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LEAVING TOWN: KUALA KANGSAR'S COLONIAL PAST AND THE POSTPONED NATION IN MALAYSIA

by

Thomas A. Williamson

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
(Anthropology)
in The University of Michigan
1998

Doctoral Committee:

Professor Ann L. Stoler, Chair
Professor Nicholas B. Dirks, Columbia University
Associate Professor Nancy K. Florida
Associate Professor Rudolf Mrazek

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Dedicated to family, friends, and teachers, who in their own ways share in all of this.

For my parents.

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INTRODUCTION

A FUTURE OF 2020, 50-50, AND THE LOSS OF THE PAST

In early 1994 when I arrived in Malaysia to do my research for this project, the country was in the sixth year of tremendous economic growth. This contrasted sharply with the first time I worked there, in 1986, when the economy was then in the midst of a deep contraction. Yet the Malay peninsula's century-long integration into the world economy makes the difference of such moments similar, in that growth and recession are two sides of the same coin that signifies life in a market economy. The world market's lengthy ties to the peninsula for first tin, then rubber, and later light manufactures make capitalism's renowned fickleness starker still. As I finish this dissertation in early 1998 the economy faces yet another downturn, this time due to Malaysia's increasing integration into global financial markets. The Malay peninsula remains, to its last decade, a center of the twentieth century.

The Malaysian economy's volatility set the tone for my research. Through 1994 I conducted ethnographic fieldwork in the small northern town of Kuala Kangsar in Perak state, and sought to understand better the texture of everyday life among a portion of the town's Malay population. I then traced genealogically my ethnographic interests through archival research over 1995 and 1996, work that took me to Kuala Lumpur, Singapore, London, and libraries throughout the United States. Such research presents plenty of complications. The narrative links among different topics and historical periods are one, the very different modes of ethnographic work and archival research are another. These are perhaps inherent in any consideration of anthropology and history and the difficulties of attempting to write a history of the present.[1] In the specific complexities of Malaysia,

[1] The phrase "history of the present" is from Michel Foucault, Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison, Vintage: New York, 1979, page 31. The number of anthropologists and historians working in the intersection between archives and ethnography continues to grow. Among the anthropological research in Southeast Asia influential to this work includes Ann Laura Stoler, Capitalism and Confrontation on

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my particular interests in the past sometimes paled before the public fixation on the future, the sense of dread and possibility brought about by highly visible new wealth, most inescapable to those left behind by its presence. The thoughts that follow develop competing senses of the national Malaysian context of such local Kuala Kangsar research in what was called in the mid-1990s a newly industrializing country.

The corporate fantasies of the Asian business press portrayed Malaysia in its high-growth years via photographs of rippling new infrastructure projects and profiles of entrepreneurial daring. The Malay peninsula's modern sheen dates back at least to the early part of this century and seemed to frustrate the Orientalist desire for difference. As a 1929 travel guide put it, upon alighting in Penang "the Romance of Industrial Progress? You mutter that you did not voyage ten thousand miles from Birmingham in search of *that*."[2] Malaysia as inappropriately modern and insufficiently tropical echoes in contemporary descriptions that for outsiders make the country sometimes difficult to locate. Journalists invariably term the pace of change "dizzying," and the dissemination of made-in-Malaysia products throughout the world's homes does not serve much better to orient their origin. The country appears to have no signs, as a consultant told the Malaysian Tourism Development Corporation: "Malaysia's primary constraint in becoming a major tourist destination was its lack of identity."[3] Malaysia should be recognizable, but is not. Hence the attempt to gain a consolidating icon for a Malaysia that exceeds its borders but is not recognizable within them--the extravagant expense of the tallest building in the world, newly opened in 1996 to displace Chicago in Kuala Lumpur. The building is part of a grand scheme to create, one day, a new and perhaps different Malaysia, one that is recognizable.

Sumatra's Plantation Belt 1870-1979, Yale University Press: New Haven, 1985; Vicente Rafael, Contracting Colonialism: Translation and Christian Conversion in Tagalog Society Under Early Spanish Rule, Cornell University Press: Ithaca, 1988; John Pemberton, On the Subject of "Java", Cornell University Press: Ithaca, 1994.

[2] Ashley Gibson, The Malay Peninsula and Archipelago, J.M. Dent: Toronto, 1928, page 21.

[3] "Malaysia Lacks Identity, Says Tourism Expert," Star, 17 July 1992. See also "Identitinya Berubah-ubah," Dewan Masyarakat, February 1992.

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At the high-point of Malaysia's very prosperous years following the 1986 recession, such a future seemed within reach. On 31 August, 1994, the newspaper Utusan Malaysia printed its special National Day edition. At the top of the front page bright colors spelled out the numbers "2020" with a note underneath that the year 2020 was just "9,253 days away."[4] The accompanying article explained

> We do not have that much time, actually. If you count in years, there are only 25. If months, 304. If days, only 9,253. Some of us are going to see the morning sun on that historic day. Some of us will no longer be in this world.
> Wednesday January first 2020.
> A sacred day that has become the dream of every Malaysian who knows and lives 'Vision 2020.'

Vision 2020 refers to an aggressive plan for economic development formally launched by Mahathir Mohamad, the Prime Minister, at a 1991 speech before the Malaysian Business Council. Under the title Malaysia: the Way Forward, Prime Minister Mahathir argues that "the ultimate objective that we should aim for is a Malaysia that is a fully developed county by the year 2020."[5] Since its inception, the Vision 2020 program emerged as (among other things) the key iconographic feature of National Day celebrations, marked in 1994 by the slogan "Pure Values Realize the Vision" [nilai murni jayakan wawasan]. That a future date (as opposed to one from the past) is seen as an appropriate frame for the anniversary celebration of the nation-state's formation points to an important dynamic of remembrance in contemporary Malaysia. 31 August 1994, after all, marked the 37th anniversary of the moment in 1957 when Tunku Abdul Rahman raised his fist in the air and shouted "Merdeka" [independence] to signify the end of British rule in the Malay peninsula. Yet the references to 2020 determinedly point away from 1957, toward something else.

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[4] "2020 9,253 Hari Lagi," Utusan Malaysia, 31 August 1994. The article concludes, "starting today, 31 August 1994, *Utusan* and the Malaysian people who believe in their Prime Minister's dream will count the remaining days until arriving at that date."

[5] Malaysia: the Way Forward, Centre for Economic Research and Services, Malaysian Business Council: [np], 1991, page 1. For other views of the 2020 project, see Joel S. Kahn and Francis Loh Kok Wah, editors, Fragmented Vision: Culture and Politics in Contemporary Malaysia, Allen and Unwin: Sydney, 1992, and Ahmad Sarji Abdul Hamid, editor, Malaysia's Vision 2020: Understanding the Concept, the Implications, and Challenges, Pelanduk: Petaling Jaya, 1993.

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Rather than more conventional commemorations of a shared history, Malaysian 2020 National Day celebrations look toward a glorious future, one released from the humiliations of colonialism and the nether world of an uncertain post-coloniality. The Prime Minister's plan aimed for seven percent growth in Gross Domestic Product for the years leading to 2020, to a point where at the awaited date Malaysia would boast a per-capita Gross Domestic Product equivalent to that of some Western countries today. In the years immediately following the 1991 speech, there was a tremendous outpouring of popular interest in the program. In 1994 and 1995 I found references to 2020 throughout the country, from the imposing illuminated 2020 numerals on the side of the Ministry of Information building in Kuala Lumpur, to the omnipresent 2020 stickers on buses and hawker carts, to t-shirts, shoes, and such ephemera as the "2020 plastic bag," the "2020 car wash," and the "2020 Muslim fez stand." Indeed the National Day measurement of 2020's distance from the present continues in the Borges-like Utusan box counting down the remaining days. All such citations worked to put 2020 within the frame of the day, and the goal need no longer be contingent--as one young friend put it, pointing to the newspaper box: sleep--get up--sleep--get up--sleep--get up.

Throughout my fieldwork the common answer I got to questions about what Malaysia will be like in the year 2020 was that it cannot be imagined [tak dapat dibayangkan], which proved that the question was not interesting. However, this was precisely the answer that some policy people in Kuala Lumpur expected small-town Malaysians to have--that is what they imagined them not imagining. In the 1994 National Day article, the writer notes that the approach of 2020 is only understandable from a historical perspective, yet "it is too close if human history is the measure."[6] To comprehend 2020, then, is to take a historical perspective but not to think historically. That is, the 37th celebration of National Day does not recall the memory of enslaved

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6 "2020 9,253 Hari Lagi," Utusan Malaysia, 31 August 1994.

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ancestors, to cite one of German critic Walter Benjamin's theses, but rather thinks of liberated grandchildren.[7]

Yet the dynamics of waiting in the 1990s celebrations of National Day recalls other experiences in recent Malaysian history. In 1950, Perak's Sultan went to London with the Sultan of Pahang to offer the opinion that Malaya was not ready for independence. The minutes of their meeting with the Secretary of State for the Colonies records

> The Sultans wished to express the view that Malaya was not yet ready for self-government. The development of liberal institutions must be regarded as a matter of long-term policy, and it was essential that the Malays should first be trained, by the increase of educational facilities and in other ways, for the exercise of democracy. No time limit in their view should be set on this process.[8]

Their interest in hesitation coincided with Britain's dependence on Malaya's dollar earnings, which were vital for holding up the value of sterling in the post-war period.[9] The protracted negotiations between British and Malayan politicians over independence stands in marked contrast to the revolutions experienced by Malaysia's neighbors.[10] Malayan independence was won seven years after the Sultan's trip, in 1957, following the defeat by Commonwealth forces of Malaya's communist rebels.

Yet after 1957 the theme of waiting reappears. The severest crisis to strike post-independence Malaysia, the May 1969 riots, was also met with a plan entailing gradual change. Following national elections that year which produced significant electoral gains

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[7] Walter Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History," Illuminations, Schocken Books: New York, 1968, page 260.

[8] Enclosure in Colonial Office 717/186/51953, "Sultan of Perak."

[9] Nicholas J. White, Business, Government, and the End of Empire. Malaya, 1942-1957, Oxford University Press: Kuala Lumpur, 1996, pages 10-13. White argues that the power of business to determine political policy was limited, however.

[10] Many of the relevant documents are reproduced in A.J. Stockwell, editor, Malaya: British Documents on the End of Empire, HMSO: London, 1995. See especially his introduction, page lxxix, for more on the shifting ideas of the Malay elite on the proper moment for independence. For more on the competing programs between conservatives and radicals over the question of Malayan independence, see Ariffin Omar, Bangsa Melayu: Malay Concepts of Democracy and Community, 1945-1950, Oxford University Press: Kuala Lumpur, 1993, especially chapters 2 and 4. A first-person account from the left is told by Ahmad Boestamam, Carving the Path to the Summit, Ohio University Press: Athens, 1979.

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by Malaysia's opposition parties, rioting broke out in Kuala Lumpur.[11] The government then temporarily suspended the constitution and authority was given to a National Operations Council, which used strict limits on public assembly and speech to restore order. The key document to address what the government perceived as the cause of the riots was the Second Malaysia Plan, 1971-1975.[12] The Prime Minister, Tun Abdul Razak, notes in his foreword to the plan that it "is just one phase, but a crucial one, in a far-reaching transformation of the social framework of production and distribution," one that "aims at the creation of a viable and dynamic commercial and industrial community of Malays and other indigenous people, and the emergence of a new breed of Malaysians" (ibid., vi). The plan details Malaysia's implementation of the New Economic Policy (NEP), meant both to eradicate poverty and redistribute wealth along ethnic lines.[13] The statistic from the plan that later became the single most prominent measure of its success was the target that "within two decades at least 30% of the total commercial and industrial activities in all categories and scales of operation should have participation by Malays and other indigenous people in terms of ownership and management" (ibid., 158). Thus the challenge of the riots was met with another period of waiting, to be realized in the year 1990. Then again in 1991, with the NEP share-capital target yet unfulfilled, the Prime Minister announced the 2020 program. These strategies of the Malaysian state and its never-defeated ruling coalition might be characterized as a politics of deferral.

A context for this deferral lies in Malaysia's critical factor of explanation, what academics often call ethnicity and what most Malaysians refer to as race: the 60-30-10

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[11] The main report of the events is the Malaysian government's white paper, The May 13 Tragedy: A Report, National Operations Council: Kuala Lumpur, 1969. Other accounts appear in Tunku Abdul Rahman, May 13: Before and After, Utusan Melayu Press: Kuala Lumpur, 1969, and Goh Cheng Teik, The May Thirteenth Incident and Democracy in Malaysia, Oxford University Press: Kuala Lumpur, 1971.

[12] Second Malaysia Plan, 1971-1975, Government Printer: Kuala Lumpur, 1971.

[13] For more on the New Economic Policy see the retrospective by three of the participants in its conception, Just Faarland, J.R. Parkinson, and Rais Saniman, Growth and Ethnic Inequality: Malaysia's New Economic Policy, Hurst: London, 1990; and Edmund Terence Gomez and Jomo K.S., Malaysia's Political Economy: Politics, Patronage, and Profits, Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1997, chapter 3.

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split of the population between the colonial categories of Malay, Chinese, and Indian.[14] These communal dynamics provide in a ready way the structure of feeling for everyday life.[15] The threat that ethnic diversity appeared to pose to the stability of Malaysian society emerged in the 2020 milieu in assertions of harmony. A common 1990s remark made to me about Malaysia is that it is "aman, damai" [peaceful]. This is a kind of greeting, the way one introduces Malaysia to an outsider. The insistence that Malaysia is aman damai suggests that it might not be, as Malaysians often qualify in the next breath that the country has avoided the fate of other multi-ethnic states like Bosnia, Sri Lanka, and Rwanda. As the exception that proves the rule, they cite the 1969 riots as an instance when Malaysia risked its continued existence. That the 1990s are not 1969, and that hideous tragedies of ethnocide occur elsewhere but have been successfully avoided, confirms that Malaysia is in fact peaceful. However in each incantation contains the reminder that it might not be.

The assured tone of the urban set at the 2020 vanguard articulates the aman-damai peacefulness of Malaysia in a different register. A glossy magazine profile of one of Malaysia's advertising writers closes by intertwining memory and violence.[16] Contemplating an ad campaign for 1997's double festival season marking the end of Ramadan and the beginning of the Chinese New Year, her agency's team was described plotting an ad for the state oil company Petronas, then the new inhabitant of the world's

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[14] For the role of the colonial census in defining the peninsula's ethnic categories, see Charles Hirschman, "The Meaning and Measurement of Ethnicity in Malaysia: An Analysis of Census Classifications," Journal of Asian Studies, August 1987.

[15] The literature on ethnicity in Malaysia, given the prominent place of ethnic divisions in Malaysian society, is especially comprehensive. See Jomo K.S., A Question of Class: Capital, the State, and Uneven Development in Malaya, Oxford University Press: Singapore, 1986; Raymond Lee, editor, Ethnicity and Ethnic Relations in Malaysia, Northern Illinois University Center For Southeast Asian Studies: Dekalb, 1986; Syed Husin Ali, editor, Kaum, Kelas, dan Pembangunan Malaysia, Persatuan Sains Sosial Malaysia: Kuala Lumpur, 1984; and Judith Nagata, Malaysian Mosaic: Perspectives from a Poly-Ethnic Society, University of British Colombia Press: Vancouver, 1979.

[16] "Pretentious Gits: Yasmin Ahmad, Malaysia's leading copywriter, on her own profession," Men's Review, October 1996. For a reaction to the ad campaign, see "Petronas Ads use a Divisive Event to Foster Greater Racial Harmony," Asian Wall Street Journal Weekly, 16 April 1997.

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tallest building. The ad team averts what they fear might be cliched themes after the following exchange:

> Chinese festivity, Malay festivity. Chinese. Malay. Malay. Chinese. The two are getting along quite well nowadays, but let's face it, it hasn't always been like that, has it? How about if we feature a racial confrontation? Ooooh. That would be something, wouldn't it? A racial confrontation sounds exciting, but how do we resolve it?

They then decide to make the Petronas commercial into a story of a Chinese boy and a Malay girl playing in a village when "a little crisis breaks the fun" (ibid.). The advertising executive reports among her group that at this point "then the reminiscing begins" (ibid.). To fill in the details, the discussion among the ad team turns to nostalgia for one's childhood, of which she says about herself "the girl from Muar has the most colourful memories of all" (ibid.). The colorful recollections of a small-town childhood, holiday festivities, and everyone getting along frame the racial confrontation, the palpable sense of threat that undergirds Malaysia's industrialization and consuming society. A point of danger provides access to their memories. She closes, "and so the story takes shape. We have ourselves a commercial" and forms one story about the possibilities of stories.

There are specific thoughts of the past that an interest in 2020 helps to forget. The orientation to the future, itself a part of peninsular history, recounts a hesitancy to narrate the past. In a 1940 short story, serialized for a Malay daily newspaper, Ishak Haji Mohammad tells the tale of Ramli, a young man from the Malayan state of Negri Sembilan who travels through the peninsula with the aim "to see the old Malay civilization."[17] In his quest he sails from Singapore to neighboring Sumatra, and is taken in by a local family and quickly taken with their daughter, Ramlah. After joining the family on a Malay heritage tour through the archipelago, through a fantastic progression

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[17] Ishak bin Haji Muhammad, "Di Sini Kita Bukan-nya Orang Dagang," serialized in Utusan Zaman, June and July 1940 [reprinted in Ali Haji Ahmad, editor, Rintisan: Antoloji Cherita Pendek Melayu Sa-Belum Perang Dunia Kedua, Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka: Kuala Lumpur, 1964, page 201].

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of events Ramli and Ramlah wash ashore on a remote, inhabited island. In due course they are brought to the local headman for initiation to their new surroundings. The old man tells them

> I think there is no need for me to narrate the origins of this island because you two look like people who have studied at school and read history books ... or at the least have seen drawings in the school museum that depict our people (ibid., 222).

The representations of the island common to those with texts make superfluous the narratable origins to which the headman refers.

The island proves to be the end of Ramli's search for a Malay space even without this history, or especially because of its absence. Its boundaries, Ramli notes, define a place where "everyone is of Malay stock" (ibid., 221). Yet after showing his two new visitors some of the remnants of the island's heritage, the headman concludes "all of this cannot be used anymore because at the present time everything has changed" (ibid., 235). Ishak's title for the story, "Here We are Not Outsiders," expresses the most profound measure of this change, the perception among Malays that they had become outsiders to the new Malayan colonial society.[18] In fact by 1940 heavy immigration of laborers from China and India left Malays a minority among the peninsula's population. The context of alienation in the passage and the title of the story in many ways prefigures later possibilities for recounting this modern past. The place where Ramli is not an outsider is also one without a narration of its past.

In Kuala Kangsar I did my ethnographic research while living as part of a small neighborhood of 40 households on the edge of the town. Throughout my fieldwork I had the good fortune to join people at work, in life-cycle rituals, and participate in the mundane aspects of daily life. When I asked residents about the local history of the neighborhood, many replied that they did not know, they were too young, they had not been born there, they did not think about such things. A few people did, though, relate

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[18] Ramli describes the peninsula as a place where "the Malays are very poor and have become outsiders. The ones who have become the locals [anak negeri] are the Chinese, Indians, Arabs, and other groups." Ishak, page 242.

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stories depicting various origins. I heard that the first residents of the neighborhood were refugees running from invading Japanese troops. Others said no, the original settlers were immigrants from the state of Kelantan, and in another opinion held they were really connected to one of the minor palaces of the state sultanate. But to be certain, many encouraged me to see the bilal (prayer caller) of the neighborhood, since he was the one who had lived in the neighborhood the longest. Though he and I often talked of the past while working on projects (he was a bricklayer), he insisted he had no old stories to tell. He vividly described for me the time of the whites when Kuala Kangsar town was full of Europeans, what people were forced to wear during the Japanese occupation, and the more humble details like when local houses were built, but he apologized to me that he knew no riwayat, no stories.

Yet the landscape of the neighborhood (and of Central Perak in general) has been the object of very precise measurements. The precision of these measurements makes certain representations inaccessible. In 1994 I went to the Kuala Kangsar District Office to ask for a local map. They told me that they did not have any, and directed me to the Surveyor's Office in nearby Taiping. There I was told that they could not provide me with a map without the consent of the country's Special Branch police intelligence division. Maps from most other areas were readily available; maps of Kuala Kangsar district were restricted in fear of providing detailed topographical information to any remaining communist insurgents.[19] When I told this story to people in Kuala Kangsar, and asked if anyone had maps to share, the responses were various. Some were suspicious and some were surprised at the Surveyor's Office's continuing restrictions. Colonial Malaya and independent Malaysia have been minutely surveyed, photographed, and mapped. People are aware of this. The Kuala Kangsar Land Office's carefully

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[19] Archival documents that were once secret but opened to researchers after 25 years were reclassified following an amendment to the government's Official Secrets Act in 1986. This is especially acute in the case of documents that describe the Emergency period in the last years of British rule, as noted in Cheah Boon Kheng, From PKI to the Comintern, 1924-1941: The Apprenticeship of the Malayan Communist Party, Southeast Asia Program: Ithaca, 1992, pages 4-5.

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worked deeds and title registers (not yet archival) have survived the British, Japanese, and Independence periods, and make it one of the busiest spots in town. Yet the precisely surveyed land is left mysterious from the general map's wider cartographic angle.

The Kuala Kangsar neighborhood I lived in did not have a ready story about its founding. Instead, people had multiple stories, ones featuring immigrants from elsewhere in the peninsula, the rural residences of the Sultanate, and the occupying forces of the British and the Japanese.[20] The Kuala Kangsar district map said to be unavailable due to the continuing communist threat, fifty years after the Malayan Emergency started within its boundaries, shows another way in which Kuala Kangsar is an epicenter of twentieth century-trauma. Mohamad Yusoff, a former Assistant District Officer in Kuala Kangsar, prefaces his memoirs with the note "no country in the world has seen so much development taking place within so short a period as time as Malaya. In fact more had been accomplished in the twentieth century than during the last thousand years."[21] The Malay peninsula's tremendous shifts through the past century help routinize lives of change, and make possible the state's elaborate plans for the future.

The huge swings of the Malaysian economy between recession and booming growth carry the headman's 1940 assertion that "everything has changed" into the century's close. In Kuala Kangsar, light manufacturing has replaced in a generation the old colonial rhythms of commodity production. Old social ties, stretched by shift-work and constant migration, grow taut as families attempt to hold long-distance relationships together.[22] This is especially acute among the Malays I lived with, new to the lower rungs of the middle class and the forms of life typical of it. For them motorcycles replace

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[20] For an insightful history of local politics utilizing oral histories in Perak's neighboring Selangor state, see Shamsul A.B., From British to Bumiputera Rule: Local Politics and Rural Development in Peninsular Malaysia, Institute of Southeast Asian Studies: Singapore, 1986, especially chapter 2.

[21] Mohamad Yusoff, Decades of Change (Malaysia 1910s-1970s), Pesaka: Kuala Lumpur, 1983, page viii.

