 6 July 1889, 273/164.

10. Swettenham's journal as resident Perak, Sept. 1890, 273/168.

11. See Pierre Guillen, "The Entente of 1904 as a Colonial Settlement," *France and Britain in Africa*, P. Gifford and W. R. Louis, eds. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1971). And see Cowan, pp. 258-59 on the Anglo-Siamese agreements.

12. The Trengganu adviser was to have been W. A. Evans, a former master at Wellington, tutor to a Siamese prince, and secretary to the Siamese legation in London (file, 7 July 1902, 273/296). See also Sheppard (note 2 above) and Swettenham to secretary of state, 15 Jan. 1903, 273/293. Swettenham wanted an outright takeover, negotiated directly with Trengganu. See also P. S. Nairn, *Poems, Letters & Memories of Philip Sydney Nairn*, ed. E. R. Eddison (London: Privately Printed, 1916), p. 71 on the relevance of Kelantan disorder as a factor prompting the British takeover.

13. Lucas minute on F. A. Campbell of the F.O. to C.O., 7 July 1903, 273/296. See also Ralph Paget, British legation, Bangkok, to Lord Lansdowne, 2 Sept. 1903, 273/296. Lucas's point was that men with Malayan experience and language were needed. Thomson resigned from the FMS service on going to Kelantan, but rejoined later.

14. File, 28 Sept. 1905, 273/316.

15. Graham's report for 1903-1904, 273/303. See also Chan Su-ming, "Kelantan and Trengganu, 1909-1939," *JMBRAS* 38 (July 1965). The report of a British traveler who visited Kelantan's neighbor, Patani, 300 years earlier is instructive: see A. Hale, *The Adventure of John Smith in Malaya* (Leyden: E. J. Brill, 1909). See also Graham's book, *Kelantan* (Glasgow, 1908), written to interest investors.

16. On Duff's career, see L. R. Robert, "The Duff Syndicate in Kelantan, 1900-1902," *JMBRAS* 45, pt. 1 (1972). Also A. Wright & T. H. Reid, *The Malay Peninsula* (London: T. F. Unwin, 1912); H. A. Crawford, "The Birth of the Duff Development Company in Kelantan, 1900-1912," *Malaysia in History* 13 (Dec. 1970); and Graham, *Kelantan*.

17. Swettenham to secretary of state, 9 Sept. 1901, 273/274.

18. See notes of a conference between Duff and C.O. officials, 2 Nov. 1920, 717/8. The government side consisted of W. G. Maxwell and Thomson of the MCS, and G. Grindle of the C.O. Maxwell had written to Collins of the C.O. that Duff honestly wanted a settlement (29 Sept. 1920, 717/9). Sir L. Guillemard later wrote that Maxwell was easy meat for Duff (to secretary of state, 8 May 1923, 717/30). After retirement, Sir G. Maxwell joined Duff's board (Maxwell to W. D. Ellis of the C.O., 27 Aug. 1930, 717/74).

19. When Kelantan was formally taken over by Britain in 1909, Pennington and Nairn transferred to the FMS service. Pennington and Keenlyside were killed in the 1914 war. See Nairn, *Poems*.

20. Nairn, *Poems*, p. 57.

21. Governor to secretary of state, 23 Nov. 1904, 273/303. On Kelantan in Graham's time, see also Mohamed bin Nik Mohamed Salleh, "Kelantan in Transition: 1891-1910," in *Kelantan*, ed. W. R. Roff, (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1974).

22. Governor to secretary of state, 23 Nov. 1904, 273/303. Stubbs noted that the governor, Anderson, was in Duff's hands and that Graham was right to defer to Bangkok, which could reassert itself if given a pretext by Graham. Ommanney replied that Siamese intervention would be the best thing that could happen because then Britain could add Kelantan and Trengganu to Malaya. When an ex-member of the IPS, Sir Roper Lethbridge, published an article saying that Kelantan and Trengganu were not British colonies, he was blasted by the *Straits Times* and by Anderson. (Lethbridge to Anderson, 25 Nov. 1904, 273/303.) Lethbridge had got information from Sir Andrew Clarke, among others.

23. Governor to secretary of state, 27 May 1909, 273/350.

24. This referred to Anderson's Federal Council plan of the same year. Minute by J. Risley of the C.O. legal staff, on Anderson to secretary of state, 8 Feb. 1909, 273/349.

25. Conlay's journal, forwarded to C.O., 11 July 1909, 273/351. See also dispatch, 14 July 1909, M.

26. File 14, 1909, M., Maxwell to Anderson. Maxwell wanted both Perlis and Province Wellesley returned to Kedah, Siam having detached the former and Britain the latter. See his article, "The Administration of Malaya," *British Malaya* (May 1943). See also Anderson's dispatches, 25 Aug. 1909, 2 May 1910, 7 July 1910, and 23 Nov. 1910, M.

27. See J. de V. Allen, "Johore 1910-1914," *JMBRAS* 45, pt. II (1972).

28. *Ibid.* and see Wright and Reid, p. 197. The appointment was gazetted as of 1 Jan. 1910. Campbell's death is reported in 273/472, 1918. During Campbell's leave 1911-12, J. B. Elcum was acting general adviser.

29. To secretary of state, 26 Oct. 1910, M. On the courts, see Roff, ed., *Kelantan*, pp. 119-21.

30. Shortly after arrival in North Borneo in 1912, Mason was killed in a riding accident. He was thirty-eight years old. I thank his daughter-in-law, Mrs. J. M. Mason, for the loan of materials on his career.

31. Morkill's memoirs, 13 Dec. 1969. I thank Mr. Morkill for answers to questions about Langham-Carter.

32. Richard Moor to H. P. Bryson, 14 Apr. 1969. Moor was serving in the secretariat when this reply was received from Langham-Carter. Sir L. Guillemard thought that Langham-Carter did not "fill the bill." (To Grindle in the C.O., 1922, 717/26.)

33. To colonial secretary, Singapore, from Cocos Islands, 1 Oct. 1910, 273/271.

34. Morkill's diary, CRP, 26 Sept. 1915.

35. Ibid. See also high commissioner to secretary of state, 5 May 1915, 273/426; Ibrahim Nik Mahmood, "The To' Janggut Rebellion of 1915," Roff, ed., *Kelantan*; J. de V. Allen, "The Kelantan Rising of 1915," *Journal of Southeast Asian History* IX (Sept. 1968); and W. E. Pepys, "Kelantan During World War I," *Malaysia in History* 6 (July 1960).

36. On the sultan's insistence that Langham-Carter not return, see Roff, ed., *Kelantan*, p. 129.

37. Guillemard, note 32 above. For information on Farrer, I thank H. A. L. Luckham and A. Gilmour.

38. On Kelantan affairs after 1933, see Luckham to author, 6 Dec. 1977. And see Roff, ed., p. 208. Also Haynes's report (Kelantan Annual Report, 1932, M.), in which he puts the accent on protecting the Malays from being inundated by Chinese, a more serious threat in the unfederated states, where, for the most part, the Chinese Protectorate did not function. Purcell did visit Kelantan to inspect schools, at Baker's request (*Memoirs of a Malayan Official* [London: Cassell, 1965], p. 235).

39. J. A. Harvey to H. P. Bryson, 18 Apr. 1970. Harvey was DO Kota Bharu under Baker.

40. To H. P. Bryson, 17 Mar. 1969. See also the appreciation of Baker's Kelantan stewardship in *British Malaya*, Aug. 1939.

41. Morkill's diary, 2 Oct. 1915.

42. Ibid., 26 Jan. 1916.

43. Letter transmitting his diary to Rhodes House, Oxford, 7 July 1966.

44. Morkill's memoirs, p. 21.

45. Ibid.

46. See M. Sheppard, "A Short History of Trengganu" *JMBRAS* 22 (June 1949): 1-74; Chan Su-Ming, "Kelantan & Trengganu 1909-1939," *JMBRAS* 38 (July 1965): 159-98; J. de V. Allen, "The Ancien Regime in Trengganu, 1909-1919," *JMBRAS* XLI, pt. 1 (1968) and his "Sultan Zainal Abidin III," *Malaysia in History* 12, 1 (1968). Also G. A. de C. de Moubray, "Trengganu Under the British," 1970, CRP. De Moubray was the last BA before the Japanese conquest.

47. Conlay's journal, note 25 above.

48. See file 400, 1910, M., the report of the agent to the federal secretary. Also dispatch 26 Oct. 1910, M., on high commissioner's visit to Trengganu.

49. Before going to Malaya, W. D. Scott had been an officer in the Lincolnshire Regiment. See his articles on his early service, in *British Malaya*, Aug. 1950 ff.

50. Minute by J. Robinson on Dickson's report, 15 Apr. 1914, 273/410.

51. He received a local appointment in 1890 and was made a junior officer in 1894. He married a Malay lady and, like Farrer, retired in Malaya, living on an island in the Dindings, where he and his wife were murdered by their *syce* shortly before the 1941 war. On his appointment to the council in Trengganu, see high commissioner to secretary of state, 16 Dec. 1916, 273/428.

52. Governor to secretary of state, 4 June 1919, 273/487. The governor knew that there would be trouble in the service if Humphreys, still relatively junior, were made BA over the heads of more senior men, but he was willing to risk that because of Humphreys's unusual ability and experience.

53. File 201, 1921, M., Humphreys to high commissioner.

54. Paterson discusses his service under Humphreys, whom he much admired, in his letter of 9 Apr. 1969 to H. P. Bryson.

55. File 201, 1921. But Sherwood added that he knew "... lots of people who would prefer to live in Trengganu."

56. *Ibid.*

57. File 130, 1921, M., Humphreys to A. S. Haynes. A problem here was the wish of headquarters to bring the unfederated states into line with the FMS in personnel matters. "Surely uniformity is the cardinal principle in the administrative policy of Malaya." (Sherwood's minute to H. E. on Humphreys's requests, file 511, *ibid.*)

58. For this tale I am indebted to H. A. L. Luckham (letter of 30 July 1977). He served in Trengganu after Humphreys's time.

59. Diary of J. E. Kempe, commissioner of lands, 18-20 June 1923, CRP. What strikes the student of Trengganu affairs in this period is the unanimous respect accorded Humphreys from highly individual and varied sources. It would be hard to imagine men more different, for example, than Kempe and Sheppard. Both were unstinting in their praise of the BA (interview with Sheppard, Kuala Lumpur, 13 May 1973.)

60. Kempe's diary, 20 Aug. 1923 ff. Kempe accompanied Humphreys on this tour.

61. File 400, 1926, M., report signed by his successor, J. W. Simmons. Humphreys, an avid golfer who laid out the course at Kuala Trengganu, went to China in 1929 on local leave and won a tournament at Tientsin. He contracted pneumonia and died there. He was fifty years old.

62. Sir William Goode to author, 9 Aug. 1976. Goode was AA Besut at the time and attended the party. See also Brown to H. P. Bryson, 12 Apr. 1969; Hawkins to Bryson, 14 Dec. 1969; and J. M. Barron to Bryson, 14 Apr. 1969.

63. To H. P. Bryson, 2 May 1969. Also letter to author, 24 Mar. 1976.

64. "Feelings rather mixed" (diary, 15 Dec. 1934). See also A. F. Richards (Lord Milverton) to Kempe, 16 Dec. 1925 and 24 Aug. 1927, CRP; Jarrett to Kempe, 14 Dec. 1934; and Sir Shenton Thomas to Kempe, 18 Dec. 1935, CRP. Headquarters regarded Kempe as the outstation type. While admitting this, Kempe thought his career was harmed by a derogatory file that followed him

throughout. Sir William Goode's letter of 9 Aug. 1976 to author sheds light on Kempe's character and career. Goode liked Kempe and recognized his good qualities.

65. Kempe's diary, 1 May 1935. The council, he said, were still "nearly all the old bad lot."

66. Kempe's retrospective journal, CRP, 98. A. E. Coope, acting BA 1937 ff., is interesting on the request of the sultan for signed photographs of the king and queen (file 46, 1938, M).

67. To author, 28 Feb. 1974. Mr. Cobden-Ramsay changed his name to Ramsay some years after joining the MCS. Though he did well, Cowgill found Kemaman too lonely and asked for a transfer after eleven months.

68. A. B. Cobden-Ramsay, "Memoirs of Kemaman District, Trengganu" and other notes, RCS.

69. "Notes on the Work of AA Kemaman," kindly loaned to author by Mr. Sheppard. After embracing Islam and assuming the names Abdul Mubin, prefixed by *Haji* following his pilgrimage to Mecca, he was honored with the titles Dato' and *Tan Sri*. Since this study is concerned with the period ending in 1942, he will be spoken of here by his then-name and style. Another useful source on the work of AAs is Sir William Goode's taped interview, CRP, which refers to Besut. He says that Tengku Long of Besut was really in charge there because his family had run the district for years. It was not subject to the sultan's government or inclined to accept the dictates of Kuala Trengganu. On Humphreys's training of Dato' Jaya, see the taped interview of M. C. Hay by H. P. Bryson, in author's possession.

70. *Ibid.*, Sheppard.

71. Sheppard's diary, Jan. 1934.

72. The Bryson papers contain correspondence between Bryson and J. de V. Allen on this point, and between Bryson and de Moubray, both of whom were in Trengganu at the time, the former as settlement collector and the latter as acting BA and commissioner of lands. See also Dato' Seri Lela Di-Raja, "The Ulu Trengganu Disturbance, May 1928," *Malaysia in History* 12 (Oct. 1968). The high commissioner, Clifford, removed the substantive BA, W. M. Millington, whom he blamed for unsatisfactory handling of the affair.

73. A. L. Birse to H. P. Bryson, 16 Aug. 1969. Birse was AA Kemaman in 1931-1932.

74. See file 602-35, 1935, M., on the Malay DO Marang who sought a transfer to Kuala Trengganu; and file 656-35, 1935, M., reporting the protests of the people of Kuala Brang against their Malay DO.

75. Notes kindly supplied to author, Apr. 1975.

76. Sheppard's diary, 20 Feb. 1936.

AFTER IMPERIALISM had become respectable in late Victorian times, London's policy was to support trade. Administrative arrangements in the various overseas dependencies that could be defended as necessary to the furtherance of that aim tended to be looked on with favor. But the designing and working out of these were mostly left to men on the spot. The C.O. was usually behind events. While it kept hands off, its legates in the colonies and the businessmen with whom they lived side by side were apt to patronize its officials as small-minded folk who were incapable of thinking "imperially."<sup>1</sup> Initiatives from London were received with surprise; and restraints with irritation. Fortunately, from the point of view of men in the colonies, there were not many of either, and, one way or another, they could usually be taken in stride.

In Malaya, there were forward moves when the C.O. took over the Straits Settlements from India in 1867, when Sir Andrew Clarke was allowed to intervene on the west coast in 1874, and when in 1909 the Siamese states were taken over and an officer was permanently stationed in Johore. At the time of federation in 1895, there had been a good deal of discussion back and forth between London and Singapore, although this had to do with tidying up existing commitments rather than taking on new ones, and, as always, the end result owed more to those at the colonial end than to people in London. By the early years of the twentieth century, the time of new departures and drastic innovations was past.

Nevertheless, there was still room for maneuvering within the country and for spirited talk about what was to be done. The British colonial system always invited this by its disinclination to clothe policy in all-embracing theoretical statements that settled every question once and for all. Apart from the traditional English instinct to empiricism, the C.O. was far removed from events, and it was only common sense to be tentative, leaving the door open to change if need be. Such a stance was all the more appropriate in an empire whose polyglot units had been acquired piecemeal over a long period. Did Pangkor make Perak a British possession, or was it a treaty between equals? Did the federation violate what had been agreed at Pangkor? What exactly was the relationship between the resident-general of the FMS at Kuala Lumpur and the governor-high commissioner in Singapore? The instruments to which these and other questions referred were open to more than one interpretation. If in the aggregate they constituted a lawyer's nightmare, they were often to be an



administrator's dream when looked at in the light of particular circumstances. It might not have been so if the governors and their subordinates in the civil service had all been stamped out of some Prussian mold, responding mechanically to whatever instructions they got from on high. Instead, there was always an ample supply of able, determined men, born and bred in one of the nineteenth century's most open and flexible social systems, one that had been re-created in miniature, to a degree, on the other side of the world. Even if the bureaucracy had been more tightly disciplined than it was, there would still have been a never ending chorus of comment from businessmen with strong views that they were not shy of expressing. As the 1900s wore on, their voices were joined increasingly by those of Chinese, Malay, and Indian spokesmen, all wanting to be heard and all aware of the freedoms enjoyed by home-based Englishmen.

The seeds of discord between Singapore and Kuala Lumpur were sown well before federation. Assuming that he would be the first resident-general and considering himself the father of the federal idea, Swettenham hoped that he would be allowed to communicate directly with London, as the heads of other colonial units—Australian and Nigerian, for example—were permitted to do at times. There would have been a certain amount of strain between the resident-general and the governor (soon to take the additional title "high commissioner" with reference to the FMS) no matter which way this question had been resolved. In fact, Swettenham was kept subordinate to Sir Charles Mitchell in Singapore, who soon felt obliged to write rather testily, "Please address me in future as high commissioner in all native state matters."<sup>2</sup> Difficulties were inevitable since, for one thing, both posts were very senior and therefore open to officers on promotion from other colonies. Mitchell and his successor, Sir Alexander Swettenham, were outsiders lording it over a Malaya-bred expert, F. A. Swettenham. During Sir Frank's time as high commissioner later on the resident-general was Treacher, both men being insiders. But Swettenham's authoritarian ways and incomparable prestige did not make things easier for Treacher on that account. They were followed by two outsiders—Sir John Anderson and Sir William Taylor—who got on fairly well together, as did the next pair—Sir Arthur Young and Sir Edward Brockman—the first, an outsider and the second, a long-service Malayan officer. But even when harmony prevailed between Singapore and Kuala Lumpur, there were the rulers and the residents to consider. The former were unhappy with residents-general who did not speak Malay, and the latter looked on them as insufficiently versed in local problems.<sup>3</sup>

Regardless of personalities, the distance between Singapore and Kuala Lumpur meant that the high commissioner could not manage FMS matters day to day. He had the colony to look after and communications with



Plate 12. Carcosa, residence of the high commissioners, Kuala Lumpur, 1896. *Courtesy of Royal Commonwealth Society.*

London. Year by year, the FMS grew more independent. Though he resisted Swettenham on railway construction, Mitchell had to give in eventually. He failed to stop the centralization of FMS finances, a step he knew the rulers would resent and one that was sure to be "... the parent of many heartburnings and jealousies ... for years to come."<sup>4</sup> Though he saw the inconsistency in many of Swettenham's positions—citing the rights of the rulers when it suited his purpose *ad hoc* and at other times justifying more centralization on grounds of administrative efficiency—the high commissioner did not feel he could intervene most of the time. When he did so Swettenham was so annoyed that he spoke to Joseph Chamberlain about a transfer to Egypt.<sup>5</sup> Yet after he himself had been high commissioner for a time—a very strong one who virtually moved the direction of FMS affairs to Singapore—he had second thoughts. Had he gone too far? Would it not be better for his successor and the new resident-general if discretion in FMS matters shifted back to Kuala Lumpur? Chamberlain replied with a question of his own that showed the continuing influence of retired governors on C.O. thinking: should the post of resident-general be abolished so that governors could again be in direct touch with residents?<sup>6</sup> This cleared the air. Swettenham replied that the clock could not be turned back. The pioneers were all disappearing, relations between the colony and the states would go on getting closer, and future high commissioners and residents-general would need both a sensible balance of power and cordial working relationships.

To take the place of the redoubtable Swettenham, whose name was by now virtually synonymous with Malaya, the C.O. sent out one of their own, Sir John Anderson, a member of the staff in London since 1879. He had stood at the top of his class in Aberdeen University, taking first-class honors in mathematics, after which he was called to the bar. In the C.O., he saw imperial affairs from on high, being private secretary to Meade and assistant to Chamberlain at the conference of colonial prime ministers. He accompanied the future King Edward VII on a tour of the colonies. In Malaya, all were agreed that he was authoritative—some said autocratic—as well as self-assured and firm. His shyness was everywhere remarked on as was his courtesy, although one of his subordinates said he did not believe in finesse.<sup>7</sup> But, though he was cold and withdrawn, he did not offend the European community as Ord had done. In fact, he was everywhere respected by men of business. Hardly a foregone conclusion in view of his background, this was to prove helpful as he put forward his plans for change. Soon after arrival, he added a businessman to the Perak State Council and proposed two more for membership on the colony's executive council.<sup>8</sup>

Deference to business came naturally to Anderson and to all devotees of the Chamberlain school, which saw flourishing trade as the engine of

imperial power. Before reaching Malaya, he knew—as everyone in the C.O. did—that the commercial interest in the East chafed under what they saw as a civil service dictatorship, a closed corporation in which they had no direct voice, especially in the vital area of finance. He could sympathize, for he himself felt excluded by the all-powerful resident-general and his coterie of obedient residents. Legality aside, the high commissioner was left in a weak position, meekly reacting to what Kuala Lumpur proposed more often than not. The rulers were similarly disaffected. Everyone knew that strong, efficient government had been built up at the sacrifice of their power. Federation had greatly accelerated the process. Anderson understood full well that this had brought resentment in its wake, a feeling on the part of the royals that they were no more than figure heads in their own state councils, while day-to-day administration was completely in the hands of British officers, no matter what the treaties said. When five more states were added in 1909, Anderson hoped that they would enter the federation, thus unifying the peninsula as Sir Frederick Weld and so many others had wanted. All this could be achieved, thought the governor, by loosening the grip of the executive in Kuala Lumpur and creating a new legislative body called a "federal council," with the high commissioner at its head. The rulers would all be members, thereby escaping from the domination of residents in state councils. Businessmen would also be represented, which would end their grievance, assure their support for the high commissioner's policy of increased consideration for the rulers, and avail the government of their expert advice in finance.<sup>9</sup>

At first, the C.O. had doubts about this ambitious and rather startling plan.<sup>10</sup> But Anderson's reputation in London and his long experience there stood him in good stead. After a talk with the high commissioner during one of his leaves in England, Churchill, the under secretary, agreed to give the scheme a try. In Malaya the businessmen, some of whom would have critical things to say later, could be depended on to go along in the initial stages, placated by Anderson's five years of diplomacy and by the assurance of direct representation for themselves in the new body. The resident-general, whose title would be downgraded to chief secretary, would not be a problem since the incumbent, Sir William Taylor, was about to retire, recompensed with the headship of the newly created Malay States Information Agency in London.<sup>11</sup> Nor would there be an outcry from senior members of the civil service, the most prominent of whom had suffered for years under the lash of Kuala Lumpur and its bureaucratic octopus. Even residents had been made to feel powerless and unimportant, and the thought of alleviation was bound to be attractive to them. Only from the unfederated states was there opposition. Instructed to sound their rulers on the most agreeable way of bringing the new states into a wider federation, the BAs were able to give Anderson no encour-



Plate 13. Seremban, 1904. Seated left to right: Sir William Treacher (resident-general), Mrs. Weld, Sir John Anderson (high commissioner), Miss Anderson, F. J. Weld (resident, Negri Sembilan). Standing left to right: Mr. Coats (ADC to resident-general), O. Marks, (private secretary to the high commissioner), Unidentified army officer, C. W. H. Cochrane (private secretary to the resident-general), E. C. H. Wolff (secretary to resident, Negri Sembilan). Courtesy of Royal Commonwealth Society.

agement. From Kedah, Maxwell replied that his sultan knew very well how his neighbor in Perak had been treated.<sup>12</sup> The FMS royals were nothing more than marionettes. Why would sultans long accustomed to independence and only recently brought into treaty relationships with Britain voluntarily exchange what remained of their independence for such a fate?

Anderson's successor, Sir Arthur Young, thus inherited a new institution—the federal council—and an administrative change—the titular demotion of the FMS headship. Young himself was the first chief secretary in 1911, moving on to the high commissionership later the same year. Businessmen sitting in the new body, styled “unofficials” to distinguish them from civil servants who sat *ex officio*, quickly showed that participation in the governmental process would not alter their basic attitudes. They were involved but were not responsible, being merely appointees of the high commissioner and always faced with an official majority. Robson spoke up immediately. He feared the financial power of the high commissioner. Would Singapore use FMS money for the benefit of the colony and the unfederated states? As his nineteenth-century predecessors

had done, he instinctively sided with local officers against their superiors in Singapore, realizing that the influence of business could be brought to bear more effectively in a system of checks and balances than in a hierarchical one whose subordinate officers were under the thumb of an omnipotent high commissioner.<sup>13</sup> He opposed the change in title from resident-general to chief secretary and held that a weaker officer in Kuala Lumpur would be less able to protect the rulers than a strong one could.

If this smacked of special pleading it was undeniable that under Anderson, ironically, the rulers were worse off than before. In the federal council meetings, they sat on a raised platform above the table where the rest of the members sat. Apart from an occasional polite gesture, they were silent, taking no part and understanding little of the discussion, which was in English. The creation of the new body rendered their state councils even more impotent than they had been earlier, divesting them of financial powers and leaving them with hardly anything to do beyond appointing *penghulus* and discussing matters of local interest. Nor had a new and less impressive rank made any real difference in the authority of the head man in Kuala Lumpur. Throughout Young's time, the position was held by Sir Edward Brockman, an 1886 cadet, whose long experience, knowledge of the language, and entrenched position within the service contrasted with Young's stance as a recent arrival in the country with a background of Sandhurst, Cyprus, and the colonial bureaucracy. Brockman was no theoretician, remarking on one occasion that book knowledge and abstract ideas were all very well but did not necessarily make the best officers: "... indeed it [is] very often the reverse."<sup>14</sup> He was the strongest head of the FMS government since Swettenham, due to his own down-to-earth grasp of the essentials and to Young's willingness to leave him alone. The high commissioner used a *laissez-faire* approach because Brockman ran a tight ship with a surplus in the till, and because of his own style and conception of his job. Young has been called the least impressive and most successful of all the governors.<sup>15</sup> Unpretentious, solid, and impassive, he was much liked by the businessmen. They saw him as the prototype sensible governor, doing all he could to help trade, to seek their advice, and to keep London at arm's length—a task that was easier to manage than usual because of the 1914 war. In fact, he saw no need to do much in this direction. As a loyal official and professional soldier, he naturally wanted to avoid bothering the center of affairs during a time of unprecedented national peril.

In these circumstances, the sand sifted back in, covering over the framework of Anderson's frail reforms and leaving Kuala Lumpur as strong and autonomous as it had been when Swettenham was resident-general. Anderson's attempt to give Malays more of a voice and role had also met with indifferent success. The unfederated states remained outside

the purview of Kuala Lumpur since the condition of their entry—a devolution of local power onto the FMS rulers—had not been met. The duty of providing European officers for service in the unfederated states was transferred from Kuala Lumpur to Singapore, where it was taken on by the secretary to the high commissioner. This emphasized the apartness of the unfederated states from the FMS, even though the officers all came from a common service.

In Young's time, the main effort to improve the lot of the Malays was the Malay Reservations Enactment of 1913, a measure frankly described in the federal council as having been designed to "... provide protection for the Malays against themselves."<sup>16</sup> For years, they had been selling their ancestral lands as European and Chinese speculators moved into unused parts. The sultan of Perak estimated that since Sir Ernest Birch's time as resident, nine-tenths of the land originally held by Malays in that state had been sold. Under the new enactment, all future sales would be subject to the approval of the ruler in council, there being no appeal. This drew strong opposition from unofficials—European and Chinese—on the federal council, who held that if the Malays were prevented from selling, they would not use the land themselves, and the country would suffer. A further brake on development, they said, was a proposal that lands could be sold only to Malays. There would be no Malay buyers, and the land would go to waste. Europeans and Chinese were the ones with excess capital, noted Eu Tong Sen. Since the bill forbade mortgaging by non-Malays and since Malays lacked money to use in exploiting their land, the development of the country would be held back. The enactment passed over these protests showed that the tension between business and government was continuing and that even the popular Young was not willing to abandon the traditional policy of standing up for Malay rights in order to please the unofficials.

In general, Young's eight-year term was a quiet time, after the mild turbulence of Anderson's governorship. From Swettenham's departure to the end of the war, the trends of the nineteenth century had been subjected to debate. New arrangements were made, but the fundamentals remained unchanged. Development was the primary concern and the central fact of the country's life. The concentration of power in Kuala Lumpur went on, as did the atrophy of Malay traditionalism and the influence of its spokesmen in the royal houses of the FMS.

With the war over, the C.O. wanted to replace the stolid Young with someone from outside the colonial service who would be able to bring fresh ideas and vigor to the task of realizing Malaya's enormous potential. The staggering cost of the war and the continuing retreat of classical ideas on free trade and minimum interference by governments caused London to look at such places as Malaya and the Gold Coast rather differently. If

their wealth were to be developed so as to contribute more to imperial prosperity, then the old cheese-paring approach to their finances would have to give way. In its place would be the notion that governments should call the tune in economic matters as they had done in World War I and should use revenues to stimulate development. Malaya's past administrations had done much to encourage trade, it is true, but balanced budgets and handsome surpluses had been the rule, and it was the rubber and tin companies that provided them, not the government.

In 1919, the governorship was given to Sir Lawrence Guillemard, a man as different from Sir Arthur Young as any civil servant could possibly be. Young was big physically, an international footballer in his youth; a soldier who never went near a university; modest, unassuming, and content to spend his middle years in such posts as the commissionership of Paphos in the dreaming backwater of Cyprus. Guillemard was small in stature, and though a good shot and an avid tennis player, he was more studious than athletic. He had a brilliant record at Trinity Cambridge and passed second in the whole of England on the civil service examinations. He thought the result so inadequate that he took the exams again the following year and came first. In 1888, he entered the Treasury, the most sought-after of all Whitehall departments, remaining from then on at the center of affairs. He was private secretary to Sir William Harcourt, the Liberal chancellor of the exchequer in the 1890s, staying on to serve his Conservative successor, Sir Michael Hicks-Beach, in the same capacity. As chairman of the board of customs and excise during the war, he played a vital role in the raising of war loans, making a good impression on members of the cabinet, including Lord Milner, who took over the C.O. at the beginning of 1919.

There were both negative and positive reasons for Guillemard's appointment to Malaya that year. It was clear to the deeply knowledgeable Milner, with his rich experience in Egypt and South Africa and his intimate involvement in affairs of state at the summit, that colonial governors of Young's kind, a majority in the service, were cut off from developments in the great world. They had spent their career years in far-off places among primitive peoples, continuing in the social assumptions and ways of a traditional, aristocratic, agrarian England that had ceased to exist in their fathers' time.<sup>17</sup> To rescue wealthy Malaya, it would be necessary to break away from outmoded points of view. It was true that Anderson had come from Whitehall and not from the service itself. But he, too, was a colonial specialist, one of the C.O. careerists who, in Milner's judgment, were almost as parochial as were the occupants of Government House who inched their patient way up the ladder for a quarter century by conforming to anachronistic ideas. Guillemard was just the man because he was a complete outsider and because he under-



stood modern public finance. He knew that surpluses meant stagnation and that debt was the foundation of progress. Milner's offer of Singapore was the biggest surprise of his life. But he quickly saw what the minister was driving at. Malaya's was "... the most interesting of all the colonial governorships... [there was] ... a lot of work to be done and plenty of money to do it with."<sup>18</sup>

Guillemard was under no illusions about his ignorance of the country he was going to. Yet he was full of confidence that all would be well. He had an open mind—"virgins are not all foolish"—and the assurance of backing from Milner himself, who gave him permission to write privately when he chose.<sup>19</sup> The C.O. would give him a reasonably free hand, he thought, since tight control from London was not appropriate in so important a place and would defeat the whole point of selecting a man with unusual qualifications. In this he was mistaken. On the governor's arrival, Brockman retired from the chief secretaryship, providing a golden opportunity for the appointment of someone chosen by Guillemard and for the C.O. to show by its support that they meant to help, not hinder. Guillemard recommended F. S. (later Sir Frederick) James, the colonial secretary who had been in the country only four years, having served previously in Nigeria. His thought was that James could bring a breath of fresh air to Kuala Lumpur, as he himself was doing in Singapore. Instead, the C.O. persuaded Milner to appoint W. G. (later Sir George) Maxwell, then serving as resident Perak. Maxwell was in London on leave at the time, talking with Sir Gilbert Grindle of the C.O. about a range of Malayan questions, including the future of the federation and the position of the unfederated states. For a time, the office toyed with the idea of doing a deal with Guillemard whereby James would go to Kuala Lumpur and Maxwell to Singapore as colonial secretary. There, as the C.O. delicately put it, thus showing their hand, Maxwell would "... be invaluable in keeping Sir Lawrence Guillemard straight."<sup>20</sup> In arriving at their final decision to give Kuala Lumpur to Maxwell, the office was influenced by Swettenham and Young.<sup>21</sup> What was needed in the FMS, said the two retired governors, was a profound knowledge of Malay language and custom. Coming from a Malaya-based family and having been in service there since 1891, Maxwell was superbly qualified. Bad feeling between Maxwell and James would be avoided by making the two posts equal. This meant a downgrading of the chief secretaryship, which was appropriate given Maxwell's comparative youth. James would be compensated by a provision that the colonial secretary, rather than the chief secretary, would administer the government in the absence of the governor.