[22] The literature on social aspects of Malaysia's industrialization is stronger in some aspects than in others, particularly comprehensive in describing the experience of Malaysian women factory workers. See Aihwa Ong, Spirits of Resistance and Capitalist Discipline: Factory Women in Malaysia, SUNY Press: Albany, 1987; and Jamilah Ariffin, editor, From Kampung to Urban Factories: Findings from the Hawa Study, University of Malaya Press: Kuala Lumpur, 1994.

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bicycles and cars replace motorcycles, children as a rule leave their families for urban employment, and cash relationships supplant older ties of reciprocity. Malaysia's phenomenal rise in GDP over the boom years 1988-1996, averaging near double-digit growth, both fuels and records this relentless commodification of social forms, and shows the wide-ranging problems when that growth halts. People in Kuala Kangsar have developed dexterous means to discuss the uncertainty of memory amid this industrial life.

The historian Khoo Kay Kim has a weekly column in a Malaysian English newspaper called "History Alive." He frequently writes, however, that Malaysian history is in effect "dead" because people do not know it.[23] Khoo's provocative conclusion perhaps opens an examination of the conditions of possibility for a purportedly forgotten history. My situation in the neighborhood after all was not unlike that of Rāmli and Ramlah on the island, for though the bilal did not have ready access to the stories that the headman did, he was aware that such stories should exist. Such fragments trace the history of a particular relationship to the past. This registers especially important in Kuala Kangsar, with its shift from a prominent place in colonial Malaya to its peripheral position in independent Malaysia. The town that once served as the Malay center of Malaya's "premier state" of Perak, changed to become just another small town inside national borders that extend well beyond the loosely-federated Sultanates of the peninsula.[24] The great achievement of Malaysian independence brought about the demise of the old relationships once possible between state and society in Kuala Kangsar.

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[23] "Don: History A Dead Subject," Star, 28 November 1996. Khoo also argues that this is a specific concern about remembrance, evident since "writing biographies in this country is a nightmare because individuals do not keep personal records and descendants of famous personalities are uncooperative. People become unnecessarily wary when searching questions are asked," in "Scant details hamper knowledge," "History Alive," Star, 4 February 1996. Khoo's essay "Malay historiography in a Changing Political Climate" appears in his collection Malay Society, Transformation and Democratisation, Pelanduk: Petaling Jaya, 1991.

[24] The entity gradually called "British Malaya" in the 1920s, in fact, contained three different groupings of these Sultanates and the territories formerly under them ceded to the British Empire: The Straits Settlements of Penang, Malacca, and Singapore, the Federated Malay States of Perak, Selangor, Pahang, and Negeri Sembilan, and the curiously-titled Unfederated Malay States of Kelantan, Kedah, Perlis, Johore, and Trengganu. Also within the administrative interest of British Malaya were the Bornean territories of Sarawak, Brunei, and North Borneo. For an analysis of how these hybrid arrangements eventually

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Yet the ways in which history remains alive in Perak is a beginning point of this project. Walter Benjamin, deeply suspicious of grand narratives of the past, argued in another of his theses that "a chronicler who recites events without distinguishing between major and minor ones acts in accordance with the following truth: nothing that has ever happened should be regarded as lost for history" (Benjamin, 254). Tracing lost things might reveal the shape of the present. Throughout my research, I heard reports of the disappearance of old people in Malay society. Their reputed disappearance links to the appearance and elaboration of a sense of belief.[25] Old people have authority in recounting the past and rearing those who will take on that role in the future, and in their absence, the authority of certain kinds of knowledge is not socially located. The things that many people described to me as objects of belief--including curing, conjuring, and spirits--are also the things about which old people might have special knowledge. Since the tremendous interest in these topics is not located socially in old people, the authority of belief marks an uncanny political relation. The history of the past's remembrance in Malaysia might describe new forms of authority amid the shocks of Malaysia's economic changes.

In the colonial conditions of Ishak's time a half century ago the story never started because of the existence of print and the schooling based around it. In fact many people in Kuala Kangsar told me that what I really should be looking for are the books. In his foreword to a recent biography of a member of the Perak royalty, Perak Sultan Azlan Shah begins his remarks by noting "Malaysia does not boast a long established tradition of a writing and a reading public."[26] The only "local" writer the Sultan cites is Munshi Abdullah, who himself chided Malays in the nineteenth century for their indifference to

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produced the three independent states of Malaysia, Singapore, and Brunei, see Nordin Sopiee, From Malayan Union to Singapore Separation, University of Malaya: Kuala Lumpur, 1974.

[25] For a further discussion of belief in other contexts see Stacy Leigh Pigg, "The Credible and the Credulous: The Question of 'Villagers' Beliefs' in Nepal," Cultural Anthropology, 1996; and Mary Margaret Steedley, Hanging Without a Rope: Narrative Experience in Colonial and Post-Colonial Karoland, Princeton University Press: Princeton, 1993, especially chapter 1.

[26] Datin Ragayah Eusoff, Lord of Kinta: The Biography of Dato Panglima Kinta Eusoff, Pelanduk: Petaling Jaya, 1995.

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text.[27] Over the course of my research I heard frequent protests that memories were fallible, that black and white printed pages were preferable to scattered thoughts, that Perak history was more complete in the National Archives or even in London. The books that should be read in Kuala Kangsar are, however, said to be no longer there. Some people recalled their family collections, and most important the old archive of the Perak sultanate based in Kuala Kangsar.[28] All these, alas, are unavailable, either thrown away, burned during the Japanese occupation, misplaced while moving, or perhaps hidden. Their unavailability recalls the stories historians tell of yet more lost collections, the Perak State Secretariat Files, the school libraries, the Special Branch records, the Sultan's Office files. However modestly, each disappearance of a book or government file constitutes its own particular story, though people hesitate to write a history that was once recorded but now only remains as a memory of a text. Together these memories of lost local collections hint of an integral past, that the museums and archives elsewhere might still contain what people remember someone once reading.

Malaysians, however, are known for their weak reading habits, a fact they readily cite due to its frequent appearance in the newspapers. In the same paradoxical way, the customary introduction in a Malaysian book (like that written by Sultan Azlan) is that more such books are needed but have not been written. Some books that do exist describe the complexities of locating things Malay. A 1960 book titled Malay Customs and Traditions is exemplary in its attempt to consolidate a field of Malay culture, and links the appearance of the post-independence state with the disappearance of familiar

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[27] Abdullah bin Kadir Munshi (1797-1854), translator, language teacher, and writer, is characterized as the first modern Malay literary figure: according to his translator, A.H. Hill, "Abdullah was the first writer in Malay to bring realism to this art, to see events of everyday life from the standpoint of the common experience of mankind and not through the tinted spectacles of legend and romance." A.H. Hill, "The Hikayat Abdullah, An Annotated Translation," Journal of the Malayan Branch, Royal Asiatic Society, 1955, page 32. Abdullah's famous quote about the reputed Malay disinterest in Malay language is reproduced as the epigraph for the 1991 annual report of the Malaysian Language and Literature Board. Laporan Tahunan, Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka: Kuala Lumpur, 1991, page 1.

[28] For a careful reading of Javanese court manuscripts, see Nancy Florida, Writing the Past, Inscribing the Future: History as Prophecy in Colonial Java, Duke University Press: Durham, 1995.

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forms.[29] The author writes, for example, that the use of a certain kind of leaf to ward off ghosts is "no longer practiced by urban or educated Malays" (ibid., 16), that "the whole a'dat [custom] of berpantang [taboo] is also fast disappearing" (ibid., 20), certain wedding rites are "no longer practised nowadays as an a'dat," though of course "some Malays may adopt it just for fun" (ibid., 43). The sense of temporality becomes most acute in the connection between Malay heritage and generational mortality. A State Cultural official argues in the introduction to the book that this kind of folkloric research requires diligence, "to interview very elderly persons who know and still remember something about these practices--and there are not many such persons alive today."[30] In Malay Customs and Traditions the disappearance of familiar practices highlights the fleeting presence of old people.

The relation between disappearing things and old people elaborates a generation later in a book titled Malay Superstitions and Beliefs, published in 1979 amid heightened Malay involvement in the New Economic Policy.[31] Though the author notes that "the strong influence of superstitions can be felt most distinctly among the old folks in the kampungs [villages]" (ibid., 3) he dedicates the book to Malay readers who might be "reminded once again of the traditions of their ancestors" (ibid., vi). This world of possibly forgotten ancestors and beliefs brings an eerie association similar to how the uncanny can frighten. The book's introduction answers the question "'What are Superstitions and Beliefs?" in the following way:

> As an example, take a look at the belief in ghosts. Everyone, from the young to the old, knows about ghosts. The odd thing is that, they only know about ghosts but they are not familiar with them. Apart from knowing about ghosts, they also have this strong fear of ghosts. But then, if they were asked to describe the appearance of ghosts, they would be at a loss for words just because they have not actually seen ghosts with their own eyes (ibid., 1).

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[29] Syed Alwi bin Sheikh Al-Hadi, 'Adat Resam dan 'Adat Isti'adat Melayu, Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka: Kuala Lumpur, 1965 (first published in 1960). Citations are from the English translation, Malay Customs and Tradition, Donald Moore: Singapore, 1962.

[30] "Introduction," Ismail bin Abu Bakar, the Dato' Penghulu Isti'adat, Johor, in Alwi, page iv.

[31] Haji Mohtar bin H. Md. Dom, Malay Superstitions and Beliefs, Federal Publications: Kuala Lumpur, 1979.

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Part of the fear of the ghosts, which Malays know but reputedly are not familiar, is that they are indescribable. The topic of discussion itself, like that of histories not told, becomes here the possibility that people do not know what they are asked to talk about. The trace marks a remembered relationship that is no longer viable, and thus without old people there is the risk that one might be lost in unrecognizable, though oddly familiar, things.

In the mid-1990s many old people in Kuala Kangsar no longer pointed to what these authors refer to as the social authority of "very elderly persons." In fact amid the triumphalist milieu of the then booming economy many old people said old people are no longer around. One elderly woman, who insisted this to be the case, readily listed the reasons why. She said that before, people knew where their food came from, but now they all buy from the store. They have no idea whether the tinned cans contained poison or not. The same was true of health, that people before did not get sick as they do now. Her grandfather knew how to treat illness, but now people just go to the hospital. Perhaps amused with my interest in her description of modern conditions, she said that young people now do not want to hear these things.

The disappearance of old people in the towns extends to those areas pulled within the urban orbit. A particular village 30 miles from Kuala Kangsar, in the midst of the jungle, still serves wedding feasts by the custom of "gotong-royong," mutual help, where people cook and serve food for others in the promise that their work will be similarly repaid (this style of wedding feast still a powerful site of nostalgia). One night before a wedding, a group of men talked about hunting and fishing, stories of the jungle that surrounds the village. They related the strange things that can happen on these occasions, how people can inexplicably get lost, and how miraculous fish can appear from the waters of the river. My friend from town turned to me in the midst of this discussion and assured me there are many prohibitions and taboos in the jungle, that people cannot do this and cannot do that.

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One of the men from the village countered by saying that they did not know, and kept insisting that it was better not to tell stories, in a way reminiscent of the bilal's protest to me in the neighborhood. He added that before the old people had a key, which they could use to open, and they could use to close. In contrast now, he said, they can open but they cannot close. Then they proceeded to talk about how little time they spent in the jungle anymore. The remark has pertinence at a moment when Malay subsistence farmers are nearly gone, and huge factory buses ply the road that splits their village (and countless others like it) to take men and women to nearby factories to work. The key illustrates what once was but has been lost, and why people might be afraid of superstition. They are in a position to know that there is something that they do not know.

In both these instances the Malay term here glossed as "old people" carries with it connotations that extend beyond age rank. "Orang tua" often refers to custom as in the idiomatic phrase "the old people say," which stands for the voice of the heritage. The term also features in sharp political debates between modernizers and their opponents from the early nationalist period on to the present.[32] One elderly man who I asked about these comments regarding the demise of old people told me that many of them have given up, they are not able to maintain the pace of change. The position of social authority that "old people" might represent has been supplanted by something else. Like the unfamiliar ghosts that people are then afraid of, waxing state power emerges into this space of indeterminacy.

In 1995 the Star newspaper covered a forum of Malay cultural activists formed "to identify and help retrieve various cultures once practised by Malays."[33] One of the participants from the Johore state cultural ministry, argued that Malay dances, poetic

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[32] For more on the clash between what was called the Kaum Muda and the Kaum Tua, see William R. Roff, The Origins of Malay Nationalism, University of Malaya Press: Kuala Lumpur, 1967, chapter 3; and his "Kaum Muda-Kaum Tua: Innovation and Reaction Among the Malays, 1900-1941," in K.G. Tregonning, editor, Papers on Malayan History, University of Singapore Press: Singapore, 1962.

[33] "Johor acts to revive lost cultures," Star, 24 July 1995.

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forms, and martial arts "had been forgotten" (ibid.). On behalf of the State Government, he said that "we want the Malays, who have become rich and live in towns, to remember and practise those cultures, which were once practised by their grandparents in the villages" (ibid.). The article continues that "we don't want progress, modern technology and economic growth to rob us of these cultures, which used to be part of our daily lives" (ibid.). This sense of the incomplete might be another case of the repeating, melancholic circle of loss and recovery typical of modern conditions. However, the past tense of the minister's English here recedes beyond a retrievable continuity with former times.

Finality is clearer in an interview in a national Malay daily with a professor of performing arts.[34] He claims "there is no reason for us to be sad about the disappearance of traditional performance and there is no need to waste time trying to revive that which is dead. If this heritage is forced to live again, it will be like a living corpse" (ibid.). The newspaper concludes the interview that

> the twenty-first century will bring a new style of life and new forms of entertainment suitable to that. The generation of the twenty-first century will likely have no connection with traditional performance because they have never been exposed to it. Their tastes and interests in entertainment will be formed ... by modern entertainment (ibid.).

The argument is that the now merely absent practices will be fully replaced in the future by something else. But the terms of modern entertainment are not described, nor evince any kind of local specificity. The bureaucrat and the professor square off around a common sentiment, that the tradition is not just disappearing but has in fact disappeared.

The death of customary forms produces a spectral relationship that people describe as "belief." One friend of a friend who works in the Kuala Kangsar market continually asked me about the course of my research. We talked often there about spirits, healing, special knowledge, in short all the common topics that Malays discuss

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[34] "Seni persembahan tradisi akan mati?" Utusan Malaysia, 18 October 1994. For more on the tenuous position of the performing arts in Malaysia, see Tan Sooi Beng, Bangsawan: A Social and Stylistic History of Popular Malay Opera, Oxford University Press: Singapore, 1993; and Amin Sweeney, Malay Word Music: A Celebration of Oral Creativity, Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka: Kuala Lumpur, 1994.

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with reference to one's belief in them. One day he told me, concerned, that he felt the purpose of my project was to find if there are still Malays who believe. Curiously enough, he did not place himself or his friends in the category "Malays who believe." The comment shows a desire for those who are now absent, who were perhaps once described as old people. The indescribable ghosts are similar to the key that will not close, or even the stories not told, and the concept of "Malays who believe" emerges as the desire for these lost things. Yet searching for someone who believes sets up a potentially threatening relationship to the authority of the state.

The foremost Malay who does not believe is the Prime Minister, Dr. Mahathir Mohammed, the architect of 2020. His continuing rule of the country from 1981-on records a sustained attempt at the rationalization of Malaysian society, especially Malay society, to better integrate into the global economy.[35] As part of this continued campaign he offered in 1995 a well-publicized challenge for Malays to give up backward beliefs. He emphasized the pernicious problem of hysteria.[36] Hysteria, he said, affects only Malays and ignores the non-Malays who do not believe in the ghosts who induce it. This being the case, he questioned why Malays continue to believe in such ghosts if they can be safe from their powers merely by not believing in them. More dangerous still, the propensity to believe in the supernatural leaves Malays vulnerable to those who might mislead them. The Prime Minister added that conjurers can convince Malays of their special powers, and entice them to surrender their will to others. Unbelief in the form that the Prime Minister urged, operates as a kind of defensive posture.

But defensive of what? This returns to the plans for 2020. The more firmly dead the past appears, the more uncanny the traces that remain. The reported social absence of old persons creates a new relationship with the expanding reach of state authority. When

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[35] For more on Mahathir, see the biography by Khoo Boo Teik, Paradoxes of Mahathirism: An Intellectual Biography of Mahathir Mohamad, Oxford University Press: Kuala Lumpur, 1995.

[36] "Pegang Agama Bukan Tahyul," Berita Harian, 28 January 1995. For more on hysteria in Malaysia, see Raymond L. M. Lee, The Social Meaning of Mass Hysteria in Malaysia and Singapore, Ph.D. dissertation, University of Massachusetts, 1979.

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I asked a friend what he thought of the Prime Minister's statement, he said that though he was not too interested in the spirits, he followed his mother's advice on such matters, which he summed up as being don't not believe. A similar phrasing came from a girl in Kuala Kangsar when she told me she believed the ghost stories we had just heard "fifty-fifty." The reticence of those who do not tell stories is at once not forgetting and at the same time complicit with the overbearing rationality of the development regime. The possibility of fifty-fifty further splits the gap that the state anxiously tries to fill in its elaborate programs for the future.

That histories, ritual events, dramatic forms and the key to the jungle are cautioned as "not the whole story" suggests that the moment of a more certain narrative mode has not yet arrived, that the memory of things neglected still lingers. There is no question that oral traditions have been under erasure in the Malay peninsula for most of this century.[37] In fact the rise of print helped to amplify Malay anxiety over precisely this, the distinct possibility of Malay cultural extinction. These are the binds that modernity presents. Yet the very dialogue shows resilience, a sustainable mode of transition in regard to the past. Malay cultural extinction is deferred when people use a register not quite accessible to bureaucratic inquisitors amid the ranks of the almost unbelievers.

The effortless understanding of Malay forms also defers their domestication. A doctor in the Kuala Kangsar Poliklinik told me that the United Nations had done a study and determined that Malay was the easiest language in the world. In striking up conversations in Malay, people invariably remarked kindly on my competence and the related fact that Malay is not difficult to learn. I often heard the story of a Westerner who became fluent in Malay after an exceedingly short period of study, even in the course of just a few weeks. These Malay language prodigies, to whom lingual access is almost instantly available, permeate many of the conversations an outsider has speaking in

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[37] See Amin Sweeney, A Full Hearing: Orality and Literacy in the Malay World, University of California Press: Berkeley, 1987.

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Malay. But this adaptive genius of the language, as the easiest in the world, has its limits. It is with uncanny fluency that one might no longer understand Malay, that meaning might escape. A photographer from Kuala Lumpur came to Kuala Kangsar to do a project with a friend of mine. Around the dining table in the comfortable, if old-fashioned, middle class house, we discussed the ghost stories that are a polite way to pass the time. The accessibility of these stories is at once held out and then denied. The photographer denounced the colonial scholars who were wrong in many of their opinions. He said hiding what they know is a characteristic of Malay people, and that the more things they know, the less Malays will reveal. He continued that this is what makes the Malay heritage difficult to pass down as a tradition, because people are sometimes unaware of what it is. Within their apparent accessibility, things Malay retain something that outsiders might not even know they have.[38] Speaking Malay then might be the same as not knowing what the language means.

The specters of difference and those of the past themselves might appear increasingly familiar, even banal, to anthropologists hesitantly stepping beyond the binarism of traditional/modern. For much of this century the Malay peninsula has had a strikingly modern society, swelling with immigrants, investment funds, and an expanding state infrastructure financed by the profits from combining labor and capital in the extraction of tin and rubber. Malaysia's marked social mobility and particular colonial grid map a pattern of social affiliation genial to state formation and transnational capitalism. It is therefore not surprising that Malaysia frequently has been characterized as a model of such things as colonial management, ethnic relations, and economic development. I focus my research attention on a specific corner of the peninsula to ask what the history of a particular local social space offers for a critique of the present, beyond that available through nationalist history or Malaysia as model. Method follows

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[38] See James T. Siegel's analysis of language use and anthropological fieldwork in his Solo and the New Order: Language and Hierarchy in an Indonesian City, Princeton University Press: Princeton, 1986, especially chapter 12.

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from this, as the traffic habits of industrial life revealed in ethnography can help locate historical questions, just like archival sources can frame contemporary inquiries. A dialectic engagement with history might help anthropological research prove vital to a society living amid the ghosts of the past, and the foreboding of ghosts looming in the future.

Toward this end, each of the chapters in this dissertation begins with a section of ethnography that describes aspects of Malay life in Kuala Kangsar. The first and last chapters might be seen as mirror images, that describe the violent intervention of British administration into Perak in the late nineteenth century. These both begin with brief descriptions of the historical landscape in Perak, looking at the state's old graves and its abandoned houses as entrance points for the archival collections that describe the violence of early British colonialism into Perak. The first chapter analyzes predominantly English-language historiography and the last uses primarily Malay-language historiography. The two chapters thereby form supplementary accounts and mark supplementary desires for determining the persistent contemporary interest in the founding terms of the Malay-British colonial relationship. These stories are separated by three chapters that trace aspects of Kuala Kangsar's colonial triad formed by schools, roads, and police. These three--the Malay College Kuala Kangsar; the town's transit hub that connects road, river, and rail; and the management of colonial violence--all provide distinct intersections to Kuala Kangsar's history in the period under British rule. Each also produced a Malay association that explored new ways to negotiate the colonial infrastructure. This same infrastructure remains vital in the present through its continuing presence in contemporary Kuala Kangsar, now part of an internationally prominent, independent nation. Yet the elaborate institutions built by the colonial state and traversed by the Malay College Old Boy's Association, the Perak Malay Driver's Association, and the Perak River Society are largely absent in nationalist historiography. Contemporary Malaysia's striking mobility, described through each chapter's opening ethnography,

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helps reveal why this is so. Kuala Kangsar's position in Perak's past and Malaysia's present marks the continuing difficulty in articulating what a future Malaysian society might look like.

Malaysia's stark modernity might challenge anthropology's interest in difference. Throughout this project my desire has been toward social forms that become mundane. As the Malaysian middle class consolidates, there is explicit interest in being normal. In fact the Malaysian dream, as some people characterized it in the mid-1990s, is that by 2020 Malaysia will be a normal country. The most elaborated public discourse in Malaysia is in the language of economics and business. Cultural and historical concerns do not readily cut across Malaysian social divisions. But even with the sophisticated attention to the economy, and its terms of global comparison, local experiences are not completely erased. I try to show that the erasure marks of the normal itself, though they may appear to defeat a quest for the drama of history, can in fact reveal flashes of the past. They might help us to question precisely what kind of sensibilities a more fluent narrative flow of history and cultural description perhaps obscures, to imagine a next generation that might remember clearly nothing that has been forgotten. And, of course, all that I have missed.

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CHAPTER ONE

REBELLION, COLONIAL VIOLENCE, AND LOCATING THE SULTANATE

"It would be out of place here to dwell on the treachery of the Sultan and his chiefs, which culminated in the assassination of Mr. Birch, their punishment, and the new regime as a British protectorate."

--Patrick Doyle, Tin Mining in Larut, 1879, page 2.

"It would weary the reader if I were to truthfully describe the state of affairs and the conditions of life in the Malay states when this interesting experiment was first undertaken."

--Frank Swettenham, The Real Malay, 1899, page 16.

"To those concerned with the advantages now offered, and with the conditions of life now obtaining in the Federated Malay States, the past history of the country is but of little account, and the merest outline of the events of former days will suffice for the purposes of this pamphlet."

--H. Conway Belfield, Handbook of the Federated Malay States, 1904, page 7.

"The Perak war is a story of occasional punitive expeditions and of the pursuit of fugitive chiefs such as Ex-Sultan Ismail, the Maharaja Lela, and the Dato' Sagor. All were captured in the end. The details of the operations are of interest only to students of guerilla warfare, but the state of affairs they brought about is worth noting."

--R.J. Wilkinson, A History of the Peninsular Malays with Chapters on Perak & Selangor, 1920, pages 150-151.

Visiting lost archives

Points of memory are sometimes elaborated via their deferral. The British investors and administrators settling into the territory of Perak in the Malay peninsula at the turn of the twentieth century only obliquely referred to the violent circumstances of Malaya's colonization, confidant that among those Malays involved "all were captured in the end." Recorded faithfully elsewhere, the assassination of Perak's Resident Birch in 1875 was a colonial narrative that at that time did not need to be repeated, only later to be continually retold. In August of 1996, Perak State Chief Minister Ramli Ngah Talib led a delegation of

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90 members of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association visiting Malaysia through the Historical Complex in Pasir Salak, a small village on the Perak River.[1] The Chief Minister explained to his foreign guests "It was in Pasir Salak that the first British resident, James W.W. Birch, and a few other British officials were killed, marking the beginning of Malay rebellion against British colonial rule" (ibid.). Birch's 1875 death in the Malay sultanate of Perak, Ramli adds, paved the way for the country's eventual independence in 1957. The newspaper account of the visit continues, "recapping the incident, Ramli said the incident prompted the British to take heed of the views of the Malays. But the good-natured MB [Chief Minister] was quick not to offend the visitors, declaring 'we are now friends'" (ibid.). For Ramli, the rebellion at Pasir Salak provides a frame for understanding a Malay past of struggle against colonial rule, from which a "Malay view" would prove recognizable to the British. By taking his visitors to Pasir Salak, Ramli can show a local Perak origin for colonial rule, one that culminates in Malaysian independence. The Malay struggle against Birch memorialized by the historical complex provides a narrative link tying the past to the present, and provides a place for people to visit.

Other historical locations in the state of Perak are not so easily recapped as the village of Pasir Salak. Off a narrow path branching from the road near the northern Perak town of Matang, one between the well-known colonial towns of Taiping and Port Weld, is the grave of Dato' Sagor, a territorial chief who was a leader of that 1875 rebellion.[2] The two burial stones that mark his body's location sit raised on a concrete platform, split from the surrounding trees by chain link. A sign, written in Malay, states

> following the death of J.W.W. Birch, the British resident in Perak, the British accused Dato' Sagor of conspiring and planning the murder, and he was punished by hanging on the 20th of January 1877. This grave was rebuilt by the Museums Department in 1976.

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[1] "Ramli: Seeds of Independence Sown in Perak," Star, 21 August 1996.

[2] For more on Dato' Sagor, see Abdullah Zakaria bin Ghazali, Dato' Sagor: Peranannya dalam Gerakan Menentang British di Perak, Persatuan Muzium: Kuala Lumpur, 1993.

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The statement ends by listing the penalties for defacing such grave sites newly refurbished by the Malaysian state. Refurbishing the grave site marks it as national space. The epitaph penalizing others from leaving their mark on the grave shows the Malaysian state's interest in ensuring the last word on Dato' Sagor's grave, and the fact of the grave's renewal indexes the state's interest in the history of the murder of Resident Birch. Yet the brief narrative of the sign suggests the Museums department's ambivalence about elaborating the story of the rebellion beyond a few terse facts.

Debates in Malaysia about the great Pasir Salak rebellion have generated rumors. A neighbor of mine in Kuala Kangsar, who gave me some of his historical documents, explained that Dato' Sagor had powers of invincibility, able to withstand both daggers and bullets. Yet young people are not interested in the story, he said, because Dato' Sagor was not a cartoon. He is too complicated a figure for them. The figure of the dead Resident, Birch, generates a different kind of interest. A secretary in Kuala Lumpur told me there was a plot among the British to get rid of Birch because he was too close to the Malays. She said that though this is not the official version of events, research confirms it to be the case. Like the story told of Dato' Sagor, Birch here has been misremembered by some, though in both conversations the historical figures were described as knowable somewhere. When film actor and director Jins Shamsuddin began shooting in 1994 the forthcoming feature Pasir Salak: King of the River, newspapers highlighted the amount of research he did, especially overseas, to prepare for the movie.[3] The important archives to know these things are not in Perak, people say, but rather in places like London. Two members of the Perak royal family, engaged in a struggle over the rights to royal patronage, longed for lost Perak manuscripts likely in London that might determine the pre-rebellion terms of succession. They told me that with the right evidence, those now

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[3] "MB to Act in Movie on Perak History," Star, 9 March 1994. The movie itself has important implications, as Utusan pointed out: "The effort of Jins should properly be praised. We have many historical figures, but have yet to have one appear on film." "Jins dan Tuntutan Pasir Salak," Utusan Malaysia, 15 August 1996.

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regarded in Malaysian history as heroes will be considered traitors, and vice-versa. Though the rebellion at Pasir Salak is often synonymous with Perak history itself, the discussion of the past turns to those doing research in other places.

People say Perak might not contain the written proof of the events in 1875. What does remain in the state are the gravesites. The museum's work at Dato' Sagor's Matang grave is part of a 1970s project to mark Perak's historical geography, the decade being a period in which the Malaysian state more rapidly divested signs of the colonial inheritance. Though the museum's refurbishing is new, such concern for the Perak grave sites itself has a history. According to museum official N.A. Halim's book, Perak's Historical Places, the expansion of these historical sites was gazetted under act by the museum in the mid- to late-1970s, and included the graves of 21 of the former sultans.[4] His book puts the grave of the rebel Dato' Sagor in the same series as the sultans. Halim's research for the museum is continuous with N.J. Ryan's work for the Malayan Historical Society in 1954 and 1955, as Ryan writes "it was while trying to record places and monuments of historical interest in Perak for the Kinta branch of the Society that I first became aware that the tombs of the former Sultans of the state still existed" to which he travelled "in order to compile a more modern description of their condition."[5] Ryan's research was also to find something, the sultan's graves, that might be lost.

Ryan notes that he was following Jeragan Abdul Shukor, who in 1907 published a list of Perak's royal graves in the journal of the Royal Asiatic Society's Straits Branch.[6] Winstedt and Wilkinson, the well-known Malayan colonial scholars, note that Jeragan's royal position was itself patched together from one abolished after the rebellion. His position of Stia Bijaya diRaja was the position formerly known as the Dato' Sagor and was

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[4] N.A. Halim, Tempat-Tempat Bersejarah Perak, Jabatan Muzium: Kuala Lumpur, 1981.

[5] N.J. Ryan, "Some Reasons for the Siting of the Royal Tombs of Perak," The Malayan Historical Journal, December, 1955, page 115.

[6] Jeragan Abdul Shukor, "List of Graveyards of the Late Sultans of the State of Perak, Der-Ul-Rithuan, enquired and visited by me, Stia Bijaya Di Raja, under instructions received by the Government," Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society, Straits Branch, June 1907.

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abolished by the British as a punishment following Birch's death, as Wilkinson and Winstedt note: "The last Dato' Sri Agar 'diraja (the son of one Muhammad Zin) was executed for complicity in the murder of Mr. Birch. One of the most ancient of Perak titles was then abolished and its place in the Eight given to the new dignity of Orang Kaya-Kaya Sri Stia Bijaya 'diraja, a title that carries no territorial authority."[7] The newly-formed title, reinstated in 1898 and held in 1907 by Jeragan, was a general Perak position. Jeragan was thus placed in charge of all of the state's grave sites rather than just those falling within the territory of his title.

Jeragan was concerned about the deterioration of the graves. He begins his report "the names of the late Sultans and the situation of their respective graveyards is as follows."[8] The description of the grave of "the first Ruler of the State of Perak" notes that the tombstones "are broken and cracked," and if the graveyard is to be "renewed" it requires a stone over the tomb with his name inscribed, and the "breaks and the cracks" of the other stones "mended with cement" (Jeragan, 7). The conservation of the graves offered a means to maintain a relationship to the sites. At the end of his list of the graves Jeragan includes the name of Sultan Idris [r. 1887-1916], who in 1907 had not yet died. Jeragan thus addresses the graves' conservation as he does the reigning Sultan Idris himself, who, he writes, might have "long life, prosperity and good health to sit upon the throne of the State of Perak Der-el-Rithuan" (Jeragan, 106). To appear in Jeragan's list the sultans need not be alive or dead, or even in Perak. Both Sultan Ismail [r. 1871-1874] and Sultan Abdullah [r. 1874-1875], who were banished from Perak as a result of the rebellion, appear on the list, Abdullah still living at the time in Singapore. The present, living generation in Jeragan's list is the same as those who have died, and Jeragan must keep track of all of them.

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[7] R.O. Winstedt and R.J. Wilkinson, "A History of Perak," Journal of the Malayan Branch, Royal Asiatic Society, June, 1934, [Reprinted in 1974], page 154.

[8] Jeragan, page 97.

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Finding the graves also indexes a relationship to the sultans. Jeragan asked Sultan Idris in 1907 for help in deciphering the location of the graves. At Sultan Mansur Shah's grave [r. 1549-1577], Jeragan reports

> The graveyard of this Sultan I asked the elders of Kota Lama Kanan to point out to me; they all informed me that, according to the stories handed down by their forefathers, this grave is in the Kota Lama Kanan Mosque, under the pulpit. I could not find it at any other place. I brought this matter to the notice of His Highness Sultan Idris, and he told me that it was true that the grave of this Sultan is in the Mosque, as former Sultans, when visiting this grave, used to go to the Mosque. I think that a large tombstone with the name of this Sultan should be made and placed in the Mosque next to the Pulpit (Jeragan, 98).

He wants to make certain that no one needs to ask where the sultans are buried. Ryan, at the time a school headmaster in Perak, does not report asking anyone for help in his searches, but rather presents the distribution of graves as a puzzle offering a key to Perak's royal past. Ryan notes in 1955 that many of the royal graves are located on the Perak river's right bank, in a string of small villages from Durian Sebatang in the south to Kota Lama in the north. The seven most recent sultans (the exception being Sultan Yusof [r. 1886-1887]), those reigning from 1874 to the 31st and then-reigning Sultan Yusuf [r. 1948-1963], are buried on the opposite side of the river, in the royal mausoleum in Kuala Kangsar. Ryan explains "it is admitted that much still needs explanation--why, for example, are all the tombs on the right banks of the river? However it is hoped that these conjectures will stimulate other readers to bring forward more information on this topic" (Ryan, 121). He feels that the position of the graves themselves might contain information. Halim's book, prepared after his work with the Museums department had marked the graves, in contrast leaves little mystery, and anyone may use it as a guide to visit the sites as Jeragan did with Royal help. The graves are a historical resource that promise to offer insight into Perak's past.

Like Jeragan's list, the lists of Ryan and Halim share an interest in conservation. Some of the graves Jeragan was unable to find in 1907 appear, added later, in Halim's list. Some that Jeragan noted were not located by either Ryan or Halim. The graves seemed to appear and disappear in the attempt to place them in a single series. For Jeragan, the graves

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show a place for the Sultans to die and should be maintained because of that. Ryan wants to conclude that finding the graves teaches a lesson about Perak's past. Halim dedicates his book "to the present generation and to the generation which will come" (Halim, xvii). He also writes for the Malaysian government, so that they "will protect the places from destruction" (Halim, xvii). For Halim, the graves are refurbished so someone in the future will see what perhaps the graves might have looked like in the past.

The graves do have regular visitors. The new Perak sultans each take a pilgrimage down the Perak river to see them as part of their installation ceremonies. The installation book for Sultan Azlan Shah [r. 1985-present] describes how the royal retinue will pay deference "to the Royal Graves throughout Perak."[9] To do so the group would first visit near Kuala Kangsar and then board the royal launch for the trip down river. By 1985 this pilgrimage did not present complications. Arranging the trip downstream from Kuala Kangsar for the 1949 installation of Sultan Azlan's father, Sultan Yusuf, caused trouble, as the Sultan wrote to the Perak chief minister "I hope that it will not take more than one week by Motor Boat."[10] In the post-war conditions, Sultan Yusuf felt "owing to the present time, we would not trouble the people to make bamboo rafts" (ibid.). His schedule, once his installation took place, took ten days via the motorized transport (ibid.). Sultan Yusuf justified the difference, noting in his letter that "His Highness the Late Sultan Iskandar [r. 1919-1938] had that trip by bamboo rafts and it was allright at that time as the people were well off" (ibid.). Included in this file is a typed schedule of Sultan Iskandar's trip in 1919, with plans for over a month's worth of events on the journey.[11] Neither of these plans, though (with their great detail about such things as where and with whom they will eat),

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9 In the installation book of Sultan Azlan Shah, this is described as "The Sultan and His Sultanah with their retainers travel to visit the Royal Graves throughout Perak. These include the grave of Tok Temong, the graves at Kota Lama Kanan, the graves at Sayong, and the Royal Mausoleum on Bukit Chandan. Then Their Highnesses board the vessel named 'Chempaka Sari' and go downstream to visit the Descendent's graves who were buried along the length of the Perak River all the way to Teluk Intan." Pertabalan, 9 Disember 1985 Bersamaan Dengan 26 Rabiulawal 1406, no page given.

10 Perak Secretariat 4473/48, "His Highness Sultan Yussuf Izzudin Shah, Installation of."

11 "Perangkatan Duli Yang Maha Mulia Sultan Iskandar Shah Menziarah Makam Almarhum2 ke Beting Beras Basah," Sultan Perak Files 110/49. For more about these files see chapter five.

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lists the specific graves they will visit. Sultan Yusof's list of plans, for example, notes that in the villages where he will sleep "the places listed above have two or three Descendant's graves."[12] In visiting the royal graves there was no concern for precisely which graves the Sultan visited. The graves, and the messages they contain, were not hidden to their visitors.

The newly-installed sultans are not the only ones who make such pilgrimages. In 1994 I took a car trip with two older men to visit several of the former sultan's graves. The purpose, they told me, was to show respect. Though we started in Kuala Kangsar, we did not start with the Royal mausoleum next to the palace. They told me that these could be visited anytime, and hence we crossed over to the other side of the river and worked our way downstream through the course of the day to its estuary in Teluk Intan. The men prayed at each of the graves and poured water on them, following Muslim custom. The tone of the rites was made more somber by the isolated sites, many of them remote even from the small villages still on the riverbank.[13] Since river travel is now rare, reserved for fishing or tourism, travellers must use the roads oriented to Perak's rubber plantations and tin mines. Hence we skipped some of the more remote royal graves. Some were too close by virtue of their location in Kuala Kangsar, others too far away to include in the journey.

The refurbished graves elicit different desires than those in the royal town of Kuala Kangsar. On the occasion I went along, the attention fixed on the museum's signboards. The signs provide a brief historical sketch of each sultan's reign, and recall knowledge that had been forgotten. The men continually stated it was a shame we did not bring a camera to record the contents of these signboards. The men said the photographs would provide proof about the experiences of the various former sultans, since the museum signboards offered facts that would not deceive. This increases the attraction of these down-river locations compared to the graves in Kuala Kangsar, whose everyday familiarity on

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12 Sultan Perak Files 110/49.

13 By river, many of the graves would be easy to reach, their riverbank locations reflecting the time when the Perak river and not Malaysia's highway network formed the transport nexus.

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Chandan Hill on the edge of the town does not merit a signboard from the Museum's department. The imposing royal iconography of the Kuala Kangsar area, from the picturesque Ubadiah Mosque next to the mausoleum, the royal museum, and the Sultan's Palace itself stand in place of the signboards marking sites that no longer contain a legible reminder of their past.

The use of the signboards reveal an effect of British intervention into Perak. Placing signboards at historic graves in the state extends at least back to 1969, when then Sultan Idris [r. 1963-1985] is shown in a photograph "unveiling the Memorial Board erected by Malaysian Historical Society near the grave of His Late Highness Sultan Mudzaffar Shah, first Sultan of Perak, (1528-1549) on Saturday 1st November, 1969."[14] Next to the photograph of the signboard is another showing Sultan Idris in a military uniform "sprinkling holy water" on the grave in the customary measure of obeisance. Both photographs appear in a 1970 book commemorating his 46th birthday, in a section titled "Historical Backgrounds and Rulers of Perak (1874-1963)" (ibid., np). But neither Sultan Mudzaffar Shah, nor the accompanying text of Perak history (that begins "in 1500 A.D.") fits within the 1874-1963 time frame of the section's title. In the text, following a discussion of the signboard's establishment in 1969, is a narrative starting in 1862 and leading to Perak "governed for the first time in history under the guidance and advice of a British Resident" (ibid., np). The dates in the section's heading reference the signing of the Pangkor treaty of 1874, which first placed a British resident in Perak, and the 1963 installation of Raja Idris as the 33rd Sultan of Perak. The photo of Sultan Idris in 1969 at the sixteenth- century grave site exceeds these brackets at both ends. His visit to the refurbished grave, captioned by the memorial board, is a historical event that falls outside of the historical limits of the text.

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[14] Composed and Edited by Raja Badri Shah bin Raja Haji Harunal Rashid, Assisted by Raja Wahiduddin bin Raja Ahmad, Souvineer: His Royal Highness Paduka Seri Sultan Idris Al-Mutawakkil Alallahi Shah Ibni Al-Marhum Sultan Iskandar Shah Kadasallah D.K., D.M.N., D.K. (Johore), D.K. (Pahang), S.P.C.M., S.P.M.P., Sultan of Perak 15th September, 1970, no page given.

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The souvenir's text shows the temporal frame that British administration in Perak provides to those who write history. The brackets of 1874-1963 also denote the boundaries of representation. The birthday souvenir, as in most historical narratives of Perak, provides portraits of the last seven sultans ruling prior to the time of Sultan Idris, their reigns coinciding with the years 1874-1963. The photograph of the signboard at the grave of Sultan Mudzaffar Shah replaces his portrait that does not exist. All the sultans not buried in Kuala Kangsar (except for Sultan Abdullah who was banished for his complicity in the Perak rebellion) also escape such representation via a portrait. Next to the photograph of Sultan Abdullah (installed in 1874) the text notes that the new British Resident, J.W.W. Birch, "was perhaps a good administrator and did many right things but unfortunately in the wrong way" (ibid., np). After Birch's death "this tragic incident was followed by a short war at the end of which Sultan Abdullah was sent into exile to the Seychelles together with a few Chiefs" (ibid., np). All the historical photographs included in the text were taken in Kuala Kangsar, though there is no explanation of how Sultan Abdullah's successors arrived there. This particular Perak history records an attempt to remember these places in a way that Kuala Kangsar, the modern site of the Sultanate, is not remembered. The stationary grave sites, though, retain memories that evade the change in local authority brought about by Birch's forces and the shift of the Sultanate to Kuala Kangsar.

I undertook my visits to Dato' Sagor's grave in Matang by myself, as my frequent guided tours of central Perak's historical sites did not include it on the agenda. The grave is found through a series of large road signs that direct one from the main road. These signs led me there in 1994 and 1995 on several visits as they was designed to do, and on subsequent trips: the signs lead outsiders to a historical location whose existence they otherwise would not recognize. Once there I spent time at a small coffee shop nearby at the road side, and over the course of several long conversations with the man who owned it and his customers from the neighborhood, discussed my research interests in Perak

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history. My curiosity about Dato' Sagor's grave and the circumstances of his death elicited little comment. The Perak history that the men recounted was rather the memories of the Japanese occupation and the attendant excitement and suffering that the period brought about. It was in fact during the occupation, N.A. Halim points out, that the Datuk Maharaja Lela's grave (another Perak chief hanged for alleged conspiracy in the rebellion) next to Dato' Sagor's washed into the nearby Matang River and vanished.[15] My questions to the men at the coffee shop about Dato' Sagor were answered with directions to another nearby historical site, the fort of Ngah Ibrahim, the local leader who profited immensely from the tin fields opened with Straits capital just prior to Birch's arrival in Perak.[16] The fort contains a wide range of displays that recount local and national history. Many were closed in 1994 as the site was in the midst of renovation. There I was told by one of the museum staff of Dato' Sagor's execution in 1877 and shown the spot where it occurred. It was the use of Ngah Ibrahim's fort for the trial of the alleged conspirators that sited the rebel's graves so far from their ancestral villages on the banks of the Perak River, and left them later for the Museums department to protect (too late, apparently, in the case of the Maharaja Lela) and direct visitors.

The graves of the former sultans and that of Dato' Sagor share museum signboards placed to locate them for those who do not know where they are. They are different from Kuala Kangsar which does not need signboards to describe its founding (instead one of the old palaces was itself turned into a museum in the mid-1980s to mark the history of Perak's royal family, in place of the Palace itself that once filled this role). But Dato' Sagor and even Kuala Kangsar risk being lost to Perak and Malaysia. In 1994 a four-lane expressway opened (a stretch of which passes within sight of Dato' Sagor's grave) that runs the length of the peninsula north to south. Since the tollway is private property, there is no exit or marker to Dato' Sagor's grave, no sign to recognize its existence. The

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[15] Halim, page 133.

[16] See Abdullah Zakaria bin Ghazali, "Orang Kaya Menteri Paduka Tuan Ngah Ibrahim Long Jaafar, 1840-1895: Satu Kajian Mengenai Perjuangannya Menentang British di Perak," Purba, 1992.

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tollway, designed to link the major economic areas of Peninsular Malaysia, also bypasses Kuala Kangsar. Once the first site in Perak linked by road, rail, and river, Kuala Kangsar is accessed by the new highway through an exit 12 kilometers away. The signboard for the exit acknowledges Kuala Kangsar's difference from the other exits through auspicious yellow lettering (the royal color) that notifies travellers the town is "Bandar di Raja," the Royal Town. Though the new highway bypasses Kuala Kangsar, the administrative, educational, and transportation infrastructure that once made it a regional hub and pilgrimage point for colonial Perak society remains. With the highway's opening, Kuala Kangsar moves off the main line of the country's rapid growth and becomes in itself a living artifact of the colonial past.

This geography of graves, signs, and roads in Perak tracks the accessibility of Malaysia's past and suggests some of the complications in the modern project of writing its history. The grave of Dato' Sagor, refurbished only in the 1970s, marks the violent onset of the colonial relationship in Perak and the ambivalent memories left there. The location of Kuala Kangsar as Perak's royal town, on the opposite river bank from the old royal tombs, shows a wound opened by this violence. Kuala Kangsar in the late nineteenth century at first fit as a colonial hub, yet one that could not resist the rationalizing forces of power concentrated elsewhere in the tin-mining towns of Taiping, Ipoh, and Kuala Lumpur. Tracing the connections that Kuala Kangsar's history offers, and those that it obscures, helps elucidate the terms under which a colonial relationship and post-colonial politics have emerged in the peninsula. The rebellion that resulted in Dato' Sagor's death, forgotten in Kuala Kangsar's establishment as a royal town, highlights the important relation of violence at the center of British intrusion into Perak, and the obstacles to recouping that violence as part of a nationalist project.