Thwarted in this way at the outset, Guillemard nevertheless had reason to believe that he and his senior officers would agree on the broad outlines

of policy. All concerned were developers, working together in cooperation with the Malay States Information Agency and the various planter groups in London and Malaya. On the need to loosen up the federation so that the unfederated states could be brought in, the same line Anderson had favored, the governor and Maxwell did not appear to differ. Guillemard circulated to all senior officers the memorandum that Maxwell had prepared for the C.O., recommending it to their careful attention. Both appointed committees to study how best to bring about decentralization. On Malay rights and the role of Malays in society Maxwell of course knew far more than the governor. But they took the same general view: government should provide an ordered framework in which evolution could take place—as was in fact happening. Maxwell opposed the creation of an elite, wanting all of Malay society to move towards a hybrid form with a native base and various European accretions voluntarily borrowed. Addressing himself to the specifics, Guillemard spoke against too fast a pace in this process, which could result in a nation of semiliterate clerks, as in India. He thought of appointing a secretary of Malay affairs, or native affairs, to oversee Malay progress and to advise the governor, as Swettenham had done in the 1870s. In his distaste for precipitate Westernization, he was very like the officials and unofficials who spoke against it in the federal council or among themselves.<sup>22</sup> He wanted a clear policy so that senior officers, especially residents and BAs, would have guidelines to follow rather than having to use their intuition or letting nature take its course. The discrepancy between the FMS and the unfederated states in the training of Malay civil servants was worrisome to everyone. There was considerable agreement, too, on the position of the rulers. Guillemard and Maxwell were both in favor of allowing ex-sultan Abdullah of Perak to return from exile.<sup>23</sup> Both wanted the royal families to occupy positions of dignity and to contribute to the governmental process as much as possible, within the restraints of development and a healthy degree of modernization.

Despite these similarities, Guillemard and his associates—both official and unofficial—soon found themselves locked in bitter controversy. The whole of Sir Lawrence's seven-year governorship was racked by it. At the bottom of the trouble were power and personality—not policy—though feeling ran so high that honest men took stands in that area that did not reflect their real convictions. Bickering between Singapore and Kuala Lumpur was hardly new. But in the past, it had been kept under control. Swettenham had been so firmly entrenched that Mitchell sensibly deferred to him. When Sir Frank went on to Singapore, he was more powerful than ever, and Treacher, his long-time subordinate, knew better than to trifle with the master. Taylor, by the same token, was not inclined to cross the authoritarian Anderson. Young respected Brockman's local

knowledge. Now, a new governor from outside confronted a Malay expert who was headstrong, full of *amour propre*, and certain that his friends in the C.O. would protect him from the depredations of an arrogant and inexperienced chief. Guillemard can be forgiven for the illusion that London would leave him a free hand. Milner had told him as much. But Milner was gone within months. The new secretary of state, Churchill, was preoccupied with the Middle East, and Maxwell's friends among the permanent staff and ex-governors saw Guillemard as a neophyte who needed both help and restraint. During the first several years, he had a bad name in London, where his difficulties in dealing with Maxwell were not fully understood. The problem was complex. If Guillemard had been as firm as Anderson was there would have been immediate and open war with Maxwell, and the C.O. would have had to decide whom to back. But Guillemard was not that straightforward, partly because of his long training in the subtle atmosphere of Whitehall and partly because with him there was sometimes a gap between the thought and the decisiveness needed to carry out the deed. Winstedt, who served him as director of education, said that he was an administrator by accident and should have been head of a college.<sup>24</sup> He could define the necessary qualities clearly enough and may have thought he possessed them—brains, perseverance, a sense of perspective ("don't be either too swank or too humble"), a sense of humor, pluck, frankness, and the ability to admit wrong.<sup>25</sup> But "he was a statesman who hesitated to have a policy. Critics and enemies he studied with a solicitude a bacteriologist reserves for a microbe."<sup>26</sup> With a man like Sir George Maxwell, that kind of cool intellectualism was sure to be taken for weakness.

The nub of the matter in the Guillemard-Maxwell battles was the power of the chief secretary. Here, Maxwell was faced by a dilemma. On the one hand, he had admitted—indeed, loudly insisted—that the federation was too tightly centralized, explaining to Anderson in 1909 that it was not a federation at all but a "conglomerate," which was why the rulers of the unfederated states looked on it with disapproval.<sup>27</sup> On the other hand, he himself was now chief secretary. If the federation was to be loosened enough to reassure the rulers of the unfederated states and prepare the way for unity throughout the peninsula, his own power would have to be curtailed as authority devolved onto each individual state government. Instinctively, he resisted this, rationalizing the policy dilemma in a more and more desperate and unconvincing way and gathering support in the local business community, in London, and in the civil service as he went along. Sensing that the best defense was attack, he tried to get in ahead of the governor by putting forth his own design for change. The issue he said was legitimacy. Anderson had violated the spirit of Pangkor which could only be honored again by restoring the rights of the rulers and their



Plate 14. Sir George Maxwell with Tuanku Muhammad, yang di pertuan besar of Negri Sembilan, 1925. J. S. (later Sir John) Macpherson at right. *Courtesy of Tan Sri Mubin Sheppard.*

councils, this in turn depending on the strong, protecting arm of Kuala Lumpur. Addressing Guillemard in a letter that was insubordinate, cavalier, and downright rude, he held that the high commissioner could not represent the views of the rulers since he had not had enough time to adequately consult them.<sup>28</sup> He produced a memorial from senior officers supporting his position and joining him in demanding the restoration of the resident-generalship as the only sure guarantee of local rights.

He also worked hard to line up the business community on his side, an effort he was well placed to pursue. Guillemard complained to the C.O. that Maxwell was in touch with the planters' association in London over the governor's head, and that he was not the right man to represent Malaya in negotiations with Duff and his company. Maxwell, said the governor, was easy meat for Duff, who walked all over him.<sup>29</sup> How was

it, Guillemard asked the secretary of state, that the Association of British Malaya seemed to be well briefed ahead of time on points at issue, such as the title of the head of the FMS government?<sup>30</sup> Why was it that Robson's newspaper criticized the high commissioner in the same terms that Maxwell did, the line then being repeated in the federal council? When Maxwell was piqued over having to play a subordinate role to Guillemard's during the visit of the Prince of Wales, was this a matter that unofficials should properly concern themselves with?<sup>31</sup> There was not always a complete identity of outlook between Maxwell and the businessmen. He called their bluff on the issue of tin duties. Nor did Guillemard always get bad marks from the merchants and the press.<sup>32</sup> But in general, Maxwell succeeded in persuading his business friends that Guillemard's plans were not in their interests. A downgrading of Kuala Lumpur would mean a milking of the FMS by Singapore, a steep rise in taxes, and a lessening of business influence. As always, the old guard in London, headed by Swettenham, did all they could from behind the scenes to foil a reforming governor.<sup>33</sup>

With the rulers, however, Maxwell failed. There was irony in this since he and his family had argued for years that no one could truly understand and sympathize with the Malays except those who were steeped in the history, culture, and language of the peninsula, who were literally born to it and raised in its atmosphere. In 1924, the sultan of Perak visited London, where he spoke with the King, conferred with the secretary of state and officials in the C.O., and called on retired civil servants. He said that his state council had no power and no serious work of the kind that was done by governments in the unfederated states. He wanted to be in direct touch with the high commissioner, which was not possible in the charade of federal council meetings.<sup>34</sup> As an Oxford man, fluent in English, Sultan Iskandar was not as easily put off as were some of the older rulers who had been known to fall asleep in federal council sessions (which even the British considered dull) and who had become fatalistic about their impotence. All resented Maxwell's rudeness to them. He had cut their budgets, eliminated guards of honor and bands, and claimed that as chief secretary he took precedence over them. Raja Chulan, a son of ex-sultan Abdullah, spoke out strongly in the federal council, supporting Guillemard and criticizing overcentralization in highly specific terms that reflected his experience as a civil servant.

Knowing that all of this had made an impression in London, Guillemard adroitly pointed out that Maxwell was making a mockery of the very policy of decentralization that he himself had advocated. He suggested a new title for the chief bureaucrat in Kuala Lumpur—"secretary for the FMS"—and observed, though there was no need for him to do so, that Maxwell would be entirely unsuitable in this diminished position. The

FMS rulers would leave the federal council, their state councils would be strengthened, and the unfederated states would then agree to come into a united government in which all units would have the same status. Agreeing, the secretary of state proposed a sweetening of this bitter pill by giving Maxwell the headship of the Malay States Information Agency. Before proceeding on leave in 1925 Guillemard was instructed to break the news to Maxwell and to discuss the new arrangements with the rulers and with his senior officers.<sup>35</sup> Swettenham swung into action again, but for once, the C.O. brushed him aside, citing against his frayed arguments the testimony of Sir Ernest Birch, whose long experience in Malaya counterbalanced Swettenham's predictable assertion that Guillemard had been led astray by lack of knowledge.<sup>36</sup> The governor allowed himself a burst of exultation—"I may be a sanguine fool but I expect to romp home"—and he hoped Maxwell would not go mad.<sup>37</sup> This was a bit premature. Maxwell held on for another year, finally retiring in 1926.

The results of Guillemard's long, patient struggle were modest: a certain amount of financial responsibility was given to the state councils. The rulers withdrew from the federal council, where they had been bored, powerless onlookers. The government was committed to further study of ways in which devolution of authority and work could continue so that local autonomy would rise without jeopardizing efficiency and coordination from the center.<sup>38</sup> While there was no change in the title of the chief secretary, relations between Singapore and Kuala Lumpur were greatly improved as the post was taken over by the genial and respected Sir William Peel, who got on well with both Guillemard, to whom he owed his position, and his successor. Whereas Maxwell's vaulting ambition had brought him down, Peel was so rational about the glory of high office that he thought long and hard before agreeing to accept the governorship of Hong Kong four years later.<sup>39</sup> He was not immune to the attractions of power, however, and though he agreed in principle that decentralization was necessary, it was not long before he, too, had reservations about an actual surrender of authority, whether to the high commissioner above him or the residents below. The major difference between Maxwell and Peel was one of personality and character, the latter possessing a keen sense of balance and proportion, and the former verging at times on megalomania.

Peel's ambivalence about policy and personalities found echoes throughout the civil service in the Guillemard years. E. S. Hose, colonial secretary at the time, was Maxwell's oldest friend. They were both from families long resident in Malaya and both entered the service as junior officers in 1891. Maxwell confidently appointed Hose as chairman of the FMS committee that looked into the decentralization question. Yet, both Hose and T. P. Coe, the other administrative officer on the committee, sided with

Guillemard on the need to loosen Kuala Lumpur's hold.<sup>40</sup> Sir Frederick James, a bitter rival of Maxwell's, could be depended on to oppose him. But A. F. Richards (later Sir Arthur and Lord Milverton) felt the same way, though his relations with the chief secretary were normal.<sup>41</sup> Some of the senior residents, such as H. W. Thomson of Perak, had put up with Kuala Lumpur's bureaucratic excesses for so long that they reacted as though by reflex to any sign of relief. This was easier to do from a distance than in the federal council where, under the gaze of the high commissioner and the chief secretary, residents tended to remain silent or to confine themselves to the seconding of motions.<sup>42</sup> Yet even there, senior men ended on Guillemard's side more often than not, partly in the knowledge that the mechanics of devolution would be controlled by them in any case, making policy changes relatively harmless. Maxwell's pro-Malay reputation survived with some, in spite of contrary evidence. W. L. Blythe, his private secretary, went on believing in it to the end, accepting his chief's contention that Malays who sided with the high commissioner in public did not really mean it.<sup>43</sup> The sultan of Perak's talks in London were known about, however, as was Maxwell's rough handling of the rulers. Mahmud bin Mat, a member of the civil service, found Maxwell less than completely sympathetic with him and his fellow Malay officers.<sup>44</sup> Among the British, G. E. (later Sir Geoffrey) Cator was not alone in thinking that overcentralization held Malays back by concentrating so much power in the hands of Maxwell and his senior officers that native administrators did not have much chance of learning the ropes.<sup>45</sup> In their views of policy disagreements, many had difficulty separating issues and people. Guillemard's pomposity, as some saw it, did not go down well.<sup>46</sup> And though they did not see eye to eye with Maxwell on everything, juniors often found him kind and worthy of respect.<sup>47</sup>

Guillemard's term was extended a year beyond the usual limit in order to make sure that Maxwell would depart first. As the C.O. gave thought to a successor during that year and even before, there was a feeling that it would be well to appoint a strong governor with Malayan experience.<sup>48</sup> Excusing themselves from blame in the Guillemard-Maxwell controversy, the office reasoned that it would take a big man of Swettenham's caliber to bridle Kuala Lumpur and keep things quiet. Only one serving governor answered that description—Sir Hugh Clifford, then in Ceylon. There was no doubt that he would be willing. Malaya was the reigning passion of his life, the subject of many books written in the years since his departure in 1902. Though his mental state was not good, London tended to play that down and to emphasize his incomparable knowledge of the country.<sup>49</sup> This came to the fore immediately. On arrival, he went on a tour of Pahang, the state he knew best, and was welcomed as a hero, an almost mythical figure from the dim past.<sup>50</sup> There was great excitement in Kuantan where many remembered him. Malays and Chinese turned out



Plate 15. Sir Hugh Clifford. *Courtesy of Malaysian National Archives.*



in large numbers and contributed money to the official celebration. But Kempe, who was serving in Kuala Lumpur at the time, thought he looked "bent and old."<sup>51</sup> In the federal council he got things muddled, though his still-dominant personality made up for it. His behavior was rather odd at times. J. A. Harvey was loaned to Clifford as an aide when the governor was visiting Kuala Lumpur in 1927, which Harvey considered a great compliment. But it was alarming to be driven about in the governor's car with H. E. at the wheel, roaring straight through busy downtown intersections at fifty miles per hour on the assumption that traffic would stop at the sight of the union jack on the front of the car.<sup>52</sup> Gala receptions were a trial for the private secretaries. On one occasion, Clifford lined up all the ladies and presented kisses and beads to those with the best ankles.<sup>53</sup> Working for a governor who rose at four in the morning could be exhausting.

He was sensible about decentralization, applying the healing balm that London had in mind. As Guillemard's minimal reforms gradually took hold beneath the surface he remained silent. When he did speak out, it was on a high plane of generalization, in words meant to inspire a service that had been divided and disturbed. The British, he said, had a responsibility for the moral and material progress of the country, for reconciling divergent racial interests.<sup>54</sup> Their rule had to be autocratic, there being no alternative. But that was an advantage which, taken together with prosperity, made it possible to exercise the rare impartiality that only true aristocracies are capable of. He was easygoing on the time-honored issues that had caused trouble in the past. When the president of the Straits Settlements Association baited the government at a banquet in Raffles Hotel, Clifford passed it off with a witty reply. He was sure the nationalist party in China would have little success in their attempts to stir up anti-British sentiment in Malaya because the Chinese living there were bourgeois.<sup>55</sup> The educational advances that were made in his time did not involve Clifford greatly. All in all, his brief governorship, lasting less than two years, was unpolitical, a lull between two storms. Some officers remember it, possibly because of its lack of partisan rancor, as a high point in the service's *esprit de corps*.<sup>56</sup> Having one of their own at the head of affairs, one who took great pride in his Malayan antecedents, was reassuring after many years of outsiders and turmoil.

Clifford's precarious health could not stand the demands of office however and the emotional pressure of being back in a place that had meant so much to him in his youth. He retired in 1929. His place was taken in the following year by Sir Cecil Clementi, who had been governor of Hong Kong since 1925. A nephew of Sir Cecil Clementi Smith, governor of the straits in the late 1880s and early 1890s, and the son of a judge in India, he was a St. Paul's and Oxford man with a distinguished academic record.<sup>57</sup> Entering the Hong Kong service in 1899, he learned both

Cantonese and Mandarin, had special service in India, became private secretary to the governor and acting colonial secretary before going on to the colonial secretaryships of British Guiana and Ceylon. While in the former colony he was invited to be vice chancellor of Hong Kong University but declined because of his governor's reluctance to release him. Like Clifford, he wrote many books.

Clementi was tall, handsome and impressive. There was a severity in his demeanor that caused some of his colleagues and subordinates to think of headmasters they had known.<sup>58</sup> Listening to the remarks of men who knew and worked with him, Americans will tend to be reminded of Woodrow Wilson. Though Clementi had a powerful intellect and was much given to reflection, he was as interested in the practical application of ideas as he was in the notions themselves. He was anything but a social animal or a man's man, preferring the privacy of his home and family. Riding and walking were the only sports he enjoyed. Though he was not totally abstemious a glass of sherry was enough before dinner, and there was universal astonishment when he accepted a mug of beer one time at Cameron Highlands. His moral standards were Victorian. Men who had been divorced or whose names were associated with any sort of sexual irregularity could not expect the same consideration from him as could those with unremarkable social records. Sometimes governors who were as withdrawn as Clementi were much helped in keeping up good relations with society by the efforts of wives who enjoyed parties and were skillful at managing crowds. Clementi did not have this advantage. Lady Clementi, though a woman of force and character, was both eccentric and outspoken, as definite in her opinions as her husband was and much less reticent.

The new governor made a good start when he presided over the federal council for the first time. He exchanged compliments with C. W. H. Cochrane, the chief secretary, who had been his classmate as an Eastern cadet and a contemporary at Oxford. He went out of his way to observe that another member of the council, Savage Bailey, a noted lawyer, was an old friend whom he had known at school. "I feel sure," he said, "that our deliberations in this council will be the best and speediest means of bringing us into that intimate relationship of fellow workers which is the safest foundation upon which to build mutual respect and mutual affection."<sup>59</sup> M. B. Shelley, the colonial treasurer, saw that Clementi was prone to gestic, holding the legislative council meeting in Penang instead of Singapore, thus "acting the fairy godmother" to the settlement that had been first historically but had had to play second fiddle for a hundred years.<sup>60</sup> He invested Shelley with the CMG at Government House, emulating the King, rather than holding the ceremony in the Legislative Council as other governors had done.



Plate 16. Sir Cecil Clementi, governor of the Straits Settlements and high commissioner of the Federated Malay States, c. 1932. *Courtesy of Malaysian National Archives.*

Turning his thoughts to matters of policy, Clementi took note of the same dilemma of Malay rights that had concerned his predecessors. The British could not alter the country's form of government in the direction of popular sovereignty without endangering the Malays—to whom they were morally and legally committed—because immigrants were now in a majority. Ormsby-Gore, under secretary of state for the colonies, visited Malaya in Clifford's time and underscored the same point. The prerogative of the rulers was central to everything. Like Guillemard and Maxwell, he saw that Britain's obligations were being honored better in the unfederated states than in the FMS, especially with regard to the training of Malay officers.<sup>61</sup> To Clementi with his deep knowledge of what China had been going through at the hands of foreign exploiters the plight of Malaya's native peoples made a strong appeal. He was influenced, too, by what he had seen in Ceylon, where radical politicians, he thought, were more interested in their own power than in the freedom and welfare of the people. Finally, there was the worldwide slump of the early 1930s. Not even so rich a country as Malaya was unaffected. Her exports of rubber and tin depended on demand in industrial countries that were in deep trouble by the time Clementi arrived in Malaya. He was shocked to discover that the surpluses of earlier years had been depleted. Salaries paid to European officers used up eighty percent of the annual revenue. He therefore proposed to London that the European staff be reduced and that future expenditure be cut down by increasing the proportion of Malay officers in the service.<sup>62</sup> The threat to Malay control posed by agents of the Chinese government and by unrestricted immigration from China and India would be met by strengthening the administrations of the Malay states, holding immigration back, and dealing firmly with Chinese agitators. Like Guillemard, he felt that nothing could be done to upgrade the FMS states and to reassure the unfederated states unless the stranglehold of Kuala Lumpur was broken. The aim was a unified country, with Malays taking more and more responsibility for government.

A number of senior officers supported the governor. Those who had been known for years as pro-Malay were bound to favor his plans for devolution of power from Kuala Lumpur onto state councils and for more Malay officers in the service. Caldecott and Adams were outspoken advocates of Malay rights. The former identified himself early and publicly with Clementi and his policy. It is entirely possible, in fact, that the governor was more influenced by the ideas of such men than they were by his.<sup>63</sup> But Clementi did not find as much support in the C.O. From the autumn of 1930 onward, his suggestions and pleas were greeted with a skepticism that gradually changed to disapproval and finally to alarm and anger over the governor's impulsiveness and persistence. He proposed at first that a series of completely new treaties be made giving full powers to

the rulers and that all European officers be employed by the colony. They would be seconded to the states as needed, in an advisory capacity, on the model of the unfederated states. This raised again all the old questions, most prominently the difficulty of maintaining enough efficiency to assure financial health. Unable to grasp the complexity of administrative arrangements and to see that anomalies would remain no matter what was done, the C.O. went on pointing to legal contradictions. Clementi's unified government would not be a real federation at all because there would be no single legislature with authority over the whole country. How could the sophistication and superior technical competence of the Chinese be ignored? "I never could see that Sir L. Guillemard's decentralization proposals were any more than eye wash," wrote a C.O. official.<sup>64</sup> Sir Samuel Wilson, the permanent undersecretary, urged caution. Clementi would be told to go slowly. Meanwhile, everyone was taking sides again, as they had during Anderson's and Guillemard's governorships. Raja Chulan applauded Clementi's aims in the federal council.<sup>65</sup> Maxwell, from his new base in England, prepared to mount a press campaign and to bring pressure on the C.O., later extending his activities to anti-Clementi propaganda with unofficials. He wrote to a lawyer in Kuala Lumpur who was about to join the federal council, urging him to resist the high commissioner.<sup>66</sup> Chinese spokesmen were inclined to join the opposition because of Clementi's known antipathy to the Kuomintang party in Malaya and his desire to upgrade state councils, bodies in which non-Malays had little influence. Businessmen and the local press would naturally look with disapproval on any scheme that might upset existing trade patterns and tax structures. The colony feared a customs union that would threaten its entrepôt trade. And the FMS, as always, worried about a drain on its rubber and tin revenues.

In August 1931, Clementi convened a *darbar* of the four FMS rulers at Sri Menanti in Negri Sembilan. In the previous year, he had held extensive talks in Singapore with their highnesses on all aspects of his proposed reforms.<sup>67</sup> Now, he made a formal presentation, following it up three months later with a detailed statement in the federal council. The chief secretaryship would be abolished, he explained, but not the federal council. The powers of the state councils would grow, but not at the expense of continued coordination throughout the country by technical departments such as public works, agriculture, mines, education, and medicine. Speaking for the unofficials, Bailey and Egmont Hake voiced caution. Were the rulers really in favor of reform, as his excellency claimed, and was the government willing to grant as much independence to them as they wished? Businessmen were worried that any diminution of centralization would carry with it a lessening of efficiency. Were things moving too quickly, without full discussion beforehand? The undang of Rembau

questioned the high commissioner's notion of semicommercial boards that would look after public services, wondering if these would employ as many Malays as government bodies did. And Chulan, siding with the unofficials for once, urged a slow pace of advance so that the rulers would not be suddenly confronted with *faits accomplis*. The Malays "... may be bland but they are not childlike."<sup>68</sup>

The C.O. did not want to be rushed either. Before Sri Menanti, the new Labor secretary of state, Lord Passfield (Sidney Webb), and his staff had asked some searching questions of Clementi. Would it be retrograde to give powers to rulers who did not now have them? Decentralization sounded all right, rather like what was needed in England. It would be easy to do everything in Whitehall, said Passfield, but localizing was more democratic. Still, the Malay rulers were not progressive. Would devolution be both inefficient and autocratic in its results?<sup>69</sup> The office was not completely convinced by Clementi's assurances. A few days after Sri Menanti, Passfield remonstrated gently with the governor, noting that London had not given approval for anything as yet.<sup>70</sup> Then followed several months of exchanges in which the C.O. grew more and more impatient with Clementi, who seemed unable to see that he was doing anything exceptional. Repeatedly he pointed out that there was nothing new in his moves, Guillemard having had approval for the same things years earlier. When Passfield and his successor, Sir Philip Cunliffe-Lister, got together to compare notes on their respective experiences with Clementi, they saw very clearly that the governor was living in a world of his own making. "It is just like Clementi," exclaimed Passfield.<sup>71</sup> He was talking to himself, hearing what he wanted to hear from his superiors, and dealing in principles when London wanted specifics. Meanwhile, though the C.O. warned him many times, he was going ahead as though London did not exist. State council reform proceeded according to the governor's wishes, and the C.O. heard of it afterward. In remarking that Guillemard, too, wanted to abolish the chief secretaryship, Clementi neglected to add that Guillemard had later changed his mind.

In the same period, Clementi began to feel the blasts of opposition from business in Malaya and its old-guard allies in London. Maxwell wrote bitinglly to the C.O., calling the governor "ignorant and impetuous."<sup>72</sup> He and Swettenham wrote articles and letters to *British Malaya* regularly, as did Marks, the head of the Association of British Malaya.<sup>73</sup> Summaries of press coverage from Malaya appeared in nearly every issue, Clementi's policy being compared, inevitably, with Guillemard's. He was putting the clock back. If the needs of humanity were placed above those of mammon, could any way be found to assure efficient government? When an association was formed in Kuala Lumpur to do in the FMS what the old Straits Settlements Association had long done in the colony, it was plain

that the need to stand up to a dictatorial governor was a prime mover. Clementi's brilliance and good intentions were admitted, but he was widely accused of being out of touch with reality and of failing to consult his unofficials. Lawyers in Malaya, like their colleagues in the C.O., pointed to inconsistencies in the governor's plans. Decentralization was his watchword, yet in some areas he wanted more centralization than before, though in Singapore rather than in Kuala Lumpur.

The prudent Guillemard had also come in for a certain amount of criticism in both the C.O. and the business community. But he had been careful to make no move without prior approval from London. Though he had had to fight Maxwell, the strongest head of the FMS government since Swettenham, he won modest victories by looking to his flanks and taking full advantage of his opposition's rash behavior. Clementi had no trouble with either Cochrane or Caldecott, the chief secretaries of his time. The former was a mild-mannered, agreeable officer, and the latter, a shrewd, strong-willed thruster who happened to agree with much that the governor was aiming at and who knew better than to prejudice his future by making a spectacle of himself as Maxwell had done. In fact, he owed his subsequent governorships in no small part to his success at maintaining a dignified, steady posture as chief secretary, colonial secretary, and officer administering the government when Clementi was on leave. The C.O. could not fail to note the contrast between this and the governor's insubordination. What brought Clementi to grief was not the predictable sound and fury of business and the old guard or the surly foot-dragging of entrenched civil servants, though the former played a part.<sup>74</sup> Rather, it was a gradual draining away of London's confidence caused by his own persistent independence of mind and action.

Their irritation over Clementi's conduct, together with the furor his policy statements had stirred up, persuaded the office that it was time for another visit to Malaya by an official from London who had the rank and authority necessary to bring order. The permanent under secretary, Sir Samuel Wilson, a soldier and former governor of Jamaica, went out for a month at the end of 1932. He recommended the adoption of decentralization as a matter of policy, but stipulated that its implementation should be slow and empirical.<sup>75</sup> Devolution to state councils would take four years. An advisory group would oversee all aspects of the program at every step, taking care that the federal machinery would not be disassembled and the parts discarded until appropriate replacements had been provided. The chief secretaryship would be abolished. Treaty revision was a matter for the future.

The reaction of unofficials in the federal council was favorable. Hake waxed lyrical on the advantages of preserving what was best in Malay civilization while, at the same time, introducing enough modernization so

of policy, except to say that he wanted to learn as much as he could about the country before commenting—an approach that made an excellent impression. The fact that Thomas, over the seven prewar years of his governorship, succeeded in implementing Clementi's plans quietly and without arousing a storm of protest, says much about the importance of diplomacy. Officers serving under him approved, finding the governor straightforward, competent, and anything but Olympian in his ways. He was careful and he followed through on even the smaller points that he had occasion to talk over with his subordinates. If he lacked the gubernatorial presence of Clementi or Guillemard, that was an acceptable price to pay for peace and for the smooth, efficient running of the machine.<sup>87</sup>

His governorship was not without incident. A year before his arrival, trouble began to brew in Selangor over the question of which of the sultan's sons would succeed him. To what extent and to what purpose was British intervention admissible? By the time Thomas reached Malaya, the sultan had already agreed that his eldest son was not suitable, being extravagant, in debt to the government, and generally irresponsible. If there had been agreement among all concerned that one of the other sons was qualified, the matter might have ended there. But the state's strong and prominent resident, T. S. Adams, disagreed with the sultan, who championed the claims of his second son. To Adams, the youth was even less worthy than his older brother. He therefore favored the third son.<sup>88</sup> F. W. Douglas was still in the sultan's entourage. Through him the business community, the press, and the old guard in England soon became involved. Thomas's popularity was not enough to stop the eruption of a minor *cause célèbre* that eventually brought in the King, the cabinet, the C.O., and Swettenham. Yet the governor was masterful. Adams's candidate was made heir apparent. The other sons were compensated appropriately. The sultan and his defenders were appeased through the removal of Adams, who left the country but was consoled with a knighthood and the chief commissionership of Northern Nigeria. As in the case of Clementi's decentralization policy, but with much less fuss, the dictates of governmental efficiency were honored at the same time as tradition and propriety received their courteous due.

In the Selangor case and the Rembau constitutional crisis that followed, the British deferred to Malay sensibilities without permitting interference in the onward march towards modernization. That march went on in the background throughout all the years from Swettenham's governorship to Thomas's, as did the steady gains of Japan in Malaya's trade and the rising importance of America as a buyer of her produce. Though they differed on the pace of advance and on the relative weights of tradition and reform, local autonomy and central coordination, all of the twentieth-century governors recognized that so small a country could not



be kept fragmented forever. All saw that the tight grip of Kuala Lumpur was a bar to eventual unity. Methods differed. Anderson changed the title of the head of the FMS administration, weakened state councils by creating a federal one, and left Kuala Lumpur as strong as ever, perhaps stronger. Guillemard broke Maxwell, but had little else to show for more than seven years of controversy. Clementi lost his job but not the fight, leaving his successor well positioned to do what most people had agreed was necessary but what Clementi's personal qualities made him unfit to accomplish. Clifford was a stop gap. Young and Thomas said little, got on with the job, and were popular. None could do much about the stubborn, historically grounded differences among the separate categories of political units—the Straits Settlements, the FMS, and the unfederated states—or about disparities of talent, inclination, and power among the principal racial groups that coexisted but that did not blend together. Under British referees, they all made their contributions and were kept from resort to arms in the manner of their ancestors. London wanted efficiency, peace, and quiet. For the most part, though the dispatches make it seem otherwise, that is what she and Malaya got. By and large the country prospered and became more Europeanized. Governors and other would-be makers of policy created a considerable stir now and again. But in the aggregate, this was of less moment than the steady, quiet grinding of the civil service mill all across the country. If Malaya was not united, the members of the service were. While governors came and went, they provided an unspectacular, solid continuity year by year, as the social and economic attributes of nationhood came into being around them.