As newly reconstituted signs of the rebellion--such as the historical complex and the refurbished graves--loom in the landscape of Perak, its narration fills the archives of Kuala Lumpur and London. The colonial and academic writing on the rebellion and the Perak

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War that followed it constitutes one of the major sociological forays into Malay life in Perak. The amount of historical work devoted to this portion of the nineteenth century in Perak is perhaps matched in Malaysian studies only by the outpouring of scholarship concerning the communist rebellion of 1948-1960, itself the period when many of the standard works on the British colonization of Perak were researched and written. The singularity of historiographical interest in 1870s Perak is amplified by the later destruction of colonial files and local libraries during the Japanese occupation of the Peninsula in the 1940s. The archivist R.J. Verhoeven begins his study of Malacca's lost Dutch archives with a reference to the more recent past of the second world war:

> The destruction was unprecedented and its consequences were disastrous in a country with no abundance of records and archives. The National Archives is now faced with the difficult and strenuous task of safeguarding, preserving and supplementing the remaining, often shattered, treasures of the archival heritage of Malaysia.[17]

The loss of the Perak State Secretariat files, the Malay College Kuala Kangsar and Clifford School Libraries, the Perak Sultan's Office files, and countless other repositories of text perhaps explains why there has been little writing on the history of Kuala Kangsar since independence.[18] Thus the absence of much of the Perak archive itself reveals the history of violence in Perak, and the voluminous presence of the archive about the rebellion and Birch gives spectral form to those later historical records that have vanished, and narratives yet to be written.

The terms of Malay rebellion

The density of writing about the events surrounding Birch's death marks the most pronounced feature of its position within peninsular historiography: volumes detailing the colonization of the Malay peninsula--the "British Forward Movement"--that comb the trial

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[17] R. J. Verhoeven, "The Lost Archives of Dutch Malacca 1641-1824," Journal of the Malaysian Branch, Royal Asiatic Society, 1964, page 11.

[18] An exception being Ismail Sudin, Sejarah Social Masharakat Melayu Kuala Kangsar dari 1887 hingga 1940: Dengan mengutamakan 1920han dan 1930han, B.A. Thesis, University of Malaya, 1971.

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records and colonial correspondence of those involved.[19] From the late eighteenth century Britain held settlements in Penang, Singapore, and Malacca called the Straits Settlements. The specific reasons for British moves further into the peninsula's Malay states have long produced sharp debate. British interest might have been due to economic pressure, to accident, or to the stress of imperial competition. Settling these questions about the British Forward Movement have been crucial to determining the propriety of colonizing Perak and the other Malay states, and serve as an origin narrative for modern Malaysia. Thus each rendition of the conditions in Perak (the first of the Malay sultanates to receive a British resident) that brought about the new colonial regime was (and is) a highly interested account. The vectors of interest were further complicated by the weak position of a Perak system of rule long under pressure from outside forces, and the hesitancy of the colonial office in London to stretch colonial administration further into the peninsula as some local officials in Singapore wanted. The shock to Singapore and London of the Perak rebellion and Birch's death added tremendous urgency to settling the narrative account of introducing British administration in the Malay states, and especially to narrating the experience in Perak.

In the early colonial period to know Perak and the Pasir Salak rebellion was to know the Malay states, and to be ignorant about everything else. If a lack of information caused by destroyed materials prevents scholarship, as I was told in Malaysia when I began my research on Perak, this perceived lack itself motivated the cataloging of events in 1870s Perak. As the first and one of the last sustained studies into the machinations of the Perak sultanate, the substantial knowledge generated by the Perak rebellion reminded British colonial officials of what they did not know. In an oft-repeated statement, Frank Swettenham, Birch's lieutenant and a central figure in the new administration, argued

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[19] W. David McIntyre summarizes the large corpus of research on the British Foreward Movement and its major shifts between the colonial and post-colonial periods. W. David McIntyre, "Malaya From the 1850s to the 1870s, and Its Historians, 1950-1970: From Strategy to Sociology," in C.D. Cowan and O.W. Wolters, editors, Southeast Asian History and Historiography: Essays Presented to D.G.E. Hall, Cornell University Press: Ithaca, 1976.

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> There was a time, not many years ago, when the Malay Peninsula was a sealed book to white men. In 1874, the ignorance of all Europeans in the colony concerning their neighbours in the Peninsula almost passes belief. They had been warned off the ground and had taken the warning to heart. Mysterious Malaya was a 'terra incognita' to official and trader alike. There were no reliable books on the subject, the whole country was an absolute blank on every map, even the names of the States and the titles of their rulers were not known to more than half-a-dozen Englishman. Of the nature of the country, the character of the people, their numbers, distribution, sentiments or condition, there was an ignorance, profound, absolute, complete.[20]

What a responsible British official should have known but did not is the source of Swettenham's hyperbole. Isabella Bird uses a similar story about the specificities of ignorance to introduce her 1879 Perak travelogue:

> When Sir A. Clarke was appointed Governor of the Straits Settlements in 1873 he went to the Curator of the Geographical Society's library in quest of maps and information of any kind about the country to which he was going, but was told by that courteous functionary that there was absolutely no information of the slightest value in their archives. Since then the protectorate which we have acquired over three of the native States and the war in Perak have mended matters somewhat.[21]

This qualifies and enhances her possibility of writing, for "the preceding brief sketch is necessarily a very imperfect one, as to most of my questions addressed on the spot and since to the best informed people, the answer has been, 'No information'" (ibid., 27). Swettenham, Bird, and Clarke knew what they did not but should know: maps, numbers, titles, character, sentiments. The empty, yet ready, lists of what was not known provided a figure of possibility, the shape that Perak might fill. The Malay had a depth of experience, mores, and habits that might be anything, but would emerge in the form of a legible, open book written with the help of "the war in Perak."

The Malay subject emerged in Kuala Kangsar after the rebellion recuperable as a peaceful, loyal base for the new colonial society only through the British forgetting that

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[20] Frank Swettenham, The Real Malay: Pen Pictures, J. Lane: London and New York, 1900, page 258. Swettenham (1850-1946), joined the Straits Settlements government as a cadet in 1870, and in 1874 became Assistant Resident, Selangor. In 1876-1882 he was Assistant Colonial Secretary for the Native States, 1882-1889 British Resident Selangor, and in 1889-1895, British Resident Perak. He retired from colonial service in 1904, and published numerous essays and sketches of his experience in Malaya. See Henry Barlow, Swettenham, Southdene: Kuala Lumpur, 1995.

[21] Isabella L. Bird, The Golden Chersonese and the Way Thither, John Murray: London, 1883, [republished by Oxford University Press: Kuala Lumpur, 1967, page 26]. Bird travelled through Perak in January-February of 1879, as part of her adventures throughout Asia in the period, including journeys to Tibet, Japan, Persia, Hawaii, Korea, and China.

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made possible their new claims of ignorance. J.F. McNair, in his preface to his 1878 Perak and the Malays, nods to all the old information available to him:

> for much of the past history of the Malays I have consulted the works of Crawfurd, Newbold, Loubere, Pritchard, Pickering, Marsden, and Dr. Vincent; Moor's 'Notes on the Archipelago,' and the Colonial State Papers--these being among the principal authorities that have treated of the origin and progress of this peculiar and wide-spread race; while, as the work is intended for general reading, I have thought it better to omit all scientific terms.[22]

These authorities available to McNair, who might have used scientific language, were the same ones that the others forgot. In the careful claims of colonial ignorance, Perak Malays were attributed with schizophrenia following the rebellion. As McNair described the new, post-rebellion Malays,

> Courteous, religious, social and hospitable, gentle in his ways when calm, and his passions not roused, the Malay, when angry or under excitement, is reckless and bloodthirsty in the extreme. He may, in fact, be described as volcanic: presenting to the eye all that is goodly and fair, while beneath the surface a fire is always smouldering, ready to burst forth without warning, and spread ruin and destruction around (ibid., 212).

On one hand the Malay were known as the peninsular sign of civility, on the other of a potentially limitless violence. Working through this dichotomy proved critical to the colonial relationship in Perak.

The ensemble of prior colonial knowledge about Perak that was unacknowledged in post-1874 scholarship was later in retrospect refocused on the specific martial dangers of the Malay population. Logan's Journal of the Indian Archipelago published in 1849 an article that argued for a particular kind of control over the Malay population:

> the importance of a maritime police in improving the habits, and through them the character, of the Malays, is far greater than might be supposed. The agricultural Malay is generally peaceful and comparatively humane. It is maritime commerce with its lust of gain, its temptations and its dangers that developes the worst features of the Malayan character.[23]

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[22] J.F. McNair, Perak and the Malays, "Sarong" and "Kris", Tinsley Brothers: London, 1878 [Republished by Oxford University Press: Kuala Lumpur, 1972], page vi. McNair (1828-1910) lived 20 years in the Straits Settlements, served as colonial engineer, was present at the signing of the Pangkor Treaty, and participated in the campaign to put down the rebellion. He wrote Perak and the Malays while on convalescence from tropical illness.

[23] "Malay Amoks and Piracies *What can we do to abolish them?* in J.R. Logan, editor, Journal of the Indian Archipelago and Eastern Asia, 1849, pages 466-467.

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This division in the notion of Malay custom and character left ambivalence. But the Journal's link between "Malay amoks and piracies" presents another split in possibility. The problem of piracy provided an answer, that of regulated maritime commerce by maritime police. The article reports that

> these amoks result from an idiosyncrasy or peculiar temperment common amongst Malays, a temperment which all who have had much intercourse with them must have observed, although they cannot account for or thoroughly understand.[24]

Malay violence was unmistakable but evaded comprehension. A footnote to another article in the Journal in 1849 cautions that

> With reference to our notice of amoks in the last number of the Journal we insert the following remarks, extracted from an official Medical Report on Singapore by Dr Oxley. They are of very great practical value, and we hope some of the other medical gentlemen in the Straits will favour us with the results of their observations on this deeply interesting subject. The importance of the diffusion of correct views respecting it cannot be overrated.[25]

The Malays later characterized as unknown were once knowable through this specific optic of concerns over maritime security and violence. The Journal contended that the moment for tolerance of Malay custom has not yet arrived, for "we must do what is necessary to prevent injury to others from piratical habits, before we can indulge in compassion for the pirate."[26] The quality of compassion meant first defeating Malay power in the region, and then relegating British anxieties about Malay violence to a barely-remembered past.

The knowledge of Malay violence was later recalled as something that had been always familiar, but only in a specific form. The 1886 dictionary Hobson-Jobson, which provides lengthy etymologies of colonial words, shows the natural place the term "amok" developed in English.[27] The dictionary notes that "the phrase has been thoroughly naturalised in England since the days of Dryden and Pope. [The earliest quotation for 'running *amuck*' in the N.E.D. is from Marvel (1672)]" (ibid., 20). Though they cite

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24 Malay Amoks and Piracies, page 463.

25 Editor's note to a reprinted report extracted from the "official Medical Report on Singapore by Dr. Oxley," in T. Oxley, "Malay Amoks," Journal of the Indian Archipelago and Eastern Asia, 1849, page 532.

26 Malay Amoks and Piracies, page 466.

27 Subtitled as a "A Spice-Box of Etymological Curiosities and Colourful Expressions." Henry Yule and A.C. Burnell, Hobson-Jobson, John Murray: London, 1903.

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much evidence that the term amok originated in the Malabar region of India, the authors claim that "there is we believe not room for doubt that, to us at least, this expression came from the Malay countries, where both the phrase and the practice are still familiar" (ibid., 18). Hence they claim "*amuk* must have been commonly used in Malay countries before the arrival of the Portuguese there, c. 1511" (ibid., 20). Other examples that Hobson-Jobson cites of amok-like behavior are measured against their similarity to "*a-muck* in the true Malay sense" (ibid., 19). Though amok by the late nineteenth century was imagined "naturalized in England" long before, its use referenced elsewhere. The apparent familiarity of a term like running amok, something known about the unknown Malay, left an unspecifiable, universal quality to the emergent relationship developing with the new administration in the peninsula.[28]

Condensing the story

The once-brief accounts about the events of 1874-1875 in Perak exemplified by the epigraphs to this chapter have expanded in length and detail throughout Malayan and Malaysian historiography. Birch was appointed provisional resident of Perak on 4 October 1874. According to the curator of his journals, Birch had three tasks:

> the settlement of the boundaries between the Straits Settlements [crown colonies of Singapore, Malacca, and Penang] and Perak under the Pangkor Engagement; the establishment of 'Abdu'llah's authority as Sultan throughout the country; and the reconstruction of government.[29]

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[28] As Swettenham put it, "Mention has been made of the Malay amok, and, as what, with our happy faculty for mispronunciation and misspelling of the words of other languages, is called "running amuck," is with many English people their only idea of the Malay, and that a very vague one, it may be of interest to briefly describe this form of homicidal mania." Frank Swettenham, The Real Malay: Pen Pictures, Bodley Head: London, 1901, page 38. For Ashley Gibson "there is one Malay word that has a world-wide currency. Nobody requires to be told what 'running amok' means." The Malay Peninsula and Archipelago, J.M Dent and Sons: London, 1928, page 29.

[29] P.L. Burns, editor, The Journals of J.W.W. Birch First British Resident to Perak 1874-1875, Oxford University Press: Kuala Lumpur, 1976, page 23. Birch was born in 1826, and in 1846 joined the Roads Department in Ceylon. He worked in the civil service there until his appointment as Colonial Secretary in Singapore in 1870. Burns summarizes Birch's colonial career in his introduction to Birch's journals, pages 7-11.

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Pangkor Island, off the coast of Perak, was the site of negotiations between members of the Perak royalty and the British government, represented by Straits Settlements governor Andrew Clarke. The Pangkor treaty, signed in 1874, aimed to rationalize the Perak hierarchy split since the 1871 death of Sultan Ali [r. 1865-1871], by recognizing Raja Abdullah as Sultan over his rival Raja Ismail, naming the latter Sultan Muda.[30] Birch was named resident, and according to the treaty his "advice must be asked and acted upon all questions other than those touching Malay Religion and Custom" (ibid., 324). Birch built and occupied a new residency in Bandar Bharu, on the Perak River not far upstream from the home village of Sultan Abdullah. As his journals describe, Birch attempted to gain control of the revenue earned by taxation of river traffic through Perak. In the course of his travels through Perak in late 1874 and 1875, Birch also worked to secure Sultan Abdullah's position against the claims of Sultan Muda Ismail and other rivals, and thereby buttress his own position, decisions that were backed by Clarke's replacement in Singapore, William Jervois. While travelling on the river over the first days of November 1875 to post proclamations detailing his newly acquired powers of taxation, Birch and three of his crew were killed by residents of Pasir Salak village. His tenure in Perak at the time of his death was barely a year. Subsequent fighting in Perak continued for weeks after, with the Malay forces ultimately defeated by colonial troops sent in from Hong Kong and India. In mounting the rebellion against him the Malay forces at Pasir Salak turned a minor, perhaps incompetent bureaucrat into the figure representing British interest in the Malay peninsula, and much of the story of the British Forward Movement proved condensable to his experience.

Following Birch's death the attention of the colonial state in the Straits Settlements flashed on Perak. The Perak War was the condition of possibility of colonial historiography--the volumes of text anxious about overcoming a Malay rebellion at the

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30 A copy of the treaty in English is available in C. Northcote Parkinson, British Intervention in Malaya 1867-1877, University of Malaya Press: Singapore, 1960, pages 323-325. Khoo Kay Kim's comments on the Malay version of the treaty are available in "The Pangkor Treaty in Malay" Peninjau Sejarah, June 1966.

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fringes of Empire on the Malay peninsula. Following the rapid deployment of colonial soldiers, however, the threat of the event passed. McNair's book describes in a section titled "Troops from India" the eerie rapidity of the colonial forces' arrival in late November 1875:

> Consequent upon the condition of Perak, and the inflammable nature of the Malay character, the other states began to show strong symptoms of a rising, as if contingent upon the Perak outbreak, and further reinforcements being urgently needed, India was appealed to by telegram; and so rapid now are the movements of forces when summoned by wire that by the 27th of the same month the first portion of the reinforcement reached Penang. It was so admirably adapted for the service in hand, so complete in itself in every detail of its composition, and showed throughout how all had been contrived by a prevailing mastermind, that it may be well here to give an account in full of this miniature army designed for jungle fighting.[31]

The telegraphic speed of the prevailing mastermind in bringing overwhelming military force into Perak's proximity ended the moment when anything might happen. A Perak distant enough from London to give Birch authority beyond the wishes of the Colonial Office, was now close to the other colonies as a result of that very overreaching.

The problems in Perak elicited explanation. When the general rebellion did not occur, the attention instead shifted to the specific conditions of Perak and the progression of events leading up to Birch's death at Pasir Salak. The military campaign through the river valley was not a focus of writing.[32] Like the rapidly arriving colonial troops, in March 1876 commissioners were appointed by Governor Jervois to go to Perak and in the derisive words of their critic Peter Maxwell go "search for evidence."[33] Maxwell, who had retired in 1871 as Chief Justice of the Straits Settlements, was a stern critic of the commission and questioned their rush to judge the case. Led by C.M. Plunket, a

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31 McNair, page 382.

32 An exception being Brigadier-General H.R. Kelham, who during the Perak War was stationed at Kuala Kangsar. In a series "Malaya in Olden Days" for the British Association of Malaya, he later recounted "Moreover, our trip was made all the more interesting by our being the first white men who had been there since the war. We saw traces of the recent trouble in blackened posts and stumps, especially in Kota Lama, which had been partially burned by the troops. Rockets had been fired into this village, and these, glancing from tree-trunk to tree-trunk, emitting flames and smoke, besides setting fire to the place, got the reputation among the Malays of being in search of their headmen." British Malaya, June 1928, page 48.

33 Peter B. Maxwell, Our Malay Conquests, London, 1878, page 80. The statement, like the title of Maxwell's critique, was meant ironically.

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magistrate and commissioner of police in the Straits Settlements, the commission produced the Enquiry as to Complicity of Chiefs in the Perak Outrages, a volume meant to condense both Perak history and the trial transcripts into a more accessible form.[34] Its legibility meant to give the events in Perak the appearance of clarity. The Precis and the Abridgement of Evidence were published in Singapore in December 1876, and according to Maxwell it "sets out, like a French Acte D' Accusation, all the facts and allegations on which the government relied."[35] Since the trial of the conspirators framed the document, the Enquiry contains the struggle for power in the peninsula to only the negotiations between Birch and the Perak royalty. But in Plunket's haste, and the conflicts over authority in Perak among both the Malays and the British, the Enquiry is left open to the possibilities of interpretation.

Plunket's Precis begins with a list. A long section titled "Preliminary," detailing events in Perak from 1871-4, opens with the royal titles comprising "the form of government existing in Perak previous to the intervention of Sir Andrew Clarke , and the signing of the Pangkor Treaty in January, 1874" (ECCPO 1). The list, the first of several, comprises

> one introduced originally under the Malayan Empire established at Malacca in the 13th century, which--according to Mr. Braddell, in his report of the 20th January, 1874,--although low in the scale of civilization, afforded protection to producers and encouraged traders to visit the ports. The constitutional body of the country originally consisted of a Sultan elected from the blood royal of the reigning house; the Rajah Muda--or heir apparent; four officers of the first rank, eight of second rank, and sixteen of third rank (ECCPO 1).

Plunket then lists the titles of the first and second rank and their duties, though notes that this is sufficient, it being "unnecessary, for present purposes, to specify in detail the title and duties of the sixteen officers of lower rank" (ECCPO 1). As titles, the thirteenth-century list registers positions, not people. They prove an empty shell, because given Perak's alleged degeneration, "the governing body had lost much of its vitality, and little

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[34] C.M. Plunket, Enquiry as to Complicity of Chiefs in the Perak Outrages, Precis of Evidence and Abridgement of Evidence, Singapore: 1876. Page references noted in the text as ECCPO.
[35] Maxwell, page 86,

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remained of the original constitution but the high-sounding titles of the officers of State, and of these, many of these had lapsed and become obsolete" (ECCPO 1). Perak appears as not itself, the list a kind of parody of "high sounding" native authority in the territory signifying little actual control.

The Precis' key factor for narrating the history of the 1870s was the Sultanate's unwieldy succession in 1871 following the six-year reign of Sultan Ali. Plunket's confident voice recites the narrative of Perak but slips over this problem, and in the list of the offices he explains

> On the death of Sultan Ali, just referred to, the officers of State, according to custom, were all summoned to attend the funeral. For some reason or other, neither, Rajah Abdullah, then Rajah Muda, nor the Laxaman, nor the Shahbandar attended, and Rajah Ismail then Bendahara,--but not of royal blood on the father's side--was elected Sultan, and the Regalia given up to him (ECCPO 1-2).

Plunket knows that the Raja Muda is customarily made Sultan, but the elevation of Raja Ismail (as Bendahara below Raja Muda on his list of rank) reveals a gap in Plunket's knowledge. "For some reason or other" signals the limit of causality for a document charged with doing just that. An event meant to take place "according to custom" failed to happen and the regalia, the sign of the sultanate, ended up in the hands of Raja Ismail, someone perhaps not of royal blood on his father's side. Even the heavy quotation from the diaries of Birch and Swettenham, and the comprehensive testimony of witnesses (all summarized in these volumes), did not always hide the seams of what might escape knowing.

Such limits of knowledge emerge in another way in Plunket's text. The second section titled "Abridgement of Evidence, Arranged under various Heads" contains a list similar to the roster of Perak offices. Where the other list of royal offices in Perak showed how the Sultanate had degenerated, this list shows how the Perak royalty could be listed as criminals alleged to be complicitous in the rebellion against Birch. This list is called "Distinguishing Numbers" because it functions as a key, the numbers used to replace the individual Malay names used in the course of the text. The previous list offered an image

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of how Perak had diverged from its thirteenth century beginnings, but this second list of Distinguishing Numbers did not show a similar divergence from the present. This requires a later hand. The microfilm copy of the Precis in the Malaysian National Archives bears the stamp of the Perak State Museum in Taiping, and on the upper corner of the first page are signatures that might read "Maxwell" and "Davidson."[36] A reader, perhaps either of them, attempted to fill in the information missing in the original report, and correct what they deemed mistaken. The list of Distinguishing Numbers appears as follows, and the words in brackets are those added in pen to signify the fate of those allegedly involved in Birch's death:

No.
1. Sultan Abdullah [Seychelles transported]
2. Ex-Sultan Ismail [Johore banished]
3. Mantri [Seychelles transported]
4. Maharajah Lela [hanged]
5. Laxamana [Seychelles transported]
6. Shahbandar [do.]
7. Datuk Sagor [hanged]
8. Rajah Mahkota [pardoned]
9. Orang Kaya Mat Arshad [do.]
10. Datu Narra [Johore banished]
11. Syed Mahmood (Orang Kaya Besar)
12. Panglima Prang Samaon [Johore banished]
13. Nga Jabbor [hanged]
14. Pandak Indut [do.]
15. Se Tuah [do.]
16. Panjang Buh [Hong Kong transported]
17. Kulup Alli [do.]

Unlike the earlier list that describes the empty offices of Perak, this list places the Perak leaders as a hierarchy of criminals. The relationship is not to a glorious Perak past, but rather to their fate resulting from the court's decision.[37]

The lists and the edits work together to make the text legible. Both translation and the numbers to replace the Perak names were to benefit readers far away from Perak. Even these conveniences produced problems, and the unknown editor of the text made changes throughout the copy of the Precis later put in the National Archives. The most common

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[36] Though uncertain, the names might be William Maxwell, son of Peter B. Maxwell, and J.G. Davidson, both of whom served in Perak and were assessors in the trial.

[37] However, like the description of the Perak succession, even this new writer does not have full knowledge: the fate of number 11, Syed Mahmood, is left unspecified.

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alteration was in the rendering of Malay words. Many corrections are place names: "Senggong" changed to "Senggang," "Battak Rabbit" to "Battak Rabit," "Krean" to "Krian."[38] The use of numbers, which refer to the list, render the names of those Malays involved free of such edits, as does Plunket's ready translation of the witnesses' Malay-language testimony into English.

From the testimony collected at the trial Plunket could reconstruct anything that happened in 1875 Perak and offer it in readily legible form. The narrative produced by the Precis details the daily events undertaken by those deemed most likely complicitous with Birch's death in the alleged scheming of the months prior to November. Entry D, for example, the "Meeting of Chiefs at Durian Sebatang, 21st July, 1875," shows the English voice in which the numbered leaders speak:

> The following is the draft, from recollection, of the secret oath of friendship, given by no 1 [Sultan Abdullah] to eight chiefs or their representatives, on 22nd July, and also the draft of their oath of friendship to him (1) 'We, No. 1 (titles) give this paper to our chief No. 5 [Laxamana], who undertakes the work of poisoning Mr. Birch. If he cannot be poisoned, he must killed, whenever there is a favourable opportunity, and we approve that being done. Oath.'
> (2) 'With this written oath, no. 5 makes this binding document. Mr. Birch has not conformed with the Pangkor Treaty, nor with Malay customs and religion. Now Nos 1 and 2 [Ex-Sultan Ismail] have approved of Mr. Birch being poisoned or killed. This is the oath of all your slaves (subjects) who have placed their chops and signatures on this document. Oath' Witness sat up all night writing with Haji Driss (ECCPO 21).

The quote marks suggest the intimacy offered in the Precis' omniscience. Perak's leaders were claimed to be angry, and they made a written oath that could later reappear from memory, returned to text by Plunket. In the meeting at Durian Sebatang, Plunket presents the anger of No. 5, No. 1, and No. 2 as the result of Birch's disregard of Malay custom. The customary response to such flouting of custom, as the Precis will suggest, will be to enact a Perak ceremony.

Even though Plunket is able to hear the voices of the Perak royalty, things still escape his Precis. In the month after that meeting, two months before Birch was killed,

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[38] Other points are unclear, like the village referred to as "Senggong" the editor questions as perhaps "Sayong?" Plunkett, page 1.

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another meeting of the chiefs was held. Plunket writes that "the ceremonies commenced, as near as can be fixed, on the night of the 24th August, and were kept up for three consecutive nights" (ECCPO 17). Not only is Plunket unable to exactly fix the date, but his editor amends his name for the ceremony--given in Malay as "Mein berhantoo" [conjuring ceremony]--to "berhantu". As a Malay custom, the conjuring ceremony demands anthropological explanation, which Plunket describes as something of uncertain origin:

> a superstitious performance which the Perak people have learnt from the Sahkies [aborigines] or wild men of the Interior, for looking into the future, by calling up spirits and questioning them, and is resorted to on a variety of occasions (ECCPO 17).

The Precis then describes the kinds of occasions that would call for such a performance, for example, in the instance of a child's illness or "if a chief were going to war, he would have a 'mein berhantoo' to see if he was going to be victorious" (ECCPO 17). The report on the conjuring ceremony in the Abridgement of Evidence reproduces the performance in direct speech: "No. 1 [Sultan Abdullah] said to the chiefs, 'if there be any prophets or spirits left in Perak, let us look into Mr. Birch's futurity, and see if there is any means by which he may die, and his steamer be wrecked'" (ECCPO 32). The narration of the ceremony, though, slips again in a note of dissent, because "No. 9 did not believe in the performance and remained in his boat" (ECCPO 32). The unbelieving Orang Kaya Mat Arshad in his boat is different from the British prosecutors in the Precis, who acknowledge the prescience of the conjuring ceremony in accurately depicting Mr. Birch's futurity by predicting his death.[39] This ceremony in the Precis works in complicity with the goal of the Precis itself, determining the Perak royalty's plot against Birch.

The mein berhantoo could be described anthropologically and corrected in spelling. Yet according to the Precis testimony of its witnesses, the ceremony produced an untranslated term. In the Abridgement of Evidence, a witness reports that he

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[39] Maxwell, for instance, ridiculed Plunket's "faith" in the "conjuring scene." Maxwell, page 80.

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> went first to an outside room of the bahlie. No. 1 [Sultan Abdullah] was inside. No. 7 [Dato' Sagor] and three other chiefs were present. Punghulu Mat Alli was sitting next to witness. Witness said, in fun, to No. 7 'Why are the chiefs of Perak in this way? They talk big. If people behave badly to the chiefs of Perak, why don't they fight?' No 7 said, 'Oh! Tunku, now we are no longer agreed; formerly we agreed with all the chiefs, and made a written agreement to 'amok' Bandar Bahru and cut down the flagstaff. Now when I want to carry it out, the affair has got spoiled; we are no longer united' (ECCPO 33).

In the testimony Dato' Sagor references a written plan for a move against Birch's headquarters at Bandar Bahru. The quote marks around the term "amok" signal it like the corrections in spelling later added by the editor. The nature of what is to be done to Bandar Bahru is distinct but left unspecified--the term is not fully Anglicized (without quotes) or fully Malay (translated in the text or in the appended glossary). The testimony leaves Malay plans both overly familiar and under described.

The term "amok" appears in quotes in other places as well. In yet another list, each witness called before the court, Malay and British alike, fit into a key that offers the "character" of their testimony. In this section the testimony of Nacodah Trang, is identified as "A Bugis trader of Singapore, who had a share in the Perak Farms, and was much trusted by Mr. Birch," and the "Character" of his testimony described as "evidence given willingly, with great exactness; thoroughly trustworthy."[40] Following the description of the conjuring ceremony, a section in the Abridgement of Evidence of the Enquiry uses Nacodah Trang's trustworthy evidence to report the plans conceived for Birch's headquarters.[41] Nacodah Trang reports that

> About the 16th September, Mr. Birch went up the river with Dyang Ismail, to see No. 1 [Sultan Abdullah]. When they came back, Dyang Ismail said that they had been obliged to come away without seeing No. 1, and that it looked very much as if No. 1's party had intended attacking Mr. Birch. For several days there all sorts of rumours that No. 1's people intended 'amoking' Bandar Bahru, and that they were going to drug the food (ECCPO 34).

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[40] The "Maharajah Dindah" described as "A herald in the service of Sultan Abdullah and living in the same boat as him." His evidence "Important, and given with great clearness and precision." "Mr. Swettenham" was "Assistant Secretary to the Native States. Employed on several missions to Perak." His evidence "Very important." Plunket, no page.

[41] Titled "Proceedings of the Ilir Chiefs from the End of August until the Murder of Mr. Birch November 2nd, 1875." Plunket, page 31.

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From the conjuring ceremony Plunket knew of a written agreement in Perak to target the British flagpole. Nacodah Trang instead focuses on rumors circulating about ruining Birch's food supply. The link between the two strategies is the term in quotations, the differences in context leaving open what it might signify.

One specific passage in the Enquiry does have special interest in the utterance of "amok." Both the Evidence section and the Precis summary describe the specific situation of Birch's death at Pasir Salak. The testimony in the Abridgement of Evidence titled "Circumstance attending the Murder of Mr. Birch, and others, at Passir Sala," depicts the giving of orders. In this case No. 4 (the Maharaja Lela) assigned tasks to be carried out. Part of the testimony is from one Soodein "a Perak Malay, boat man of Mr. Birch" and from one Seputum, "A Perak Malay, convicted and executed for the murder of Mr. Birch."[42] Soodein testifies that at the critical moment "Mr. Birch gave Mat Arshad another paper, when some one cried out that they had got orders from No. 4 to 'amok'" (ECCPO 65). Seputum's testimony records "Witness made two cuts at Mr. Birch, but he was already in the water. Se Gondah by this time was on shore crying 'amok!' and he and others began stabbing people in the boat" (ECCPO 65). The signal for Birch's death was through an identifiable voice crying "amok." The incident at Pasir Salak, in their view, followed a chain of command.

The distinguishing numbers were meant to reveal the hierarchy of Malay leadership in Perak, but it sometimes escaped Plunket. The Precis summarizes this testimony describing the death of Birch in slightly different terms:

> While he was in the bath house, Mat Arshad called out to Mr. Birch that the Malays had torn down the proclamations, and Mr. Birch called out to him in reply to put up others. Mat Arshad did so and was returning to his boat when the Malays shouted 'Amok' and stabbed him. A scene of great confusion then ensued (ECCPO 27).

As the Precis summarizes it here, the voice shouting "amok" is not the Maharaja Lela as in Soodein's testimony from the Abridgement of Evidence, but rather "the Malays." The scene at Pasir Salak remains narratable until these Malays begin shouting. When amok

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[42] Both of their testimony was deemed "not very important," without elaboration. Plunket, no page.

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does not follow orders the result is confusion, precisely the confusion that the Precis is meant to explain. When "the Malays" yell "amok" Plunket is unable to continue summarizing the events at Pasir Salak.

The Evidence contains testimony detailing plans for an attack on Birch's headquarters at Bandar Bahru after Birch was killed. One witness reported

> At the meeting at Durian Sebatang, on the 21st, No. 7 [Dato' Sagor] said, that if No. 4 [Maharajalela] stabbed Mr. Birch, he would attack Bandar Bahru and pull down the flagstaff. About the 4th October, No. 4 said to No. 1 [Sultan Abdullah], 'twenty men will be sufficient to 'amok' Bandar Bahru.' No. 1 said, 'Wait until I get back to Battak Rabbit' (ECCPO 69).

After Birch's death the orders are given to attack the camp, but for a series of reasons the attack did not occur. Similar plans, with similar terms, were reported in the village of Blanja. Another witness reported that

> When the news of the death of Mr. Birch arrived at Blanja, Haji Mat Yassim ordered Haji Driss and witness to make bullets. Haji Alli said to Haji Mat Yassim, 'Mr. Swettenham is at Qualla Kangsa, let us send two boats to 'amok' him, for the white men will destroy Perak' ... Whilst Mr. Swettenham was at Qualla Kangsa, witness was told by Haji Driss that Haji Alli had said to No. 2 [Ex-Sultan Ismail], 'If Mr. Swettenham comes down here on his way to Bandar Bahru, I will kill him,' and No. 2 replied 'Very well, only ask him to come on shore and wait until it is night' (ECCPO 77).

As in the attack on Mr. Birch itself, the testimony records commands to "amok" strategic British positions following his death. These witnesses testify to remembering someone ordering someone else to amok the British positions along the Perak river. Whether No. 4 to No. 1, or Haji Alli to Haji Mat Yassim, amok in this testimony fits into a hierarchy of command. In the brief passages summarized in the trial Precis, references to amok express a relationship among the Perak royalty.

Following the chain of authority was crucial to the prosecution's case in determining who was responsible for Birch's murder. Plunket describes the challenge his conclusions faced by those who felt the incident at Pasir Salak was not planned but rather a spontaneous reaction. The Precis concludes with yet a further summary of the evidence:

> These were all the facts that were elicited at the time relative to the murder of Mr. Birch, and although there were rumours that the Sultan was at the bottom of it, and that it was the result of a wide spread conspiracy, still it was often set down as a

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> unpremeditated outbreak consequent upon the intemperate action of Mat Arshad in striking one of the Malays while posting up the proclamations (ECCPO 27).

Mat Arshad, Birch's translator and the one sent from Birch's boat into Pasir Salak village with the taxation proclamations, might have been the instigator (he was also killed by the villagers). This motivates Plunket to provide even more detailed recitations beyond the evidence gathered by the court:

> The evidence subsequently taken supplies what was wanting on the trial of the three men convicted of the murder of Mr. Birch, and, assuming it to be trustworthy, the 2nd November 1875, was no chance affray; but that the men engaged in it were acting under the immediate orders of the Maharajah Lela (ECCPO 27).

"Amok" provided both the solution and the problem in assuring that the rebellion at Pasir Salak was not the product of chance. Malays at Pasir Salak followed orders, he felt, and shouting "amok" was the sign of the presence of authority.

Throughout the court proceedings the term "amok" is used over and over by Malay witnesses. In all these instances the word amok is in quotes, but it does not appear in the commentary of the case or even in the glossaries appended to both volumes. Why is it a key term of evidence, yet without comment? Is it somewhere beyond translation? The later reader's edits of Plunket's spelling of Malay words and place names in the text suggest a lack of confidence in Plunket's knowledge of Perak. The word "amok," however, escapes such editing. Since it is not translated it appears to transcend language--the violence and threats of violence it describes seem both irreducible to a local essence and yet thoroughly essentialized as a Malay practice. The references appear faithfully in the record but without comment, as if the over-legibility of the Malay masked some other possibility of violence. The absence of amok in the glossary is especially curious.[43] Indeed amid the frequency of these comments one might have expected the gaze backward, toward the Malay classics where the term is frequently used, or at least to the early Malay-English dictionaries often based on those chronicles.[44] Reports of amok grew in journalistic renown in Straits

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[43] Maxwell, for instance, describes the events at Passir Salak as "Lela's men and the bystanders, raising the cry of 'amuck' (murder), rushed to the bath house." Maxwell, page 58.

[44] Determining amuk was a part of the early Orientalist project and according to the great philologist Marsden in 1784, "it is not to be controverted that these desperate acts of indiscriminate murder, called by

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newspapers, in the medical knowledge of Logan's Journal, and in the growing legal lore around murder cases in the Straits Settlements under Crown jurisdiction. The familiarity of the term perhaps helped it to slip through the transcripts, though in quotes--the quotes that serve to obscure Perak political strategy, but also prevent the complete domestication of what might have happened at Pasir Salak.

One might think. Yule and Burnell of Hobson Jobson, the great colonial etymologists, were certain the term amok was thoroughly naturalized in English "since the days of Dryden and Pope" (Yule and Burnell, 20). In Perak, Birch did not respect Malay custom and the response was customary. The Precis records the presence of orders for amok and in effect codes Birch's death as an amok attack, but does not analyze it as such. Someone like Wilkinson, the famous historian of Perak (for whom things in Malayan history never happened for merely one reason or another), would later know better and not cite the word in his 1920 description of the Perak War.[45] In this case "amok" stands as the failure of communication--between Birch and Perak Malays--but the content of the Precis renders it as a speech-act akin to stating "I'm speechless." The Malay hierarchy's plans for confronting Birch and the new regime that he represented vanish in their presence as part of a conspiracy ending in "amok." The relationship between Birch, custom, and amuk might be one permitting an odd type of communication, an almost understandable miscommunication, one that would seem to be repeated in the later recuperation of Malay violence and the destruction of Malay politics in Perak.

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us mucks, and the native *mongamo*, do actually take place, and frequently too, in some parts of the East (in Java in particular)." William Marsden, History of Sumatra, T.Payne: London, 1784, page 22. His 1812 Malay-English dictionary defines amuk as "engaging furiously in battle; attacking with desperate resolution; rushing, in a state of frenzy, to the commission of indiscriminate murder; running a-muck," with the following example: "meng-amuk meng-ikut rajania" which he translates as "rushed on to the attack in imitation of their chiefs." William Marsden, A Dictionary and Grammar of the Malayan Language, Cox and Baylis: London, 1812 [republished by Oxford University Press: Singapore, 1984], page 16.

[45] Wilkinson describes, "There was a hubbub at once. The Malays tore each proclamation down as it was posted up. Mat Arshad persisted and even struck a bystander. Blows followed words; in the end the interpreter was stabbed, and an infuriated crowd rushed at the bath-house where the Resident was. The Sikh sentry was taken by surprise and made no attempt to guard his master. A spear was thrust through the thin thatch partition, and Mr. Birch was seen to fall into the water. He rose to the surface, was slashed at with a sword, and then sank finally." R.J. Wilkinson, Papers on Malay Subjects: A History of the Peninsular Malays With Chapters on Perak & Selangor, Kelly and Walsh: Singapore, 1920, page 149-150.

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Securing Kuala Kangsar

The town of Kuala Kangsar was founded to prevent this possibility of confusion, by offering a place for reconfiguring the Malay hierarchy. Following the executions and banishments of those alleged involved in the conspiracy there effectively ceased to be Malay governance in Perak. As Wilkinson described the war in 1920

> we are concerned with his [Hugh Low's, one of Birch's successors] policy only so far as it throws light on the errors that led to the Perak war. This is purely a Malay history and not a treatise on government.
> The Perak war removed from the country all the leading figures of the preceding years. The Maharaja Lela and the Dato' Sagor were hanged at Matang; Sultan Abdullah and his principal followers were banished to the Seychelles; Ex-Sultan Ismail died in exile in Johor; the Mantri was banished. Malay history proper ends with them.[46]

Wilkinson imagines a break of history brought about by the war, one that would make Malay history appear as something discrete and divorced from the possibilities in the new colonial Perak. The first move to contain the violence of Pasir Salak and the confusion it caused was to locate a headquarters for the new regime, and to inaugurate a new history.

The location of this headquarters shows the orientation of the regime post-rebellion to the Malay population of Perak and not to its substantial immigrant population. Birch had located his headquarters at Bandar Bahru, a strategic location on the river near its entrance into the Straits of Malacca, near Sultan Abdullah's village of Batak Rabit. Birch's trips up and down the Perak river from Bandar Bahru to further his legislative agenda also located the target of governance: the Malays in the river valley. Colonial history attributes the internecine struggles between rival Chinese clans as one of the reasons for Birch's assignment to Perak.[47] The Perak tin produced in Larut, and later the district of Kinta (itself site of one of the world's richest, and most cheaply extracted deposits of tin),

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46 Wilkinson, page 140.

47 In the vicinity of the river there was a substantial population outside this optic, since in 1874 26,000 largely Chinese miners worked tin in Larut. C.D. Cowan, Nineteenth-Century Malaya: The Origins of British Political Control, Oxford University Press: London, 1961, page 216. For a critique of the commercial origins of colonial expansion, see Khoo Kay Kim, The Western Malay States: The Effects of Commercial Development on Malay Politics, Oxford University Press: Kuala Lumpur, 1972.

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provided the revenue that made colonial administration and development possible.[48] Swettenham describes a Perak "divided practically into two parts--Larut, the place of tin mines and Chinese, and the valley of the Perak River where, for ages, the Malay had lived unvisited by any step, and uncontrolled by any voice from the outside world."[49] He refers to the river valley as "Perak Besar," or greater Perak (ibid., 10). Yet the selection of Bandar Bahru as the site of his residency, and the negotiations over succession to the sultanate, suggest the importance of building modern colonial Perak through the maintenance of the old Perak along the river. At this moment Perak was seen split geographically and demographically, with the (still) unknown characteristics of the Malay population forming the British administrative target.

Swettenham and Birch both attempted to sketch out Perak. Their diaries are filled with geographical drawings made during the course of their journeys. In Perak, Malays produced a map in 1876 in which Perak is figured as the river itself.[50] Certain types of peninsular geographical study were only a result of the war, as a cartographer reported in 1878, "it was not until after the Perak War (June 1876) that any better, or indeed any other map of the whole Peninsula was to be obtained."[51] Birch and Swettenham often visited the Kuala Kangsar area, and Swettenham wrote of his close relationship with Che' Mida, the mother of Kuala Kangsar's headman, whom McNair dubbed "the Princess of Perak."[52] Other royal traces, however, including the attribution of Kuala Kangsar as a refuge for feuding royalty (for instance in the Perak chronicle, the Misa Melayu), did not attract

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48 Yip Yat Hoong, The Development of the Tin Mining Industry of Malaya, University of Malaya Press: Kuala Lumpur, 1969, page 19.

49 Frank Swettenham, About Perak, Straits Times Press: Singapore, 1893, page 9.

50 Included in Barbara Watson Andaya, Perak: The Abode of Grace. A Study of an Eighteenth Century Malay State, Oxford University Press: Kuala Lumpur, 1979.

51 A.M. Skinner, "Geography of the Malay Peninsula," Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society, Straits Branch, Number 1, 1878, page 53.

52 McNair, page 168. As mother of the headman of Kuala Kangsar, Swettenham and others claimed "She struck us as having more sense than most of the Malay men we have met." H.S. Barlow, Swettenham, Southdene: Kuala Lumpur, 1995, page 58.

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Swettenham's interest.[53] Quite the opposite, for Kuala Kangsar's advantage in 1875 was its lack of a royal presence. On a journey there in February he recorded in his journal:

> A station and an officer at Q. Kangsa appear to me to be most desirable and after that a road to Laroot, an undertaking which has but few engineering difficulties. There would be a good many bridges, but easily made, and some heavy work between Bukit Gantang and Bukit Berapit. Qualla Kangsa, tho' only about the middle of Perak, with as large a population on the Patani side as on the sea side, is still I think nearly 150 miles from the Qualla Perak, and can hardly be reached in less than 6 or 7 days from Batarabit. It is moreover the key to Laroot, or at least the Perak terminus of the highway between Perak and Laroot, and also, of no slight importance, there is no chief of any importance on the Patani side of Q. Kangsa, there being only one of any sort, the Toh Sadika Raja, a chief of quite second class rank.[54]

The estuary (in Malay, kuala) of the Kangsar River opens into the Perak River 150 miles from the Perak River's opening into the Straits of Malacca. But Swettenham is not interested in the heritage of these Malay kualas, and instead when he sees Kuala Kangsar in this passage, he thinks of roads and no royalty. Bandar Bahru was near Sultan Abdullah. Kuala Kangsar, in Swettenham's view, is part of a new grid that extends via road to Larut. Swettenham sees "Perak" as having two sides, "Patani side" being northeast, and "sea side" being Southwest, but with these sides being refigured by a highway.[55] In this way colonial Kuala Kangsar attached "Perak"--the river--to the mining areas that surround it.

In Plunket's Precis on the Pasir Salak rebellion, the description sometimes hesitates over information that was unknown. In contrast a command language fills the documents that built the new Kuala Kangsar. The wartime negotiations that established Kuala Kangsar as a military post are detailed in the Colonial Office series titled "Confidential Prints, Eastern." This series took the handwritten correspondence and anxious telegrams between the Straits Settlements government and its new Governor, Jervois, and the Colonial Office's secretary of state for the colonies, Lord Carnarvon (Henry H.M. Herbert)

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[53] For more on this text see the version annotated by Ahmad Fauzi Mohd. Basri, Siri Warisan Sastera Klasik: Misa Melayu, Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka: Kuala Lumpur, 1992, and also the reading by Andaya, pages 155-215.