### Notes

1. See A. Wright and T. H. Reid, *The Malay Peninsula* (London: T. F. Unwin, 1912), pp. 343-51. Also F. A. Swettenham, *British Malaya*, London: Allen and Unwin, 1955), pp. 213-17. Asked how much influence the C.O. had on the Government House Policy, Sir John Macpherson replied, "... on the whole they [the C.O.] are very tender." (Interview by Kirk-Greene, 27 Feb. 1968, CRP, 84.) Sir John started as a cadet in Malaya in 1921, went on to the governor generalship of Nigeria, and ended as permanent under secretary of state in the C.O., the only career colonial civil servant to hold that post.

2. 11 Aug. 1896, M.

3. See Sir R. O. Winstedt, "Decentralization in Malaya," *Asiatic Review* 32, 111 (July 1936).

4. To secretary of state, #89, 1897, M.

5. Swettenham to secretary of state, 10 Feb. 1898, 273/245. This private letter followed a conversation between the two when Swettenham was on leave in England.

6. Chai Hon Chan, *The Development of British Malaya 1896-1909* (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1964), pp. 67-69, citing correspondence between Swettenham and Chamberlain in 1902.

7. Peel's memoirs, p. 35. See also Sir Edward Marsh, *A Number of People* (London: Heinemann, 1939), pp. 122-23. Marsh worked under Anderson in the C.O. from 1896 onwards and remembered him as lovable, very Scotch, and good at teaching one how to draft dispatches.

8. Anderson to secretary of state, 14 Nov. 1904, 273/303. And see Stubb's minute, 26 Mar. 1906 on dispatch 15 Feb. 1906, 273/317. The C.O. was against both of these moves.

9. Anderson's suggestion that the resident-generalship be abolished was made earlier. See dispatch, 14 Sept. 1904, 273/303, in which he proposes that the title be changed to lieutenant governor, the incumbent outranking the colonial secretary in Singapore and administering the government in the governor's absence. On the background of the federal council, see Chai, pp. 72-78.

10. See high commissioner to secretary of state, 8 Feb. 1909, 273/349 and minutes by the legal officers, Sir H. Lambert and J. Ridges, and by others, including Stubbs, George Fiddes, and Churchill. See also high commissioner to secretary of state, 27 July 1910, 273/362.

11. He had been in the country only a short time, having come from Cyprus and, in 1902, from Ceylon. He was therefore not entrenched as Swettenham had been or as Sir George Maxwell soon would be. Taylor, known as *ikan kering* (dried fish) because of his small stature, was thus Anderson's creature from the start, being put into the resident-generalship by him in 1905.

12. Enclosure 25, 717/88, 92300. This was a collection of documents sent in Feb. 1932 by Clementi to the secretary of state, showing that his aim of decentralization had a long history. The document specifically referred to here was a letter from W. G. Maxwell, BA Kedah, to Sir John Anderson, 1909, giving details of the opposition of the sultan of Kedah to the idea of joining a federation.

13. J. H. M. Robson, *Records and Recollections 1889-1934* (Kuala Lumpur: Kyle, Palmer and Co., 1934), pp. 104-105, 136-37. And Proceedings of the Federal Council, 1911, B3 and B4.

14. To A. E. Collins of the C.O., 14 Mar. 1923, 717/32.

15. Wright and Reid, p. 228; Robson, pp. 21-22; R. O. Winstedt, *Start from Alif* (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1969), p. 164; J. V. G. Mills to H. P. Bryson, 6 Aug. 1969. Young was the son of a soldier. His father-in-law was a marquess. He was educated at Rugby and Sandhurst. Another reason for Young's success was that he left the running of the straits government to the very able Wilkinson.

16. Proceedings, 9 July 1913, remarks of F. Belfield, legal adviser. Brockman pointed to a case in which speculators tried to acquire 645 Malay holdings in Province Wellesley in order to float a land company. The Netherlands Indies already had laws protecting natives.

17. See I. F. Nicolson and C. A. Hughes, "A Provinces of Proconsuls: British Colonial Governors 1900-1960," *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, IV (Oct. 1975).

18. L. Guillemard, *Trivial Fond Records* (London: Methuen, 1937) p. 76.

19. *Ibid.*, p. 78.

20. Minute by Collins, 4 Sept. 1920, 717/3. Also Grindle to Maxwell, 25 Sept. 1920, and Collins to Grindle, 23 Oct. 1920, 717/3. James was also in London at the time.

21. Minute by Collins, 10 Nov. 1920 on Maxwell's memorandum, "Notes on Policy in Respect of the Unfederated Malay States," Oxford, 15 Oct. 1920, 717/10. And James to Collins, 21 Nov. 1920, 717/10.

22. Governor to secretary of state, 8 Nov. 1920, 717/5. And see Guillemard, *Trivial*, p. 109. Also Proceedings of the Federal Council, 1925, B142 ff., and M. B. Shelley to his daughter, 10 Mar. 1926. Shelley was acting director of education under Guillemard at the time.

23. Minute by Collins, 9 Dec. 1920, 717/10.

24. Winstedt, *Alif*, p. 165.

25. Shelley to his daughter, 20 Apr. 1927, after a talk with Guillemard at the latter's farewell dinner.

26. Winstedt, *Alif*, p. 165. See also Miss Newton's notes on Guillemard, to author, 28 Sept. 1974. One must be cautious about Winstedt's notoriously abrasive judgments. He may have known that Guillemard did not think that highly of his own administrative ability, being joined in this by some of the men who served under Winstedt when he was G. A. in Johore. See G. Hawkins to H. P. Bryson, 12 June and 14 Dec. 1969. But in this case, his views are heavily supported by other evidence.

27. See note 12 above.

28. 19 Dec. 1921, 717/14.

29. Governor to secretary of state (private letter to duke of Devonshire), 8 May 1923, 717/20. Also 17 Dec. 1920, 717/5.

30. 2 Apr. 1922, 717/20. Also acting governor to secretary of state, 27 June 1922, 717/20. J. A. S. Jennings, editor of the *Straits Times*, wrote to Churchill, under secretary of state, taking the same line, 10 May 1922, 717/25. In its issue of 27 Jan. 1923, the paper hit Guillemard for being an outsider with no knowledge of the Malays. See also R. C. M. Kindersley of Kajang estates to under secretary of state, 28 May 1925, 717/47.

31. See Peel's recollections, pp. 81-83, and Robson, p. 119 ff.

32. See file 300, 1921, M. In retrospect, Robson (p. 153) approved of Guillemard who added more unofficials to the federal council, making their numbers equal to those of the officials. See governor to secretary of state, 30 Nov. 1923, 717/30.

33. The C.O. had to reassure Guillemard on one occasion that Swettenham was not "out for [his] blood," a somewhat disingenuous line to take (minutes on discussions with Guillemard in the C.O., 7 June 1922, 273/520). See also Robson, "Recollections and Reflections," *British Malaya*, Nov. 1926. Also Swettenham to O. Marks, 27 Oct. 1925, RCS, and to the editor of the *Malay Mail*, 6 Oct. 1925, RCS. There were exceptions, however. In 1925, Sir Ernest Birch criticized Maxwell on overcentralization (see Loh Fook Seng, "Malay Precedence and The Federal Formula in the Federated Malay States," *JMBRAS*, 45 (1973): 41.

34. Notes on G. E. J. Gent's talks with Sultan Iskandar, 2 Aug. 1924, 717/39. See also governor to secretary of state, 1 Oct. 1924, 717/34, and Proceedings of the

Federal Council, 25 Nov. 1924, and sultan's letter to Collins, 13 Aug. 1924, 717/39, and Collins to Sir H. Lambert, in Sultan to Collins, 13 Aug. 1924, 717/39.

35. Guillemard to secretary of state, 1 Oct. 1924, 717/34, 22 Oct. 1924; telegram, 29 Dec. 1924, 273/526; Ormsby-Gore to Amery, 24 Feb. 1925, 273/526; Amery to Guillemard, 25 Feb. 1925, 273/526. Maxwell had lost the C.O.'s support even earlier. See Collins's minute, 4 Mar. 1923, 717/28.

36. Swettenham to Sir S. Wilson, 1 Nov. 1925, 717/48, and Collins to Birch, 8 Dec. 1925, 717/48.

37. To Collins, 10 Dec. 1925, 717/52.

38. Proceedings of the Federal Council, 1926, B55. Also text of the agreement for the reconstitution of the federal council, dispatch 295, 13 May 1927, 717/55/7457.

39. Peel's recollections, pp. 138-39.

40. Coe's recollections, RCS. Also sultan of Perak to Collins, note 34 above. And report of Decentralization Committee, Proceedings of the Federal Council, 1924, M.

41. Some officers considered Maxwell, the Malay expert, as having been more theoretical than Guillemard. Hawkins notes that Maxwell had copies of Lord Lugard's Dual Mandate placed in all district offices. (Interview, Penang, Sept. 1970.)

42. J. W. Simmons, resident Selangor, remarked in the federal council, 1932, (Proceedings, B21), "I have never made a speech except on those few and mournful occasions when I had to come to this council for some more money that I had forgotten to estimate for."

43. To author, 29 June 1974. Blythe said that the memorandum written by Maxwell to this effect so infuriated Guillemard that he summoned Maxwell to Singapore immediately for a dressing down. Presumably, the memorandum perished when Peel had his private secretary, J. A. Harvey, burn Maxwell's papers in 1926. (Harvey to author, 18 May 1975 and H. G. Turner to author, 14 Apr. 1975.)

44. See Mahmud's autobiography, M., 221 ff. I thank the late Sir Mahmud's daughter-in-law, Mrs. R. Mokhtar, for allowing me to consult the autobiography.

45. Interview, 25 Sept. 1970. Bryson, on the other hand, pointed out (to J. de V. Allen, 14 Mar. 1969) that a loosening up of the whole country might not have been in Malaya's interests because it could have exposed the Malays to commercial exploitation from the straits.

46. He once reproved Kempe for leaving church before the end of the service (diary, 1927, p. 92). See also Cator to Bryson, 17 Apr. 1969, and Bryson to David Gray, 17 Feb. 1976.

47. Jarrett to author, 24 Mar. 1976. And see his notes to Bryson, 2 May 1969.

48. Collins's minute, note 34 above.

49. There was also the matter of pensions. Clifford's successor in Nigeria, Thomson, was sent on to Ceylon though he was known to be very ill, because he needed further service to qualify for a pension. He died in Ceylon. On Clifford's cyclical insanity, I am indebted to the late Harold Ingrams who knew Clifford well and who saw him often in the C.O. in these years, and to Sir John Macpherson, who had similar knowledge.

50. Autobiography of Mahmud bin Mat, p. 289. Mahmud was present when Clifford reached Pahang.

51. Kempe's diary, 1927, p. 109 ff. Kempe was clerk to the federal council and worked closely with Clifford. Kempe thought Clifford's Malay had faded greatly, though Mahmud bin Mat said he spoke well and still wrote a beautiful Jawi hand.

52. Notes to Bryson, 15 Apr. 1970.

53. Shelley to his daughter, 8 June 1927. And see Purcell, *Memoirs of a Malayan Official* (London: Cassell, 1965), pp. 274-75.

54. Proceedings of the Federal Council, 1927, B108 ff.

55. To the secretary of state, 31 Aug. 1927, 717/56.

56. Clifford's presence was "a tonic to the MCS." (John Falconer, notes to Bryson, 3 Oct. 1969.)

57. Clementi took a first in classical moderations and a second in *Literae Humaniores*. He won the chancellor's Latin essay prize, and honorable mention for the Ireland, Craven, and Hereford prizes. He held a demyship at Magdalen and was a Sanskrit scholar. The offer of the vice chancellorship of Hong Kong University is discussed in Sir Claud Severn's letter of 3 Sept. 1918 to the Foreign Office, CRP. Severn, formerly of the Malayan service, was colonial secretary, Hong Kong, at the time.

58. For a detailed description of Clementi and an account of his personal style and posture, I am indebted to the late Charles Corry, who served him as private secretary (to author, 29 Apr. 1974). In one of our talks in London, Corry said Clementi reminded one of a cardinal.

59. Proceedings, 1930, opening remarks. Clementi also noted that the legal adviser, W. S. Gibson, and he had studied Chinese together at the *yamen* in Canton.

60. To his daughter, 8 July 1930. Shelley was amused by this. He thought Clementi delightful and had great respect for him.

61. Cmd. 3235, *Report of the Rt. Hon. W. G. A. Ormsby-Gore on His Visit to Malaya, Ceylon and Java in the Year 1928*.

62. File, 16 Mar. 1931, 717/76.

63. See Caldecott's letter, "The Pros and Cons of Decentralization," *British Malaya*, Sept. 1932, p. 119. Caldecott was acting resident Perak when Clementi arrived. During Clementi's governorship, he was resident Selangor, acting chief secretary, and finally colonial secretary before going on to the governorship of Hong Kong in 1935. I am indebted to H. G. Turner and C. H. Whitton for most interesting exchanges on the question of the influence of senior MCS officers on Clementi.

64. Minute by Ellis, 25 Nov. 1930, file 16 Mar. 1931, 717/76.

65. Proceedings, 1931, B124. And see the remarks of the undang of Rembau, B129.

66. E. D. Shearn, interview, London, 19 May 1974, and subsequent correspondence. I also learned much in talks with the late Mr. Egmont Hake, a long-time member of the federal council. See his remarks, Proceedings, 1931, B128-9.

67. Notes on the 1930 durbar, Singapore, 273/568/7428, n.d. The Sri Menanti speech is in *British Malaya*, Oct. 1931, p. 163 ff. See also Proceedings of the Federal Council, 1931, C502 ff. and B96 ff.

68. Proceedings, 1932, B15.

69. C.O. conference notes, 15 May 1931, 717/80.

70. 24 Aug. 1931, 717/80.

71. To Cunliffe-Lister, 25 Feb. 1932, 717/88. "It really is amazing that these proposals come forward without apparently any discussion..." (Handwritten note by Cunliffe-Lister, 1 July 1932 on minutes of C.O. meeting, 14 Apr. 1932, 273/583.) Clementi told his private secretary, Corry, that if he ever rose to a governorship, he, Clementi, hoped he would have a more sympathetic C.O. to deal with than Clementi had. (Bryson to author, 29 Jan. 1976, reporting Corry's account.) On the C.O.'s dislike of impulsive governors, see Clifford, *Bushwhacking*, [New York: Harper, 1929], p. 81.

72. To under secretary of state, 6 Feb. 1932, 717/88. See also his letter, "The Alleged Decentralization Policy," *British Malaya*, July 1932, pp. 66-67, and letter from O. Marks, *ibid.* Another letter from Maxwell appeared in the issue of Sept. 1932.

73. Swettenham's article, "The Legal Status of the Malay States," is in the Jan. 1932 issue. A letter from Marks to the C.O. appeared in the July 1932 issue. At the time, Marks was secretary of the Association of British Malaya in London, having been in the MCS 1891-1921.

74. Governor to secretary of state, 4 Nov. 1935, 717/112; see especially the minutes of Sir Edward Gent and others on this dispatch, discussing the activities of Swettenham and the Association of British Malaya, in relation to Clementi's downfall. It is clear that the office was well accustomed to the clamor of the old guard and especially Swettenham as its "principal promoter." They did not allow themselves to be influenced unduly. Gent accompanied Wilson on his visit to Malaya and was acquainted with all the problems.

75. Governor to secretary of state, 9 June 1933, 717/97. See Cmd. 4276, *Report of Brig. Sir Samuel Wilson, Permanent Under Secretary of State for the Colonies, on His Visit to Malaya, 1932, 1933*. I have learned much from a paper, "Decentralization," by H. G. Turner, sent to author with his letter of 28 Jan. 1975.

76. Howell to Caldecott, officer administering the government, 26 Apr. 1934, 717/103.

77. It is certain that the C.O. had no intention of allowing Clementi to finish his term of office. Caldecott was instructed to excise the offensive reference to the C.O. in the printed minutes of the durbar. By summer, a new governor had been selected. Health was the reason given for Clementi's early retirement. I thank Dr. J. de V. Allen for information from the Clementi papers which he examined and which were not available to author. See also Allen to Bryson, 3 Dec. 1964.

78. I have benefited from talks and correspondence with A. V. Aston, W. C. S. Corry, and R. J. Curtis, all private secretaries or ADCs to Clementi, and with C. W. Dawson who was in the Singapore secretariat at the time. Bryson, secretary to resident Negri Sembilan, was also helpful.

79. To Clementi, file 2263, 1931, M., sent to all FMS state governments for comment. With the creation of the Malayan Establishment Office in Clementi's time, residents were consulted directly on postings, not through Kuala Lumpur.

80. To Bryson, 2 Apr. 1969. And see the recollections of T. P. Coe, RCS.

81. To Bryson, 18 Apr. 1970.

82. One resident, who need not be named, said in Clementi's time that the only reason he would like to go up in an airplane was so that he could spit on Government House. Among those who have provided examples of anti-Clementi sentiments were Sheppard, H. G. Turner, Jarrett, David Gray, and Bryson. See also Shelley's letters and Purcell, *Memoirs*, p. 300.

83. To author, 17 Apr. 1974. The other members of the group were C. H. Whitton, David Gray, L. R. F. Earl, R. H. Oakeley, and G. W. Davis. Among those who felt similarly about Clementi were Sir William Goode, Sir Robert Black (one of Clementi's private secretaries), Hayward, J. M. Brander, and Cunyngham-Brown. See also Jones, *Public Administration in Malaya* (London: Oxford University Press, 1953).

84. Minutes on decentralization advisory council, 27 Mar. 1934, 717/102, minute by Gent, 2 July 1934.

85. H. G. Turner's memoirs, p. 245.

86. See *British Malaya*, Jan. 1935, p. 202, on his opening address in the Legislative Council, and June 1936 on his speech before the Association of British Malaya in London, with Swettenham present.

87. See Bryson to David Gray, 17 Feb. 1976; Shelley to his daughter 7 Feb. 1935; Kempe's diary, 1936, p. 174. See also Thomas's comments on circular 443, 1935, controller of labor et al., M.

88. See governor to secretary of state, 19 June 1933, 717/100, and 4 Nov. 1935, 717/112, with minutes by Gent and others. Also Adams's memorandum, 9 July 1936, 717/117; governor to secretary of state, 14 Nov. 1936, 717/118; and *British Malaya*, July 1935, p. 81; Sept. 1936, pp. 124-25; Dec. 1936, p. 198; Jan. 1937, p. 220; and Mar. 1937, p. 265.

IT WAS a different empire that emerged from the war in 1918, mature, exhausted, less sure of itself than its Victorian predecessor had been, and more inclined to take an introspective, conservative view. Even so notorious a free trader as Winston Churchill, who became secretary of state for the colonies in 1921, found himself obliged to urge a narrow mercantilism on his governors—a line that went against the spirit that had built Malaya and that was contrary to the faith of his own exuberant, Liberal past.<sup>1</sup> Lamenting the mood of postwar England, Milner remarked on a lack of adventurousness and patriotism in the younger generation, an inclination to go into business careers rather than to accept the uncertainties and lower material rewards of government service.<sup>2</sup> And in Malaya, senior officers were apt to observe that the brave frontier days had given way to a time of bureaucrats who had only to tread the easy paths so laboriously made by the sweat of their hardier forebears. Cunyngnam-Brown divided the civil service into three historical groups: the pioneers of the time from Pangkor to the turn of the century, the consolidators who followed them, and, finally, his own generation, who were mere polishers.<sup>3</sup> If the distinction was a bit severe on interwar recruits, it was not to be denied that the atmosphere had become somewhat sedate and that work proceeded in well-worn grooves.

Guillemand, the first postwar governor, was favorably impressed with the services as he found them, but he thought certain changes were needed.<sup>4</sup> The separation into straits and FMS cadres was outmoded and inefficient. It was unfair to make straits officers pay income tax when their brothers in the FMS did not. Salaries wanted raising everywhere, not least because natives would find it hard to respect men whose way of living seemed to suffer by comparison with that of other Europeans. In particular, he thought that cadets ought to be selected by interview and careful investigation into background and character. Written examinations could not identify the desired qualities for work that involved human relations as well as ordinary office duties. "Although myself a product of the competitive system," he wrote, "I am not convinced that it secures the best results."<sup>5</sup> A second advantage of recruitment by interview was that more Malays could enter that way.



Some of these changes would take time. Meanwhile, there was one step that could be taken fairly easily and with measurable improvement in morale. In 1920, the governor got Milner's approval for adopting the name "Malayan Civil Service" to cover all officers of the straits and FMS administrations regardless of the terms and procedures of their original appointments.<sup>6</sup> This had long been desired as a means of bringing the Malayan services a recognition and prestige comparable to that of the empire's leading overseas corps, the Indian Civil Service. Officers themselves had wanted it. So had their friends among the unofficials and the business community generally. Since federation, the name had been used occasionally and informally. From 1921 onwards, the initials MCS were increasingly used after officers' names, and the designation began to appear in official documents. During his governorship, Clifford made a point of placing MCS after his name, ahead of his GCMG and other honors, to emphasize the importance he attached to esprit de corps and his own pride in having rejoined his original service after a long absence. A single-volume civil list replaced the separate straits and FMS ones. The combined service was regraded, and an all-Malaya standing committee was appointed to deal with staffing. Guillemard succeeded in getting salaries raised—an act that brought him a good deal of criticism later on and a reputation for profligacy—and in defending the MCS from charges that it was too big. The latter was of long standing. Critics in London and in business circles pointed to the heavy burden of taxation needed to support services that were considerably larger than most other colonies had. Per capita of population, Malaya's were far larger than India's. Defenders, including Swettenham, answered that Malaya's revenues were greater due to export duties on her extraordinarily impressive shipments of rubber and tin, and that salaries actually used up a smaller percentage of revenues in Malaya than in India. The country's relatively advanced economy and society put a heavier work load on officers. In the light of all this it could be argued that the MCS was not big enough.<sup>7</sup>

For several years immediately following the war, examination recruitment of the usual type was set aside. Instead, applicants took a much shorter and less onerous written test and were interviewed. The verbal part carried more weight than the written one in determining an applicant's suitability, the aim being to recognize war service by giving demobilized officers priority of access. Since many had had to forego university education and since all were far removed from formal studies at any level, it would not be fair to subject them to the ordeal that prewar candidates had prepared for at university or at a crammer's or both. Losses due to normal attrition and to casualties in the war had created unusual needs. The result of the two factors operating together—the desire to accommodate veterans and the need for more recruits than usual—was

considerable overstaffing by 1922, when it was decided to resume the prewar selection system.<sup>8</sup>

Another effect of taking ex-soldiers was a reopening of the classical question that had exercised nineteenth-century residents and governors: which system of recruitment was better, one that tapped the same body of applicants which supplied the home civil service and the ICS, all of them sitting the annual examinations in Burlington Gardens, or the method of interviews and investigation of backgrounds and schooling that was used for the African colonies? After three years' experience of waiving the former and using a variant of the latter the question was not academic. Sir Edward Brockman, an MCS officer then in charge of the Malay States Information Agency, knew from his experience on the Civil Service Commission's interview board that many applicants in the postwar stream had been brainwashed against Malaya.<sup>9</sup> Its reputation as the least desirable choice in the whole range from home civil through ICS to Eastern cadetships continued to filter back to schools and universities even when salary revisions in Malaya and the decline of career prospects in India had made that reputation undeserved. Brockman thought a campaign ought to be mounted to correct this and Collins in the C.O. agreed. He discussed the matter with his colleague Major R. D. Furse, who for several years had conducted exactly the sort of recruitment work Collins wanted—visiting public schools and Oxford and Cambridge colleges to drum up interest in the African colonies. Furse was more than willing to extend this system to Malaya and was sure that he could counteract the unfavorable publicity, having come upon it himself and knowing that its baselessness could be exposed in talks with schoolmasters and dons.

During the next few years, the feeling persisted in the C.O. that businesses were draining off many of the best university men—exactly the sort who would have entered government careers before—and that others were going to Africa in order to avoid examinations. Furse and the under secretary, Ormsby-Gore, both visited Malaya in 1928. They came away more than ever convinced that examinations were discouraging young men of the desired kind and that some of those who did pass and came to Malaya, conversely, were of a mental stamp that was unsuited to work among peoples of tropical countries.<sup>10</sup> Furse later wrote that he had detected a certain mandarin quality and complacency in the MCS, an intellectual superiority feeling that reminded him unpleasantly of Whitehall.<sup>11</sup> Neither was especially convincing in fact, partly because each took a pronounced and preconceived bias to the task of appraising the MCS on its home ground. Both had the traditional aristocratic preference for intuition in judging human beings and a suspicion of academic abstractions and of those who got ahead by mastering them. Moreover, it is to be doubted that their study was more than a once-over-lightly, quick, spotty

and superficial.<sup>12</sup> However that may be, opposition to change was strong enough in the Far Eastern Department of the C.O. to prevent abandonment of examinations at this stage. In that office, the mystique of the Eastern cadetships was still enough to withstand questioning from above and, a few years earlier, from a governor who was the embodiment of the successful examination wallah.

What brought change was unmistakable evidence over the years that examinations were unpopular with the Oxford and Cambridge undergraduates whom the C.O. wanted to attract. Visits by MCS officers to those universities and to others left no room for doubt.<sup>13</sup> The 1930 governors' conference opposed examinations and called for a system that, at the very least, combined the virtues of written tests and personal interviews. In the same year, more ominously from the point of view of those who favored examinations, a high-level committee chaired by the head of the home civil service, Sir Warren Fisher, gave its blessing indirectly to Furse's system by endorsing his selection criteria and noting that there was "no calculus by which these endowments can be assessed."<sup>14</sup> For several years, the C.O. and the committees that met during the governors' conferences had struggled with the question of unifying the far-flung, autonomous services that ran the colonies. Real unity on the French model proved elusive, largely for financial reasons. But it was felt that at least London could bring a basic uniformity to the administrative cadres by establishing a common system of recruitment in England and by taking other steps, such as instituting preliminary training courses that all recruits would take regardless of their respective destinations. Since the Eastern cadetship dependencies were the only eccentric units as regards method of appointment and since their system had been found undesirable in the eyes of candidates, the secretary of state brought them into line with the others as of the summer of 1932.

The timing was opportune in that recruitment had to be cut back drastically in these years anyhow because of the slump. Savings had been effected through retrenchment and through the reclassification of certain junior posts that would be reserved from then on for Malay officers. This too had the effect of temporarily de-emphasizing the whole subject of recruiting Europeans. Nevertheless, there was bound to be continuing discussion of pros and cons, if only because so much had been made—and for such a long time—of the lofty standards by which applicants for the MCS had been judged. Clementi, the governor of the time, strongly disapproved of the change and was only partly reconciled when London agreed to his proposal that no applicant be accepted in future unless he had at least a second-class honors degree. Speaking for the unofficials in the federal council, Savage Bailey agreed. The old system had produced "the finest type of officer in the empire."<sup>15</sup> He was worried by the news that

the administrative services of the colonies had been officially unified, which would presumably mean that officers would become interchangeable parts, subject to transfer from one area of the world to another. If this took place, what would happen to that vital human sympathy and close local knowledge that allowed European officers and native peoples to work together in mutual understanding and respect? Some members of the MCS felt that the innovation simply reflected C.O. jealousy of the civil service commissioners and a desire to get the whole selection mechanism into their own hands.<sup>16</sup> Would the new procedure swamp the MCS with "rugger blues and governors' nephews"?<sup>17</sup>

Others thought there was something to be said for the new methods. J. M. Barron, though he had come in by examination, considered that system only moderately successful.<sup>18</sup> Many who had done well on their papers proved mediocre at administrative work later on, while everyone knew of men who had done poorly in school or university and then gone on to brilliant careers in government or business. The magazine *British Malaya*, always a reflector of the views of what might be called the business-civil service establishment, favored the change as an improvement by means of which Malaya would fall into step with the rest of the colonial empire where selection by interview had proven its worth.<sup>19</sup> Interviews would identify both mental qualities and character, the latter being difficult, if not impossible, to demonstrate on written tests. To this, H. A. L. Luckham, a 1928 cadet, added that in fact the civil service commissioners did conduct interviews as well as written examinations, all candidates being marked on both.<sup>20</sup> These were not as systematic as those of the C.O., nor were they accompanied by extensive personal inquiries into family background and educational performance, social, athletic, and academic. In any case, could it be said with certainty that there was a correlation between method of entry and career success? Malaya had had a wide variety of systems since 1867. Officers of long experience, such as Sir George Maxwell, could see both sides. If good scholars did not always make good administrators, the 1896 to 1914 in-take, all of whom, unlike himself, were examination men, were a "good average lot," very like the patronage appointees who had preceded them.<sup>21</sup>

As for the other innovations of the 1930s—training courses and the formal proclamation of service unity throughout the empire—the effect cannot be said to have been very great. There was a general feeling that language instruction should start in England as part of the one-year introductory course that all colonial service recruits took at either Oxford or Cambridge. Even old-timers like Clifford who had learned everything on the job spoke in favor of maximum advanced preparation.<sup>22</sup> Recruits themselves often had doubts about the ultimate value of some lectures, thinking that there was no substitute for practical experience and that

there was likely to be a hothouse quality to Oxbridge in the best of times. It was obvious that men bound for Africa stood to get more than MCS cadets from courses on surveying, field engineering, geography, and medicine. The latter should take Malayan law and colonial regulations instead, together with anthropology and economics courses aimed at Malayan conditions. "Above all," wrote one officer after nine years in Malaya "get someone really good to teach the cadets," such as an MCS man on leave.<sup>23</sup> He added a whimsical aside: what he himself had enjoyed most about the course was the leisure it gave him to read whatever he liked after the rigor of his trips.

Unity remained largely a paper thing. In the C.O. lawyers and permanent officials debated fine points, such as whether or not an MCS man, being subject to colonial regulations in the Straits Settlements and also to the general orders of the FMS, could be considered a member of a wider colonial service. Transfers to other colonies had always been possible and had often been arranged by means of a new contract with another colonial government. But in fact, MCS officers could not be sent elsewhere if they did not wish it. Most did not, and, for them, the MCS's legal incorporation into something called the colonial service remained an abstraction.

During the average year in the 1920s and 1930s, the MCS totaled some 200 men. A glance at their profile reveals a group that was representative of what may be termed the "public-service class" of Britain.<sup>24</sup> Most were the sons of clergymen, army officers, doctors, members of overseas civil services, schoolmasters, and lawyers, with rather fewer coming from monied or business families. The big majority had been to public schools. Oxford and Cambridge claimed about three quarters, with Trinity College Dublin, the Scottish universities, and London trailing behind, followed by a scattering from Sandhurst and redbrick and a handful who had gone to war instead of taking up their scholarships in Oxbridge colleges. In 1939, there were twenty-two Malay officers out of a total of 184. Of the 162 British, 101 were in the Malay stream, 33, in the Chinese Protectorate, and 28 in the Labor Department.

Though times had changed in many respects and Britain was not the same place she had been earlier there remained much similarity in motivation between the interwar in-take and their precursors of the years before 1914. As before, there were some who ended in Malaya for lack of anything better. H. C. (later Sir Harold) Willan would have liked to stay in England, but as a recently demobilized officer with no prospects, he could not afford to pass up a sure thing.<sup>25</sup> Bryson, also just out of uniform and casting about for something to do, was not attracted to the idea of going back to university and was bored by the thought of the family linen business in Ulster. While the notion of serving native races in the tropics was beyond him at that point, "a free and easy life in different surround-

ings" did appeal.<sup>26</sup> An exception to many rules was T. P. Cromwell. The grandson of factory workers and the son of a manager of a small soap works, he had done well in the Bradford City Corporation Secondary School. He had won a scholarship at Cambridge and taken a first in the modern language tripos and a second in English.<sup>27</sup> His year, 1930, was one of the worst for finding jobs in Malaya, though completely unknown territory, offered security, further language study, and perhaps some interesting work at a time when nothing was to be had in England. Two years earlier, Norman Ward, also from Bradford where he attended the grammar school before going on to Queen's Oxford, was offered a poorly paid job with Lloyd's Bank. He toyed with the idea, put forward by his tutor, of going to Cairo University as a lecturer, and also thought of becoming an insurance actuary. Finally, a friend who wanted to enter the ICS suggested the civil service examinations, in which he did so badly that he was astonished to be offered Malaya.<sup>28</sup> C. H. Whitton, on the other hand, came from the sort of background that made some kind of public service a logical aim. The home civil would have been nice, but he did not place high enough and he sailed for the East (about which he knew nothing) in the thought that one must "accept the race that is set before us."<sup>29</sup> Having taken a first in history at Oxford, R. N. Turner naturally thought of a fellowship in one of the colleges. None was immediately available in the early 1930s, however, and he could not afford to hang about. His high academic standing gave him entree to the C.O., where he chose Malaya over Africa.<sup>30</sup>

At the other extreme were men who knew exactly what they wanted. A. B. Cobden-Ramsay had a father and an uncle in the ICS.<sup>31</sup> While no one would have advised going to India in 1927, Malaya offered a comparable career. To J. M. Brander, also the son of an ICS officer, an Easter cadetship was the obvious objective.<sup>32</sup> His father had always urged him to opt for a life of adventure and interest, having loved his own years in India. The consular service was considered too soft, and Africa was not highly regarded. J. F. Hannington, the son and grandson of ICS men, wanted India despite the known risk or, failing that, the home civil or the diplomatic.<sup>33</sup> Malaya was very much a last resort. R. N. Broome, another cadet with an Indian background, was indifferent to Malaya. "I had never heard of [it] at the time and went for the home civil, India and Ceylon in that order."<sup>34</sup> He nearly got Ceylon because the man above him on the list, who eventually did choose that colony, seemed about to be medically disqualified. But in the end, the man's somewhat delicate problem was solved, and Broome went to Malaya.<sup>35</sup> On the other hand, W. A. C. (later Sir William) Goode paid Malaya the supreme compliment of choosing it over the home civil. His father, Sir Richard, was in the service of Rhodesia and wanted him to have a career in the colonies, while his uncle, Sir

William, urged that he follow him to Whitehall. Offered both the home civil and Malaya because of his high marks on the examinations he thought deeply about what he really wanted to do with his life—a ponderation that most did not have to indulge in, much as they would have liked it.<sup>36</sup> After much agonizing over whether he could get into the C. O. rather than the inland revenue and if, once there, he could arrange an overseas posting, he did the common-sense thing and joined the MCS.

Some had very special reasons for wanting a colonial career or at least a general attraction to it, whether or not this was backed by particular knowledge. J. S. (later Sir John) Macpherson had read Conrad and knew about Stamford Raffles. He had friends in the ICS and picked Malaya after war service because he was told that India was no longer feasible.<sup>37</sup> A professor of geography at Liverpool University convinced W. L. Blythe that life in Malaya would suit him perfectly.<sup>38</sup> As a schoolboy at George Watson's, R. B. (later Sir Robert) Black learned of the tradition, dating back to Henry Dundas, of recruiting Scots for John Company and even before his father had implanted in him an absorbing interest in the expansion of Britain from the seventeenth century onwards.<sup>39</sup> It was also from an enthusiastic father that E. C. G. Barrett got the idea of going abroad, though in his case the information came not from books but from enthralling letters written home to a young son by an officer of the Indian Political Service posted to such exotic-sounding places as Aden, Muscat, Bahrain, Kuwait, Bushire, and Meshed, some of which he himself remembered from early childhood.<sup>40</sup>

For others—perhaps, the majority—a specific impetus was not necessary. Growing up in England, the world's most imperially minded and imperially experienced country in modern times, one could not help noticing alien influences in all sorts of otherwise domestic institutions. At Marlborough, boys were vaguely aware of a tradition of public service stemming from the school's beginnings as a place for the sons of Anglican clergymen and, more specifically, of overseas service, a later and more tangible tradition.<sup>41</sup> J. G. Black's father, a schoolmaster who was also a classical and Oriental scholar, had his son thinking about a civil service career in childhood; no other aim was even considered.<sup>42</sup> By the same token, one could not be at Brasenose College, Oxford, in the twenties and thirties without being conscious of the imperial interests of its principal, Dr. W. T. S. Stallybrass, whose casual suggestion pointed C. W. Dawson in the direction of Malaya.<sup>43</sup> At Balliol, the college chosen for the future sultan of Perak, one was likely to be exposed to Kenneth Bell or Sir Reginald Coupland, both lecturing on imperial subjects. Talk of India and the colonies was common. Furse and other Balliol men from the C. O. and from the overseas territories turned up regularly.<sup>44</sup> Cambridge, though its preoccupations with imperial affairs were not on quite the same scale as

Oxford's historically, did provide its undergraduates with a similar background and atmosphere. It was there that H. G. Turner heard a lecture by an MCS officer on leave. This, and the advice of a friend in the ICS, caused him to think again about trying for India.<sup>45</sup> Purcell had no thought of a career outside England and, in fact, would have liked to stay in Cambridge, whose charms remained irresistible all his life. But the very cosmopolitanism that drew him to the place also opened up other vistas and gave him the perspective he needed for a rational choice when the time came.<sup>46</sup> It was people he met at Cambridge who persuaded J. A. Harvey to abandon earlier plans for a teaching career and opt instead for service abroad.<sup>47</sup>

The service that interwar recruits found on arrival in some ways resembled comparable organizations in England more than it did the nineteenth-century cadres that preceded it. There had always been expressions of discontent with conditions of service: some made individually; others by deputations that waited on the governor or memorialized the secretary of state. By the twenties there was a standing MCS committee, with branches in the main centers, whose concerns and work amounted to administrative trade unionism.<sup>48</sup> The group that called upon Guillemard in 1920 spoke for the whole service, powerfully and in detail. Salaries, which they compared with those of the ICS and other overseas corps, were grossly inadequate. The governor listened sympathetically to a point-by-point presentation of the case for reform or amelioration in every category, including pensions, allowances, widows' and orphans' fund, and leaves and passages. He telegraphed Milner that the cost of living had gone up 50 percent since 1918 and that relief was "absolutely necessary."<sup>49</sup> Raises did come. Later, Guillemard was to be criticized for squandering the large surplus that he had inherited and leaving the country in debt. More would be heard later on about inadequate pay. But there can be no doubt that, in the Guillemard years, the MCS became one of the best-paid services in the empire, so much so that senior officers were reluctant to accept higher-ranking posts elsewhere. This did not come about easily, nor was the C.O. ever entirely reconciled to it. When immediately after salaries had been raised, the MCS association pushed for better pensions, the under secretary of state protested against the habit of "lavish expenditure" on government services in Malaya—a state of affairs that was resented in other colonies.<sup>50</sup> He doubted that living conditions in Malaya were anywhere nearly as bad as they were in West Africa, and he demanded figures on suicides and deaths in harness so that the point could be backed by hard evidence. To this it was replied, with more passion than consistency perhaps, that such comparisons were invidious. The plight of the MCS should be seen, not by contrast with that of services in other colonies, but in its own local context. Business and



professional men lived far better than government servants. Yet they were the very people the MCS was expected to live on close terms with in order to do its job.

During the late twenties and early thirties, the C.O. tried to gain perspective on such questions by holding governors' conferences in London and by means of special inquiries such as that of the Warren Fisher Committee, and by the visit to Malaya of the permanent under secretary, Sir Samuel Wilson, who was the C.O.'s representative on that committee. In these days of a more self-conscious empire, there was impatience with the easygoing ways of the past when administrative arrangements were made haphazardly in response to *ad hoc* needs. The great depression accentuated this, causing old anomalies and duplications to be questioned on financial as well as scientific grounds. At the same time, the country received a new governor, Sir Cecil Clementi, who noticed, as Anderson and Guillemard had before, that the organization of the civil services was neither coherent nor economic. He tried to prepare the ground for political unity by reducing the differences among political units. If this presented obstacles, he thought the rationalization of the MCS would be easier to bring about. Unification and standardization of the administrative corps that ran the whole country would surely make cultural, regional, and legal individuality less objectionable. The governor instructed Caldecott, acting chief secretary FMS, to prepare plans for the abolition of his office and for its replacement by structures better suited to integration with the colony and the unfederated states.<sup>51</sup> One of the resulting recommendations was that a new central office be set up and charged with managing personnel matters for the whole country. The Malayan Establishment Office came into existence in 1934. Its purpose was to coordinate staffing by grading all posts according to a common standard, regardless of location, thus ending once and for all the lingering remnants of separation between the colony and the FMS. It would also provide the unfederated states with officers as needed, which was already being done, but would now be arranged more centrally and systematically. Though the new office would be in Singapore, the rulers would be assured that postings of European officers to their states would be made in an overall way, without reference to the government of the colony. Hyman Weisberg, a 1914 cadet with much experience in treasury work, chaired a committee that reviewed the organization of the MCS and issued the so-called pyramid report on structuring and operations. He would have taken charge himself if the governor had not wanted him in another position.<sup>52</sup> Instead, the first head of the MEO was J. A. (later Sir John) Hunter.<sup>53</sup>

The importance of postings would be hard to exaggerate. Though a good deal of what the MEO and its precursors did was subject to objective rules and to unarguable exigencies of the moment, there were points

during every officer's career when options were available to those in a position to decide where he would go next. Personalities and luck did play a part. With the best will in the world, unfortunate assignments would sometimes be made, unreliable information would be acted on, and men would get reputations, pro and con, that were not entirely deserved. Reducing the possibility of unfairness and giving everyone an equal chance became a constant aim, one that was more efficiently served as time went on. The MCS was divided into time-scale and super-scale grades. The former included all but the very highest posts. Officers advanced through the time-scale grades more or less automatically on good performance after passing examinations in languages and law and in colonial regulations. Extraordinary merit was recognized by promotion into the super-scale and, occasionally, by advancement over the heads of one's peers. Care was taken to find out how men had done in their work so that when the time came to make a new assignment, it would be possible to match an officer's qualities and capacity with the known requirements of a particular job and the special requests of senior officers asking for staff. While junior and middle-ranking officers were not consulted about their next posts, most found the MEO sympathetic to appeals for consideration of unusual circumstances and needs.<sup>54</sup> By the same token rulers and senior officers were listened to on the subject of men whom they had high regard for or about whom they had reservations.

Generally speaking, everyone served at one time or another in both secretariat and rural posts, the theory being that knowledge of both was necessary and that a good man could manage either without difficulty. It was thought that too much or too little of either would leave men's records improperly balanced. Andrew Gilmour, who had two consecutive postings to Ulu Kelantan, which he loved, was warned not to become typed as a latter-day Captain Berkeley.<sup>55</sup> Goode, when he too begged for a second tour on the east coast, was told by Caldecott—that shrewd calculator of the coordinates of success—that "only dogs return to their own vomit."<sup>56</sup> Nevertheless, Malaya was not immune to the prevailing mystique of the colonial empire, that the romance and the morality of European rule in tropical countries was centered on outstations run by omniscient district officers, whereas the secretariat was the home of the effete, the ambitious, and the not quite respectable. Inveterate *ulu* types like Charlton Maxwell could be depended on to pour scorn on bureaucracy and all its works. Saddled on one occasion with a hopelessly incompetent young assistant and asked for his advice as to where the hapless junior's talents could be more advantageously employed, he replied, "In the secretariat or the museum."<sup>57</sup> Even Winstedt, with his quite different, scholarly temperament, could not help smiling at those who got on in the service by staying in secretariats and writing equivocal

dispatches to London.<sup>58</sup> And Clifford, who knew from personal experience the whole range of jobs from the most junior to the highest, could defend secretariats as necessary and undervalued, yet sternly insist that the essence of administration was to be learned only in districts. Shortly after arriving as governor, he gave orders that new recruits were to be posted to outstations, well away from the lures of European society in bigger towns, even though he knew that secretariat needs were great and that some young men would not like being deprived of the "loaves and fishes of Singapore, Penang or Kuala Lumpur."<sup>59</sup>

Others felt very differently. There were always classical DO types who thrived in the countryside and hated paper work. "I like men and not figures to play with," moaned Nairn at a time when he was burdened with customs and harbor duties in Port Dickson.<sup>60</sup> Richards remarked philosophically to Kempe that "we all have our particular bents and . . . lines to which we are not suited. I think I was the worst magistrate who ever sat on the bench . . . secretariat work requires an attitude of mind which does not come very readily to you . . . your road to a residency will come more easily through district and land work than through the secretariat."<sup>61</sup> Praising a newly arrived cadet in the thirties Sheppard lamented the "deplorable waste" of keeping such a man in the secretariat.<sup>62</sup>

Perhaps more typical of the whole service year by year were officers who saw the potential of secretariat duty, whether or not they preferred life in districts. "I had had my fair share of working in secretariats," said Harvey, "which was not always well received by the MCS; but there was no better way of coming to grips with the system of government, the law, and the proper way to set about [doing] a pet project."<sup>63</sup> Jarrett, who delighted in his time on the east coast, could hardly be called a natural or willing bureaucrat. Yet he was intrigued by the jigsaw puzzle of personnel work under Pepys. Later, as under secretary FMS, he found his job as many-sided and interesting as it was arduous. He met and corresponded with heads of professional and technical departments, weighed up the yeas and nays of complex problems, and submitted recommendations.<sup>64</sup> The task gave him a wide view of important developments in every branch of government service and brought him into contact with Asian leaders who were not encountered in outstations. If he sometimes felt as though he were working in a blindfold and wished he could get away from the paper into the sunlight of workaday reality, he realized, from his extensive district experience, that the counterpart to this was a feeling of being lost and forgotten in a backwater. Goode had much the same reaction when he was yanked away from blissful Kuantan and made secretary to the retrenchment commission in Kuala Lumpur. "Here I am living . . . this appalling suburban life, wearing a collar and tie; if I really wanted this . . . wouldn't [it] be better to stay at home?"<sup>65</sup> Yet he saw that

the job was good for him, providing an overview of the whole government structure and how it worked and forcing him to consider it all in a critical way.

An MCS officer who had service in Africa and came to Malaya with the military government in 1945 saw colonial secretariats as *sui generis*, differing from ministries in England in history, make-up, and work. Whereas a Whitehall department included both policymakers and men who carried out the resulting decisions, colonial secretariats did the planning and coordination but left implementation to specialist departments such as public works, medical, police, customs, and education.<sup>66</sup> This state of affairs had come about naturally as residents and governors gradually gathered about them the staff needed to deal with their steadily increasing office work. In this process, which continued all the way through to the end of the prewar period and to an extent afterward, a much greater measure of power accrued to the generalist administrative officer than to his opposite number in England, where ultimate authority rested in popularly elected legislative bodies. If high-ranking secretariat officers sat in different offices from those who put their plans to work, they nonetheless had far more discretion than home civil servants did. They had no special training and relied on experience, common sense, and the support of superiors who were, like them, appointed from England and who were, in effect, responsible to themselves. In the nineteenth century, the power they wielded was not all that great because the scope of government was relatively restricted, communications were rudimentary, and considerable latitude was left perforce to magistrates and collectors over wide areas. By the 1920s, great changes had taken place. Secretariats had grown in size, in complexity of work, and in control over events. Assumptions about qualifications for high office had changed as well. In the old days, an officer was said to be qualified for a residency if he had had many years of experience in districts. Now, it was secretariat service that counted.<sup>67</sup> Virtually everyone had had at least some of that and the majority more than a little. Officers with service in other colonies, particularly in Africa, noticed that the traditional distinction between secretariat and district men was of much less account in Malaya with its small size, thriving economy, and urban society.<sup>68</sup>

As they talked and wrote about the bureaucratic work they had done in Malaya—usually long after retirement—officers revealed many of the reasons why seemingly routine jobs had held considerable fascination for them and why some preferred secretariat to district work. Willan's feelings were grounded in social tastes. "You don't live in the *ulu*; you merely exist."<sup>69</sup> In a very full career, Cator had had all manner of postings, ending with the senior residency, Perak, followed by a lengthy stint as agent for Malaya in London. Yet he remembered customs and opium

control as the most enjoyable work of all—endlessly interesting, human, and varied.<sup>70</sup> For seven years, Peel was municipal president in Penang—in effect, mayor of a big, attractive port city with a bustling, multiracial population. Though the job was unquestionably bureaucratic in nature, he was intrigued by it precisely because he "... had to deal with people ... much more than minute papers."<sup>71</sup> He headed the secretariat, true enough. But subordinates saw to details while he presided over large public meetings, dealt with the press, and tried to sort out the competing claims of departments as varied as health, electrical, water, engineering, veterinary, police, fire, and vehicles. With Shelley, the attraction was greater still. His letters present a man who was as much drawn to the clubs and card games and dinner parties of high society as any suburban-based civil servant or businessman in England, one who reveled in the pomp of office and gladly suffered the minutiae of everyday bureaucracy in order to enjoy it. Treasury work in Singapore was satisfying because money was power. He loved his uniform and sword, his intimacy with the governor, the deference and the prefix "honorable" he received as a member of the federal council, and his close association with merchant princes. When he acted as director of education during Winstedt's leave, he liked the big house and the respect shown him by office underlings and teachers in the schools and was only slightly worried that the very thorough new governor, Clementi, might ask him a question that, as an amateur in a specialist job, he might not be able to answer.<sup>72</sup> When, towards the end of his career, he became acting chief secretary he was as thrilled with life in the federal capital as Goode had been irritated by it. Living at Carcosa, wearing his CMG, inspecting his visitors book, and then for a few days acting as governor were more than ample recompense for decades of paper work in the sweltering offices of Singapore and Kuala Lumpur.

When H. G. Turner asked for a transfer out of Ulu Kelantan in 1938, he was not thinking of anything so grand or even a secretariat position as such. He and his wife wanted another baby. Kuala Krai in the back of beyond was no place for dependable midwifery or for European children in need of occasional pediatric care. He had mixed feelings on being told that he had broken half of the golden rule—never ask for a transfer and never refuse one—and that he was posted to Singapore as fourth assistant secretary, a slight demotion.<sup>73</sup> At first, the work was exactly the sort of thing that devotees of district postings lived in dread of: the docketing of papers in the mountains of files that accumulate in such places. As these were secret, there was also a good deal of cyphering. In addition, Turner was given responsibility for papers concerned with defense and with honors. The former proved intensely interesting and demanding as the war approached. For this reason, and because he had a natural flair for

detail and got on well with his colleagues, Turner enjoyed his time in the Singapore secretariat, where he remained to the day the island surrendered. The community itself was full of interest, as Penang had been for Peel. He respected and liked the Chinese, Indian, and Eurasian office assistants and clerks whose role as the noncommissioned officers of administration was so important in assuring efficiency and continuity.

The latter remained a problem, constantly complained about and never solved, due to the frequency with which officers were moved from post to post. During the ten-year period beginning in 1922, Shelley was DO Klang, acting treasurer in Singapore, acting official assignee and public trustee in the FMS, registrar of companies, collector of stamp duty, treasurer again, acting director of education, chairman of the Trade Statistics Committee, controller of rubber, acting commissioner of lands in Kuala Lumpur, treasurer in Singapore again, acting director of education again, as well as president of Raffles College, treasurer again, acting colonial secretary and resident Perak. He was on leave twice during the period. When Raja Chulan complained in the federal council that senior officers were moved and went on leave too often, making continuity impossible, Caldecott denied that in practice they took leave every two and a half years as they were entitled to do. If this were done, he conceded, there would indeed be a "continuous game of general post."<sup>74</sup> It was admitted in official documents that reassignments were "somewhat numerous."<sup>75</sup> Some defended the system of never sending a man back to the same post for a second consecutive tour on the grounds that it helped avoid stagnation and the kinds of petty corruption that had sometimes occurred in the pioneer years. But in private, everyone admitted that the discontinuity resulting from this and from leaves was a heavy price to pay.

The question of who was sent where and why was of burning interest. Often it seemed to be, and indeed was, a matter of the "merest chance," as in the case of Weisberg's financial job.<sup>76</sup> Although he was unknown to the powers at the moment and completely inexperienced in that field, he found himself suddenly landed in the position of colonial treasurer, due to the temporary unavailability of two qualified officers, one of whom would have got the post otherwise. No doubt Weisberg's exceptional ability would have come to the notice of higher authority sooner or later. But in fact, the specialty that was to bring him much deserved recognition later on was one that he had no special training for and embarked on quite by accident. In other cases, men were destined for certain posts because they had reached their forties without having distinguished themselves. When a man got a customs job late in his career, it was not a good sign. If an officer of the Malay stream was clearly not residential timber and could not be entrusted with a high secretariat position, the chances were that he would finish as DO of one of the more important Perak districts, which

therefore became known as "stable for old horses."<sup>77</sup> Men who had done well enough, on the other hand, had to be given final posts that possessed a dignity appropriate to that fact—the resident councillorship of Malacca or Penang, for example—which meant a fairly steady stream of short-term incumbents on the eve of retirement and correspondingly heavy burdens for their subordinates. Winstedt held the title of general adviser Johore in the early thirties and drew the salary. It was S. W. Jones who did the work, first, as legal adviser, then as commissioner of lands and mines. Occasionally, a governor refused to go along with this sort of thing. When Guillemard went on retirement leave in 1927, he insisted on being relieved by Peel, whom he considered the most able man available, though the regulations provided that the colonial secretary should act in such instances and though a royal warrant had to be got in order to legalize the governor's wish.<sup>78</sup> Rarely the reason behind a posting was frivolous, perhaps suggesting the need to *cherchez la femme*.<sup>79</sup> But for the most part, seniority, capability, and common sense prevailed. Year in and year out officers got the postings their performance fitted them for, the jobs they expected to get.

When it is asked who got on in the service, who did not, and why in both cases, the answers present a similar picture of generalization and diversity. For most the key to success was the same quality of gregariousness and ability to work happily with one's fellows that opens doors in any field. Horse sense was more important than intellectual brilliance. Social acceptance in all the myriad interracial and governmental-commercial settings of Malaya counted for more than specific attributes of character, not to mention particular qualifications such as language facility or membership of the bar. Reviewing the comments of governors on MCS officers through the years, one finds that in all cases there were general impressions that men were good, bad, or indifferent, and that these were based on an intuitive sense of what a man was and how he had done.<sup>80</sup> As the careers of Sir Ernest Birch and Captain Bloomfield Douglas showed, a man with patent limitations could go far if he was liked by his sultan, among others. Cunyngnam-Brown's quip about the formula for advancement—"bowing at the doors of the mighty, marrying a nice girl, seeking a post in the central secretariat, and becoming a free mason"—was not totally lacking in point.<sup>81</sup> Government service, mused Bingham, was "... somewhat of a soporific... originality or special ability is not of much use."<sup>82</sup> Conversely, everyone knew that debts or alcoholism could bring a man down and that a single unfortunate move, such as abandoning one's district, might leave a blot that proved ineradicable.<sup>83</sup>

One way to get ahead was to catch the eye of the C.O. This might happen without any effort on the part of the officer in question, who could be noticed by a member of the staff on a visit to Malaya.<sup>84</sup> Some were

spotted as rising rockets at the time of their recruitment and for that reason were posted to the C.O. at the outset of their careers, being marked men from then onwards. Others, not content to leave the matter to chance, made a point of calling at the office when on leave. In fact, everyone was expected to sign a form reporting their presence in the country, and occasionally, one would look in on a friend temporarily serving there. Most men left it at that, viewing the C.O. as a mysterious place that had little to do with them, or as a hotbed of intrigue that any self-respecting MCS officer would instinctively avoid. The few who did go there for a disinterested purpose tended to have their prejudices confirmed. While in the office to fill out his form one time Broome asked if anyone wished to talk with him about recent developments in Malaya. No one did.<sup>85</sup> Those who actually entered the premises on their own and formed friendships with people who worked there were not regarded favorably in the MCS. It was not thought possible that such visits could have any but a self-serving aim.

A process that unavoidably and mercilessly identified officers with lackluster records was retrenchment. A small number fell by the wayside in 1932-1933, some of them being kept on in other capacities, and others being rehired later.<sup>86</sup> The fact that newly arrived recruits were kept on, though untried and at that point unjudgeable, made the evaluations of retrenchment committees all the more damaging to those affected. The number was not large since normal attrition reduced the service by fourteen that year and since recruitment was suspended for a time.

At the other extreme were men whose qualities were shown when they voluntarily left the administrative branch of the service, when they accepted offers of employment out of the country, or when they received honors. There was a small number of transfers to the colonial legal service, where most did well. Willan, Gibson, and Worley were knighted and reached high positions elsewhere. Many men qualified for the bar, most of them remaining in the MCS but specializing in magistracy rather than administration. Transfers to other colonies or to London were more frequent after the turn of the century than before, due to Malaya's growing prestige. But several officers refused these, mainly for financial reasons. Among those who did leave, receiving knighthoods and lofty responsibilities, were: A. F. Richards, A. S. Jelf, G. E. London, John Huggins, J. A. Hunter, R. E. Turnbull, J. S. Macpherson, Andrew Caldecott, E. B. David, T. S. Adams, R. B. Black, W. A. C. Goode, William Peel and his son W. J. Peel, and two, John Martin and John Fletcher-Cooke, who served in the C.O. before coming to Malaya and were in the country for very short periods. While they did not rise quite as high as the others, R. N. Turner, George Hemmant, and A. M. Dryburgh should also be mentioned.



Some officers—only a handful in later years—put their talents to ex-tragovernmental use by joining the boards of companies. Swettenham's connections with the rubber industry have been noted. Occasionally, someone would be approached during the career years and asked if he would like to leave the service for a salaried position with a firm in Malaya. Duff and Macfadyen departed early, the former to start his own enterprise. William Peel, with some seventeen years of service behind him, was sounded on accepting the general managership of a large block of rubber companies. It was pointed out to him that administrative ability rather than specialist knowledge was what the organization needed.<sup>87</sup> At first, he was inclined to take the job. But he thought better of it when the circumstances altered following several years' delay. On completion of their careers, a few—Taylor, Brockman, Cator, Marks, Jarrett, Bryson, and Corry come to mind—accepted positions in London with either the Malay States Information Agency or the Association of British Malaya, both primarily commercial in orientation. From 1913 onwards, everyone understood that if they accepted company directorships after retirement they would lose their pensions. When some joined boards despite this the C.O. made clear that it frowned on the practice, whether or not the giving up of a pension was seen to have freed an officer from formal ties to the government.<sup>88</sup> The number of men involved was never large, providing little or no justification of charges that the MCS was guilty of impropriety in its relationship to business. Like the other cadres throughout the empire, it was remarkable for its imperviousness to corruption.<sup>89</sup>

The number of Malay officers in the MCS was never large in the prewar period. In the absence of anything like a nationalist movement, this is hardly surprising. Still, the seeds of a native service had been put down early, and the plants prospered. There was a certain amount of talk about preparing the country for self-government, a series of policy statements which, if read in sequence, might make it seem that there had been a coherent, long-range plan. In fact, these represent a chain of *ad hoc* expedients together with a fairly consistent feeling that Malays, should participate, especially in clerical work and rural tasks such as were done by settlement officers. Occasionally the recruitment of Malays, usually by promotion from the Malay Administrative Service, would be given an impetus by crises—the 1914 war, the slumps of the twenties and thirties—which brought retrenchment of Europeans in their wake and reminded the government that Malay officers were less expensive. A new scheme was introduced in 1921 whereby the chief secretary would advise the board of governors of the Malay College as to how many probationers were needed each year.<sup>90</sup> Candidates could come directly from the college or from English schools elsewhere in the country. All had to pass the Cambridge seventh-standard examination and be interviewed by a selec-

tion board appointed by the board of governors, itself made up of the residents and a Malay member for each state. Malay assistants could be transferred into the MCS. Meanwhile, a growing number of junior posts, such as those of ADO in Rompin and Pekan, were reserved for Malays. As chief secretary, Maxwell urged the MCS to make a point of "bringing out" Malay officers.<sup>91</sup> They tended to be diffident and lacking in self-confidence, and it was the duty of European officers to accept responsibility for their education on the job. By teaching office work to Malay juniors, they would provide needed training at the same time as they freed themselves from bureaucratic chores that would otherwise keep them from getting about their districts and exercising the personal touch that was vital. "But the matter has a much more serious aspect," said Maxwell.<sup>92</sup> If young Malays were not properly trained at an early stage, they would be ineligible for promotion later and in mid-career could become discontented and troublesome. Instead of remaining solid and loyal to the empire, Malaya could fall into disaffection "as rabid and pestilential a growth as it has been in India, Burma and Egypt."<sup>93</sup> Others were talking the same way. As chairman of the 1922 Retrenchment Committee, Adams criticized his colleagues for failing to sympathize with their Malay brother officers. In its obsessive concern for economic development, said Meadows Frost, the government had lost sight of the Malays. And E. S. Hose, resident Negri Sembilan, told his MCS juniors that preparing the Malays for self-rule was their primary *raison d'être*.<sup>94</sup>

Now and again, Malay voices were raised in support of what came to be called "Malayanization." Raja Chulan, a former administrative officer, allowed himself a quip at the expense of the MCS in the federal council. After praising Clifford, who had just retired, and noting that they had been boys together under Low in Perak, he said that the Malayan tiger could not stand any more European officers:

Big fleas have little fleas upon their backs to bite 'em  
And little fleas have lesser fleas and so on ad infinitum.<sup>95</sup>

But he showed himself ill-informed on training schemes for Malays and more interested in scoring debating points than in any systematic harassment. More down to earth was the request of the undang of Rembau for information on the transfer of administrative posts from the MCS list to that of the MAS.<sup>96</sup> The answer—that the posts of ADO Larut and Krian had recently been transferred—was as matter of fact as the question, a striking contrast with similar exchanges in India and elsewhere in these years.

After the creation of the Establishment Office in 1934, more thought was given to promotions of Malays to the MCS.<sup>97</sup> Though the total was

still small by the time the Japanese came, a healthy start had been made. There were many more in the MAS and in clerical posts, and the habit of sharing in responsibility for their own affairs was deeply ingrained in the ruling classes and among many commoners as well. If she was behind India and Ceylon, Malaya was ahead of Africa.

Still, the training of native officers was a minor theme. In every important respect, it was the British who ran the country in the interwar years. By the late thirties their instrument of rule—the MCS—was one of the most seasoned and self-confident in the empire, secure in its local acceptance and in its reputation at home.

### Notes

1. Dispatch 259, 28 Jan. 1922, M. The theme was "buy British," with specific reference to British, rather than American, motor vehicles.
2. To the high commissioner, 11 Jan. 1921, 596, M.
3. S. Cunyngham-Brown, *Crowded Hour*, (London: Murray, 1975), pp. 42-43.
4. Sir Lawrence Guillemard, *Trivial Fond Records*, (London: Methuen, 1937), p. 91 ff.
5. Cited by Sir John Macpherson from a minute by Guillemard, in R. Heussler, *Yesterday's Rulers* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1963), p. xi.
6. Governor to secretary of state, 28 Aug. 1920, 273/501. This was approved 13 Oct. 1920 and appeared in "Eastern 67" (see governor to secretary of state, 28 June 1921, 717/13). See also Maxwell's memorandum on the background, 19 Apr. 1927, S. P. 5, M.
7. See Swettenham, *British Malaya*, (London: Allen and Unwin, 1955), p. 303. Savage Bailey called the MCS "a vast array of anonymous officials" (Proceedings of the Federal Council, 1929, B129). See also Clementi to secretary of state, 26 Oct. 1932, 273/584.
8. See Blythe to Bryson, "The MCS," 26 Nov. 1920. Also governor to secretary of state, 26 Nov. 1918, 273/470; 30 Sept. 1922, 717/23; and "reconstruction scheme," file 752, 1922, M.
9. Brockman to Collins in the C.O., 5 Mar. 1923, 717/32. And see "Unpopularity of the Civil Service of Malaya," *Straits Times*, 27 Jan. 1923.
10. Cmd. 3235 on Ormsby-Gore's visit; and Cmd. 2883, *Summary of the Proceedings of the Governors Conference*, 1927.
11. R. Furse, *Aucuparius*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1962), p. 206 ff. I depend also on notes of many conversations with Sir Ralph Furse, 1959-1962 and an extensive correspondence.
12. Furse says, for example, (*Aucuparius*, p. 208), that he did not meet anyone in the MCS who had ever been to Java, where there was much to learn from the Dutch. In fact, local leaves in the Dutch islands were common. See also Furse's minute, 9 Feb. 1933, on the retrenchment report, 17 Sept. 1932, 273/582.