[54] P.L. Burns and C.D. Cowan, editors, Sir Frank Swettenham's Malayan Journals 1874-1876, Oxford University Press: Kuala Lumpur, 1976, pages 193-194.

[55] Swettenham later called it "a roadless Malay jungle, inhabited by a people of whose eccentricities almost everything had to be learnt." About Perak, page 12.

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and published them for the parliament in London.[56] Though they were largely written coterminous with Plunket's work, the confidential print does not struggle over the retrieval and interpretation of lost facts.

Like the Precis, these dispatches consolidate and condense testimony about Perak events. But they are different in that their recipient (the Colonial Office in London) was in a position to judge the colonial officials in Singapore in command of Birch in Perak, in contrast to Plunket's interest in judging the Malay rebels. Given these stakes, any mediation by the Perak hierarchy vanishes in the Colonial Office reports. The first attempts following Birch's death by British forces to challenge Pasir Salak (located near Bandar Bahru), were successfully rebuffed by Malay forces there, and the planners in Larut wired:

> I think the best arrangement would be to send the troops here in detachments of two companies, or between 100 and 200 men at a time, we could then pass them on to Qualla Kangsa, where a general depot or head-quarters could be formed and preparations made for further operations. Captain Speedy's men occupy stockades at Qualla Kangsa and Campong Buaga, also at Bukit Barafit and Gunong Pondo. I am at present with Captain Speedy at Laroot, but go east in a day or two.[57]

Included in the enclosure is a "a general plan of River Perak and Laroot Road" (ibid.). From Swettenham's image of the "two Peraks," the particular circumstances following the rebellion at Pasir Salak produce these two strategic zones with Kuala Kangsar as its possible headquarters. The military staging point appears in view of possible "further operations," security potentially necessary for an administration that has not yet located the means to pacify Perak.

New infrastructure reoriented Kuala Kangsar away from the Perak river. The road from the Larut River at Teluk Kartang through the jungle and a mountain pass to Kuala Kangsar cut British dependence on the Perak river itself to reach the interior further

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[56] Jervois assumed the post of Governor of the Straits Settlements only in May, 1875. The volumes relating to the Birch affair--all marked "confidential"--were titled "Correspondence Relating to the Affairs of Certain Native States in the Malay Peninsula, in the Neighbourhood of the Straits Settlements."

[57] In an enclosure of the dispatch to London on 23 November, 1875, J.H. Satterwaite to Colonel Anson at Larut, 'Further Correspondence Relating to the Affairs of Certain Native States in the Malay Peninsula, in the Neighbourhood of the Straits Settlements,' no. 44 in 100.

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upstream. In early December 1875, Jervois sent a message to Lord Carnarvon detailing the preparations for the road:

> 15. I have been most anxious to improve the communications from Larut to Qualla Kangsa, in order to be able to move, without difficulty, through this district, a force intended to operate from Qualla Kangsa and the upper part of the Perak River. Native labourers have been employed in improving the road, and there will be now no difficulty in supplying provisions and stores. An adequate supply of provisions has been laid in, camping grounds have been selected, stockades erected, 'kadjangs' and 'attaps' [both temporary shelters] supplied for shelter in the field, huts and storerooms erected. I enclose, for your leadership's information, reports and communications concerning the arrangements and preparations made, as also a sketch map of the road. The distance from Telok Kartang, the place of disembarkation, to Qualla Kangsa, on the Perak River, is 27 miles.[58]

Developing a road to Kuala Kangsar meant moving through the jungle without difficulty. The tin fields of Larut and the Perak River were now at Kuala Kangsar precisely 27 miles apart. Through the military measurements a new Perak emerges into relief.

From empty Kuala Kangsar the military commanders were interested in looking elsewhere. The main British concern in siting colonial headquarters in the village was to maintain communication beyond it. After the war, Jervois argued to Carnarvon in favor of plans to turn the military base of Kuala Kangsar into a regional police base:

> The head-quarters of the Seikh guard should be at Qualla Kangsa, where I am of opinion that the Residency should be established, in preference to Bandar Bahrn [sic]. An Assistant Resident should, however, be established, in preference to Bandar Bharn, and another in Laroot as at present. Besides being much easier of communication with Penang, and, therefore with Singapore, Qualla Kangsa is in the centre of Perak. A road, about 27 miles long, has already been made between it and the mouth of the Laroot River, which is only seven hours distant from Penang, and a telegraph line has been laid along this route. In case of emergency therefore, a re-inforcement could readily be sent to Qualla Kangsa from Penang.[59]

The colonial officials in Singapore thus imagined Perak ready for another emergency, tied via the telegraph line laid next to the highway.[60] Resident Birch, reporting his activities in

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[58] Jervois to Lord Carnarvon, December 2, 1875, 'Further Correspondence Relating to the Affairs of Certain Native States in the Malay Peninsula, in the Neighbourhood of the Straits Settlements,' no. 100 in 17.

[59] Jervois from Singapore to Lord Carnarvon, August 19, 1876, 'Further Correspondence Relating to the Affairs of Certain Native States in the Malay Peninsula, in the Neighbourhood of the Straits Settlements,' no. 71 in 20.

[60] "The first internal telegraph circuit in the Malay States was opened on 16 April 1876, eighty-six years ago. It was a single wire hung on jungle trees from the Office of the British Resident, Perak, in Kuala Kangsar, to the Assistant Resident in Taiping and on to the Magistrate's Office in Matang, a total length of twenty-seven miles. Ten years later, in 1886 (less than ten years after the first telephone exchanges were

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1875 to Singapore in journals sent via the steamers that plied the Straits of Malacca, had a long delay of response to his activities. Birch's replacement as resident of Perak would not work distant from Singapore and London, but rather be connected electrically to the colonial authorities ready for any contingency.

The remnants of the Perak royalty were brought to Kuala Kangsar like the colonial officials gathered there. The royal ranks described in the Precis, the Sultan followed by the Rajah Muda, continuing into the ascending numbers filling the first, second, and third ranks, had apparently failed to rule Perak justly. Just as Birch had abused his authority, so had Sultan Abdullah, and they would only have limited powers in the new residency. In the same dispatch as above, Jervois requested that London allow him to bring the absent Perak royalty in a diminished capacity to the newly connected town:

> If your Lordship approves of the course which I have recommended, respecting the appointment of Yusuf as Regent, the Resident will, at Qualla Kangsa, be near him, Raja Yusuf, at present, resides at Senggang, only a short distance from Qualla Kangsa, and I have no doubt that he would live in the immediate vicinity of the Resident, if requested to do so.[61]

Given the apparent problems between Raja Abdullah and Raja Ismail over succession following Sultan Ali's 1871 death, and the royalty's perceived complicity in the rebellion, for the time being the governor's office thought it unwise for Perak to have a Sultan. Instead Raja Yusuf could be brought in as "regent" to fill a new title of authority near the new town. The novelty of these steps, given the growing British understanding of the Perak hierarchy, did not escape those involved in the decisions. McNair described Raja Yusuf's situation in these terms:

> Rajah Yusuf, heretofore mentioned as the Rajah Muda, was thus made ruler of Perak, the government being carried on in his name, and with the aid and advice of a Resident--Mr. Hugh Low receiving the onerous appointment. Yusuf gained the confidence of the British Government by the way in which he refused to join in the contemptible little plots of the chiefs against Mr. Birch, and also by the spirited way

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opened in Britain and America), Perak had its first telephone system, three point-to-point circuits between Police Stations in the Taiping and Gopeng areas." G. A. Langley, "Telecommunications in Malaya," Journal of Tropical Geography, May, 1963, page 79.

61 Jervois from Singapore to Lord Carnarvon, August 19, 1876, 'Further Correspondence Relating to the Affairs of Certain Native States in the Malay Peninsula, in the Neighbourhood of the Straits Settlements,' no. 71 in 20.

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> in which he came forward with his following of friendly Malays to aid in the capture of the various fugitives, and in the pacification of the country. He is a man over the middle age, and is described as being of considerable ability, feared and hated by many of the chiefs, and as being of a fierce and cruel disposition; but he was a proved man as to his loyalty; and there being no desire on the part of Government to annex the state of Perak, his appointment was the wisest course that, under the circumstances, could be pursued.[62]

In 1876 Raja Yusuf became Perak's regent. Unwilling to annex Perak for the British Crown, placing Raja Yusuf in the "vicinity" of Kuala Kangsar maintained a semblance of the old regime in the novel conditions of the new one. Raja Yusuf as a figure acceptable "under the circumstances" was himself akin to Kuala Kangsar. Like Swettenham's claim that Kuala Kangsar had no royalty, Yusuf's proved his appropriateness for the new position to the British by his unpopularity in Perak.

Rationalizing colonial administration in Perak meant locating its center. For the Straits Settlements Governor in Singapore and the Colonial Office in London, Perak's center was its Malay population. In the same dispatch as above Jervois counseled that it would not be advisable for Perak's British Resident,

> to whose personal influence with the Chiefs and people any measure of success which may attend the Residential system must, in a great measure, be attributable, should reside anywhere but in some central position in that State, which would be in immediate proximity to the chief native authority and the seat of the central Government of the country.[63]

Kuala Kangsar's new "centrality" was thus dependent on its proximity to a Malay hierarchy freshly relocated, and its potential influence over the "people" of whom only the indigenous population counted. The tens of thousands of Chinese laborers in Perak did not figure in this rendering of Perak based around the anxious security concerns presented by the Malay population. Though Perak was not a British Crown Colony, its chief native authority and

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[62] McNair, page 412. Jervois wrote, "2. I have requested the Sultan to nominate another chief to act for him during his detention in Singapore, but he has not as yet done so, and I think it probable that, unless pressure be brought to bear on him of a more stringent nature than appears to me desirable under the circumstances, he will avoid taking any action upon my request. 3. Meanwhile, during the absence of the Sultan from Perak, and in default of any special appointment, the chief authority in the country falls upon Rajah Muda Yusuf." November 14, 1876, no. 27 in 25.

[63] Jervois to Lord Carnarvon, Singapore, August 19, 1876, 'Further Correspondence Relating to the Affairs of Certain Native States in the Malay Peninsula, in the Neighbourhood of the Straits Settlements,' no. 71 in 20.

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central government appeared as separable entities, brought together in the Perak center at Kuala Kangsar.

The emerging system for running Perak through a native authority focused on the development of a security apparatus to replace the colonial forces. Two months later in October 1876, in another long dispatch from Singapore to London, Jervois argued that Perak's fiscal health was contingent upon the substitution of native police for colonial forces. The plan went:

> 4. If a police force were to be organised, with the object of carrying on the business of the state largely through its agency, it would necessarily far exceed in number that which would be requisite if the old-established system be continued of governing through Native Headmen. After carefully considering the subject, I have no doubt that the latter system possesses great advantages over the former, as being more economical, more palatable to the population, more calculated to interest the natives themselves in the Government of their country, and more practical in every respect.[64]

Kuala Kangsar grew in British knowledge that it was to maintain, even buttress, the "system" of old Perak. The language of this correspondence calculates the system of indirect British rule in Malaya, one built on the twin poles of bureaucratic efficiency and security. The uncertainties of the rebellion provided the condition of possibility of Kuala Kangsar, a geographic manifestation of a new regime of colonial security to manage the Malay population of Perak.

Yet the extractive interests of Straits investors in Perak's great tin fields made the plans for Kuala Kangsar of only partial use. Perak proved to be more than "Perak." The problem of Kuala Kangsar as the primary administrative center was that governmental duties in the area focused on the other end of the new road at Larut, the mining center which following the war was the only area producing substantial revenue for the state.[65] The solution was to create a commuting administration:

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[64] Jervois to Lord Carnarvon, Singapore, October 18, 1876, 'Further Correspondence Relating to the Affairs of Certain Native States in the Malay Peninsula, in the Neighbourhood of the Straits Settlements,' no. 7 in 25.

[65] Swettenham cites that in 1875 "Larut" revenue was that $300,000, and "Perak" $80,000. About Perak, page 11.

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> 9. ... When the Residency is finally established at Qualla Kangsa, and the road between that station and Larut is available for carriages, an arrangement may be made by which the Resident at Qualla Kangsa may perform the Residential duties for Larut. There will then be only one Resident and one Assistant Registrar in Perak, the former receiving 2,000£, the latter (at Bandar Bahru) 750£ per annum. It is to be observed that there is a line of telegraph through Larut to Qualla Kangsa; and Bukit Gantang, where the Mantri of Larut lives, is nearly as close to Qualla Kangsa as it is to the Assistant Resident's house in Larut.[66]

Thus at the very moment a Malay hierarchy was to be recreated and situated at Kuala Kangsar, the attention of the colonial state wandered elsewhere. Malays in Perak were a problem of security; the immigrant miners one of administration. The relationship between the colonial state and the Malays brought together at Kuala Kangsar split apart as it started. With colonial power evacuating Kuala Kangsar, the newly reconstituted old Perak regime was left adjacent to a vacuum.

Even as administrative control moved elsewhere, the trappings of government grew in the center along the river. In 1879 the Confidential Print published "Mr. Swettenham's Tour Through the Protected Native States in the Autumn of 1878."[67] Swettenham closed out the narrative of the Perak War in describing the growing state infrastructure of "Kwala Kangsa": "The only Government buildings at this station are the Resident's house, the police quarters, the court-house and telegraph station, and quarters for the clerks."[68] Among these quarters were those of Raja Dris, the man who served as judge for those accused for complicity in Birch's death and was rewarded with the title Raja Muda, second to that of Regent Yusuf. Below Swettenham adds

> Raja Dris has built himself a house below the Resident's, and the Raja Muda is occupying the late Raja Bandahara's house at Saiping, on the opposite bank of the river. I understand it is intended to build for Raja Muda a more fitting residence during the current year (ibid.).

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66 Jervois to Lord Carnarvon, Singapore, October 18, 1876, 'Further Correspondence Relating to the Affairs of Certain Native States in the Malay Peninsula, in the Neighbourhood of the Straits Settlements,' no. 9 in 25.

67 By 1879, London's interest in Perak as measured by its appearance in the Confidential Print had largely waned, and turned instead to other crises elsewhere in the Empire.

68 Enclosure in Lt. Gov. Colonel Anson to M.E. Hicks Beach, Singapore, 6 March 1879, 'Further Correspondence Relating to the Affairs of Certain Native States in the Malay Peninsula, in the Neighbourhood of the Straits Settlements,' no. 32 in 80.

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The Raja Muda's home was just below the resident's, while Raja Yusuf lived across the river from Kuala Kangsar in the village of Sayong. In 1884, Perak's Resident took Raja Dris and Sultan Abdullah's son Raja Mansur to London on leave. Two years later, in 1886, conditions were deemed stable enough for Raja Yusuf to be crowned Sultan, the last Sultan to rule from the right bank of the Perak river.[69] As Perak's specifically Malay center, Kuala Kangsar became precious, as Swettenham noted "it is the absence of the Chinese element that, with the extreme beauty of the place, makes Kuala Kangsar so attractive."[70] When Sultan Yusuf died just eleven weeks after his installation, he was not buried in attractive Kuala Kangsar but rather across the river in Sayong, the bank of the river where his predecessors graves are found. When Raja Muda Dris was promoted to become Sultan Idris on 5 April 1887, he was the first of his line to live in Kuala Kangsar, on the left side of the river, and the first Perak sultan to be buried there.

Security and the new order of things

British officials replaced their fear of a general rebellion in the Malay sultanates with an unnerving sense of their docility. McNair's 1878 Perak and the Malays is a compendium of travel lore, ethnology, reportage, geography, botany, and history that appeared in this moment of uncertainty. Even just a few years after the rebellion against Birch's forces, the military dangers of life in Perak seemed to recede.[71] McNair's book registers this shift, and describes the attack on Birch to illustrate a section on Malay pathology

> physiologists attribute this uncontrollable fury to disease--in fact, to a kind of monomania induced by disorder of the digestive organs; but there are occasions

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[69] For more on the re-establishment of the Perak Sultanate and the installations of Sultan Yusuf and Sultan Idris, see chapter two below.

[70] About Perak, page 38.

[71] In a striking casual tone Brigadier General Kelham recalled "Life was never monotonous at Kuala Kangsar, in fact the days seemed scarcely long enough, for what with military duties, shooting, skinning of rare birds, and writing my diary, I never had a spare minute." British Malaya, April 1928, page 313. He also notes that "it was with great regret that I left Perak, for life at Kuala Kangsar had been very pleasant, with cheery companions, a certain amount of soldiering, and no financial worries." British Malaya, August 1928, page 99.

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> when the practice is made subservient to the will, and a Malay will "run amok" to gratify revenge, or, as if for a forlorn hope, adopt it in the little wars of the people, rushing amongst the enemy and killing right and left. In fact, it will be seen that on the occasion of the murder of Mr. Birch, the cry of 'Amok, amok!' was raised, and a savage rush was made by all present, who seemed to be animated with but one desire--to kill (McNair, 213).

These contagious possibilities of amok described by McNair spread almost verbatim to other accounts of the killings. Isabella Bird records in her 1883 travelogue that "when Mr. Birch was murdered, the cry '*amok! amok!*' was raised, and the passion of murder seized on all present" (Bird, 356). The quote marks in the Precis signaling "amok" as something linguistically special become for McNair and Bird the quote marks of direct speech. Much like Kuala Kangsar itself, analysis of amok evades a recognition of its own history, and Birch's death does not represent the events of a specific local history but rather a general Malay practice.

The descriptions that McNair and Bird cite reflect something ethnological rather than historical. Though both of their books include sections that describe the conditions that brought about the Perak rebellion, neither passage about Birch's death appears in these historical accounts. McNair uses the rebellion account cited above for his section on "Malay character," which follows mundane examples like the typical menu for a Malay dinner. Bird's account of amok, also cited above, follows a description of Malay superstition, where she notes "I never heard in any country of such universal belief in devils, familiars, omens, ghosts, sorceries, and witchcrafts."[72] The rebellion at Pasir Salak, and what may have been said there, becomes detachable for general illustration. In Hobson-Jobson's etymology of amok they cite a letter from "Sir W.D. Jervois to the E. of Carnarvon, Nov. 16, 1875" which reports

> On being struck the Malay at once stabbed Arshad with a *kriss*; the blood of the people who had witnessed the deed was aroused, they ran **amok**, attacked Mr. Birch, who was bathing in a floating bath close to the shore, stabbed and killed him.[73]

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[72] This amid her comparison between bustling Taiping and "Silent Kwala Kangsa." Bird, page 353.

[73] Yule and Burnell, page 22. Emphasis in the original. Hobson-Jobson places the Perak rebellion in proximity to other criminal incidents characterized as "amok," and gives as its last example of its etymology Bird's description of Captain Shaw's rendering of the generic amok attack, one where the

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Malays themselves seemed to narrate what happened at Pasir Salak, and provide ready quotes for citation.

In 1882 British ethnological interest in Perak followed these security concerns. An intelligence division in the London War Office published the Precis of Information concerning the Straits Settlements and the Native States of the Peninsula.[74] The document's focus remains on the Malay population, even though they are estimated to be a minority: "now probably outnumbered by the enormous influx of Chinese of late years" (ibid., 9). Since "a considerable proportion of the population still consists of Malays" they continue as the chief interest and problem for maintaining colonial security. The post-rebellion, post-war conditions allow for more intimate knowledge of the Malays, as

> The Malay physique is of a fairly high order; the men are short, being on an average about 5 feet 3 inches in height, but they are well proportioned and active, with strong limbs, small hands and feet, and good countenances. In disposition the Malays are proud and revengeful, never forgetting an injury, and it was probably on this account that early travellers described them as treacherous. They are so, only, however, with strangers who do not understand how to treat them and with enemies (ibid., 9).

This intimacy allowed the recuperation of Perak rebels as colonial subjects. Though admitting that "on several occasions serious loss has been suffered by European troops" (ibid., 10), new knowledge offered a strategy for dealing with the Malay nobility: "it is necessary to be firm and watchful, but at the same time conciliatory in manner" (ibid., 16). The War Office concludes, given the experiences of the "Dutch War in Acheen" and "our own operations in the Malay Peninsula," that "the Malays are not altogether despicable enemies" (ibid., 10). Measuring Malay military capacity revealed the limited extent of potential problems.

The responsibility for maintaining peace among the Malays of the peninsula was deemed contingent on the actions of Europeans. The Intelligence Division's Precis cites

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protoypical amok's "bloodshot eyes start from their sockets, his frenzy gives him unnatural strength; then all of a sudden he drops." Yule and Burnell, page 23.

74 "Prepared in the Intelligence Division, Horse Guards, War Office, From Information obtained from official and other sources." Harrison and Sons: London, Revised 1891. The other sources are academic: and include McNair, Begbie, Cameron, Crawfurd, Earl, Logan, Newbold, Popham, and Raffles, together with Malay language primers and the wartime maps.

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Singapore lawyer J.R. Logan as one of its authorities in dealing with the Malay population.[75] His statement about the Malay population in Malacca (the Crown Territory on the Peninsula south of Perak) is cited as an instance of pre-rebellion prescience:

> A European travels with a sense of such absolute security amongst agricultural Malays, and is treated with so much deference and friendliness, when his own manner is courteous and friendly, that it is hard to believe that anything short of a supercilious behaviour and a despotic disregard of rights and prejudices could provoke them into an armed resistance of a European government. The truth is that the Malays are essentially a peaceful and not a warlike people (War Office, 104).

The uncanny quality of Malay friendliness and courtesy risks revealing European mistakes, that a colonial regime would have to be supercilious to upset the Malays. Yet for him to term Malays as essentially peaceful it is necessary for Logan to reference their warlike qualities. To understand Malay rights and prejudices in Perak, that gained through the very act of reading the Precis of intelligence, produces the sense of absolute security. For Europeans to know the Malays are dangerous is at the same time to understand that they need not be dangerous at all.

Yet when the War Office's Precis describes the administrative apparatus in central Kuala Kangsar, the bureaucracy that usurped the Sultan's power in Perak, it reveals slips of imprecision and insecurity. The Perak section describes among its "Towns"

> Kuala Kangsa, now the seat of the Resident of Perak and the place of meeting of the State Council, is situated on the right bank of the river, about 150 miles from its mouth. It contains the Resident's house, Police Barracks, Court-house &c (ibid., 122).

The "&c" perhaps includes the presence of the Sultan, who is mistakenly identified as "Sultan Iskandar Shah." (ibid., 131). Understanding the Sultan's place in Perak did not figure prominently in the security concerns of the Intelligence Division. Other kinds of information escape the War Office authors. They report it is "impossible to estimate correctly the number of Malays in Perak capable of bearing arms" however "the proportion

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[75] With characteritic hyperbole Swettenham called Logan, who edited the Journal of the Eastern Archipelago, "a distinguished ethnologist and writer, who knew the people of the Archipelago better than anyone of his time." The Real Malay, page 245.

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ever likely to be brought against us is very small compared to the population."[76] Such precision in information anyway was not immediately needed. Reforming the Malay population was a project for the future, since

> Now that the principal opponents of the new order of things have been removed or pensioned, it will be comparatively easy in time to develop the resources of the country, and give the people a chance of improving their condition; though but little industry or improvement can be expected from the present generation (ibid., 125).

In this estimation the Sultan and the rest of the Perak royalty were no longer figures that British army officers needed to understand. The proclivities of the entire Perak generation defined security concerns, and reproduction would produce a population the War Office could work with.

The present generation of Perak Malays presented possible hints of trouble. The Precis cites "the peculiar phase of madness known among the Malays by the name of running 'amok'" one that "still exists in Perak, but not to any great extent" (ibid., 125). Amok remains in quotes, a Malay form of madness perhaps set off by the bad European behavior that Logan mentioned. But in the consideration of its possibility the Precis promises that the popularity of amok-running will fade.[77] The description of the rebellion at "Passir Sala" carries this ambivalence about Malay violence, for "the affray arose apparently in an accidental manner, but was believed to have been in accordance with a previously--arranged plan, to which nearly all the chiefs of the country were privy" (ibid., 128). By 1882 whether the Perak Chiefs were complicitious in the Perak outrages apparently no longer mattered in the "accidental manner" of the rebellion. If Perak Malays were capable of planning violence, they could only carry it out in the circumstances of madness. The Precis concludes with a note of success, that "since April, 1876, the country has been perfectly quiet, and there seems to be no danger of any renewal of

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[76] War Office, 125. Should there be trouble the War Office thought the Malays could be "starved out" through the blunt tactic of blockading access to the river at its mouths, for the colonial regime's access to Perak was now open by other means.

[77] Perhaps the most stable characteristic of colonial descriptions of amok, always more common at some previous time.

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disturbances."[78] The danger of administering the Malay territories reduced to the ever-present possibility of accidents.

The lessons for avoiding accidents and colonizing Perak formed a colonial pedagogy. Perhaps the most-cited quotation from Swettenham of the period is his 1895 eulogy of Birch in his book Malay Sketches,

> In Mr. Birch the British Government lost one of its most courageous, able, and zealous officers, but, by the action which his death made necessary, the State of Perak gained in twelve months what ten years of "advice" could hardly have accomplished. That was not all, for the events of those twelve months, when they came to be fully known, threw a light on the inner life of the Malay that was in the nature of a revelation. It is all too soon to forget the lesson or disregard its teachings.[79]

In a slightly different version of this quote, Swettenham eleven years later gave the credit for proper instruction to Raja Yusuf, who "unpopular as he was, knew his country and his people probably better than anyone, and he was right when he said that no real good could ever be done till those who most wanted it had been taught a lesson."[80] The image of Perak as a classroom appears again in Winstedt's well-known description of Birch as "an angry Victorian schoolmaster" who "dashed into Perak's Augean stable."[81] The learning done in Perak was to manage the memories of how British administration entered the peninsula. Part of this management was shifting the Malay from a historical subject to an ethnological object. Yet the ethnological relationship between Britain and Perak was not elaborated in a comprehensive scholarly project, since the administrative concerns of controlling a state rapidly growing with both immigrants and capital through the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries left Malays peripheral to the government's worries.

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[78] The report concludes the section on the Perak War by claiming "no further engagements of any note took place in Perak, and after about a year's occupation the troops were withdrawn, being replaced by a native police force chiefly composed of Indians," the term native being used not to refer to Perak but rather to non-European. War Office, page 131.

[79] Frank Swettenham, Malay Sketches, Bodley Head: London, 1895 [reprinted by Graham Brash: Singapore, 1984, pages 246-247].

[80] A lesson which in 1906 had accomplished what twenty years of advice could not have. Frank Swettenham, British Malaya An Account of the Origin and Progress of British Influence in Malaya, George Allen and Unwin: London, 1906, page 215.

[81] R.O. Winstedt, "A History of Malaya," Journal of the Malayan Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society, March, 1935, page 237.

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Rather the lesson from Perak seemed to be to defer the determination of danger, and to defer specifying the requirements necessary to maintain the "absolute security" of the new territories on the peninsula.

Collecting custom in Perak

In modern Perak historiography the threads of the Perak royalty and the establishment of Kuala Kangsar are erased in the personality of Birch. In much of the writing of the rebellion, Birch's death functioned as the result of inadequate learning. The post-rebellion shift in the British narrative of Perak from the unknown to the known provides a contradictory history, a frame for thinking about the violence used to crush the rebellion in the context of colonial management to prevent another such uprising. The "Birch Affair" founded both modern Kuala Kangsar and the official historical landscape of Perak state. The chain of citations quoting Perak's colonial scholars provides one series of lessons from the rebellion. The particular historiographical elaborations of the Perak rebellion, some thorough and some shallow, condenses a story in which the violence is minor but necessary.

What might be called the Malay historiography of the colonial period follows a different trajectory precisely because of this violence. Early references in Malay to Birch are fragmentary, a slow process to incorporate the new regime into the Sultan's realm. The struggle for representation ran heavily against the Malay writers of the late colonial period, since British historiography recorded with relish the events at Pasir Salak. Wilkinson's comment that "the Perak War removed from the country all the leading figures of the preceding years" and that "Malay history proper ends with them" works for Perak writing as well. No doubt as a result of British domination of the Perak royal house post-1875, the earlier textual heritage of works like the Misa Melayu and the Undang-Undang 99 in Perak largely ended with the onset of the new administration. As the Sultan of the peninsula's "Premier State" under British advice, the Perak court "ruled" from a lavishly-appointed

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palace based in the small town of Kuala Kangsar. The writing of the Sultan's office--surely composed of lists of heirs, records of births, deaths, and marriages, royal tours, genealogies (and perhaps even histories)--probably does not survive to the present. The violence of the second world war likely had a large role in ensuring the destruction of these documents.

Some fragments do, however, remain. Royal clerks first published catalogs of customs and court procedures during the mid-1930s. The best known, The Customary Code of Malay People in the State of Perak, the Abode of Grace, from Ancient Times, appeared in 1935 under the qualification "the first edition," anticipating that "one day there will be published another piece [karangan] as an addition" to keep up with the times (which did not, however, appear until 1970).[82] These books established authority through the convention of listing the royal genealogy from Sultan Muzaffar Shah I [r.1528-1549], to then-ruling Sultan Iskandar, [r. 1919-1938]. Such lists consolidated a relationship to the past that was continuous into the present, a Malay line of rule now including the civil service hierarchy firmly in place in the royal prescriptions.

Even amid the slump conditions of export-oriented Perak, such publications appeared in a society awash in print. During its growth in the late 1920s Malay printing--both journalism and fiction--amplified the ready possibility of Malay cultural extinction, that poverty and backwardness relative to the immigrant communities left Malays "ready to vanish from the world."[83] Based in the heavily immigrant Crown colonies of Penang and Singapore, Malay publishing circulated in the Malay states but generally was not produced there. Only in 1939 do Malay descriptions of the rebellion in Pasir Salak appear in

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82 Adat Lembaga Orang-orang Melayu Negeri Perak Darul Ridzuan Pada Zaman Purbakala, Arkib Negara ARA 21, 28, 29. One of the compilers of this earlier text, Datok Mohamad Ramly b. Abdullah (of the title Toh Tan Dewa Paduka) apparently wrote other materials as well. However, "according to his child, Datok Ramly had written many history books, but from what I learned from his widow they were all thrown away [dibuangkan]." Mariam Mohd. Ali, Susunan Pertama Adat Lembaga Orang-Orang Melayu di Dalam Negeri Perak Darulridzuan dari zaman Purbakala 1935, B.A. thesis, Univesiti Malaya, 1976, page 13.

83 For example see "Adakah Nampak Jalannya Bangsa Melayu; Akan Pupus Sebutannya Dalam Tanah Semenanjong Ini?" Majallah Guru, September 1929.

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Perak.[84] These texts switch the insular orientation of the Custom books, and attempt to locate the Sultan's position amid a Perak realm filling with immigrants. The Chronicle of the Installation of Raja Abdul Aziz is one such book, published in 1940 by Raja Lob Ahmad as a souvenir of the occasion.[85] Like the Sultan's photograph that often appeared in the Malay press, the Chronicle depicts the newly installed Sultan Abdul Aziz [r. 1939-1948] as a figure of celebrity. Aside from the novel biographical material about him, the printing of the 1937 colonial census returns suggest the Perak Sultan's reign is over what is termed the "inhabitants of Perak" [Pendudok Perak]: Malays, 307,245, Chinese 376,950, Indian, 185,515, Whites, 3,361, others groups, 6,561 (ibid., 49). Immigrants were concentrated in the modern sectors of the state--the mines, plantations, and cities--with the Malay population mainly in rural villages along the coast and rivers. The census citation as part of the Sultan's biography stretches to include the varied inhabitants of the state.

Yet the Chronicle does not proceed as a historical argument about the rights of Perak sultans. Instead, following the census, is "The History [tawarikh] of the State of Perak, the Abode of Grace" with the note that this has been "taken from the Perak Education Office" (ibid., 53). The royal genealogies like that in The Customary Code begin with the first Islamic Sultan, Sultan Muzaffar Shah in 1528. The Chronicle instead begins with the Bruas kingdom located in "Perak" prior to the Perak dynasty[86] and then follows conventional colonial historiography, under the headings "The Dutch Enter Perak," "The Alexander the Great of the East," and "The Chinese Want Tin." The arrival of Birch, which dominates the space of the story, follows the heading "The Change in Royal Power"

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[84] A 1939 history of the peninsula, tersely records early Perak history: "in the year 1874 Perak received a British Resident, and in the year 1895 joined with Selangor, Pahang and Negri Sembilan to become the federated Malay states under British protection." Mej Dato Haji Mohd. Said, Hikayat Semenanjung Tanah Melayu dan Negeri2 Berhampirannya, Singapore, 1939, pages 63-64. The Malay text reads, "Pada tahun 1874 Perak menerima seorang British Resident dan pada tahun 1895 berikat dengan Selangor, Pahang dan Negri Sembilan jadi negeri Melayu yang bersekutu di bawah pernaungan Inggeris."

[85] Riwayat Pertabalan yang Maha Mulia Sultan Sir Abdul Aziz Almarhum Ballah Shah KCMG KBE, Bersama Press: Penang, 1940. For another analysis of this work, see Anthony Milner's The Invention of Politics in Colonial Malaya: Contesting Nationalism and the Expansion of the Public Sphere, Cambridge University: Cambridge, 1995, chapter 9.

[86] For more on Bruas, see M.A. Fawzi Basri, Cempaka Sari: Sejarah Kesultanan Negeri Perak, Yayasan Perak: Ipoh, 1986, pages 6-13.

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(Chronicle, 58). In the Chronicle's narrative the problem Birch faces is one of money, as the royals raise taxes "only for their own use and not to administer the state" (ibid., 58). Birch gains power of taxation, puts the nobility on wages [gaji] and goes to the village of Dato' Maharaja Lela in Pasir Salak to post a proclamation announcing his new position. But, with no reason given, the Dato' Maharaja Lela has prepared a fort and asked the Pasir Salak people to fight the British government should the notice be posted in their village. Birch is then killed in what is called a "riot" [huru hara] by the people of the village, but with "good fortune" [nasib baik], the rest of Birch's crew are able to escape and later lead the attack on the Perak leadership (ibid., 60). The story closes with Sultan Abdullah, returned on pension from his exile in the Seychelles, dying in 1922. The burial of the Sultan, last of the conspirators convicted by the British, closes Perak history. The rebellion provides a moment after which no more narration is necessary. Birch, like the immigrants, becomes part of the story of Sultan Abdul Aziz' installation.

Another more explicitly political argument on the Perak Malay position appeared just after the installation. Politics [Siasat], a Malay-language newspaper, published in 1939 its inaugural (and only extant) edition to laud the ascension of the new Sultan. Politics reprints the returns of the 1937 census, without caption, but with details about the ethnic composition of the various parts of the modern sector, including the schools, and the laborers. Immediately underneath the population figures is "Perak State from four hundred years ago," a history to prove that Perak is a "blessed" [bertuah] Malay state following the policies [polisi] of the old realm.[87] Politics introduces this under the heading "The reason Mr. Birch was killed." Birch, the first to "run the administration of the new world" died sixty-six years ago, as is "recalled in the state historical study" (ibid., 26). The important detail is the location of his death, which offset the political center of the state. Should Birch not have died in Pasir Salak, "then the capital of Perak would be at Bandar Bharu where Mr. Birch is buried" (ibid., 26). But the growing administrative centers in Perak were the

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[87] "Negeri Perak Telah Bertuah," Siasat, 15 October 1939. Siasat was published in Penang.

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predominantly Chinese mining towns of Taiping and Ipoh, both of which gained town councils by the 1930s. These urban locations became a focus of Politics. The history section argues that with the formation of these councils, administered in part by Chinese, Ipoh appears shameful to Malays. Shame [silu mata] manifests in the unregulated Chinese commerce, overrun with pigs--hanging cut open in shops, their blood dripping from the bicycles which take them to and from the market. The editors close that "we do not like it in a Malay state, to have it said that Chinese are the Masters [tuan] of Malaya" (ibid., 26). With Birch dead in Pasir Salak and buried in nearby Bandar Bharu, his body's continuing presence in this area of predominately Malay settlement makes a claim of political priority for the Malay sultanate. This prefigures later returns to the Perak River to claim Malay political control of the territory.

The writing in English about the rebellion focuses on the mistakes Birch made, mistakes that helped him eventually become imaginable as the only agent of the story. Perak colonial historiography fancied a particular image of Birch as the instigator of the rebellion. Returning for a moment to Plunket's work, the Precis of Evidence describes in its review of Perak history Birch's desire for a system allowing for the uniform collection of tax revenue in Perak. Birch's despair with the current system of tax collection in Perak traces to a quote from an administrative report he sent on 14 December 1874:

> But really I think it concerns us little what were the old customs of the country, nor do I think they are worthy of any consideration in dealing with the present taxation of the country. The wants of the country were then very few, the people lived in a half-savage state; and the present requirements of the Sultan and chiefs, and of the very large immigrant population now in the country, as well as the great increase of that class of the population which may be expected, demand that the subject be handled with reference to them, and not with regard only to old customs.[88]

This citation in the Precis was in regard to "a general account under separate heads of the taxes to which the Sultan and other chiefs were entitled by old custom" (ibid., 6) Birch here shifts between the usage of the term custom as a habit and as tribute paid as an

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[88] Enquiry as to the Complicity of Chiefs in the Perak Outrages, page 6.

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obligation like a tax.[89] Plunket's Precis locates Birch's interest in custom as one allowing his nascent administration to gain access to the wealth of Perak for the profit of his interests. The detailed report itself he submitted a year prior to the rebellion does so as well.[90]

Birch's interest in custom had consequences, though McNair, Swettenham and others were properly elegiac toward the fallen resident. Colonel A.E.H. Anson, was one of the first to turn on Birch in print, in 1920, and in his memoirs he cites a letter Andrew Clarke sent him in 1875 that records Clarke being "very much annoyed with Birch...he has made a regular mull of the farms [revenue monopolies]."[91] He recalls later meeting the Perak royalty in the Singapore jail (on their way to exile in the Seychelles) and remarks on his feelings of sympathy for them, since he "believed that, had they been properly handled, they would have been amenable to the requirements of the British Government" (ibid., 323). Birch's interest in abolishing old Perak custom printed in the Precis would prove readily repeatable as the measure of this mishandling. Winstedt, in his 1935 History of Malaya, cites the report Birch sent, showing "Complacently Mr. Birch, the earnest rationalist school-master wrote his report to the headmaster at Singapore: 'it concerns us little was were the old customs of the country, nor do I think they are worthy of any consideration.'"[92] Rupert Emerson's 1937 treatise on colonial rule in Malaya and the Indies then cited Winstedt's citation of the quote in a footnote describing the events at Pasir Salak.[93] The story of the rebellion and the entrance of British rule into Perak condensed to

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89 Hobson-Jobson notes the "origin of *Customs* in the solemn revenue sense." Yule and Burnell, page 286.

90 "Birch's Report on Perak, 14 December 1874." Reprinted in P.L. Burns, The Journals of J.W.W. Birch First British Resident to Perak 1874-1875, Oxford University Press: Kuala Lumpur, 1976, 378-388.

91 A.E.H. Anson, About Others and Myself, John Murray: London, 1920, page 323.

92 R.O. Winstedt, History of Malaya, Luzac and Company: London, page 237. Winstedt himself was saved by his research: "Though solitude took its toll of other European officials, Winstedt's preoccupation with Malay Studies immunised him from the psychological afflictions of some of his compatriots." R.O. Winstedt, Start From Alif, Count From One, Oxford University Press: Kuala Lumpur, 1969, page ix.

93 "Winstedt writes that 'Mr. Birch dashed into Perak's Augean stable, like an angry Victorian schoolmaster, confident that decision and firmness would soon clean it up,' and cites Birch's report to Singapore that 'it concerns us little what were the old customs of the country, nor do I think they are worthy of any consideration.' History of Malaya, p. 237." Rupert Emerson, Malaysia: A Study in Direct

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the nature of Birch's character, as reflected in his attitude to the term "custom" shifting away from referring to Perak's finances to instead describe the general habits of Perak's Malay population.

In the late 1950s and early 1960s, the years just following Malaya's hesitant independence, Malayan scholars took one final opportunity to describe the terms of Britain's colonization of Malaya.[94] The correspondence in the files about Perak were combed again. In Cowan's book, one the first post-war surveys of the British Forward Movement, the characterization of Birch takes the following form:

> He had the fixed and rigid morals of his age, which did not embrace toleration of slavery. He was not a fluent Malay speaker, and was unable to converse with those around him or to gain any insight into their feelings. And his reputation as a negotiator with Malay chiefs had been gained by the use of firmness and strength at the time of the Selangor incident--gun-boat diplomacy at its most successful. His view of Malay institutions is summed up in his report of 14 December 1874:
>
> > But really it concerns us little what were the old customs of the country, nor do I consider they are worthy of any consideration in dealing with the present taxation of the country.
>
> In his eyes almost everything he met in Perak was 'of such an irregular character as to require immediate alteration.'[95]

The historian Chai Hon Chan writes that the selection of Birch "showed a lack of appreciation of the seriousness of introducing British rule in the Malay states. Birch's background and training had not given him an insight into the intricacies of handling hostile natives."[96] Birch's position offered a pedagogical, mystical quality to the events that focuses on his personal proclivities. Birch's feelings about custom here support his intolerance and rigidity toward Malays, and occludes other desires he or the Colonial Office might have had in Perak.

Birch did, though, seem to have something to say about Perak and the origin-story of British colonialism in Malaya. In R.O. Tilman's 1964 study Bureaucratic Transition in

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and Indirect Rule, MacMillan: New York, 1937 [republished by University of Malaya Press, 1964, page 125].

94 This is described in McIntire, page 267-270.

95 However he notes as his source that this is "Quoted in Precis p. 6" rather than the report as his source for the passage. C.D. Cowan, Nineteenth-Century Malaya The Origins of British Political Control, Oxford University Press: London, 1961, page 224.

96 Chai Hon-Chan, The Development of British Malaya, Oxford: Kuala Lumpur, 1964, page 9.

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Malaya the sketch of modern peninsular history condenses to, "On the whole, the British movement into the Malayan Peninsula was a peaceful operation, with a necessary resort to force against the established government occurring on only one occasion."[97] In a footnote to this he continues

> The single military expedition against a native government came as a result of the murder of the first British Resident of Perak, Mr. J. W. W. Birch. Birch, a former Colonial Secretary of the Straits Settlements, was probably one of the worst possible choices for the difficult initial residential assignment in Malaya. He spoke no Malay, having come to the Straits Settlements from Ceylon, and his attitude is best summarized in his own words: 'It concerns us little what were the old customs of the country nor do I think they are worthy of any consideration.' (Quoted in G. P. Dartford, A Short History of Malaya [London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1957], p. 131.) ... For the single major clash between the British and an established Malay government (which in many ways bore more resemblance to a comic opera than to a war) and for details of several minor encounters, see C. Northcote Parkinson, British Intervention in Malaya, 1867-1877 (Singapore: University of Malaya Press, 1960), passim, esp. chaps. x-xi (ibid., 27).

The revolt for Tilman erases the progression of military expeditions taken through the course of colonizing the peninsula. His citations allow him to offer an argument that colonial domination was peaceful, and that what did go wrong was located in the personality of Birch himself. Birch appears to speak in his own words, through those who continue to cite him. Tilman quotes Dartford citing Birch, but in Dartford's book Birch's quote appears without a reference.[98] In so doing the quote on custom takes on the character of an adage, a statement freed from attribution and the bounds of history.

Reports of Birch's harshness toward the Perak Malays permits other types of erasure. In lieu of reciting the details Tilman cited Parkinson. Parkinson argues that given Birch's overweening pride "an heroic death was preferable" and

> If there was a revolt, moreover--if he himself were killed, for that matter--there would be a punitive expedition. Perak would be conquered by force of arms and probably annexed.

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97 R.O. Tilman, Bureaucratic Transition in Malaya, Duke University Press: Durham, 1964, page 27.

98 The passage reads, "His attitude can be summed up in his own words: 'It concerns us little what were the old customs of the country nor do I think they are worthy of any consideration.'" G.P. Dartford, A Short History of Malaya, Longmans, Green and Company: London, 1957, page 113.

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> And he would be the true founder of British Malaya; not a man who had failed but a man who had died in the hour of victory.[99]

Parkinson thus cites Mallal that "There was to be an element of suicide in Birch's death."[100] N.J. Ryan, though published in 1959 the year before Parkinson's book appeared, follows Parkinson's logic:

> the result was that the Resident alienated the Malay chiefs and the Sultan, and in so doing caused his own assassination.[101]

One could say that during this period the Malays were left out of Perak history, but this burst of history writing occurred at the moment in which the British were to be left out of the unfolding story of independent Malaysian history. In the mid-twentieth century, with Malaya just emerging from the hot years of the communist rebellion, the desire for Malay custom was to erase the threat of Malay violence. Malay custom, properly respected, would allow for the continuing successful extraction of Malaya's riches by a benevolent, disinterested regime. The presence of Malay custom in the practice of amok deferred the achievement of such security. Birch's death was productive, and so readily recountable, as a story that taught the safety of careful colonial rule. The lesson learned from Birch's death was one about the nature of the colonial relationship to Malay custom. Yet by 1965 it was no longer possible to imagine how such a relationship was once possible, and in some people's accounts Birch was left having to do everything by himself.

The future history of Perak

In 1965 the historian Khoo Kay Kim at the University of Malaya published a survey of comments on Birch that largely closed the attention to the early colonial period in Perak.[102] He opens, "it must be fully conceded that any criticism of western writings on

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99 C. Northcote Parkinson, British Intervention in Malaya 1867-1877, University of Malaya Press: Singapore, 1960, page 221.

100 Parkinson, page 222. For more on Mallal, see chapter five.

101 N.J. Ryan, Malaya: Through Four Centuries, Oxford University Press: London, 1959, page 136. Ryan was the last white headmaster of the Malay College Kuala Kangsar.

102 Khoo Kay Kim, "J.W.W. Birch: A Victorian Moralist in Perak's Augean Stable," Journal of the Historical Society, University of Malaya, 1965/1966.