13. Cochrane visited the Colonial Services Club in Cambridge in 1928, for example (file 1058, 1928, M.), when on leave from his post as GA Johore. Such visits and the use of recruitment literature such as *Some Notes on the Government Services in British Malaya* (London: Malay Information Agency, 1929), by C. W. Harrison of the MCS, showed the concern of the government. Harrison assured readers that Malayanization was not a problem and that, in many respects, Malaya was not all that different from home.

14. Cmd. 3554, *Report of a Committee on the System of Appointment in the Colonial Office and the Colonial Services*, 1930, 19. See also Cmd. 3628, *Colonial Office Conference 1930 Summary of Proceedings*; and Sir Charles Jeffries, *The Colonial Empire and Its Civil Service* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1938), chap. 6.

15. Proceedings, 1932, B15-18. The local press in these years regularly attacked the idea of selection without examination and suggested, after the ending of examinations, that the service would fill up with athletes and public school snobs.

16. J. V. G. Mills to author, 1 Feb. 1975, and to Bryson, 6 Aug. and 10 Nov. 1969. Mills says his feeling was widely shared in the MCS at the time. Hawkins agreed, adding that examinations produced better men. (Interview, Penang, Sept. 1970.)

17. Oakeley, 27 July 1975, to author.

18. Barron's recollections, 14 Apr. 1969.

19. Feb. 1932, 284.

20. To author, 11 May 1977.

21. Brockman to Collins, 14 Mar. 1923, 717/32. Bryson, a 1921 cadet, ran a test on this point. He and several colleagues made lists of men they considered successful and other lists of those they thought were less so. There proved to be no correlation between method of entry and career distinction.

22. To secretary of state, 23 Mar. 1928 ff., 273/545/7428. See also Guillemard to secretary of state, 6 Sept. 1924, 273/526.

23. A. N. Goode, ADO Kuala Kangsar, memorandum of suggestions on Oxford courses, file 1781, 1940, M.

24. See file 1086, 1 July 1935, M. on the next-of-kin of each officer in the MCS and his home address. Also the posting schedule for 1937 by J. Huggins, acting Malayan establishment officer, 273/628/50051; and the 1940 civil list, M., made up in 1939. See also R. O. Tilman, *Bureaucratic Transition in Malaya* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1964).

25. H. G. Turner's memoirs, p. 55. Turner shared a house with Willan in Ipoh in 1930. Willan was a 1920 cadet.

26. A 1921 cadet, Bryson is quoting Gerald Hanley's *Warriors and Strangers* (London: Hamilton, 1971). Having known Hugh Bryson well in the period 1960-1977, I take this affected cynicism with a grain of salt.

27. To author, 4 Feb. 1974.

28. To author, 14 May 1975. Ward was a 1928 cadet.

29. To Bryson, 10 Dec. 1969. He was a 1929 cadet.

30. To author, 15 May 1976. Turner was a 1935 cadet. We had also discussed this question in 1962 when we met in North Borneo, where he was acting governor.

31. To author, 28 Feb. 1974.
32. To author, 24 May 1976. Brander was a 1928 cadet.
33. To author, 28 Dec. 1974. He was a 1930 cadet.
34. To author, 10 Jan. 1975. Broome was a 1932 cadet. His father was a lieutenant colonel in the Indian Medical Service.
35. The medical difficulty involved an operation on the testicles, inspiring a fatalistic jingle from Broome (10 Feb. 1975 to author):

I did the bidding of the Lord  
Expressed in Wiley's spermal cord  
And coasted life's velocipede  
As fate, through Wiley's balls, decreed.

Wiley is a pseudonym. "My whole career," he went on, "marriage and everything, depended on that man's balls. So I have never believed in carving out a career."

36. Interview transcript, CRP, I. Goode was a 1931 cadet.
37. Interview transcript, CRP, I. Macpherson was a 1921 cadet.
38. To Bryson, 26 Nov. 1970. Blythe was a 1921 cadet. See also the dedication in his book, *The Impact of Chinese Secret Societies in Malaya* (London: Oxford University Press, 1969).
39. To author, 4 Jan. 1975. Black was a 1930 cadet.
40. To author, 29 Dec. 1974. Barrett was a 1931 cadet.
41. Among the interwar Marburians were: Barrett, Hayward, C. C. Brown, L. H. N. Davis, and Sheppard. On this point I have benefited from conversations with a former headmaster of the school, G. C. Turner.
42. To author, 5 Jan. 1975. Black was a 1920 cadet.
43. To author, 7 Jan. 1975. Dawson was a 1920 cadet.
44. I have learned much about Balliol's connection with overseas administration from correspondence with H. A. L. Luckham, a Balliol man and a 1928 cadet, and from talks and correspondence with Furse and with Lionel Smith, son of a Balliol master and director of education in Iraq in this period. Coupland was a fellow of All Souls.
45. "Eastern Cadet," n.d. Turner was a 1929 cadet.
46. Purcell, *Memoirs of a Malayan Official* (London: Cassell, 1965), chap. 5.
47. Harvey's recollections, p. 1.
48. See "Report of the Malayan Civil Service Committee for the Year 1920," M. A formal MCS association came into being with effect from 1 Jan. 1921.
49. File 96, 1921, M.
50. Amery, file 226, 1921, M.
51. Clementi to Calder in the C.O., 14 Mar. 1932, 717/91. On this subject I am much indebted to H. G. Turner for his paper, "The Malayan Establishment System," sent to author, 20 Jan. 1975.
52. Weisberg to Bryson, 2 Oct. 1970.
53. Sir John Huggins, Hugh Fraser, and C. R. Howitt were also prominently associated with the office. A. J. Gracie was later on. I learned much in talks with him in London in 1960. I am also indebted to the late Sir David Watherston, a

subsequent head of the MEO for useful information on its history. (Letters, 4 Dec. 1973 and 7 Oct. 1974, and discussion in London, Oct. 1973.)

54. Blacker to author, 7 Nov. 1974. The view expressed herein is typical.

55. To author, 13 June 1973.

56. Transcript of interview with Sir William Goode, CRP, 6. And see Purcell, *Memoirs*, p. 98.

57. Hawkins, "The Passing of the MCS," *Straits Times Annual*, 1967, p. 126.

58. Sir R. O. Winstedt, *Start with Alif* (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1969), p. 35.

59. Memorandum, 3 Jan. 1928, 2. I thank Dr. C. Gray of Yale University for sending me a copy of this, found in the Raub files. See also F. A. Swettenham, *Stories & Sketches* (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1967), p. 88.

60. *Stories*, p. 80, citing his letter of 15 Aug. 1911. Among the many dyed-in-the-wool DO types often mentioned by their colleagues were: W. R. Boyd, 1911; W. F. N. Churchill, 1921; Leslie Forbes, 1913; and H. S. Paterson, 1913.

61. 24 Aug. 1927, Kempe papers, CRP. Kempe agreed. See his diary of the same year, pp. 85 ff. CRP.

62. Alor Gajah diary, May 1935, kindly loaned me by Mr. Sheppard. The recruit was H. R. Hughes-Hallett, a 1934 cadet. And see Corry's remarks on the "lordly secretariat", interview transcript, CRP, 5.

63. To Bryson, 18 Apr. 1970.

64. To Bryson, 2 May 1969.

65. Typescript of interview of Sir William Goode, CRP, 4.

66. J. M. Gullick, "The Negri Sembilan Administration 1946-1948," June 1970. I thank Mr. Gullick for the loan of this and other papers which throw light on prewar administration in most interesting ways. Also relevant here are Weisberg's recollections (to Bryson, 2 Oct. 1970).

67. See Bryson to Hawkins, 23 June 1969. Also Clementi to secretary of state, 6 Nov. 1930, 717/76.

68. H. A. L. Luckham to author, 3 Nov. 1974. Luckham served in East Africa during the 1939 war.

69. H. G. Turner to author, 26 Apr. 1976.

70. Interview, 25 Sept. 1970. Blackwell's time as official assignee and registrar of companies in Kuala Lumpur made a similar impression on him. See "Malay Curry," CRP, p. 132 ff.

71. Peel's memoirs, CRP, p. 49.

72. See especially the letters of 12 Feb. 1930, 17 Dec. 1923, 22 Apr. 1924, 20 Feb. 1929, 8 and 11 June 1930, 29 July 1930, 20 Oct. 1930, 25 Nov. 1930, 17 Jan. 1935 and 7 Feb. 1935. None of this suggests that Shelley was not an honorable man and an efficient officer who won his high place by hard work and devoted service.

73. Turner's memoirs, p. 231 ff.

74. Proceedings, 1932, B70. An unofficial, Col. Rae criticized the government some years earlier because there had been so many residents in Perak in recent years (Proceedings, 1928, B79).

75. Selangor Administrative Report for 1919, 3, enclosed with governor to secretary of state, 27 Sept. 1920, 717/3.

76. To Bryson, 2 Oct. 1970.

77. Interview with O. W. Wolters, 8 Mar. 1975.
78. Peel's memoirs, pp. 122-23.
79. As when Shelley became acting colonial secretary in 1930 because, so he told his daughter, the wife of the officer who made the decision did not care for the wife of the man who would have got the job otherwise (letter of 1 July 1930).
80. Governor to secretary of state, 24 Mar. 1922, 717/21; 21 May 1923, 717/28; 29 July 1927, 717/54; 24 Apr. 1929, 717/66.
81. *Crowded Hour*, p. 70.
82. To his parents, 8 Jan. 1933, from Malacca.
83. See Gilmour, *An Eastern Cadet's Anecdote* (Singapore: University Education Press, 1974), p. 74. Also governor to secretary of state, 12 July 1920, 717/1 and 31 May 1921, 717/13.
84. Sir R. Furse noticed Richards this way in 1928. See *Aucuparius*, p. 208. He made general comments on the subject in his letter of 28 May 1966 to author.
85. Luckham to author, 3 Nov. 1974, quoting Broome. See also Harvey to Bryson, 18 Apr. 1970, and Bryson to Gray, 17 Feb. 1976. Even Swettenham, who was hardly above suspicion as a frequenter of the C.O., was prone to disparage it. See *British Malaya*, p. 327.
86. See the report of the Straits Settlements Retrenchment Committee, 17 Sept. 1932, 273/582/7428; and the Proceedings of the Federal Council, 1933, B5 ff. Stark discusses his own retrenchment, notes by Bryson, 20 June 1969, made after interviewing him. Whitehouse did the same in his letter to author, 8 Apr. 1974.
87. Peel's memoirs, pp. 59-60.
88. Governor to secretary of state, 21 Dec. 1921, 717/14. It was Sir Ernest Birch's acceptance of a directorship that inspired the 1913 enactment. See A. Edgcumbe of the C.O. to Sir George Maxwell, 4 Aug. 1926, 717/49 and secretary of state to governor, 16 Aug. 1926, 717/52. In defending himself from the suggestion of impropriety, Maxwell cited the case of Lord Allenby who was said to have taken a directorship after leaving his post in Egypt. Maxwell later notified the C.O. that he intended to join the board of the Duff Company. Col. Hume, former resident Perak, also figures prominently in the correspondence on directorships.
89. A perhaps representative MCS view of directorships and corruption in the interwar years may be found in Purcell's *Memoirs*, pp. 99 and 292. I have benefited from talks and correspondence on the subject with Sheppard, Gilmour, Gullick, and H. G. Turner, and from the recollections of Harvey and Hawkins. Among civil servants outside the MCS, Sir Claude Fenner of the police was especially interesting and informative.
90. Governor to secretary of state, 10 Sept. 1921, 273/510; 14 May 1921, 717/13; 28 June 1921, 717/14; 7 Nov. 1921, 717/14; file 126, 1921, and file 330, 1 Jan. 1921, M. See also the autobiography of Mahmud bin Mat, chap. 6; FMS Annual Report on Education, 1927, M. On the scheme for Malay officers, see high commissioner to secretary of state, 26 Oct. 1932, 273/584/7428. On Malayanization and the C.O.'s plans for a united colonial service, see high commissioner to under secretary of state, 5 Mar. 1932, 717/100.
91. Circular, 18 Sept. 1922. I thank B. R. Whitehouse for sending me his copy of this. See also acting high commissioner to secretary of state, 14 Aug. 1928, 717/59.

92. Circular, 18 Sept. 1922.

93. Ibid.

94. Hose's remark is reported in notes sent by Morkill to Bryson, 1 Nov. 1969. See also W. R. Roff, *The Origins of Malay Nationalism* (Kuala Lumpur: University of Malaya Press, 1967), p. 115 ff.; file 2263, 1931, M. is a symposium of MCS opinions on this, including one from a Malay DO.

95. Proceedings, 1929, B106. And see Caldecott's clever reply to Chulan on a similar point, 1932, B22, and Chulan's rejoinder, B57.

96. Proceedings, 1930, B3. See also 1933, B132 FF., and 1934, B58. Also file 1805, 1934, M. on hiring Malays for rubber regulation work.

97. Watherston to Bryson, n.d., but written in Oct. 1971, p. 5.



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## Residents and District Officers: Life and Work in the Federated States Between the Wars

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FROM THE earliest days when Captain Light and Sir Stamford Raffles dickered with Malay chiefs in the interests of trade, the British had proceeded on two assumptions about their own aims and the rights of the Malays: first, that Europe's superior civilization, including economic development, was paramount; and second, that as that civilization spread, no violence should be done to native culture and the country's natural rulers should be treated with courtesy and consideration. Sir Hugh Low, the founder of the administrative system in the Malay states, knew that he and his officers had to rule directly; Malay incapacity dictated that. But the sensibilities of the royals and their subordinates should always be deferred to on grounds of both expediency and protocol, and every effort should be made to integrate the natives and their administrative machinery into the new British hegemony. Low, Swettenham, and Clifford saw clearly that this would involve considerable posturing at first. Rule by advice—that pious nostrum of the C.O.—was not a practical possibility. But appearances had to be kept up. It was hoped that in time the Malays would become more competent in exercising responsibility for what was, after all, their own country. That assumption, too—that Malaya belonged to the Malays—was a hardy perennial which survived the time when other peoples outnumbered them. If members of the Chinese Protectorate had their doubts, most senior MCS officers did not.

As time went on, certain fundamental strains encountered by the early residents seemed to remain constant: there were tensions between the reality of direct rule and the myth of rule by advice, and between the demands of development and those of Malay rights. The resulting inconsistencies and conflicts showed themselves in gyrations of policy and in the mixed feelings of officers who saw contradictions but were powerless to do anything about them. Occasionally, a man became the creature of the very forces he had struggled against in his early career or found himself pursuing a course of action, with the best intentions, that ended in damaging his own cherished objectives. Sir George Maxwell railed against the conglomerate of Kuala Lumpur and went on to become the most intransigent federalist of them all. Sir Theodore Adams, the proto-

type Malayophile, destroyed his own MCS career while helping to deal a further blow at the pretense of royal prerogatives. Despite the pro-Malay policies of every important governor, development steadily undercut traditionalism, drawing the Malays into a social milieu in which they had to compete at a disadvantage.

Officers serving during the interwar years may not have given much thought to such questions day to day. Even the more reflective, of whom there were many, had entirely too much to do. State and district administration had grown immensely more bureaucratic over the years since the easygoing, personal rule of the pioneers had first taken hold. As they struggled with rising mountains of paper, officers were hard pressed to keep up with daily work. One was aware of the complexities of race relations, of the competing claims of Malays in their *kampongs*, Chinese in mines and shops, and of Indians on rubber estates. Meanwhile, there was the daily drill of dealing with applications for land, of tax work, of surveys for boundaries and roads, of talking with *penghulus* and planters and officers of the technical services, of hearing cases in court. There were outlying areas to be visited by river or jungle path in remote parts or by road elsewhere.

Organization and systems in the FMS differed from those of the unfederated states in that the four federated units had been under European administration longer, populations were larger, and development was more advanced. Residents and rulers did not live in the same towns, as advisers and rulers did in the unfederated states. The resident's main job was to preside over the state bureaucracy in a place that was originally selected for convenient access to principal lines of communication, mines, estates, and commercial centers. Therefore, relations between residents and rulers were not as close and as continuous as were those between their counterparts in the unfederated states, though a resident posted to one state for an unusually long time could and occasionally did come to know the ruler well. Sultan Iskandar of Perak was spoken of with affection and respect by more than one former resident. Cator, who was resident in Perak for nearly seven years, called the ruler "a great gentleman and a great friend."<sup>1</sup> It would be inaccurate to say that FMS rulers were completely lacking in power or influence. The establishment office consulted them religiously about the posting of European officers to their states. This was no mere formality, though it sometimes appeared frivolous. De Moubray was posted to Kuala Kangsar in the twenties because Iskandar knew he played polo.<sup>2</sup> The sultan was allowed to have his way in certain local matters such as relations with *penghulus*, especially those with traditional ties to the districts where they held office. When he was ADO Kuala Kangsar, de Moubray was stopped from breaking an unsatisfactory *penghulu* because the sultan defended the man, and the resident did not choose to make an issue of so delicate a question in the sultan's home

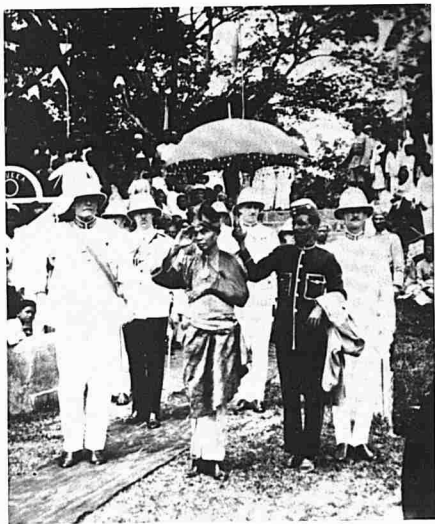


Plate 17. Sir Hugh Clifford (high commissioner), left, and Sultan Alang Iskandar of Perak, Kuala Kangsar, 1928. John (later Sir John) Huggins behind and between the sultan and the umbrella bearer. *Courtesy of Tan Sri Mubin Sheppard.*

base.<sup>3</sup> In their state councils, which they chaired, rulers often wielded considerable power. The sultan of Pahang did his paperwork ahead of time, showed keen interest in what was going on, and took his leadership role seriously. But, like many of his fellow aristocrats, he was improvising and unrealistic about money, making it necessary for residents to watch all expenditures with special care, including his highness's personal accounts.<sup>4</sup>

Generally speaking, council meetings were dull performances that had "little effect on bureaucracy."<sup>5</sup> It was rare for a ruler to show continuing interest in the kind of administrative routine that occupied so much of European officers' time. Even Iskandar, with his English education and profound understanding of British ways, was bored by the minutiae. To Harvey, who had brought him the latest batch of enactments from Kuala Lumpur, each calling for his signature, he remarked with a sigh, "You people make too many laws."<sup>6</sup> The other side of that coin was British interest in and respect for Malay culture. Though they worked hard to train everyone from rulers to office clerks in the rudiments of governmental organization as conceived in Europe, officers did not want Malays to lose their traditions in the process. Maxwell and Iskandar agreed on the importance of bolstering religious faith. "There is reason to fear," wrote Maxwell to all MCS officers, "that the Malays will deteriorate morally if their religion fails to maintain its hold upon them."<sup>7</sup> He urged DOs to cooperate with *kathis* so that, with the support of chiefs and *penghulus*, they would be able to overcome the laxness of the people in religious observances and thwart seditious actions by disaffected members of the community. When royals went on visits to England, their British guides were more attentive to the strict demands of Islam than the Malays were.

The resident's own office work became more and more stereotyped with the passing years, less concerned with initiating and ruling than with carrying out Kuala Lumpur's orders. For many senior men in their last tours of duty, a residency could be little more than an honorific post, a gloss on one's career, or a matter of filling in for someone on leave.<sup>8</sup> Residents came and went rather quickly in most instances, making it hard for them to get more than a superficial grasp of affairs, much less to exert an influence. They were overseers of a bureaucratic apparatus rather than movers and shakers as their precursors had been. Cator found little Brunei in Borneo incomparably more demanding and absorbing than mighty Perak at the other end of the spectrum of MCS glory.<sup>9</sup> Much of what one did was perfunctory. When Thomson visited a Perak district in the late 1920s accompanied by Peel, the chief secretary, the DO had a hard time getting them interested in anything. They did not bother to inspect the office, let alone the files.<sup>10</sup> There was a good deal of committee work and much that was ceremonial. Begging off from attending a meeting of one

of the governor's innumerable committees, Marks told H. E.'s secretary that as resident Selangor he had to chair a gathering of the State Council, run a session of the Malay Regiment Committee, and confer with his opposite number from Perak.<sup>11</sup> There was a stream of visitors from the town, from nearby estates, and from heads of professional and technical departments. Social demands were many and unrelenting. None of this is to say that residents were unimportant in the interwar years. Quite a few stamped their personalities on the states they served in and provided vigorous leadership. But that quality had to be demonstrated in an increasingly complex administrative framework, with residents coordinating at the top rather than playing a personal role on the firing line of everyday work.

To help hold the mechanisms together and provide a linchpin of continuity, each state had a chief of staff called the "secretary to resident." Usually held by a man of some ten to twelve years' service, the post gave good across-the-board training for higher responsibility. It was the SR who got all of the resident's donkey work, seeing everything as it came in, drafting summaries and suggestions for his superior, and taking action after the resident had considered these. He functioned as a coordinator for all administrative officers in the state and, in the resident's name, as a link between them and Kuala Lumpur.<sup>12</sup> He was the custodian of secret and confidential papers, clerk to the state council, and, very importantly, coordinator of postings. As the resident was usually *ex officio* president of the local club, so the SR served as secretary—a job that called on even the more gregarious to summon up all the tact they could to keep intense local societies from undue strain. SRs also did some of the same kinds of general factotum jobs for residents that ADCs did for governors. Most residents were considerate enough not to overload their SRs with excessive duties after hours. But it was not always so. A well-known Pahang resident, who went the standard colonial caricature one better, gave his SR many a trying and overheated evening. The resident insisted that everyone dress for dinner, as he himself did no matter where he was. On one occasion when he and his party were visiting Pekan, his juniors hoped that the great man would relent and allow a measure of comfort to his sweating subordinates at the end of a long day. The SR, H. G. Turner, was prevailed on to approach the resident with a request to this effect. It was no use. "You cannot have dinner without a dinner jacket," snapped the resident.<sup>13</sup>

Jarrett's relations with his resident, Elles, in Perak, were better and were more typical, though Elles's *modus operandi* was a bit strange. The resident dealt with business by inviting his SR to the residency in the Waterfall Gardens at 12:30 every weekday and going through the agenda over two large gin tonics.<sup>14</sup> It was Elles's last tour. He left nearly everything to Jarrett, while keeping a practiced eye on important matters and bringing his own long experience into play whenever he felt so inclined.

Jarrett loved Taiping, though he wondered if the capital should not have been left at Kuala Kangsar, where Low had lived within a stone's throw of the sultan. There, the resident and his staff would have been closer to Ipoh, the main commercial center. But Taiping was pleasant, and its mixed society of planters, miners, and officers of the Burma Rifles gave one a representative picture of the economy and life of the state.

Relations between residents and district officers varied greatly from state to state and according to personalities and styles of work. Some residents left supervision to their SRs, while receiving visits of DOs when they came in on regular business and seeing them on tour. They would read reports from the districts and would ask questions and exert discipline if necessary. Luckham, when DO Rembau, looked on Caldecott, resident Negri Sembilan, with a mixture of respect and apprehension. The resident was always easy, pleasant, and helpful. But he was a highly intelligent and thorough officer who knew local peoples intimately and had clear ideas of what was needed. An appeal had been made against Luckham's decision in a land case. Caldecott heard the appeal in person. He listened patiently to the young officer's rather spirited presentation and then wrote a beautifully composed and brilliantly argued opinion recognizing the merits of what Luckham had said while finding in favor of the Malay official who had lost the first round.<sup>15</sup> It was a matter of seeing the human side, thought the resident, and not being too tied down by precedent or literal interpretations of the law. Caldecott emerged with the regard of his ADO and the gratitude of the Malays, neither side bearing the other a grudge. This stood in contrast to Elles's handling of Hugh Fraser in Perak a year or two later. It had been found that a clerk in Larut, where Fraser was DO, had mishandled land office monies. Neither Fraser nor his immediate predecessors had caught the man. Elles promptly censured Fraser and his ADO, Raja Aman Shah, without going into the circumstances in any detail.<sup>16</sup> Though Fraser, an excellent officer, was rescued by Pepys, the under secretary to government, the case left a bad taste in many mouths.

During the interwar years, there was endless discussion of whether or not the old days of district autonomy were gone forever. Men who had served before the war naturally tended to think so. Peel recalled his omniscient DO in Kinta, E. J. Brewster, in 1910, who had been locally recruited in 1878 and had remained on the Perak coast in one capacity or other ever since. As DO Jelebu in 1913, Stark toured by buggy, did everything himself, and was upbraided by Aldworth, the resident, for asking permission rather than going ahead with the disciplining of planters who had violated the land codes. And M. C. Hay, thinking back to his days as ADO Lipis in 1916, was sure that the informal methods of magistracy were unbeatable. "With everyone in the *kampong* sitting round, one was more likely to arrive at the truth than by standing up in

court and swearing oaths."<sup>17</sup> Others denied that things had changed all that much. W. D. Barron, with one of the most intensive and continuous records of district experience in the MCS, thought that change was more apparent than real. The DO was still in command, seldom bothered by interference from above. He knew everybody in his district, Malay and other, was himself familiar to all, and completely approachable. Professional and technical officers visiting his parish invariably consulted him as the sure possessor of needed information.<sup>18</sup> If bureaucracy in Kuala Lumpur had grown, so had the DO's staff.

Nevertheless, there was concern that paperwork had in fact burgeoned to such an extent that the DO was in danger of losing touch with his people. Would it be possible to restore the old balance by setting up a single board in each district, that would replace the many existing bodies, each with its own tie to Kuala Lumpur?<sup>19</sup> Responses varied. Most officers vehemently denied the alleged loss of touch and insisted that they were as close to their parishioners as ever. It was feared that the creation of yet another committee would only add to the paper. Caldecott, acting chief secretary at the time the question was raised, predicted that some sort of localization would come about eventually. The aim should be approached gradually, step by step, in an experimental way.

In the meantime one functioned within the structure as it was. Districts were classified according to the MCS time-scale grades, from the most important, II, to the least, V, postings being made accordingly. In Negri Sembilan the capital district, Seremban, was a class-II post. Kuala Pilah was a III, being relatively large and diversified and including the royal family's seat at Sri Menanti. Tampin and Port Dickson were IVs, and Rembau and Jelebu were Vs. Newly arrived cadets of the Malay stream were sent up-country immediately, usually to an important FMS district where, ideally, they could be supervised by experienced officers and where they would be exposed to a broad range of duties. In the days before there was an establishment office, commonsense had shown the way. In 1911, T. P. Coe learned that he was posted to Lower Perak where he would serve under the legendary "Tom" Fleming, a locally recruited officer who had begun in 1890 in the Pahang police, having been in the Canadian mouties before that. As the train slowed for Telok Anson station, Coe had no trouble spotting the DO, all twenty stone of him, seated in a special deck chair waiting for his new cadet. Fleming's kindness and willingness to help matched his formidable appearance. He took Coe in as a paying guest in his own house, there being no separate quarters. He taught him the ins and outs of treasury work straight away and sat him on the bench in court to learn by watching. A few days later, having made him read hard at his law books, he left him to it. "You'll make mistakes of course. But there's always the appeal . . . you are gazetted a second class magistrate. Don't exceed your powers."<sup>20</sup>

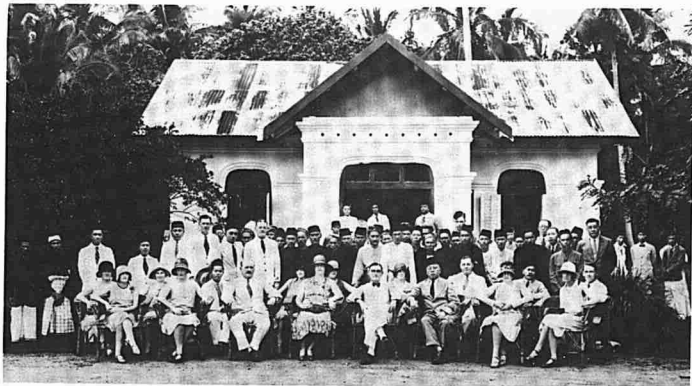


Plate 18. Kedah, c. 1929. Seated third from left, front row is T. W. Clayton, with T. S. Adams standing behind him. Seated behind Clayton and to his right is Tunku Badhishah (later sultan, and uncle to Tunku Abdul Rahman, first prime minister of Malaysia). To Adams's right is Syed Mohammed Idid. Seated third from right, front row, is Tunku Ibrahim (regent). *Courtesy of Royal Commonwealth Society.*



Bryson and Corry also lived with their first DO, T. S. Adams, the former at Batu Gajah in 1921, the latter in Larut two years later. Adams was a very different officer to Fleming. A public school and Oxford man with a distinguished career ahead of him, he was already, at thirty-six, a well-known and somewhat awe-inspiring figure. Highly intelligent, hard working, a fanatic cricketer, he was notoriously the most pro-Malay officer of his generation. He was a lifelong bachelor, "very courteous to ladies in company but seldom willingly seeking this."<sup>21</sup> Some thought him rather a snob. Bryson saw no evidence of unfair treatment of non-Malays by the DO, though he knew that senior Malays in the MCS regarded his excessive tolerance of Malay lapses as dangerous. Later, when he himself dealt leniently with a Malay officer accused of a misdemeanor, Bryson wondered if Adams's early conditioning was not partly responsible.

Some DOs were not terribly interested in green cadets.<sup>22</sup> But most were considerate, perhaps recalling their own days as beginners. At Tampin in 1928, G. M. Kidd saw to it that Luckham carried a relatively light burden of office work so that he could study for his language and law examinations.<sup>23</sup> He arranged a thorough introduction to district affairs, taking the cadet with him on tour from the start, and allowing him to share in the work of inspecting lodging houses and shops, supervising the town board, and auctioning off lots in outlying areas. More than one cadet found himself hearing cases a day or two after arrival, sometimes under supervision, and sometimes not. Court interpreters, usually old enough to be one's father, could be counted on to guide the first steps. In Province Wellesley in 1929, Whitton was put on the bench in a hurry because the DO, Captain Edward Pratt, was himself bringing suit and had to appear as a witness.<sup>24</sup>

If DOs found less time for new men than they would have liked to give, the reason is not far to seek. The central position a DO occupied and the multiplicity of his jobs kept him at full stretch. On bigger and medium-sized stations, he was first among a number of equals usually including a police officer and perhaps one or two other Europeans of comparable seniority to his. If there was a garrison or a training unit, there would be soldiers about. During their junior years, officers in various branches tended to be great friends, joining together in sport and club life and cooperating on matters of common concern under the direction of their respective superiors. Later on when all were senior, they would usually be in agreement once more, sharing the perspectives that long experience provides. In between, when they were in their thirties and working in places where everyone knew everyone else, and where projects of widely varying kinds were going forward, relations were not as easy. The DO was in charge. There were times when the rules or his own judgment

compelled him to say no to a colleague or to give instructions that did not sit well. It was then that the phrase "heaven born"—borrowed from India and applied to the MCS—might be used as an epithet, implying an attitude of arrogance on the part of administrative officers towards their fellows in other branches. DOs seemed to go by the book, said a policeman, sometimes opposing what one wanted to do, and we "hated the guts of the MCS" on those occasions.<sup>25</sup> There was sometimes bad feeling too between MCS officers and members of the legal service, particularly at state and federal headquarters. The latter tended to resent the fact that administrators were at the top of the heap, taking precedence over everyone regardless of professional qualifications. For his part the officer whose pet schemes had to be vetted by a member of the bar would understandably bridle at legalisms that frustrated his plans.<sup>26</sup>

In his office the DO was chief bureaucrat of the district, assisted by a clerical staff that was quite sizable in the bigger places. These included Malay assistant collectors in land offices, chief clerks who were often Chinese, and hosts of subordinates drawn from all three of the main racial groups. MCS officers with African service invariably remarked on the comparatively high competence of Malayan office staffs.<sup>27</sup> Luckham learned more about land office work from his Chinese clerk and his Malay assistant in Lower Perak than from anyone above him. Their detailed knowledge, years of experience, and long service in one place made such men invaluable. In smaller posts, one got to know them better than in the large Perak and Selanger districts with their major land offices. Cunyngham-Brown had unqualified respect for Jack Fernandez, his chief clerk in Jasin and one of the most able and devoted of the Malacca Portuguese in the service of that old settlement. A half step higher was Roy Power Lewis, a Eurasian who had the rank of ADO in the straits civil service and who epitomized the acute, hypersensitive NCOs of Malaya. Proud and embittered, such men sometimes felt that they stood on the soil of a country that would never accept them as its own and that there was no hope of full recognition from the cadre of Europeans above them. One could learn from such men and try to be a friend to them. It was never possible to get round their tortured ambivalence about the lords of the world and their helpless resentment at having to live out their lives in a cultural and social twilight zone. At Seremban a few months before, he had met Ramasamy Iyer, a chief clerk in the general clerical service of the FMS. Having just returned from India, Cunyngham-Brown knew his job as assistant controller of labor. What he got from Iyer was a superb conditioning in the "rules and regulations, the etiquette of correspondence, interoffice protocol, and official procedures."<sup>28</sup>

The DO who spent more time in his office than out of it was not unknown. Nor was he esteemed. Nothing was more essential to sound

administration than constant touring throughout one's district, acquiring intimate and comprehensive knowledge of the people and their lives and devoting thought and time to their welfare. Idle moments there were, especially in one-man outposts. "Spent [the] morning cleaning shells," noted Kempe one day in Upper Perak.<sup>29</sup> More typically, men felt that there were not enough hours in the day. Coming to Alor Gajah on the west coast fresh from his Trengganu experience, Sheppard soon saw that the people expected him to do everything, quite simply because the DO always had done, as far back as anyone could remember.<sup>30</sup> He ran the land office, heard cases in court, worked hard on the encouragement of appropriate crops and animal husbandry, on hygiene, rubber restriction, road maintenance, school inspection, irrigation, and on the siting of public buildings. He broke in a new ADO. His social obligations as head of the district administration were heavy and constant: attending weddings and funerals, calling in at the Chinese Club for an orange squash, attending a Christmas Eve dance in neighboring Jasin, presiding over the celebration of the King's twenty-fifth jubilee, introducing the people to a traditional *wayang kulit* theatrical performance by players from the east coast, chairing a debate by clerks in the recreation club, on the proposition that "it is better to be stationed in a town than in the country," and observing fatalistically that virtually everyone supported the affirmative. Matters of Malay custom and even religion were by no means beyond his scope. He instructed a *penghulu* to make announcements in the mosque about candidates for local offices, heard an appeal by a *kathi* on a divorce case, refused to appoint an Afghan to a *sidang*'s post because this would put him in line for a *penghuluship*, both of which offices he thought should be reserved for the locally born, spoke with an ousted imam about not holding services in the district, and instructed his *penghulus* to see to the care and preservation of ancient Malay monuments. He arbitrated among the Khehs, Cantonese, and Malays who were arguing about order of precedence in public ceremonies and took charge of a mass meeting of the Better Living Society, a Malay social reform group, at which he approved restrictions on wedding-days, on numbers of cows and buffaloes to be slaughtered, and on the scale of dowries and presents of rice and eggs. There were innumerable talks and joint inspections with fellow European officers of the Chinese Protectorate, the labor, medical, and public works departments, the police, and the legal service, and regularly with his superior, the resident councillor in Malacca. He did what he could to encourage the Boy Scouts, and he boosted the agricultural show and interracial football and badminton.

At the center of his universe were the *kampong* Malays—the people whom Clifford and Adams had found so maddeningly attractive and whom Morkill, over the border in Kuala Pilah, called "nature's gentle-

men."<sup>31</sup> On his tours, Sheppard had ample opportunity to speak with them directly in fields, in *padis*, in villages and schools, in police and military units, and in chance encounters. One morning, he met a boy with an ulcerated foot and ordered his father to stop using a home remedy and take the boy to the hospital. He was often called on to provide protection for people notorious for their easygoing ways and their improvidence, though one time, he was surprised and delighted to learn that a Malay butcher had done so well that his Chinese competitor had gone out of business. "For once, a really hard-headed Malay!"<sup>32</sup> Over the long run, it was through *penghulus* that his main efforts were made. On first taking over the district, he gave high priority to the jacking up of these crucially placed headmen. Having learned to read Jawi in Trengganu he was able to plow through their monthly diaries and find out what each was up to and how he saw his job. Now and again he could do one of them a favor, enhancing his own prestige with both the *penghulu* and the people he had authority over. In one *kampung*, he settled a land dispute that had dragged on for years despite many attempts by the *penghulu* to resolve it. The district was small enough so that he could come to know the people well and not have to depend on *penghulus* for information. His standards for judging their performance were so well known that the head *penghulu*, a famous incompetent, resigned voluntarily rather than undergo the public disgrace of being removed by the DO.

There was always a tendency for some Malay officials to backslide, reverting to the bad old days when peasants were little more than slaves. In the early twenties Morkill discovered that a recently installed young *tungku* in Kuala Pilah was abusing his privileges by sending policemen on private errands and having peasants brought before him on artificial charges. When reprimanded, he came to the DO's office accompanied by a friend and hit Morkill on the shoulder with a heavy stick, "for which he was carpeted and made to apologize in the presence of the . . . resident."<sup>33</sup> Throughout the British years the gap between the rulers and the peasants had widened, being filled by alien men and methods. In the process everyone had changed and adapted. By the interwar years, no one could remember a time when there had been any other system than the Anglo-Malay one they saw in operation every day. The governmental mechanisms ticked along quietly, so much so in fact that minor ruffles of the kind Morkill experienced were seen as curiosities.<sup>34</sup>

Since the Malay stream in the MCS was so much larger than the other two, in spite of the Malays being a minority, the question was raised rather often whether the service in general was biased in favor of the Malays and against other races. One obvious answer, that the other two of the three main racial groups had special government departments to look after them and that the work of officers in the Malay stream was never

confined solely to Malay affairs, did not entirely satisfy the critics. One Chinese Protectorate cadet went so far as to say that in the whole period from Pangkor to 1942, the Chinese and Indians were considered "beyond the pale of administrative interest or responsibility."<sup>35</sup> There was no doubt that some officers had strong preferences. Haynes, C. C. Brown, and Adams stood out, perhaps, though they were not the only pro-Malays. Yet the very intensity and extremism of their views draws attention to the moderation of the majority. Occasionally someone would make an intemperate remark that might have seemed to reveal deep prejudice. When the Chinese were rioting in Perak and Selangor in 1912 and there was talk of calling out the Malay States Volunteer Reserve, Kempe, then a green cadet, thought "it would be gorgeous to have to go at those Cantonese."<sup>36</sup> Morkill had a run-in with a protectorate colleague during the rubber slump of the twenties after he arrested gangs of unemployed Chinese who were roaming his district committing robberies and breaking into lodging houses. When the protectorate officer complained that he was stretching the law by dealing with the coolies as vagrants, Morkill answered, "I was responsible for public safety in the district and he was not."<sup>37</sup> But neither Kempe nor Morkill showed himself to be anti-Chinese or unreasonably pro-Malay year by year. That the Chinese and Indians remained separate from the Malays—and from each other—and did not receive representation in governmental bodies in proportion to their numbers is undeniable. Yet, the two communities hardly protested. And they were secure in the equal treatment they got from DOs and magistrates. If officers of the Malay stream—the "old stiff," as one of their own number put it—failed to understand the Chinese and Indians as well as protectorate and labor men did, that did not cause them to be unjust.<sup>38</sup>

In the meantime, there was the never ending job of trying to protect the Malays against themselves. Cooperative societies—begun in 1922—were one means of addressing the problem of Malay improvidence as well as their victimization at the hands of Indian chettiers and Chinese shopkeepers. Over the years, a new kind of debt slavery had come into being. Thousands of peasants had lost their land or fallen so deeply into debt that they had little chance of ever improving their positions. The pioneers of the cooperative idea were Alexander Cavendish, Robert Boyd, and L. D. (later Sir David) Gammans. Boyd started in the labor stream, and the other two in the Malay. The movement eventually won support from Sir George Maxwell, from Malay royals, and from planters, and it made a strong appeal to Indians on estates as well as to *kampong* Malays. Its first superintendent under Cavendish was Leo Vaz, an Indian, who worked mainly with members of the Malay Administrative Service in the initial stages.<sup>39</sup> Progress was slow. Mohamed Noordin, a Malay cooperatives

officer in Negri Sembilan, reported that one of the local societies he had helped to start was soon liquidated and its residual funds used to repair a mosque.<sup>40</sup> Hawkins, propagandizing for cooperatives a few years later, spoke of being greeted with the "usual blank expressions" as he tried to explain how the societies worked and what benefits they could provide if people would only become more thrifty.<sup>41</sup> Slowly the notion caught on and by the early thirties it had become enough accepted to survive the rubber slump. The societies were looked on by some MCS officers as socially divisive forces, driving a wedge between the Malays and the Chinese who had dealt with one another in a mutually satisfactory way for generations. Most seemed to feel that the principle was right and that in time Malay peasants and Indian estate workers stood to gain.<sup>42</sup>

Such efforts were marginal. At the center of administrative life was the many-faceted work of the land office, by which the government defined and exemplified its basic position on economic development, on race relations, and, to a considerable degree, on the rationale of district administration as such. An effective officer, one who stood a chance of rising to the heights, was first and foremost an experienced and successful land office man. To European businessmen, to Malays entering government service or engaging in agricultural work, and to Chinese whose enterprises, from humble shops to great estates and thriving mines, were all subject to regulations and rates, the land office was a controlling instrument of incomparable importance. In the nineteenth century, a political unit was reckoned successful—Penang and Malacca were so considered at one point and Singapore was not—according to the revenues produced by its land office.<sup>43</sup> Sir William Maxwell's 1891 enactment was perhaps the most compelling single piece of legislation to be passed in the whole period from Pangkor to the turn of the century, and its major revisions in 1903 and 1926 were comparable in their effects on the country at large. Conversely it was in the reports of land offices that the impress of a great economic crisis or trend would be most accurately and comprehensively reflected.<sup>44</sup>

The instructions given to land officers show the scope and importance of the work.<sup>45</sup> In the cases of companies applying for land, they were to make sure that each firm was properly registered and that its land description had been checked. On their own authority they could approve applications from Asiatics for up to ten acres of agricultural land, which was to be alienated in tracts, not in isolated blocks. No land was to go to Malays who were not natives of the *mukim* concerned, a regulation designed to discourage people from wandering from place to place. In areas where there were big estates, enough land was to be reserved so that small Malay settlements would be protected. Farming on high ridges was to be avoided as it led to erosion. Land suitable for wet rice was to be reserved

for natives. There were instructions about fees, mining leases, the duties of *penghulus*, and temporary occupation licenses, access roads, auctions, reclaiming of land not properly used, and investigations and reports to higher authority. Through it all ran a central theme: the competing demands of Malay rights and economic development, involving large foreign enterprises as well as smaller ones, usually Chinese. If at times it seemed that nothing would be allowed to stand in the way of rubber and tin, the record also shows a constant concern for the peasants. It was the land officer who kept the balance.

In most districts, the main task was dealing with Malays who were asking for permission to undertake various kinds of farming schemes. These ranged from minute, individual plans through family efforts to good-sized projects involving large numbers. A peasant wanted a loan to buy a buffalo, which the DO refused after talking with the *penghulu* and satisfying himself that the purchase would be unsound at that point. Two Malays applied for a small plot in a Malay reservation where they wanted to plant rubber and were told they would have to bid for it at public auction. Others wanting land for *padi* were granted permission after the DO got the agreement of the forests department in whose reserves the land was situated, and after reference to the state council. Another *padi* application was held up because the *penghulu* knew that the desired land was a good source of firewood and if too much of it were used for other purposes, the local Malays would be in the hands of Chinese merchants.<sup>46</sup>

In their dealings with Chinese applicants, DOs and collectors of land revenue sometimes found the going relatively easy and straightforward. An established miner with a large work force wanted more land in a section that had already been approved by the warden of mines.<sup>47</sup> Other cases—especially those involving squatters, could drag on for years and saddle land offices with a volume of paperwork that was wildly out of proportion to their importance. DOs were continually discovering that actual occupants were not the ones who were listed on office registers, and also that ejection of unlawful inhabitants was not a practical possibility, particularly when nobody objected or when legal tenants cooperated with the offenders.<sup>48</sup> Even more time-consuming were cases of "conversions" in which historical information had to be collected on land being used for purposes other than those that had been approved. Similarly demanding were cases in which rubber and tin companies wanted land close to agricultural plots that could be damaged, by tailings from mines for example, if investigations were not thorough enough, or cases in which DOs had to weigh up the conflicting claims of *kampong* Malays and a hydroelectric scheme, a road-building project, or a public works department reserve.<sup>49</sup> Where Malay reservations were concerned, there was also the question of whether or not it was good for the Malays to be kept apart from the mainstream of social development for lengthy periods. A con-

ference of Perak officers examined the question in detail, agreeing that, in principle, "a reserve is a place where Malays can live together and preserve their customs."<sup>50</sup> But what if reserved land was found suitable for rubber? Apart from the argument about Malay rights versus development, should Malays be barred from joining in the prosperity of the country? Charles Wilson, serving in Kinta at the time, thought that "rubber to the Malay ought to be like the pig to the Irishman—what pays the rent."<sup>51</sup> A similar discussion in Selangor, centered, this time, on tin, ended in a rough consensus that gave mining a clear priority.<sup>52</sup> Reservations should consist of agricultural land mainly. If tin was later found there in quantity, the state government would have to decide whether or not to take back the tin-bearing areas from the reservations. Everyone knew that if lands were not reserved speculators would start an unwanted trafficking in land, whereas, if too much was reserved, the tin economy could suffer. By the late thirties most DOs felt that Malay reservations did have their uses, especially as guarantors of adequate agricultural land. On the other hand some thought that, in the aggregate, they could become a kind of national whipsnade, stunting the social growth of the Malays without protecting them from the curse of indebtedness.<sup>53</sup>

Though *kampong* Malays seemed to change slowly, DOs were in touch with others who were becoming more involved in European ways every year. Land offices in the bigger districts all had settlement officers or Malay assistants who were members of the Malay Administrative Service. Winstedt took a rather patronizing view of them in the early years. They did not seem to be all that well motivated or efficient, and their existence meant that fewer European officers came to know the people and the language as well as their predecessors had done. Moreover, Malay assistants, unlike British officers, were apt to be deaf to the complaints of the common people. This would be bad enough with a vigorous, self-reliant peasantry. It was that much worse with *kampong* Malays, who were usually content "to lie in the cradle of custom and [not] grumble if it [was] not a bed of roses."<sup>54</sup> The DO Port Dickson blamed the MCS, in part, for not being serious enough about the recruitment of competent Malays and for putting Malay assistants into any old job rather than giving thought to what kinds of work they would be suited to.<sup>55</sup> Morkill was sympathetic, but he caught two assistants mishandling funds, and had praise for only one on his station.<sup>56</sup> Conditions slowly improved. By the late thirties there were refresher courses for assistants, most of whom were by then much-valued members of land office staffs.<sup>57</sup> The main trouble was that the work was boring and the prospects dim. Few had much chance of rising into the MCS itself.<sup>58</sup>

One who did and who proceeded on to a brilliant career crowned by a knighthood and high office in independent Malaya was Mahmud bin Mat. Born in Pahang in 1894, he was the son of an impecunious courtier who



enjoyed the favor of the sultan but lived in a style not far above that of the common people in his home district a few miles upstream from Pekan.<sup>59</sup> The family's diet, housing, dress, and sanitary arrangements were much like everyone else's; nor were they any more immune to disease than their peasant neighbors. Education was the principal divider. Mahmud and the village boys started out together, taught by a *haji* from Perak who came to the family house for the purpose. Some of his friends went on with him afterward to a village school that had been started only a few years before. But Mahmud took the only prize given in his year, and this together with his family's position, won him entry to Malay College in Kuala Kangsar in 1909—an honor and an experience that set him off from his village peers from then on.

Even before leaving home, however, Mahmud had begun to question the values and habits of traditional life. Though the British had officially put an end to slavery, it persisted under another name. Peasants were pressed into service whenever the royals and the local chiefs of Pahang wanted their labor. Waste and frivolity seemed to characterize the existence of the upper classes. There was a constant round of celebrations, gambling parties, and other indulgences that overburdened the peasantry at the same time as it corrupted and enfeebled their rulers. The Chinese he looked on with ambivalence, respecting their industriousness and fearing its effects on his own people. As for the British, they were Olympian figures with everyone's destinies in their hands.

At college one realized that a watershed had been passed and that there would be no turning back. Parents, even of the well-born, did not favor this foreign education, seeing clearly that it would cut their children off from the home base forever and transform them into alien beings or, at best, into men with a divided allegiance. Mahmud's eyes widened when he reached Singapore on his way to the west coast: noise, crowds, rickshaws, gharries, motor cars, dozens of ships at anchor, a multiplicity of races and activities that made Pekan, and even Kuantan, seem parochial in the extreme. In college, everything was strange at first. Mr. Hargreaves, the headmaster, spoke no Malay and the new boys no English. Yet the head was such a commanding personality that with his thin voice and gentle ways he was accorded an instant and spontaneous obedience. There were daily prayers led by an imam. Otherwise, Europe dominated. The food was strange and mediocre; sports were obligatory. Everyone rode bikes. There were sham military exercises and signaling practice. Schoolwork was incessant, and so was an unobtrusive and thoroughly effective moral pressure from the masters, backed by Sultan Idris, that slowly and surely turned them all into new paths of thinking. Mahmud was made responsible for the eleven-year-old son of the sultan of Pahang, called by the DO Pekan "the spoilt darling."<sup>60</sup> He admitted that the description had

been accurate at first. But after a year in Kuala Kangsar, the boy had shaped up along with everyone else.

Again Mahmud stood first in his class, passing the seventh standard in 1912. He was sad to leave the Malay College with its "happy corporal's life [and] many friends."<sup>61</sup> But in 1915, the year of his departure, there was an exciting prospect—a scheme for Malay subordinate officers. While waiting for a posting to settlement work, he volunteered for duty in the Pekan office. The routine was intolerably dull. In a few months, however, he was sent to Kuala Pilah under Winstedt, where he gained an immediate sense of the importance of his position due to its legal powers in land purchases. Already he was aiming higher. By passing the law examination and the other tests given to cadets, he hoped to move up in to the MCS, a possibility that the war had brought into the realm of serious discussion for the first time. It took nearly a decade to achieve this. Meanwhile, he worked in the secretariat in Kuala Lumpur and held district posts comparable to those occupied by junior Europeans, acquiring practical experience of exactly the right kind and a healthy measure of self-confidence as he went along. One of his DOs paid him the compliment of asking for his help in drawing up a plan for the mechanics of bringing Malay officers into the MCS.<sup>62</sup>

After entering class V of the service in 1925, Mahmud spent sixteen years in the districts, ending as DO Batang Padang at the outbreak of the war. The striking thing about his account of these years is that it sounds so much like what Europeans cadets wrote in the same period. His ties to home and family remained strong, though even in that part of his life he continually took a different course from the one his boyhood friends were taking. He married a girl of his choice rather than accepting a bride selected by his father. His tastes in sport and recreation were increasingly European. Above all, his judgments have a familiar MCS ring. He disliked tough, inconsiderate superiors and stood up to them in a way that called for courage and could have damaged his career. When a DO in Pekan wanted him to follow Malay tradition by picking a headman from his own family, he refused and won the point. A tactless DO in Klang asked why he kept both his wives in the same house—the other lady was actually his sister-in-law—and he replied with dignity that he could not imagine what would make the officer ask such a question. "I thought to myself that if that was the kind of thing . . . this old DO concerned himself [with] it was not surprising that he could not tackle his own work properly."<sup>63</sup> He saluted officers he liked and was grateful to a DO who saw that he got a houseboat for rent-collecting. The secretary to resident Lipis, Gerald Hawkins, he considered "a man with a golden heart," who looked solemn and was taciturn but worked hard and was utterly selfless.<sup>64</sup> He never forgot E. V. G. Day and J. S. Macpherson, who insisted

that Mahmud and his wife move in with them when their own house was flooded out.

He drove a car of his own, went on shooting parties with European fellow officers whom he called by their first names, and got a "home" leave to England, where he was warmly entertained by MCS friends and where he attended the Oxford summer school on colonial administration. "A wide variety of topics was discussed, including indirect rule, which seemed to me to be quite intriguing."<sup>65</sup> His remarks on the Chinese and Indians, and even on his own people, were very like what European DOs were saying. From his writings and from the comments of men who knew him, there emerges an impression that this was so because he had become a genuinely bicultural man. His Europeanism was more than skin deep.

Nor was he unique. Hamzah bin Abdullah, several years his senior, was much esteemed throughout the MCS as a thoroughly dependable, steady and capable man. His correspondence sounds in no way different from what his European colleagues wrote. When he was in charge of Ulu Selangor in the late thirties he treated his British ADO exactly as the junior had been treated by Hamzah's European predecessor. "I want to see the *penghulus* when they come in for their monthly salaries . . . please tell [the] new *penghulu* of Kuala Kubu that I expect better and more chatty reports from him in the future . . . why has [he] not submitted any report for October and November?"<sup>66</sup>

Not every British officer approved of having Malays in the MCS or thought their performance respectable. Cobden-Ramsay harked back to Wilkinson's views at the turn of the century, criticizing the government's assumption that only Malays of good family should be recruited. Too many members of the ruling classes were lazy and intellectually inferior, insisting on their privileges rather than exercising the responsible leadership that theoretically entitled them to their rights.<sup>67</sup> It was hard to shrug off cases of blatant corruption.<sup>68</sup> S. W. Jones was not hostile to the idea of having Malay officers, but he felt that few of them could achieve the independent-mindedness of their British colleagues. They lacked the necessary character and drive, and under them district administration tended to lose its salt and its essential elan.<sup>69</sup> Others had praise for particular officers. Not surprisingly, Mahmud stood high on many lists. "A very fine chap," wrote Bingham; "an outstanding officer" added Dawson, his BA in Perlis.<sup>70</sup> As always, there were some who blamed the MCS for doing too little to bring the Malays along. Hayward thought that there was no more important task than watching out for Malays of promise, men who had the imagination to be cultural brokers, interpreting their people to the British and vice versa.<sup>71</sup> It was impossible for Goode to forget that a Malay officer, Dato' Hussein, the father of a future prime minister, had initiated him into the mysteries of court work.<sup>72</sup> To

some, the clinching argument in support of recruiting Malays was that nationalist feeling of the Indian kind was virtually unknown in the years before the Japanese conquest.<sup>73</sup>

The question of how much social mixing there was between the MCS and non-Europeans is a complicated one. There was great informality in nineteenth-century Selangor, with Malays, Europeans, Chinese, and, to a lesser extent, Indians—all of them male—seeing one another in clubs and on playing fields, as well as in meetings of the state council, in business houses, and out in the districts where daily work brought them together. Even in those days, however, it began to be felt rather early that Europeans needed places where they would be able to fall back on their own habits and ways of thought in leisure time. This was especially true when wives appeared. "It became politic," wrote Swettenham, "... to supply at the headquarters of every district a reading room where all Europeans could find journals and books and where they could meet on common ground."<sup>74</sup> The government constructed the clubs and contributed an annual subscription, the remaining costs being met by membership dues. Later on, hill stations were built, as at Simla in India, to provide places where short local vacations could be taken, away from the oppressive heat and insect-borne diseases of the river valleys and coasts where most officers were stationed. Bukit Fraser, just inside Pahang above Kuala Kubu in Selangor, was small. In the early twenties plans were made for a larger development in the Cameron Highlands at the northwestern tip of Pahang overlooking central Perak to the west.<sup>75</sup>

Such places helped relieve the tedium of the daily grind and offered a change of air and outlook. By the interwar years, clubs and hill stations had become focal points of European social life, making it seem at times that people could live almost as their families did in England, in societies made up of their own kind during all but office hours. For children this was not possible. If they were not sent home at early ages they faced disadvantages in health, education, and social development by contrast with their peers in the United Kingdom. But the departure of the children and of men going to their jobs every weekday created a problem for the women. Many had resources of imagination and drive that allowed them to create interesting and useful roles for themselves in a strange land. For others, boredom was more oppressive than it would have been at home. Many did not respond happily and with interest to the new culture as their husbands did, having language examinations to pass and being deeply involved with local peoples all day. Without comparable challenges wives were often hard put to fill their hours with anything but trivia. "In the house the cook does all the culinary work, houseboys do the cleaning, *syces* drive the car or groom the horses, the gardener does all the hard labour in the garden and an *ayah* or *amah* looks after the baby."<sup>76</sup> Bridge,

tennis, and golf went only so far. Not every wife had the qualifications or the inventiveness to find some sort of job. In such circumstances it was not surprising that families would be subjected to strains, added to by flirtations and alcoholic excess that are found everywhere but can be more troublesome than usual in the tropics.

Clubs and sport were important to most officers, providing the athletically inclined with opportunities to keep fit and offering comfortable meeting places where one's friends in business, the professions, and the other services could be seen in a relaxed atmosphere and where the little games of status could be played out in ways that often appeared less rigid than in the workaday world or that emphasized different criteria. The kings of sport, of whom Malaya had more than its share, were not, after all, the same men who guided the destinies of the great firms in Singapore and Kuala Lumpur or whose cars flew little union jacks in Taiping, Lipis, and Seremban. On the *padang*, junior officers could remind themselves and onlookers, too, of glorious days at university. Much as one loved the country, the people, and the work, cricket and football were English. So were the beer or the gin that came after, the billiard table, the magazines, the prints on the wall. Clubs held Malaya together in a way. "A good story or a flash of wit originating in Ipoh would be in Penang, Kuala Lumpur and Singapore next day. Some members were bound to be travelling north or south and clubs were inevitable ports of call. Government business was occasionally transacted in them. Caustic minutes from the top led in one state to a regular meeting on Friday in the club . . . to draft a suitable reply. The combined talent and wit was quite deadly."<sup>77</sup>

But some found the club resistible. Rituals became a bore rather soon, especially in smaller places. "I can now quote verbatim the [sports] organizer's concluding speech before he has made it."<sup>78</sup> Newly arrived juniors, fresh from university, might see the intellectual attractions of a planter-dominated club as somewhat limited.<sup>79</sup> Not a few of the older DOs looked on them as fit places for children and planters rather than for busy men like themselves. It was possible to discover wives who were bored by them.<sup>80</sup> Those who disliked the racial bar that came down from earlier times—especially young cadets, but also a number of their seniors—tended to be critical of exclusively European clubs on that account. As chief secretary, Maxwell told FMS officers not to bring Malays into clubs, assuring them that natives did not wish it anyhow, a notion that was not entirely lacking in foundation and may have made sense in the memorandum it appeared in, but which conflicts with what Mahmud bin Mat wrote in the same time period.<sup>81</sup> In the early 1930s Whitton was discreetly told that he had committed a gaffe by including in a dinner party at the E



Plate 19. Lake Gardens, Kuala Lumpur, 1916. Left to right: A. W. Just (collector of land revenue, Kuala Lumpur), W. A. White (superintendent, posts and telegraphs), E. M. Baker (assistant treasurer, FMS), A. (later Sir Andrew) Caldecott (assistant secretary, federal secretariat), Mr. Griffith. *Courtesy of Royal Commonwealth Society.*

and O Hotel in Penang two ladies "whose antecedents included a slight non-European element."<sup>82</sup> In fact, however, the bar was never totally effective throughout the whole country. In the unfederated states, inter-racial clubs were sometimes the first to be founded. Sultan Ibrahim of Johore was not the man to tolerate social or other institutions that excluded the ruling class, not to mention himself and his family, and, in fact, he was not above closing the door to Europeans of whom he disapproved. Malay members of the MCS were welcomed to FMS clubs in the twenties, and royals before that. Sport brought the races together from the first and did not go through a segregated phase as some clubs did. One of the reasons Morkill loved Tampin in the twenties was that the cricket team he played on included Eurasians, Indians, Ceylonese, a Sikh bowler, and a Japanese wicket keeper.

Towards the end of the twenties officers who had been disturbed by what they saw as a widening gap of understanding between the British and many of the younger men—Malay and other—began to ponder ways of bringing the races together again. Malays, Chinese, and Indians who had been to Europe for higher education, somewhat ironically, were the ones who seemed most disaffected. Gilman and several of his colleagues formed a committee in Kuala Lumpur and decided to start a Rotary Club. There was some hesitation about employing that instrument since it was alien and had a reputation which in some respects was not entirely approved of. What appealed was its secular, nonpolitical approach, stressing unity within communities and joint efforts of social service without regard to members' origins. The clubs opposed cliquiness, issuing tickets with place numbers at each meeting so that one never knew whom one would be seated next to at table. A quota system was used in order to assure that all major trades, professions, and callings would be represented, and the balance thus provided was kept by accepting new members only when openings occurred in the appropriate category.<sup>83</sup> Caldecott was the first president of the Kuala Lumpur club, and several successive residents were members. Blackwell was a founder member of the Taiping club and served as its secretary for a number of years. Programs varied. Whitehouse spoke to the Malacca club on horse racing in Kelantan. A year or two later, when Sheppard was president, the same group heard a paper on Shakespeare's *Brutus*.<sup>84</sup> A Chinese member, Hock Huat, entertained the club on a tour of his pineapple-canning plant. Eurasian and Indian members lectured together on the history of tennis. The resident councillor, W. M. Millington, joined, and Tan Cheng Lock, the settlement's most distinguished public man, became the club's new president. The Kuala Lumpur club supported a home for vagrant boys, who were trained in useful work and were visited by priests from their respective racial groups.

An even more down-to-earth way of meeting people from other races and working with them closely for extended periods was to join one of the volunteer military units. There was considerable democracy in this, many European MCS officers serving in the ranks under men whose civilian standing was lower than theirs. Mahmud bin Mat joined as a private in Tampin under Tengku Abdul Rahman, a friend of Malay College days, was later commissioned a second lieutenant when posted as ADO Lipis and afterwards served under a bank manager and ex-captain who commanded the unit at Kuantan. Sheppard found that Malays in Alor Gajah were glad to join because the law of female succession meant that there was nothing to hold them in their *mukims*. Young Eurasians in Malacca enjoyed serving in their own special company, usually commanded by a European MCS officer with the *ex officio* rank of captain. When he held the

office, Whitehouse cheerfully admitted that the NCOs and most of the men knew more about Lewis guns than he did. Morale was excellent.<sup>85</sup> "I joined the force partly as a means of getting to know the scattered planters in the district better," wrote Turner, "and because in the event of [trouble] I should be heavily involved in . . . administrative arrangements for the protection of families."<sup>86</sup> Many commented on the masonic solidarity of the volunteers—a sort of throwback to the time when Malays, Europeans, Chinese, and others slogged along together through the daily drill, took meals together, laughed and groaned at the same things, and were brothers under the skin. As war clouds gathered across the bay in Cambodia, this was thought to be a good thing for the future as well as a happy circumstance of the moment.

### Notes

1. G. Cator, "I Remember: A Malayan Cadet in 1907," *British Malaya*, Feb. 1941. In my talk with Sir Geoffrey, 25 Sept. 1970, he went into some detail on the subject. See also the sultan's letter to A. S. Haynes, 26 Jan. 1939, RCS. The sultan makes clear that the basis of his own regard for the British was his confidence that they would continue to assure the primacy of the Malays. See also Bryson's "Negri Sembilan," n.d., written 1969 (Bryson papers, in author's possession).
2. See de Moubray to I. Lloyd Philips, 17 Jan. 1967, Bryson papers. See also Watherston memorandum on postings, to author, Oct. 1970.
3. M. L. Wynne, *Triad and Tabut* (Singapore: Government Printer, 1941), pp. 491-92. See also Wynne's observations on Raja Chulan's activities in Telok Anson, the former base of his father, ex-sultan Abdullah (p. 509).
4. H. G. Turner's memoirs, p. 156. Kempe is more critical than Turner (diary, 1932 ff., p. 36 ff.). Peel wrote that Sultan Abu Bakar's predecessor, Sultan Abdullah, had not been of much help in the 1927 flood crisis (recollections, pp. 114-16) and that council meetings in Selangor earlier had been a farce, through which the Malays dozed (p. 39).
5. Bryson, commenting on Negri Sembilan in the 1930s when he was SR there (*Memories of Negri Sembilan*, n.d., written in 1969).
6. Harvey's recollections, p. 1. Kempe's diaries and Turner's memoirs are of special interest on relations between British officers and rulers.
7. Circular, 18 Sept. 1922, Whitehouse papers. A British consul in Jidda noted in these years that Malaya was much more concerned about the welfare of her pilgrims journeying to Mecca than Arab governments were about theirs. See Sir R. Bullard, *The Camels Must Go* (London: Faber and Faber, 1961), p. 127.
8. See governor to secretary of state, 20 Nov. 1920, 717/5. In this dispatch, Guillemard admits that he would not have let A. H. Lemon go to Selangor if he had known that it would be more than a sinecure at the end of his career.
9. Recollections, taped by Bryson, 2 Apr. 1969. By the same token, Gilman found the Selangor residency an easy job after being controller of labor (memoirs, p. 79).



10. Kempe's diary, 1927, p. 51. This was in Upper Perak.
11. File 96, 9 Dec. 1920, M., to Haynes. Kempe wrote (diary, 20 Feb. 1933, when he was acting resident Perak), "R. S. P. Walker in to see me . . . on nothing in particular."
12. It should be noted that there were considerable differences among the four Federated States; SRs had much more to do in Perak and in Selangor than in the others.
13. H. G. Turner, memoirs, p. 153. The resident was C. C. Brown. On Brown, see Harvey's recollections, and Blackwell's "Malay Curry," CRP.
14. Jarrett's recollections, 4.
15. To author, 3 Nov. 1974. The case was heard in 1929. Caldecott favored the flexibility of customary law over the more rigid case law.
16. File 2016, 1931, M. See also J. M. Gullick's excellent notes on the methods of W. A. Gordon-Hall, a 1919 cadet under whom Gullick served in Negri Sembilan after the war. To author, 11 Dec. 1974.
17. Taped interview by Bryson, n.d. See also Aldworth's comments on Stark, file 568, 1914, Negri Sembilan secretariat files, M., and Stark's "Jelebu Memories," 1913-1914, RCS.
18. See Barron's recollections, to Bryson, 5 July 1969. From 1911 to 1929, Barron held district posts in Ulu Langat, Kuala Langat, Kroh, Kuala Kubu, Rembau, Tampin, Temerloh, Lipis, Batu Pahat, Kuala Selangor, and Seremban.
19. See file 2263, 1931, M., a symposium of officers' views in response to F. W. Douglas's suggestions to the governor. Also Maxwell, note 7 above; and file 160, 1922, M., giving the opinions of Frost, Berkeley, Worthington, Crichton, and de Moubray; Clifford's memorandum to residents, 23 Mar. 1928, RCS; and the report of the FMS retrenchment committee, 3 Oct. 1932, 717/91.
20. Coe's recollections, RCS. Stark's experiences under R. J. B. Clayton in Ulu Langat the same year were similar (notes by Bryson, 20 June 1969), as were Blackwell's under S. W. Jones at Lipis in 1921 ("Malay Curry," CRP).
21. Bryson, "Theodore Samuel Adams," RCS. And see Corry's interview transcript, CRP.
22. P. S. Williams paid no attention to D. A. Sommerville at Kuala Kangsar in 1932 (to Bryson, n.d., received 21 Mar. 1970).
23. "Notes on My Career in the MCS," Luckham to author, Dec. 1973.
24. Notes to Bryson, 10 Dec. 1969. See also H. G. Turner's memoirs, p. 19, and Harvey's, p. 2.
25. Sir Claude Fenner, Kuala Lumpur, 12 July 1973. Sir Claude began as a police officer in 1936 and ended as inspector general of police, 1963-1966.
26. See Whitton's recollections, pp. 18-19. He transferred in 1938 from administration to law.
27. See Luckham, note 23 above, and 9 Aug. 1973 to author. Among others with African service were Gullick, R. L. Peel, and F. V. Duckworth. When other clerical staff members such as dressers and technical assistants are taken into account, it becomes apparent that Malaya had considerable resources to draw on in this category.
28. To Bryson, 12 May 1969. Fernandez was beheaded by the Japanese. Cunyngham-Brown was "proud and humble to have known him."

29. Kempe's diary, 1927, p. 80.

30. Alor Gajah diaries, 1934 ff., kindly loaned to me by Mr. Sheppard. As in the case of Jasin (note 28 above), it should be pointed out that Alor Gajah was a straits (Malacca) district, not an FMS one, and that conditions were similar. There were some differences; for example, DOs in the FMS and AAs in the unfederated states did not hear appeals in matters of Islamic law. Overall, administration in neighboring districts such as Alor Gajah in the straits and Kuala Pilah in Negri Sembilan was much the same. On the scope of the work, Sheppard wrote: "The DO Alor Gajah appears to have acquired a reputation as a sort of universal aunt." (13 Nov. 1934.) On agriculture, see file 837, 1937, M., Kuala Kangsar.

31. Morkill's recollections, p. 13.

32. Sheppard's diaries, 12 Nov. 1935.

33. Morkill's recollections, p. 25. On this point, see also E. C. G. Barrett to author, 11 Nov. 1974.

34. For details of the work of an exemplary *penghulu*, see Turner's memoirs, p. 178.

35. J. D. H. Neill to Bryson, 11 June 1969. Neill was a post-1945 protectorate officer.

36. Kempe's diary, 1911-1912, p. 71.

37. Morkill's recollections, p. 19.

38. J. S. W. Reid to Bryson, 7 July 1969. See also Cator to Bryson, 28 June 1969; Falconer to Bryson, 23 June 1969; Cunyngham-Brown to Bryson, 1 July 1969; Helps to Bryson, 18 July 1969; and Harvey to Bryson, 20 July 1969.

39. See Cavendish's memoirs, CRP. I thank Miss J. Cavendish for permission to use her late father's papers; the late Capt. Robert Boyd for a most helpful correspondence; and Lady Gammans for information on her late husband's work. See also the report of the 1933 Cooperatives Conference (Gammans papers, CRP), and, on the subject of exploitation in general, the Kempe diaries, Harvey's recollections, and Luckham to author, 9 Aug. 1973. Also Kempe on the difficulty of catching moneylenders, file 1800, Kuala Kangsar, 1931, M.

40. File 1748, 1931, M.

41. Sheppard's Alor Gajah diaries, Dec. 1934.

42. Cunyngham-Brown takes the former view (*Crowded Hour* [London: Murray, 1975], p. 76) and R. C. Gates (to author, 31 May 1976) the latter. See also S. W. Jones, *Public Administration in Malaya* (London: Oxford University Press, 1953), pp. 63 and 123.

43. Acting governor to secretary of state, 22 June 1898, 273/236.

44. See Annual Report, land office, Selangor secretariat, 696, 1922, M.

45. "Instructions to Land Officers," J. R. O. Aldworth, under secretary to government, FMS, 1911, M. See also "Note on Second Draft FMS Land Code," 1925, by J. L. Humphreys, Kempe papers, CRP. I am much indebted to H. A. L. Luckham for a lengthy treatise on land administration and an extensive correspondence on the subject.

46. See file 290, 1927, Kuala Kangsar land office; file 1743, 1926, Kuala Kangsar; 511, 1940, Batang Padang; 278, 1927, Kuala Kangsar; 1339, 1928, Kuala Kangsar, M. Also R. Crichton, DO Kuala Kangsar, to SR, file 291, 1926 and SR to DO Kuala Kangsar, file 1011, 1931, M. On town planning, see file 696, 1922,

Kuala Lumpur Land Office Annual Report, M., and A. V. Aston to author, 17 Nov. 1974, on planning in Kampar and Bukit Mertajam.

47. File 610, 1927, Kuala Kangsar land office, M.

48. File 1579, 1929, Negri Sembilan secretariat files, M.; file 974, 1934, Kuala Kangsar land office; file 561, 1938, Batang Padang land office, and file 557, 1939, Batang Padang land office, M.

49. File 504, 1923, Kuala Kangsar land office; 685, 1926, the same; 646, 1927, T. S. Adams, DO, the same; 882, 1927, the same; 328, 1935, Batang Padang land office, and 1324, 1928, Kuala Kangsar, M. European applications are in file 212, 1935, Negri Sembilan secretariat files, M.

50. Minutes, conference of officers, Gopeng subdistrict, file 24, 1922, M.

51. *Ibid.* Wilson, who was from Ulster, was educated in Derry and at Trinity College Dublin.

52. Conference in Ulu Selangor district office, file 1076, 1936, M.

53. Whipsnade is an outdoor zoo near London. See file 1168, 1926, M., on a meeting of residents, DOs, and representatives of a power company, Kuala Kangsar. Also file 986, 1934, Kinta, M. Compare Roff, *The Origins of Malay Nationalism*, (Kuala Lumpur: University of Malaya Press, 1967), p. 123, and Jones, *Public*, p. 107.

54. Winstedt, DO Kuala Pilah, Annual Report, 1913, file 561, 1914, M., and *Start from Alif* (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1969), p. 111.

55. File 421, 1914, M. The DO Tampin thought that Malays were not as good at detecting smuggling as were Chinese members of the customs service and that if pay were not raised, Malay junior officers might be tempted to misappropriate public monies.

56. Morkill's recollections, Kuala Pilah, 1920.

57. See the report of the SR Perak, file 1180, 1939, M. Also H. G. Turner's memoirs and Luckham's notes.

58. See the autobiography of Sir Mahmud bin Mat, pp. 5-7. I thank Dr. Ishak bin Haji Muhammad for much helpful information on this point (interview, Kuala Lumpur, 10 July 1973). He was in the MAS twice, 1930-1934, resigning both times out of boredom. Having literary interests, he preferred the bright lights of Singapore to a bucolic life in remote Temerloh.

59. Mahmud's autobiography. See also Dato' Sir Mahmud's "Some Features of Malay Life in East Pahang at the Close of the Nineteenth and the Beginning of the Twentieth Centuries," *Malaysia*, May 1964.

60. Mahmud's autobiography, pp. 115 ff.

61. *Ibid.*, p. 142.

62. This could be either A. S. Haynes or E. B. Williams, probably the former.

63. Mahmud's autobiography, p. 200. He found Sir George Maxwell curiously unsympathetic to Malay officers. See p. 221 ff. Sir Mahmud told Dr. C. Gray of Yale University that his superior in Upper Perak watched him more closely than he would have watched a European subordinate. See also p. 376.

64. *Ibid.*, p. 268.

65. *Ibid.*, p. 425.

66. File 53, 1937, M. In my talks with another officer of Sir Mahmud's generation, Othman bin Mohamed (Kuala Lumpur, 12 July 1973), I got the same sort of

impression, and this many years after the British had gone. See also Raja Musa, "My Experiences During the Bar Examinations," *British Malaya*, June 1927.

67. To Bryson, 28 Feb. 1974. Raja Kararalzaman ibni Raja Mansur, DO Krian, had to be rapped on the knuckles for writing to the secretariat in Kuala Lumpur over the head of his resident (23 July 1936, file 52, M.). See also Jarrett's reprimand, 12 Aug. 1936, in the same file.

68. See governor to secretary of state, 4 May 1922, 717/21. Also H. G. Turner's memoirs, p. 173.

69. Jones, *Public*, p. 114.

70. Bingham's letter, 29 June 1932, to his parents; Dawson to author, 1 May 1975. See also H.G. Turner's memoir's, p. 14 and pp. 42 ff., and Paterson to Bryson, 9 Apr. 1969.

71. To author, 13 Nov. 1974.

72. Sir William Goode, transcript of interview, CRP, p. 3.

73. Among the most interesting and persuasive testimonials on this important point are: J. de V. Allen (who does not entirely agree) to Bryson, 3 Dec. (no year, but probably 1969); Gilmour to Bryson, 18 July 1969; and J. M. Barron to Bryson, 14 Apr. 1969. See also Mahmud bin Mat's autobiography, p. 308, on Chinese lack of interest in politics. The late Sir Claude Fenner observed to me (Kuala Lumpur, 12 July 1973) that the main reason the Malays were not against the British was that the British were so pro-Malay.

74. Swettenham, *British Malaya* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1955), p. 266.

75. J. F. Hannyngham to author, 28 Dec. 1974. In this letter, he gives details of his service as ADO Cameron Highlands in the early 1930s when the station was being developed. Unofficials in the federal council criticized the expenditure and the slow pace of the project and were strongly answered by Peel (proceedings, 1929, B70 ff.). There were hills stations in Penang and outside Taiping as well.

76. Blackwell, "Malay Curry," p. 192. See also H. G. Turner's memoirs; G. Hutchinson, "Rubber Planting in Malaya, 1928-1932," RCS; Bilainkin, *Hail Penang* (London: Sampson, Low, Marston & Co., 1932); Shelley's letters; and Shorland to Bryson, 30 Aug. 1969.

77. Harvey's recollections, p. 11. On armchairs and seniority, see Gilmour, *An Eastern Cadet's Anecdote* (Singapore: University Education Press, 1974), p. 79.

78. Bingham to his parents, from Malacca, 30 June 1940.

79. Hayward's recollections, Apr. 1975, p. 10.

80. Hawkins to Bryson, 12 June 1969. And H. G. Turner's memoirs, p. 146, on his wife's views.

81. See Maxwell's circular, 18 Sept. 1922, Whitehouse papers, and Sir Mahmud's autobiography, chaps. 5 ff. Other races had thier own clubs, and it is perfectly true that most people, whatever the race, preferred the company of their own kind after hours.

82. Whitton's recollections, p. 7. He goes on to relate (pp. 20 ff.) how servants went to great extremes to avoid any actual bodily, even tactile, contact with Europeans.

83. See Gilman's memoirs, CRP, p. 81; Blackwell, "Curry", pp. 162 ff.; Gamman's note in *Rotary International*, Jan. 1933, giving some of the history of the Malacca Club; and Shelley to his daughter, 22 Dec. 1930, on the Singapore Club.

84. *Monthly Magazine of the Rotary Clubs of Malaya*, n.d., probably 1933 or 1934, Whitehouse papers. And see Sheppard's Alor Gajah diary, Nov. 1935.

85. To author, 9 Apr. 1974. And see Parade Orders, Eurasian Company, Malacca Volunteer Corps, Straits Settlements Volunteer Force, 4 Mar. 1935, Whitehouse papers. Also Sheppard's Alor Gajah diary, Dec. 1934, and M. R. Stenson, *Organized Labour, Government and Employers in Malaya 1935-1948*, thesis, University of Malaya, pp. 76 ff. On 22 Apr. 1973, I visited a young Chinese called Lee in Bukit Tinggi, Pahang, who had been in the forces himself and whose father still proudly kept his own medals and service record from the 1940s. I thank my host, Mr. Henry Barlow, for arranging our visit to the Lees' home.

86. H. G. Turner's memoirs, p. 137.

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THROUGHOUT THE interwar years time seemed to stand still. Malaya was a contented place. The system went easily and well in its time-worn grooves—familiar, tried, efficient, and therefore complaisant, as such systems are bound to be. Its success and its acceptance made a closed circle. The great slump of the 1930s and the troubles stirred up by Chinese and Indian agitators were taken in stride, bringing less turbulence to Malaya, perhaps, than was caused by similar difficulties in other countries.

Despite the euphoria however some officers were concerned about the activities of Japanese nationals in various parts of the country. Though Japan was a traditional ally and had joined Britain against Germany in the great war there were disturbing signs quite soon afterwards. Whitehouse, when posted to southern Johore in the early twenties, learned that Japanese businessmen, of whom many villages had one or two, were compiling lists of notables in the areas where they worked. A directive forbidding clearance of hilltops above a certain height had been ignored by the manager of a large Japanese rubber estate, whose high ground commanded an excellent view of Singapore.<sup>1</sup> In the same years, the C.O. wondered if Britain's open-door policy in the Pacific meant that Japanese oil-exploration teams had to be admitted to Labuan.<sup>2</sup> By the early thirties after Japan had taken Manchuria, it was widely assumed in the MCS that Malaya would be an eventual target. A British general gave a gloomy talk to the Europeans of Taiping in 1932. In Ulu Kelantan, Gilmour was helplessly aware that his district contained far more strategic points than there were men to defend them. Japanese seemed to be everywhere, and a war book was maintained in the Singapore secretariat, with guidelines on what was to be done in the event of an emergency.<sup>3</sup>

When Britain went to war in Europe, Malaya seemed hardly affected at first. As in 1914 there was a rush of young men to join the forces at home or at least to get into the local volunteers. Some succeeded, causing an increase in the work of officers who remained behind. Prices rose. For MCS men and their families the home country filled the conscious mind more than heretofore. There was a reversal of roles in correspondence, with those in the far outstations of the empire expressing concern for the safety of relatives and friends in Britain.<sup>4</sup>

Then in December 1941, the blow that many had expected fell at last on Malaya. Hardly anyone thought the whole peninsula could be held, the

east coast being lightly defended and wide open to attack from enemy bases in Cambodia. Assuming that international law required civil authorities to keep essential services going when their areas were occupied by invading forces, de Moubray, BA Trengganu, wanted to stay on under the Japanese and there was heated discussion of alternatives until he and his staff were ordered to fall back.<sup>5</sup> The speed of the withdrawal and the ineffectiveness of the defense were surprising. Many officers and their families had to leave homes and offices on a moment's notice and take part in what proved to be a general and continuous retreat southwards. The story of the collapse and the surrender of Singapore in mid-February 1942 is well known. As with the French in Indochina, the Americans in the Philippines, and the Dutch in the East Indies, Britain's vulnerability in Malaya was a minor function of great-power politics from Versailles onwards. Though straits governors had always been designated commanders-in-chief as well as heads of the civil government, and some had been professional soldiers, the job that they and their officers had been called on to do was concerned with preserving law and order and enhancing trade. Once Britain was involved in fighting Germany, Malaya's task was to support the war financially by concentrating on the production of rubber and tin. At the last minute, immediately following the Japanese invasion, London sent a minister of state to Singapore and, in cooperation with her allies, appointed a supreme commander for Southeast Asia. Inevitably, the hastily assembled military and political hierarchy and the long-established, traditional colonial government found it difficult to work together since they had very dissimilar backgrounds, assumptions, and preoccupations. Confusion was great. There were recriminations and the nominating of scapegoats, the most prominent being S. W. Jones, colonial secretary at the time and one of the most able of the senior MCS officers. He was removed and sent home, thereby missing incarceration in a Japanese prison for three and a half years. In view of the undeniable facts—mastery of air and sea by the Japanese, their overwhelming superiority in armor, British reluctance to subject the civil populace to the horrors of a siege, and the hopelessness of the position over the long run—this was as self-defeating as it was unedifying.<sup>6</sup>

H. G. Turner's first-hand account of the last weeks is vivid and down to earth, providing a picture that his colleagues would recognize as typical in many respects.<sup>7</sup> In January, on return from leave, he was transferred from the Singapore secretariat to Alor Gajah as DO. He soon moved on to Jasin as Cobden-Ramsay, who had had previous experience in Alor Gajah, had just arrived from Trengganu after having been driven out by the Japanese. A few days later, all the Malacca DOs were called in by the resident councillor and the colonial secretary and told to destroy everything useful

in their districts and prepare to pull back into Johore. Exhausted British troops were pouring into the district from the north. He paid the staff their last salaries, did the accounts, and dispatched the remaining funds to Singapore, along with the stocks of *chandu*. In accordance with instructions from the resident councillor, the native police discarded their uniforms and went home, leaving Turner to collect their arms at the police station. Two British sergeants helped him drive looters from an Indian shop and restore a sense of order that had departed with the police. As he drove out of Jasin on the road to Singapore he had the guilty feeling that he was deserting his people, leaving them to the unknown mercies of the advancing enemy.

In Singapore he resumed his former job in the secretariat and took on extra duties in the air-raid precaution service when bombing became more severe in late January. Transportation was difficult and so he and a number of others camped in the office, living close to their work day and night. By early February, all troops had retreated to the island. Shelling was then added to the discomforts of life in a crowded city. When Japanese landings were made the defenders set fire to stocks in compliance with a scorched-earth policy, blanketing the town with a huge pall of smoke. Evacuation of nonessential people proceeded apace, as did the shipment of important records, including the files of the embassy in Shanghai, which Turner talked the captain of a tramp steamer into taking with him to India. The office routine went on. He felt there was an air of unreality to the sending and receiving of the usual telegrams, especially as the C.O. clearly had no idea how near the end was. Despite the shelling, the governor kept up appearances to the last, living on in Government House with his wife, who was ill with dysentery, until two days before the surrender, when he moved to rooms in the Singapore Club.

During the last week, everyone worked full time on preparations for the collapse that all now saw as inevitable. Furnaces had been specially built and used for the destruction of files and currency. Plans were made for the cutting of the telegraph cable at the last moment. On Saturday, February 14, the day before the surrender, the oil reserves were set afire. Sunday morning, as Turner was working at his table in the secretariat, General Percival, the army commander, came in looking for Hugh Fraser, the colonial secretary, whom he wanted to accompany a senior officer of his staff in approaching the Japanese. The general "had been at a communion service at Fort Canning and was so smart that he looked as though he had come out of a bandbox."<sup>8</sup> With capitulation at hand, permission was given for some MCS men in uniform to attempt escapes in small boats. Harvey and Hay, then serving in the FMS light artillery, were among those who managed this, making their way to Ceylon. Cunyngham-



Brown got as far as the Dutch islands, where he was captured and brought back. Several removed their uniforms, preferring to be interned as civilian members of the government rather than being taken as prisoners of war.

Events had followed each other so fast that on the day of the surrender, the Japanese were not ready to run the city. They therefore ordered certain officers to remain at their posts for the time being. For a week, Turner lived in an extraordinarily odd world of freedom within captivity, doing routine tasks for the conquerors and meanwhile being allowed to visit shops to buy such things as razor blades and sewing materials that would be needed in camp. It was not pleasant to have to watch the rest of the European population queuing up by the *padang* two days after the surrender. A body of some 2,000 men and 300 women and children walked from there to a temporary camp near the sea view hotel. "The local population at that stage was not cowed as it was in later years by instances of Japanese brutality and it did make gestures of sympathy with the melancholy procession."<sup>9</sup>

In Changi camp, great efforts were made to use time constructively. There were lectures and courses of study in languages, biology, mathematics, astrology, and other fields. Arts and crafts were eagerly taken up. A few months after the surrender, Bingham wrote that there had suddenly burst upon him full force "that curiosity about life and the world, civilizations, religions, in fact about everything, which should have happened more than twenty years ago" when he had been in school.<sup>10</sup> Some officers formed discussion groups, one turning its attention to administrative improvements for after the war and emergency arrangements that would have to be made to reestablish British rule the minute Japan was defeated. Naturally enough one's thoughts ran to the immediate past. Few doubted that an era had ended with the fall of Singapore and that however strongly British authority might be reasserted in the future, things would never be the same again. The old days of an unself-conscious government going its plodding way with no particular thought for ultimate aims, much less for timing, were gone forever. Though many of the same men would serve again after the war, doing many of the same kinds of things in a similar atmosphere, a line had been firmly drawn across the path. The core period of MCS history was over.

To the question of what can be said about the civil services of British Malaya in the seventy-five years beginning in 1867 two kinds of answers suggest themselves: those given by various outside observers, and those of the MCS itself. In the foregoing pages, much has been said about relations between the MCS and its client peoples—Malays, Chinese, and Indians—and the views of such peoples on the men of the service. The attitudes of the resident European community similarly have been manifest in countless situations in which officers played roles as facilitators,

friends, or disciplinarians. To these may be added the comments of the local press, which expressed itself on the subject frequently and in great detail, usually taking a critical line that had its origins in the earliest days when Light and Raffles tried to please both the straits traders with whom they lived and their own distant masters in India. A free press is seldom pro-government. Malaya's papers called for maximum support—a garrison for protection, improved communications, health services, and chaplains—with minimum interference or demands such as taxes. Occasionally, an officer was singled out for praise or blame. Senior men known to be friendly to business were invariably eulogized on retirement. Swettenham and the other famous leaders could usually count on respectful and sometimes extravagantly favorable treatment, though even he was gently taken to task long after retirement, when it was thought that his pronouncements were outdated.<sup>11</sup> Adams was criticized over the Selangor succession case, not because he personally was disliked by the press, but because he had dared to question one of business's sacred cows, the prerogative of rulers, that had become entangled in the decentralization controversy. Rarely there would be some generalized comment by editors who were trying to see the service in the broad context of a changing society. G. L. Peet of the *Straits Times*, later head of the department of information, saluted DOs for staying in close touch with their people, but wrote that officers in the towns knew too little of other races and that by the end of the first war the MCS as a whole had lost the cultural initiative to more vigorous elements, especially the Chinese.<sup>12</sup> Much the same sort of comment came from Egmont Hake, a member of the federal council and a prominent spokesman of the agency houses, who lashed the MCS for being "a colourless bureaucracy, whose chief admirer was itself."<sup>13</sup> Sir Bruce Lockhart, briefly a planter in his youth, disagreed entirely. His best friends were MCS officers, and he thought his fellow planters neither as civilized nor as much fun to be with as civil servants were.<sup>14</sup>

Writers from farther afield had more to say about the MCS perhaps than about colonial civil servants elsewhere in the world because Malaya was on the main communication line eastward. All sorts of people fetched up in Singapore at one time or another. Most did not remain long enough to make their observations especially worthy of note.<sup>15</sup> However, one brief sojourner, Alec Waugh, managed to see beneath the surface, possibly because he stayed with an old friend in the MCS and because he was tolerant and open-minded, more interested in learning about a new place than in being smug about the unfamiliar.<sup>16</sup> Some who had no direct experience of colonial life were inclined to condemn it at a distance as something intrinsically wrong, an existence that only megalomaniacs would be attracted to, and one that automatically corrupted the rulers by giving them too much power over people who were in no position to

insist on a healthy sharing of that power.<sup>17</sup> Being disembodied, such comment is hard to evaluate. More useful, potentially at least, are the remarks of writers who made repeated visits, got about the country, and spoke at length on what they saw and what they thought of it. Of these, W. Somerset Maugham is undoubtedly the best known and most widely read. Maugham was not the kindest and most gentle of social critics, eventually being ostracized by much of London society for what was seen as caddish behavior. But the very force and mercilessness of his thrusts, his unmistakable meaning and fulsome exposition, make it relatively easy to judge what he has to say in relation to the record as revealed by others. His fundamental line was that the colonies were dustbins for failures from the United Kingdom, that too many of those who came out to the East were from the lower social orders, and that these did not do as well there as did the few who were of higher birth.<sup>18</sup> People gave vent in the Orient to the lusts they did not dare gratify at home. At best, the British colonial was decent and dull. All that was shallow and stereotyped about suburban socializing at home was that much more boring in the tropics, where, being at several removes from the vacuous original and set in exotic surroundings, it was yet more contemptible. A fellow novelist said that Maugham, being from a minor public school himself, was right at home in the Malaya he satirized as socially derivative.<sup>19</sup> Be that as it may, Maugham hit hard at the philistinism he thought he saw everywhere, the scarcity of cultural interests, the enthronement of all that was low and superficial in England: a society based on clubs, on sport, and magazines, on the pursuit of other men's wives, on the consumption of more alcohol than anyone needed or enjoyed. In Malaya, there was the further debility of having servants to do work that might have kept people in touch with a wholesome reality, and of the easy availability of natives to share one's bed, resulting in a form of racial mingling that was demeaning to exploiter and exploited alike. In short, to borrow a phrase attributed to Noel Coward, Malaya was a "first-rate place for second-rate people."<sup>20</sup>

Although Swettenham said he admired Maugham's work, it is not easy to find other MCS men who did, especially in the generation of the twenties and thirties when the writer was visiting Malaya and Borneo.<sup>21</sup> Many knew of the heartbreak that had come to the MCS families who had entertained Maugham and confided in him, only to see themselves bent out of shape and scorned in his stories later on. High on the list of tales that were bitterly resented was, "The Letter," written after Maugham and his companion, Gerald Haxton, had gone to Kedah to collect gossip and background material for it.<sup>22</sup> Raja Brooke of Sarawak forbade Maugham his country after reading "The Force of Circumstance" and "The Outstation."<sup>23</sup> What bothered people was not that Maugham told unpleasant truths—many admitted that often there was substance in what he wrote—but that the end result of his efforts was caricature, a picture that was

distorted and partial, giving the knowledgeable reader much more of Maugham and the tastes of his homeside clientele than of Malaya. The writer was, in any case, primarily concerned with the British and their foibles, not with the complicated interracial situations in which the MCS lived and worked. His characters were cardboard figures, all labeled and manipulated by the writer to achieve a desired effect. If the average officer had been like Maugham's players—weak, neurotic, boozing, womanizing, insecure, brutal, and pathetic, by turns—he would not have been able to get out of bed in the morning, much less survive the daily round.

Work by professional scholars has been more informative. The Anglo-Canadian, Lennox Mills, produced a volume in the mid-thirties that brought up to date an earlier study in the old style—wide-ranging, descriptive, and calm—noting matter-of-factly that Malaya was an unruffled country with no signs of nationalism.<sup>24</sup> This was followed soon after by Rupert Emerson's book, *Malaysia*, a mine of information on the MCS and its work.<sup>25</sup> An American on the Harvard faculty, Emerson found the service just and efficient but not representative of British society as a whole or able to rule in such a way as to promote the interests of any but the upper classes in Malaya. From what he said about governmental institutions, it would appear that he was judging by the standards of American democracy in a country where the preconditions and social forms of that phenomenon had never existed. Though he was not able to examine official documents of the kind he would have liked to see and gave more attention to policy questions—particularly the decentralization dispute—than to grass-roots administration, his book was fair-minded, rich in detail, and a landmark in the study of a neglected subject. Purcell, who became a friend of Emerson's, disagreed with many of the author's judgments while hailing the book as an important work that made the MCS think, something they were normally disinclined to do unless prodded.<sup>26</sup>

As has been often noted, the 1914 war was a major watershed. Since then, colonial regimes have not had a good press. Beginning with Lytton Strachey's *Eminent Victorians*, published in the last months of the war, there has been a steady stream of critical work that has tended to keep colonialism psychologically off balance and on the defensive. More polemics have appeared than descriptive books written to provide information on exotic areas. This is not to say that such writing cannot be instructive—much of it is—but that the spirit of the age has been anti-colonial and that some authors have begun with the assumption that the thing they were looking at was not respectable. Just before the second war Leonard Barnes published *Empire or Democracy* under the aegis of the Left Book Club. While he had little to say about Malaya as such, he did describe all British colonial civil servants as sensible, untheoretical types, honest and hard working, unconcerned with spreading European civiliza-

tion, and blind to the fact that economic development was undercutting the paternalistic regimes they served so loyally and well.<sup>27</sup> During and after the 1939 war, scholars inclined to accept the firmly established view that colonialism was morally indefensible were able to hold that, in Malaya's case, it had now shown itself to be frail and inefficient as well. Virginia Thompson's *Postmortem on Malaya*, issued in 1943 by the Institute of Pacific Relations, said that the country had fallen because, inter alia, its prewar government had been inadequate.<sup>28</sup> Studies by Robert O. Tilman, an American political scientist, have provided useful statistics on both British and Malay members of the MCS, without concerning themselves as much with normative questions as some earlier books had done.<sup>29</sup> The works of Khoo Kay Kim, Philip Loh, J. M. Gullick, and others have examined the roles of individual members of the MCS and have evaluated the performance of the service in various contexts. The best-known study focusing directly on the subject is J. de V. Allen's article, "Malayan Civil Service, 1874-1941: Colonial Bureaucracy/Malayan Elite," which appeared in 1970.<sup>30</sup> Arousing more comment within the ranks of the service perhaps than anything since Emerson's book, this short treatment by a scholar from an Australian family who had extensive experience in Malaya as well as in England and East Africa is by no means the out-and-out condemnation some have considered it to be. Much of it is devoted to unexceptionable background description, to helpful figures, and to biographical information. Some of his points will not go unquestioned: for example, that the MCS never modeled itself on the ICS or made heroes of such as Raffles and Brooke; that the ending of examinations in the thirties was an important event in the history of British Malaya and that there was a social distinction between men who became eastern cadets and those who passed higher on the examinations and went into the home civil service or the ICS. What some MCS men have taken exception to is a tendency to harp on social origins and their supposed influence on administration and, in general, a seeming disapproval of the whole idea of Europeans ruling non-Europeans.

As they themselves look back on the years of their service, the officers of the MCS provide a rich panoply of inside views that can be weighed in the scales with what has come from observers who were less intimately involved. They discuss their own country's attitudes, the conditions in Malaya during their time there, the choices open to them, the things that were done, and the results. Many offer final judgments on the record of the service and present an envoi in which one sees how they felt about their lives and their careers.

For the British public's knowledge of the colonies and concern for their welfare, few have anything good to say and many express considerable bitterness. "In the course of one's own lifetime there has been a complete change in the minds of the British public . . . the gulf is enormous between

the attitude towards the British in India adopted by Kipling and the portrait of the white official in the far east as painted by Somerset Maugham . . . the [official] having lost his moral superiority as a result of the wars."<sup>31</sup> As for the C.O. and the House of Commons, neither was thought to have done much to counter the abuse heaped on the MCS by homeside students and newspapers, especially after the fall of Singapore and again in the troubled years following the liberation.<sup>32</sup> In their dismay at London's ignorance and lack of appreciation of what conditions were really like in the East and what British officials were doing there, MCS men of the 1950s echo their predecessors of the 1870s. Both generations had much the same complaint, a feeling of being misunderstood and abandoned. England did not know and did not care. One looked elsewhere for the approval and reassurance that could help sustain morale.

Turning to the great issues of the colonial era, nearly everyone speaks at one time or another of racial divisions, of the growth of immigrant populations, and of the resulting social problems. Was it right, for economic reasons, to allow and even to greatly assist a long-term influx that would eventually produce "national indigestion"?<sup>33</sup> If Clementi's attempt to plan for future social unity had been defeated mainly by big business, was it not true nonetheless that pro-Malay and pro-Chinese views within the MCS had never been reconciled? Could the predominantly rural Malays have been persuaded against their deepest instincts to change their way of life enough to compete with their Chinese and Indian neighbors? Did the MCS make enough use of its popularity with all segments of society and capitalize on the comparative absence of the "we-they" outlook that was to be found in the Netherlands Indies and in India? Enjoying the trust of all peoples, could they not have pushed for more unity? It was not easy. They were constantly being reminded of their legal and moral obligations to the rulers, which assured the primacy of the Malay upper classes and the rights of the peasantry to their traditional habits.<sup>34</sup> The passivity of the Indians was well known, as was the disinclination of the Chinese to take part in government, preferring to leave that to the British while they devoted themselves to making money. Purcell thought this was the nub in fact: Malaya's undeniable economic success had been completely dependent on the profit motive, the impetus that had brought Chinese and Indian hordes to Malaya at the same time as it attracted European capital and dictated government policy.<sup>35</sup> The MCS held the ring and it all worked. Hardly anyone thought of a situation in which the British linchpin would be removed.

The issue of Europeanization was part and parcel of the development question. Swettenham never tired of emphasizing the prior importance of prosperity. He understood that it could not be achieved without great changes in native life. But he warned against any attempt to alter the basic character of Asian peoples and believed that they could take on the

externals of morally and technically advanced civilizations without sacrificing their own cultural attributes in the process.<sup>36</sup> To Clifford this was doubtful. By the 1920s, Malaya's past was dead. Europe had won.<sup>37</sup>

MCS opinion on this enormously complex subject was a kaleidoscope that never ceased to fill the tropical air with its multicolored light. Writing of his impressions shortly after the turn of the century, Winstedt doubted that East and West would ever meet. Comparison of the two was not profitable. Repelled by European society in Malaya, he plunged deeply into studies of Malay civilization, into the ways of a people whose lives retained a certain romance at a time when Europe was wallowing in a materialistic sameness and conformity that did not answer the needs of the soul. The Malays had "... all the glamour of sportsmen, aristocrats and cynics."<sup>38</sup> With Swettenham, whom he did not admire, he believed that changes in native life would be superficial. As educators he and his colleagues would do well to keep this in mind and not attempt the impossible. Malays cared more for their own culture than for British efficiency, wrote S. W. Jones, and even when some of them took advantage of European education, the result was often frustrating since the careers that boys had been trained for were frequently unavailable.<sup>39</sup> "You've educated me; now where's my job?" said one young Malay to Morkill.<sup>40</sup> For that matter, the prosperity of which developers endlessly boasted was not an unmingled blessing. The *kampong* Malay in the early days was in no danger of losing his orchard, said Helps, whereas later on there was the fatal combination of title deed, lawyer, and promissory note, and Malay reservations did not completely offset this.<sup>41</sup> As for the paraphernalia of parliamentary democracy, he went on, it did not work twenty miles across the channel, yet London was bent on introducing it on the other side of the world. Some felt, however, that this did no special harm since it was only the trimmings and not the essence that got transferred abroad. "I am happy to say there was no damned nonsense about democracy in Malaya; members of both legislative and executive councils were the best men available and were appointed by the governor; so in the matters which could be decided by the local government the constitution was an aristocracy."<sup>42</sup>

Hayward views it all in deep historical perspective, looking with philosophical detachment on his own country's efforts, on the nature of Asian societies, and how Europe and the Orient reacted to one another. For Swettenham's notion that Europe came to the East with a superior culture and the moral obligation therefor to confer its advantages on native peoples he has little sympathy. Each civilization is *sui generis*. Like trees and plants, they differ, but each has its own integrity, and such terms as "higher" and "lower" have no organic meaning.<sup>43</sup> The remarkable thing about Malay, Chinese, and Indian peoples was that they stayed so much apart, each community living its own life, cooperating to an extent, even

intermarrying a bit, but remaining for the most part separate and self-contained. Though each experienced a modernizing impulse from the Europeans there was great variety in response and in net effect, the Malays changing least of all. This was not surprising. People who live on the land and get their livelihood from it are not usually in a position to greatly alter the pattern of a life that is governed by soil and climate. But change of a sort had to come. The question was how to control it so as to keep discomfort to a minimum.

It was the tradition of southern Asia, unknown in Europe since the days of Rome or earlier that totally different, self-sufficient, small communities should subsist side by side; but if new technology from the west was to lead to an industrial system [then] closer common political, economic and social unities would be necessary. How was that to be gradually achieved without conflict and cultural sacrifice or . . . loss of identity, and how and at what pace should these unities be furthered by a protecting power? One just did not know. It could only be played by ear.<sup>44</sup>

The Malays would survive without great damage to their way of life. Of that he was sure.

Did the MCS feel a responsibility to prepare Malaya for self-government? There was a vague official policy to this effect, though Macpherson, who began in Malaya and ended as head of the C.O., was frank to say that nobody thought much about it day to day.<sup>45</sup> Running the country kept one too busy to take much notice of such abstractions, which were in any case the playthings of M.P.s, C.O. officials, and the occasional governor. Now and again, a newly arrived cadet would notice that the general orders mentioned an obligation to bring the Malays forward. M. C. Hay asked a secretariat officer what this meant and was told, "Your punka puller must be a Malay."<sup>46</sup> It was not unlike the policy in education, where "getting a boy a pen-pushing job" was the actual if not the stated aim, with consequences not all that different.<sup>47</sup> What was being turned out by English schools—apart from an occasional Malay recruit for the MCS—was an incipient class of babus, half denatured youths who were dissatisfied with tradition and also with the meager opportunities open to them in a European government. So Harrison thought at any rate. The plain fact was that "no one wanted to be brought forward."<sup>48</sup> There was no effective pressure from the rulers, none from the common people of the Malay community, and, until very late in the day, none from the Chinese and Indians. Even then it was likely to be of foreign origin.

Reflecting on their lives as a corps of career administrators, the alumni of the MCS present a composite self-image of a kind that is not often found, since autobiographies are seldom written by any but the few who



reach high office. How did the more typical officers see the essential functions of the service, its special characteristics, its spirit and morale?

All realized that they were a band of amateurs who yet managed a regularized organization and had, in Winstedt's somewhat ironic and jaundiced phrase, a "strong sense of discipline . . . and . . . no profession."<sup>49</sup> In later years, some would talk approvingly of formal training courses, regretting that they had had none. In the core period, most saw the value of assuming responsibility at a young age, learning by doing, with or without the tutelage of superiors, making mistakes, gaining experience, seeing the guts of multifaceted tasks from the inside, and soon feeling a self-confidence that might otherwise take years to come by. There was far more variety than beginners in other lines of work were exposed to. And once a cadet had been conditioned in the school of hard knocks it was taken for granted by his seniors that he would be able to acquit himself well in any assignment they sent his way. Unlike civil servants in England, they were a ruling rather than a bureaucratic group, a contrast that was brought home to Gilmour with particular force when he held United Nations appointments after the war.<sup>50</sup> Even as a young DO it was easy to see the way one's decisions and instructions affected people's lives directly and immediately. Though they had not prepared the foundations of self-rule in any systematic fashion the framework, example, and habit of their regime became so familiar to natives that when the time came many in the MCS and outside it thought that Malaya was readier than her neighbors. Meanwhile one of the service's chief prides was the competence of its Malay members. "You'd hear officers boasting of how well Mohammad or Ahmad was doing," recalled an MCS wife, and outdoing one another in confident predictions about their future careers.<sup>51</sup>

All was not sweetness and light. Though corruption of the more obvious and unsophisticated sort disappeared early, along with the primitive conditions that gave rise to it, one or two officers criticized the system for allowing more subtle kinds. It was said that certain governors engaged in favoritism to the detriment of the public good and that senior officers were not above using their positions to angle for company directorships after retirement.<sup>52</sup> Men who came into the MCS after the war sometimes thought that some of the prewar generation tended to be a bit stodgy.<sup>53</sup> Arrogance and stagnation were occasionally spoken of.

But these kinds of comments seemed to be mainly in the realm of ordinary grumbling, an indication, if one were needed, that the MCS was made up of men, not saints. What emerges more often is a quizzical, almost unbelieving backward glance at the uprightness of the service. "I do not think I can recall a single case of a senior officer treating me unfairly; there are precious few walks of life in which this would be said."<sup>54</sup> W. D. Barron thought it would be ridiculous to say that the MCS was motivated by a sense of dedication.<sup>55</sup> Yet, he quickly added that the

average officer was a man of good conscience and sometimes of considerable vision who felt he was doing a worthwhile job and who gave of his best in the interests of all the communities he was there to serve, trying always to temper justice with humanity. The British were naturally reserved, even at home, he said, and therefore were not inclined to talk of such things. Agreeing, Falconer noted that although it was not "customary to give fine verbal expression" to these feelings, they were there all the same, especially in the middle and later years when a man had got hold of his job properly.<sup>56</sup> The only one who had alluded to it openly with him was G. E. (later Sir George) London, secretary to resident Pahang, who murmured rather shyly that the young man had come to a worthy position in which he could be of service to the people. Morkill was not so reticent. He knew he was doing "a thoroughly useful job, one which [it] was Britain's destiny to do; from school days the prospect had attracted me, partly Kipling—dominion over palm and pine—partly some family associations with India and the East, perhaps mainly because, having lived all my life in the country and being devoted to sport, it offered a marvelous opportunity of combining business with pleasure . . ." <sup>57</sup> Blackwell was even more specific:

At times cynics have portrayed the administrator as a ridiculous, bombastic, self-important, unfeeling and most inefficient being who simply holds a safe government job. But this is surely a shallow and stupid conception. Thousands of young Britons have entered the service . . . with enthusiasm and ideals and maintained them in spite of long years in lonely and unhealthy tropical outposts . . . [they] have brought to their work their education and culture, their humor, good spirits and kindness. Most of them realize that they hold their positions of authority in trust, so they strive to know their peoples and their languages, customs and prejudices, and to promote the general wellbeing of the community by checking abuses and injustices, without bribery, fear or favour.<sup>58</sup>

Addressing himself to the subject of what made his countrymen that way, of the peculiar claim of the British to suitability for work among dependent peoples, J. V. G. Mills speaks in a way that brings Rhodes to mind, or Milner or Cromer. The men of the MC's

. . . were the [ones] whom you had met as undergraduates at Oxford . . . not outstanding leaders of men, but otherwise typical products of the English public schools—god-fearing, moral, clean-thinking, truthful, upright, fair . . . interested in sports, though not outstandingly skilful [at them] . . .<sup>59</sup>

Perhaps they were not always the most imaginative or witty or artistically inclined. The type evolved, he thought, through both heredity—"good sound stock"—and environment—family life, religion and school and university teaching—an atmosphere that had come into being gradually from Elizabethan times onwards and then faded rather suddenly in the decades after 1918.<sup>60</sup> Caldecott in his faintly cynical way made the same point. "It's blood that Malays and planters respect, not brains."<sup>61</sup> Country and schooling mattered:

What other education is the same  
As discipline engendered by a game?"

Yet will I not forget thee [Oxford] in the day  
That severs me from England, youth and thee.<sup>62</sup>

And if one felt pride in the profession, it was best to cover it with a veneer of irony:

We sons of heaven here agree  
Not to appear too fervent;  
Each has the honour just to be  
God's most obedient servant.<sup>63</sup>

The aristocracy they were thinking of was not, of course, a social thing. No one pretended that the MCS had ever been recruited from the highest orders at home. By contrast with pukka sahib India, Malaya was a relaxed and humane place, run, in Purcell's typically abrasive phrase, by a "dersy-made society."<sup>64</sup> Nevertheless, he thought it absurd for people like Maugham to patronize, coming as they did from the pretentious sophistication of Chelsea and the Riviera with its pseudointellectualism. Unlike those in Kenya, Malaya's Europeans were a fairly homogeneous social collection, both commercial and administrative, and this made for easier living.<sup>65</sup> In speaking of public schools and other institutional contributors to a ruling spirit, officers had in mind the challenges of the job in Malaya, not Burke's or the right hounds or polite conversation in the West End. Remembering the reason for providing the ICS with its own special curriculum at Haileybury early in the nineteenth century and the thought given in other schools to the sorts of careers their boys might have Hayward felt that there was a sensible connection between what the schools stood for and what had been done in the East. Boys could receive "a discipline and *esprit de corps* calculated to provide, if any schooling could, [men] fitted to stand up in solitude to the social strains of service outside Europe and more particularly in the lands of intelligence and thought which are Asia."<sup>66</sup>

Clifford put the accent on the need for government to be "autocratical" because of the social conditions it worked in and on the advantages and responsibilities this entailed.<sup>67</sup> Only men of the highest moral integrity could be trusted with the burdens of rule in such circumstances. The success of Low, Swettenham, Weld, and Paul had shown the way. By the same token, Winstedt despised the unsure American regime he saw in the Philippines, with its utterly wrong emphasis on a democracy that managed to be corrupt without being efficient. He found the Dutch in Java too intellectual about their task, looking on natives as museum specimens rather than human beings.<sup>68</sup> He was sure that the unabashed authoritarianism of Malaya was more appropriate, that it worked better, and that other colonialists in the area recognized this. Coming out a generation later, Hawkins was equally averse to theories and grand policies. What sustained British rule in Malaya, he wrote, was an inbred sense of "duty, implacable, unmentionable," that caused businessmen to see MCS officers—rightly—as a Braham caste.<sup>69</sup> Guided by honor and pride of service, they ran a system that was feudal in the best sense. Because the MCS was large and its job was so varied, it was not the highly placed and most visible that were later looked on as giants and heroes, but the unsung dozens who went their quiet, effective way year by year, earning the regard of the peoples they ruled over and, very importantly, of their brother officers, the men who were hard to fool and who had the most inflexible, work-tested standards. Reginald Crichton, a 1900 cadet, who retired early at his own request, was remembered for especially valuable and unrecognized work in Malacca. Leslie Forbes was excellent as DO Lipis, hated paperwork and replied to the numbered points raised in a three-page letter from his resident, "1. no; 2. no; 3. no." A. V. Aston was such a gentleman that he gave every possible assistance to a lady official in his district even though he completely disagreed with the spirit and substance of the mission that had brought her there. W. E. Pepys, mentioned most often of all perhaps, seemed to have been the most admired superior of cadets in the interwar years. And H. W. Thomson, a Yorkshireman and good all-rounder whose service on the east coast was especially esteemed, did not get as far as his subordinates thought he should have because, as they saw it, he could not be bothered to do what was necessary to impress the mighty. The list is long.

After the 1941 war it seemed to many in the MCS that the old spirit had gone. Some thought that London was now apt to send out just anyone, including mere careerists. Bingham did not like the atmosphere at the highest levels in Singapore, the false bonhomie and back slapping, which was bad enough among Europeans but was impossibly embarrassing to prewar officers when indulged in with Asians looking on. He lamented the "undressed way of going to the office," the "slack morality" of some

in the military administration who acquired the property of others in ways that were no less reprehensible for being within the bounds of the law.<sup>70</sup> This contrasted with what some of his recently retired brother officers were doing. Jordan became a clergyman and de Moubray, a lay preacher. J. V. G. Mills engaged in scholarly work on China that won him a D.Litt. from Oxford. Wolters, also a sinologist, took a doctorate at London and later joined the faculty of Cornell. Winstedt lectured for years at London and became a fellow of the British Academy. Purcell acquired a doctorate and a fellowship at Cambridge. Others, including Gilman, Barrett, H. G. Turner, and Gray, were also associated with academic institutions. Gammans went into Parliament and became a baronet, while Richards received a peerage and entered the upper house as Lord Milverton. Many published learned articles in journals or produced books. The number that took on unpaid positions in public service, many at the local level, was large. Whether or not the comparison with their postwar colleagues was fair, the pride of the earlier MCS generation in these honorable pursuits is an accurate gauge of their values.

When all was said and done, Bryson asked his brother officers how would they sum up their years in Malaya? One or two professed to see it as a job of work, a matter of getting instructions from senior men and carrying them out.<sup>71</sup> Others made laconic references to something of modest value that they hoped Asian peoples might have approved of. Perhaps, said G. E. Turner, some "still think kindly of the service."<sup>72</sup> Band was surprised by the question, which was put to him in more or less the same form several years before by a friend in Malaya. "But it didn't take me any time to answer: 'I wouldn't have changed it for anything.'"<sup>73</sup> "Dedicated to the hilt; loved it," wrote Gates.<sup>74</sup> Hawkins suggested that the history of the MCS that he hoped would someday appear might have the subtitle, "The Happy Breed of Men."<sup>75</sup> Mementos of Malaya, displayed in the houses of retired officers bore mute testimony to lasting affection, as did strange names on cottages in the English countryside: "Perlis," "Kinabalu." Morkill, keenly disappointed at being made to retire early for medical reasons, consoled himself with the remark of a gamekeeper friend: "But they can't tek away t' memory on it." And he quoted his favorite lines of Belloc:

From quiet home and first beginning  
Out to the undiscovered ends  
There's nothing worth the wear of winning  
But laughter and the love of friends.<sup>76</sup>

W. D. Barron, a 1911 cadet, musing on his service fifty-eight years later, confessed to a feeling of nostalgia "for the rustle of the wind in the

palm trees on a Malayan beach, the kindly caress of the early sun on a Malayan morning, that most exquisite period of a tropical day."<sup>77</sup> If he had his life to live over again, he said, he would have it just as it was.

## Notes

1. Whitehouse to author, 9 Apr. 1974. C. A. Vlieland, who became Malaya's first secretary for defense in 1938, wrote that MCS officers knew of Japan's designs on the country as early as World War I. Vlieland was a 1914 cadet. See his paper "Disaster in the Far East, 1941-1942," n.d., sent to the librarian of King's College, London University, with his letter of 12 Oct. 1965. The paper is in the Liddell Hart Centre for Military Archives in King's College.

2. Grindle to the Admiralty, 23 July 1923, 717/31.

3. On the Taiping talk by Gen. Oldfield, see Kempe's diary, 1932, p. 74. Gilmour's recollections of Ulu Kelantan are mentioned in *The BEAM* 17 (Oct. 1973): 3. The Singapore war book is discussed in H. G. Turner's memoirs, pp. 226 and 240. Blackwell, in "Malay Curry," p. 164, says that the war was not foreseen, but few agree with him. See also Cunyngnam-Brown's *Crowded Hour* (London: Murray, 1975), p. 84.

4. See Bingham's letters to his parents, 1940 ff.

5. Luckham to author, 26 Jan. 1978. Luckham was one of de Moubray's subordinates at the time. Oakeley in Singapore was among those who thought the island and much of the peninsula could be held (to author, 27 July 1975). A Chinese in Kuala Kangsar, Cheong Kok Leon, wrote to the DO four days after the invasion asking permission to use the Gunong Pondek cave as a "Buddah temple and hiding place" in case of emergency (file 1801, 11 Dec. 1941, M.).

6. Among the sources that may be usefully consulted for indications of the various civilian and military points of view on this period are: John Connell, *Wavell II* (1969): 96-97, and S. W. Jones, *Public Administration in Malaya* (London: Oxford University Press, 1955), chap. 8. I have learned much from Christopher Dawson, secretary for defense at the time, and H. G. Turner, who was in the Singapore secretariat to the last. See also A. Duff Cooper, *Old Men Forget* (London: Hart-Davis, 1953); Brig. I. Simpson, *Too Little and Too Late* (London: Leo Cooper, 1970); Noel Barber, *A Sinister Twilight* (Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, 1968); Raymond Callahan, *The Worst Disaster* (Newark, Delaware: University of Delaware Press, 1977); and C. M. Turnbull, *A History of Singapore 1819-1975* (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1977). Vlieland's paper (note 1 above) holds that the defenders had far too little air, sea, and armored power to protect the peninsula or the island and that this weakness was risked by London because a higher priority was assigned to the Middle East. By late 1940, when Sir Shenton Thomas returned from leave, it was clear that Malaya could not be defended. Vlieland, who favored resistance on the western plain of the peninsula, therefore resigned as secretary for defense.

7. See Turner's memoirs, written from letters home, pp. 257 ff. See also the diary of Mrs. C. W. Dawson, parts of which she kindly sent to me with her letter of 3 Apr. 1978.

8. *Ibid.*, Turner, p. 284. Turner takes a favorable view of Percival. This comment should not be construed as critical.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 288. On the subject of continuing loyalty to the British, see also G. E. Turner's recollections, especially on Eurasians and others in Malacca.
10. To his parents, 9 July 1942, from Changi prison.
11. See *British Malaya* (Aug. 1935): 104-105, citing the *Straits Times*.
12. G. L. Peet, *Malayan Exile* (Singapore: Straits Times Press, 1934) Also *British Malaya* (Jan. 1939): 226; and Bilainkin, *Hail Penang* (London: Sampson, Low, Marston & Co., 1932). An Australian journalist, Ian Morrison, in *Malayan Post-script* (London: Faber, 1942), described the MCS as too comfortable and easy-going. A Dutch officer told Winstedt in the thirties that British officers were of the right type, that is, they were gentlemen, but that they were not as intelligent as their Dutch counterparts or as well informed. See H. G. Turner's memoirs, p. 164.
13. Proceedings of the Federal Council, 1933, B95. But in my talk with him in London, 25 Sept. 1970, he praised the MCS highly, saying Malaya owed much to it. See Egmont Hake, *The New Malaya and You* (London: Lindsay Drummond, 1945).
14. Bruce Lockhart, *Memoirs of a British Agent* (New York, 1932), p. 12. For views from nonadministrative services, I would refer again to my talk with Sir Claude Fenner, Kuala Lumpur, 12 July 1973, and also to the letters of another police officer, G. C. Madoc, to Bryson, 2 Jan. 1957 and 10 July 1957, in which he criticizes the "jobs for the boys" attitude of the MCS. See also Katharine Sim, *Malayan Landscape* (London: M. Joseph, 1946). Mrs. Sim's husband was in the customs service.
15. Lord Kinross, for example (Patrick Balfour, *Grand Tour* [New York: Harcourt, 1935]), who visited Farrer and others in Kota Bharu and Besut. His view is favorable, if somewhat superficial.
16. Alec Waugh, *The Early Years of Alec Waugh* (London, 1962). He visited Noel King in the Dindings in 1926. They had known each other in school.
17. See G. K. Chesterton's remarks in R. Las Vernas, *Chesterton, Belloc, Baring* (Folcroft, Pa.: Folcroft Library Editions, 1938), p. 13.
18. See *The Complete Short Stories of W. Somerset Maugham*, vols. 1 and 2 (New York: Doubleday, 1952), especially "The Letter," "Before the Party," "The Force of Circumstance," "The Outstation," "The Yellow Streak," "P. and O.," "Footprints in the Jungle," "The Book-Bag," "The Door of Opportunity," "The Back of Beyond," "Neil MacAdam," and "A Casual Affair."
19. Alec Waugh, *My Brother Evelyn* (New York: Farar, Straus & Giroux, 1968), p. 276.
20. S. Cunyngham-Brown, *Crowded Hour*, p. 72. And see Bilainkin, chap. 19. This may be compared with Bertrand Russell's dictum, "... the Empire has been a cesspool for British moral refuse." [*Freedom and Organization*, p. 415; cited by Leonard Barnes, *Empire or Democracy* (London: Gollancz, 1939), p. 84]. See also p. 89 for Barnes's own paraphrase.
21. *Footprints in Malaya* (London: Hutchinson, 1942), p. 6.
22. See E. A. P. Helps to Bryson, n.d., received in the spring of 1969. Also Macpherson interview typescript, CRP, p. 15. And see Robin Maugham, *Conversations with Willie* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1978) pp. 29-30, 60-61, 104.

23. I thank Raja Brooke's daughter, Mrs. F. P. Thompkins, for an enlightening discussion of this subject (Northfield Falls, Vermont, 10 Aug. 1977). Mrs. Thompkins herself enjoyed the Borneo stories and thought them deady accurate.
24. *British Rule in Eastern Asia* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1942). See also *British Malaya 1824-1867* (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1966) and his correspondence with Blythe, Purcell, and Webb, CRP.
25. First published in 1937 and much reprinted, the book examines Dutch rule as well as British.
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27. *Crowded Hour*, (London: Gollancz, 1939), p. 99.
28. V. Thompson, *Postmortem on Malaya* (New York: Macmillan, 1943). In a foreword to the book, Sir George Sansom points out that the military disaster did not necessarily reflect on the prewar administration one way or another.
29. R. O. Tilman, *Bureaucratic Transition in Malaya* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1964); "The Malay Administrative Service; 1910-1960," *Indian Journal of Public Administration* (2); "Nationalization of the Colonial Services in Malaya," *South Atlantic Quarterly* 61 (Spring 1962).
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31. Helps to Bryson, 30 Apr. 1969.
32. Harvey to Bryson, 20 July 1969, and R. L. Peel to Bryson, 28 Sept. 1969.
33. Barrett to Bryson, 7 Aug. 1969.
34. See sultan of Perak to Haynes, 26 Jan. 1939, RCS. Also Meadows Frost to Sir G. Maxwell, RCS, and transcript of Corry interview, CRP, on the "Balkanization of Malaya," pp. 7-8.
35. Purcell, *Memoirs*, p. 303. And see his paper, "A Malayan Union," RCS, written in connection with the so-called Shenton Thomas constitution. See also Reid to Bryson, 29 Dec. 1966.
36. Letter to *British Malaya*, 22 Sept. 1935, printed in the issue of Oct. 1935, pp. 140-41.
37. *Malay Monochromes*, p. 312. Actually there are many Cliffords. He often speaks of the hardness of native culture. But he returns frequently and sadly to the theme of Europe's victory.
38. R. O. Winstedt, *Start From Alif* (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1969), p. 6. And see pp. 16, 39, and 87 ff.
39. To Sir G. Maxwell, 20 Jan. 1943, RCS. And see Cunyngham-Brown, *Crowded Hour*, pp. 52 ff. and pp. 99 ff.
40. To Bryson, 16 Nov. 1969.
41. To Bryson, 30 Apr. 1969. And see Purcell's *Memoirs*, p. 204, on the limitations of English law in the Malayan context.
42. To author, 1 Feb. 1975.
43. To author, 13 Dec. 1974. I thank Mr. Hayward for his long, thoughtful, and informative notes on the MCS between the wars, dated April 1975. On so-called superior cultures, Hayward is close to Wilfred Blunt [*Diaries* (London:



M. Secker, 1932), vol. 1, 211 ff.] and a long line of their countrymen who, in their various ways and from widely differing experience, have emphasized the rights of subject peoples to guard their own traditions, while never departing from a deeply-felt Englishness such as Rupert Brooke expressed in his phrase, "a richer dust" ["The Soldier," *The Oxford Book of English Verse* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1948), p. 1134]. See also Sir George Trevelyan's *The Competition Wallah* (New York: AMS Press, 1977), especially the comments of a young ICS recruit of the 1860s on Macaulay's famous minute on education, 1835, pp. 317 ff.

44. Hayward, notes to author, April 1975, p. 4.

45. "Colonialism and the Commonwealth," *Journal of the Royal Commonwealth Society* (July-Aug. 1960): 126.

46. Typescript of taped interview by Bryson, 3 July 1969.

47. C. W. Harrison, "The Future of British Malaya," May 1943, Maxwell papers, RCS.

48. Gilmour to Bryson, 18 July 1969. Robert Boyd watched Bingham lower the union jack at Penang when independence came and noticed that there was no cheering. A Chinese standing next to him was in tears (to author, 30 Mar. 1975).

49. *Alif*, p. 3. And see Whitton to Bryson, 10 Dec. 1969.

50. A. Gilmour, *An Eastern Cadet's Anecdote* (Singapore: University Education Press, 1974), especially chap. 13. And see Cobden-Ramsay to Bryson, 9 May 1969, on DOs playing god.

51. Mrs. M. C. Hay to author, 19 May 1975. And see R. C. Gates to Bryson, 14 Apr. 1969. Those who had African as well as Malayan service were especially aware of the differences in this respect.

52. E. N. Taylor to Bryson, 19 Nov. 1969. Bryson, Sheppard, and H. G. Turner are among the many who challenge this allegation. They deny that as a general proposition it can stand the test of careful enquiry.

53. Letter to author, 11 July 1974. My correspondent prefers to remain anonymous.

54. R. N. Band to Bryson, 13 Aug. 1969.

55. To Bryson, 5 July 1969.

56. To Bryson, 10 Mar. 1969.

57. To Bryson, 1 Nov. 1969.

58. K. R. Blackwell, "Malay Curry," CRP, p. 3.

59. To author, 24 Feb. 1975.

60. *Ibid.*

61. *Fires Burn Blue* (New York: Longman, 1948), p. 172.

62. A. Caldecott, *Oxford* (Oxford: Holywell Press, 1907), verses.

63. A. Caldecott, *Not Exactly Ghosts* (New York: Longman, 1947), p. 82.

64. *Memoirs*, p. 257. And see Cunyngham-Brown, *Crowded Hour*, pp. 71-72.

65. Helps to Bryson, 30 Apr. 1969.

66. Notes, note 43 above, p. 5.

67. Proceedings of the Federal Council, 1927, B113.

68. *Alif*, chap. 10. He is particularly contemptuous of Whitman, whom he sees as the poet of the American spirit.

69. To Bryson, 10 Apr. 1970. See also his letter of 31 Mar. 1966 to Bryson, RCS.

70. To his family, 29 Nov. 1946. I am also grateful to Cunyngham-Brown for a helpful discussion of this point, Penang, 22 June 1973.
71. T. W. Clayton, interview by Bryson, 28 Feb. 1969.
72. To Bryson, 20 Jan. 1970.
73. To Bryson, 13 Aug. 1969.
74. To Bryson, 14 Apr. 1969.
75. To Bryson, 16 Jan. 1970. This rhymes with Bingham's reference to "the happy days of security and reasonable reward for good work," (to his family, 10 Aug. 1947). Macpherson described Malaya as his first love. Much later, after he had retired from the headship of the C.O., he still occasionally thought in Malay (transcript of interview, CRP, 7 and 77).
76. Morkill's Recollections, p. 34.
77. To Bryson, 5 July 1969.

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## About the Author

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ROBERT HEUSSLER is Professor of History at the State University of New York College at Geneseo. His earlier books include *Yesterday's Rulers: The Making of the British Colonial Service*, *The British in Northern Nigeria*, and *British Tanganyika*.