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former colonial territories should be tempered by a cool head and sober judgement" (ibid., 33). Under the "different light" of hesitantly post-colonial conditions in Malaysia, his retelling of Birch's story illustrates the "shortcoming" in these western writings on Asian history, their assumption that western culture is "innately and intrinsically superior" (ibid., 33). Khoo's description savages Birch's bumbling colonial portrait: he argues that Birch knew Malay, had a suspicious interest in harboring fugitive women slaves, and was rife in shady financial dealings. Khoo suggests that even the Malay chiefs in Perak knew what Birch was doing, and said that he "had nothing to fill his own belly and came to Perak to collect the revenue of others."[103] Khoo's skillful riposte leaves no misunderstanding in Perak.

Khoo laments that this is but one instance of many in Malaysian historiography that "have always focussed attention on British personalities" (ibid., 47). The repository for these personalities is not in the books produced by western writers, but rather in the heads of Malaysian youth. The colonial legacy of "such misconceptions and fictions as have been deeply imbedded in the minds of thousands of our pupils and undergraduates must be cleanly eradicated before an autonomous history of Malaysia can be even understood" (ibid., 47). The opportunity to stop talking about the personalities and start cleaning did not immediately arise. Khoo's article, and a discussion on history teaching methods in Malaya, produced further comment on the possibilities of developing an indigenous historiography.[104] Those outside scholars who felt they were being written out of Malaysian history writing were among those who wrote back, and tried to defend the claim that they knew something about Birch by virtue of their outsider status.[105] Khoo and his colleague Zainal Abidin bin Abdul Wahid of the history department, University of Malaya,

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[103] A citation itself from the Singapore Straits Times of April, 1875, as Khoo notes, page 47.
[104] Zainal Abidin bin Abdul Wahid, editor, History Teaching and its Problems in Malaya, History Department, University of Malaya: Kuala Lumpur, 1964.
[105] J. De V. Allen, "J.W.W. Birch and the Writing of Malaysian History," Journal of the Historical Society, University of Malaya, 1966/67.

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did not preclude such outsiders from writing about Malaysia, but they were skeptical.[106] In the 1960s they were more interested in eradicating the remains of the colonial past rather than writing a better analysis of it.

The enormous historiography devoted to the British Forward Movement, which Khoo describes as "for many years, practically the most popular topic in Malaysian history," is an origin search for the beginnings of British rule in Malaya.[107] The research looks both ways, as a snapshot of Malaysia's pre-colonial past and the beginning of its future. Even scholarly work not devoted to the events of the period uses these materials, as in a footnote in John Gullick's seminal 1958 book on the traditional Malay polity,

> Birch was killed at Pasir Salak on 2 November 1875. The revolt for which this attack was to be the signal failed to materialize. The Maharaja Lela was eventually caught and hung. There was a full-scale enquiry into the causes of the attack and the unsuccessful plan for a revolt. The records of that enquiry and of the trial of the Maharaja Lela are the source of much information used in this book.[108]

The "full-scale enquiry" retains its vitality into the present, since many of the key sources not published at the time (like the Precis and the Confidential print were long ago) have been republished to provide future scholars with greater ease of access into the primary sources. Birch, Swettenham, Bird, McNair, Winstedt, Wilkinson, and others have been allowed to speak again to new audiences in these reissued works. There is both a greater amount of, and better access to, this republished colonial-era material than post-colonial critiques. The preface to the reprint of Winstedt and Wilkinson's 1935 A History of Perak in 1974 argues "the reprint could be justified from the point of view of the dearth of published and easily accessible materials on Perak history despite the reprint of J.F.A. McNair's Perak and the Malays in 1972."[109] McNair's book was reprinted in 1972

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[106] Khoo closes his reply, "He is saying, as it were, 'I claim that Birch was an honest and moral man', without taking the trouble to prove the case conclusively and dares me to prove him wrong. Let me reverse the order. I say that Birch was a corrupt and immoral man, although I have no conclusive evidence to show it. I challenge Mr. Allen to produce 'one incontestable evidence' to show that Birch was innocent." "A Comment (and a Challenge)," Journal of the Historical Society, University of Malaya, 1966/67, page 131.

[107] "Birch Episode Not That Simple," Star, 27 March 1994.

[108] John Gullick, Indigenous Political Systems of Western Malaya, University of London: London, 1958, page 106.

[109] Preface by Zainal Abidin b. Abdul Wahid, page ii.

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without an introduction, as if its appearance explained itself. Keeping in mind the archival absences that witnessed the violent overthrow of Perak rule, the lack of documentation is the point: the testimony of those who were its victims. The ambiguous quality of post-colonial Perak history also provides a way to think about undocumented Kuala Kangsar.

The continuing rumors in mid-1990s Kuala Kangsar about Birch's behavior in Perak and the media growth industry around the rebellion suggest that such an autonomous history might well include the figure of Birch in his various guises and his relationship to those who waged the rebellion against him.[110] This I discuss further in chapter five. In Kuala Kangsar, ready references to Professor Khoo Kay Kim himself, as the most prominent and senior Perak historian, provides stability to the idea that the past is in fact locatable somewhere. Perak, as a location, and its royal house, gained historiographical attention by being colonized first. Other struggles among the nobility in the Peninsula, and other rebellions against encroaching British rule, did not generate the archives that the events in Perak did. This scholarship describes the future creation of Malaya and later Malaysia. A scholar like Parkinson feared that someone might look for precisely this, and argued at the end of the introduction to his book

> It should be emphasized, finally, that the Malayan patriot of the future who seeks to identify patriots of old Malaya will seek in vain among the characters of this story. Some of them were admirable in statesmanship, courage, and persistence, but Malaya as we know it did not exist. It remained for the British to invent it (Parkinson, xx).

Parkinson wrote as a professor of history at the University of Malaya and his book was the first in the series called Malayan Historical Studies, "covering the story of what we now call Malaya from the earliest recorded times down to the year 1957" (Parkinson, v). In narrating a history that ultimately delivers Malaysia, the history of Kuala Kangsar is not available. In lingering here on the rendering of violence and the establishment of Kuala Kangsar I stress not origins but possibilities. The graves along the Perak River could be

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[110] This includes HVD Entertainment's production of the drama *Kota Setia*, "Based on the Pangkor Agreement in 1874 and the infamous incident of J.W.W. Birch's murder in Perak" and screened for national day 31 August 1997. See "Fanning the Spirit of Patriotism," Star, 14 August 1997.

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lost and then found again. The Perak Raja who judged Dato' Sagor and Dato' Maharaja Lela, later as sultan founded a college in Kuala Kangsar to attract and disperse an English-educated elite throughout the territory. Kuala Kangsar is bypassed by the new expressway but retains its colonial infrastructure and the presence of the Sultan. The question of what entails a true case of amok bedeviled the colonial regime concerned with underground political intrigue and continues to the present. Writing post-colonial Perak history focuses not on Kuala Kangsar but the other colonial spaces that surround it. These appearances and disappearances fill Perak, still, in contemporary Malaysia.

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CHAPTER TWO

ESTABLISHING A CIRCUIT: THE SULTAN'S COLLEGE IN KUALA KANGSAR

"5. We consider that while the College has rendered the important service of giving the Malays a larger share in the service of their own country, it has not raised the standard of efficiency to any appreciable extent nor does it enable us to hope that at any early date it will be possible to replace European Officers by Malays."

--"Report on the Malay Residential School at Kuala Kangsar, 1909," Selangor Secretariat Files 4421/09, page 2.

"These figures, dealing with populations of which only infinitesimal proportions are settled, indicate the overwhelming influence of immigration and emigration on population statistics in the Federated Malay States."

--The Census of the Federated Malay States, 1911, page 21.

"The constant change of the staff naturally reacts badly on the work of the boys especially in the lower school."

--"Report by Head Master, Malay College Kuala Kangsar," 8 January 1930.

"Boys were carefully selected to act as Malay Rulers and Mentri Besars [Chief Ministers] for the scene. Tengku Mahkota of Pahang, acting as his royal father, walked along the stage, full of the dignity which characterises a Malay aristocrat. Yassin, and the Undang of Rembau, pondered awhile before signing the agreement. The scene ended with a speech given by Wan Makhzan, who acted the part of the late Sir Edward Gent. The last item for that night was the singing of a newly-composed Malay national song."

--"The Dawn of a New Era," Malay College Magazine, 1948.

"Healthy boyish mischief seems to have made an early appearance and the delight of my informants was unmistakable as they recalled the sham fights among the orange trees behind the Residency or the fruit trees of Kota Lama, the illicit trips down the river from Enggor pontoon bridge to Kuala Kangsar, using banana stems for life buoys and the highly irregular excursions to town after candles had been officially extinquished. ... Punishment was often deservedly severe but I was able to assure these 'ageing rebels' that, while the escapades might be different, their sons and heirs were not one whit less troublesome now."

--A Short History of the Malay College, 1955

Remembering Kuala Kangsar

Annually, the Malay College Kuala Kangsar (MCKK) holds its Old Boys' Weekend. In 1994, as usual, the event packed Kuala Kangsar town with luxury cars, most

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of them driven from Kuala Lumpur on the new expressway that links the capital to the rest of the country. The glamorous arrival marks their success, as MCKK thrives in the spirit of solidifying class status. In this particular year the focus fell on the achievements of one of the Old Boys, Halim Saad, proclaimed by students a billionaire made wealthy as head of the conglomerate that built the highway (some told the joke of his being stopped by a police officer and asked if he thought he owned the road. His reputed reply was yes, in fact, he did). Other alumni of the Malay College fill the cabinet of the federal government, the chairs of academia, the state sultanates, and like Halim, the growing number of Malays in business. Since the vast majority of the Malaysian elite from the 1960s-on have been schooled in overseas universities, the Malay College in Kuala Kangsar provides a rare local shared experience of organizational life for the Malay fraction of the country's ruling class. The annual Old Boys' weekend is just one of myriad opportunities--shooting matches, business lunches, golf tournaments, treasure hunts--developed by the Malay College Old Boys Association (MCOBA) to maintain school ties. Since the greatest concentration of Old Boys live in the Klang Valley, 150 miles south of Kuala Kangsar, Old Boys' Weekend is a rare MCOBA event that occurs at the school itself.

The Old Boys' cars are parked on the expansive green lawns that surround the College. In its center, tall white pillars of the building dubbed the Big School dominate the campus. Connecting buildings, all uniformly white-washed, radiate out under the grand trees whose size marks the College's advanced age. Yet the College grounds are only partially sealed off from town, as one of Kuala Kangsar's streets runs through the middle of the school and divides it in two. Traffic toward the railway station and the town of Taiping to the north has to yield to the white-uniformed pedestrians crossing the street in the course of their daily schedules, and such passing-by gives the town's inhabitants a connection to the school's rhythms. Special events like the Old Boys' weekend, sports day, and speech day attracts modestly more attention from the College's Kuala Kangsar spectators.

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The weekend's focus is the possibility of return to the experiences that made the alumni different. Sports events between Old Boys and present boys test their strength, and a program of music and skits their showmanship. In the 1994 program, an ease of switching between English and Malay and knowing jokes about politicians and national issues, all referenced the large world that the Old Boys bring with them back to the school grounds. The tone follows that of the Old Boys magazine, Berita MCOBA [Malay College Old Boys Association News]. Rehman Rashid's article "Talkin' About Mah Generation" describes the desires he recalls raised by the Weekend:

> When we were at school together, we used to watch the Old Boys converge on Kuala Kangsar for their annual Weekend, and wonder at their density and heft, the lavish cars they drove, the loudness of their laughter, their grand and infectious bonhomie, their obvious pleasure at being back in the surroundings of the Malay College as grown-up (if never quite 'mature', whatever that meant), successful men, in the company of lifelong, childhood friends.[1]

Though the title of Berita MCOBA is partly in Malay, most of the contents of recent issues are in English, written with a jocular sensibility markedly distinct from other publications in Malaysia not allowed the candor of its racy humor. The glossy magazine's public distribution reflects the private reach of the school-instilled sense of superiority: as Rehman describes it, "a distinct cachet about the MCOBA aura; a polished and Italian-suited thing" (ibid., 4). As a sign on the school grounds simply claims to outsiders and students alike, MCKK is "the best school in Malaysia" [yang terunggul di Malaysia]. The Old Boys' reunion at the school generates desire that it be similar to nothing else in the country.

The desire for excellence brings anxiety that it might not be achieved. The Old Boys' presence on the campus mixes delights and burdens for the current students, because the Old Boys represent both their future both as prospective former students and successful graduates. In 1994 the undercurrent of the reunion was the sense of decline, that the "standards," as many of the Old Boys put it, had fallen. The sense that national eyes are on

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[1] Rehman Rashid, "Talkin' About Mah Generation," Berita MCOBA, October 1993, page 1.

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MCKK reflects in newspaper articles that chart even mundane details of school life.[2] Declining exam scores are a public index of problems matched by signs of deterioration in the physical surroundings of the college and an increase in discipline problems. As the New Straits Times reports,

> If old boys from the Fifties (mostly officials in government service) yearn for the days when the school was run by Englishmen where discipline, impeccable manners, good grooming and attention to detail were the order of the day, the recent pick of old boys want all of these to be fully espoused as well as putting into place a learning environment in which students are geared to take on 21st Century challenges.[3]

Such a desire to carry the past into an even more competitive future brought attention to the school's dilapidated classrooms, insufficient library and laboratories, and unhygenic dormitories. Berita MCOBA ran a photo spread of the campus depicting the dingy conditions in the students' quarters, the bathrooms, and the school canteen under the ironic title "The Premier School."[4] The returning Old Boys' grand success heightens the sense that the present boys will not be able to replace them when they leave the school and themselves become alumni.

The College's prestige as an institution is the Old Boys' concern, one many do not trust the government to protect. Plans to privatize the College were discussed fervently at the 1994 Weekend. In an later newspaper story, an Old Boy offered as a reason for the take-over, "MCKK has a historical value attached to it, a legacy that should be continued and the Old Boys are the ones who care enough about it to want to see this happen."[5] The College's aging physical structure, one form of the legacy, was itself a justification for the takeover. Its access to state resources and its historic role in producing bureaucrats was once MCKK's source of prestige. Yet as a part of the Education Ministry, MCKK belongs

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[2] The announcement of an impending school holiday runs as a news item, as do the test scores of the MCKK students. The failure to achieve one hundred percent passes in their examinations in consecutive years brought headlines in both Malay and English papers. See for example, "MCKK Gagal Pertahan Kelulusan 100 Peratus," Utusan Malaysia, 8 March 1994.

[3] "MCKK Seek to Regain Past Glory," New Straits Times, 22 November 1994.

[4] "The Premier School," Berita MCOBA, March 1991.

[5] "Bid to Bring Shine Back to Old School," Star, 23 June 1996.

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to the Malaysian state and not to MCOBA. One of the Old Boys in the above article noted that this meant the school received the same budgetary allocation as other schools, and "this doesn't allow the kind of development that we want" (ibid.). The fear goading MCKK's privatization is that state resources must be shared equally among Malaysia's many government boarding schools and hundreds of day schools.[6] Changes in state responsibility produces the Old Boys' suspicion that the state does not have sufficient interest in maintaining the distinctiveness of the College. History by itself does not guarantee the school's viability into the future.

The school's historical legacy is at once familiar and unknowable. Some privatization plans include the construction of a College museum. Indeed presently the school does exhibit photographs of illustrious alumni and other artifacts from the school's past, a process of collection that continued in the mid-1990s. Students mentioned to me that this was a way they learned of the school's history, which they readily list off as extending back to the school's founding in 1905. Though other boarding schools in Malaysia have passed MCKK in test scores and facilities, some of the younger students mentioned that one of the first things that strikes them upon entering the school is an awareness that the nation's leaders have studied there. They know that other students in the country are studying the Malay College's past, and are unsurprised that a foreigner would also choose to do so. As one of the current staff of the College told me, all eyes in the country are on MCKK, and the history of MCKK is the history of the country. The students locate the school's narrative in a national history.

The school's high public profile coincides with a particular kind of privacy. Originally an English-medium school exclusively for the sons of Malay royalty, it is now a

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[6] The private expressway, and the privatized post office, telecoms, power utility, national lotteries, mines, resorts, shipping concerns, local water authorities, and numerous other privitization projects in line with Prime Minister Mahathir's "Malaysia Incorporated" concept reflects the contraction of the state sector. Jomo notes that the Malaysian state's announcement of the ambitious privatization policy "represented a dramatic reversal of preceding Malaysian government policy," though one consistent with conservative ideological trends of the 1980s. See Jomo K.S., editor, Privatizing Malaysia: Rents, Rhetoric, Realities, Westview Press: Boulder, 1995, page 2.

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Malay-medium school to prepare privileged Malay boys for overseas tertiary education. In my visits to MCKK I was able to interview the students. The press of activities and study, especially exam preparation, leaves only specific times available for mixing with outsiders. They told me their daily schedules, flowing from 6:15 in the morning to 11:15 at night, wished me "good morning, sir" in the hallways, switched readily between Malay and English, listed off their adventures in Kuala Kangsar town, and spoke of plans for the future. As a group of students told me, the College produces Malay men who can compete with non-Malays on the national stage, which was a challenge for those they called the old Malays. Their sense of duty, to lead Malaysia into the year 2020, was the most common message they wished to share. Yet the students also joked with me about their serious dispositions. One student, with a wry smile, answered a question about Malaysia's future with the popular word for haze [jerebu], referencing the acute smog plaguing the peninsula. The regimen of the school lends itself especially well to the candid exchanges of the sociological interview.

Even though criticism of the Malay College by students has been a durable genre, I was told by one of the staff members that I could not use student complaints from interviews in my research. His assumption seemed to be that I would have access to something private that risked becoming public. Most often the students I spoke with were quite frank about MCKK problems, but few of them said anything that might be construed as negative regarding school policy. Syed Danial Syed Ahmad, an Old Boy of the College who did a 1966 bachelor arts thesis based on MCKK, reported that students have little time for interviews and that "at the Malay College, even playing is mandatory ... actually activities like this must be encouraged so that student's fill their free time [masa lapang]."[7] His study shows the intimacy with which students' lives become an object of research, from clothes washing to sexuality. The staff themselves feel the acute scrutiny of the Old Boys and the students' parents (in many cases one and the same), given their wealth and

[7] Syed Danial Syed Ahmad, Komuniti Kolej Melayu Kuala Kangsar, Bachelor Arts thesis, University of Malaya, 1966, page 123.

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power as what Malaysians call "somebody somebody." An antagonistic relationship with school rules that likely exists was not part of our conversations, but was expected to be. Syed Danial, for instance, reports that in the 1960s most fifth formers did not follow school rules, and instead "perhaps many of them follow the principle 'I rebel therefore I exist'" (ibid., 100). The students unfailing politeness and articulate answers to questions about the school's past and future, and their enormous sense of responsibility in both, made the warning to "delete" complaints about school policy unnecessary. What students did tell me was that the College is very difficult for outsiders to understand. One can read books about the school, one group said, but that was not what College life was like. The students early on construe a public persona, one completely accessible to those outside the College sphere.

Given the school's prominence in Malaysian public life, there is little outside scholarship on the College.[8] Old Boys contain the memory of the College in several ways. Syed Danial's thesis is a rare piece of ethnography about the school, and he is a former student. The research for the school's anniversary publications sometimes takes on an ethnographic flavor, as in the author of the 50th anniversary issue remarking on school lore coming from fellow-student "informants."[9] Most of the histories of the College are in official MCKK publications, and the remaining copies of these publications are in the Old Boys' hands rather than the school's. All of the prewar copies of the school magazine are gone from the school library, lost with the rest of the holdings during the Japanese occupation. In 1994, as part of their plan of expanding the College's historical display, the school began to solicit historical materials from the Old Boys who have retained them.

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[8] Among these include Khasnor Binte Johan, The Malay College Kuala Kangsar, 1905-1941, M.A. Thesis, University of Malaya, 1969; William R. Roff, The Origins of Malay Nationalism, University of Malaya Press: Kuala Lumpur, 1967, pages 100-106; Rex Stevenson, Cultivators and Administrators: British Educational Policy Towards the Malays 1875-1906, Oxford University Press: Kuala Lumpur, 1975, chapter 8.

[9] "Golden Jubilee Souvineer Brochure, A Short History of the Malay College." Malay College Magazine, 1955, np.

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Slowly some of the materials were due to arrive back in Kuala Kangsar from their dispersal around Malaysia, since Old Boys were known to value school mementos as collectibles.

Though a sense of historical destiny saturates the Malay College, students realize it is incumbent upon them to produce memories of their experience there. Participation in Old Boys' weekend is one place where students recognize memory's importance. One of the senior students I talked with discussed the value of being unruly [nakal] so that he would remember his schooling, beyond what would be possible simply by diligent study. In 1986, a reunion marking the 25th anniversary of the class of '61 published a commemorative booklet entitled "Tarinaga [Dragon Dance]'61." The introduction explains

> Why tarinaga
> The tarinaga was an incident in the year of 1961 when form five students held a 'dragon dance' at around 4 a.m. winding through the entire Big School. They had previously been given a warning by the Headmaster (NJ Ryan) that they were not to have the 'dragon dance.' The 'dragon dance' was a fixture among form five students every year before that. The result from flouting that rule was that each student in form five of 1961 were caned five times by the Headmaster. That is why 'tarinaga' is used as the name of this group.[10]

The graduates were by 1986 well into their power years, and the Dragon Dance book provides an address list of the doctors, civil servants, and business leaders that make up the class, including Sanusi Junid, then a member of the federal cabinet. Memories are tightly linked to the presence of rules.[11] The school's sixtieth anniversary book explains, "most boys enjoy their stay in College because there are numerous school rules of which quite a number are unnecessary. They sense the thrill of breaking school rules without being caught."[12] The rules that were broken provide the possibility of future memories for those who now have power over others and are less subject to rules themselves. The reunion souvenir elicits the memory that these rules were once serious but only in a distinct place and at a discrete time.

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[10] MCOBA, Cenderamata Jubli Perak Kelas Tingkatan Lima Tahun 1961 'Tarinaga 61' Kolej Melayu Kuala Kangsar, 22 November 1986, np.

[11] One of the Old Boys from the class of 1970 thought I might be able to attend his 25th reunion as part of my research on Kuala Kangsar. On second thought, however, he determined my presence might be awkward for the Old Boys in his batch would want to tell stories, and an that outsider might inhibit such proceedings.

[12] Malay College 1905-1965 Past and Present, Straits Times Press: Kuala Lumpur, 1965, page 142.

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MCKK memories are thus part of an institution, not a location. The school is not oriented to the past of Kuala Kangsar or Perak. In response to my questions about the school's history I was kindly given two books by the school's staff. One of these is entitled "A History of Kuala Kangsar," produced as a supplement to the Malay College Magazine in 1957. The publication celebrated Malaya's independence, an event that encouraged the students to think of their presence in the town. This history, however, is mysterious as the students begin: "The early story of Kuala Kangsar is a mixture of legend and folk-tales clouded by uncertainty so that it cannot accurately be described as history at all."[13] After stories about the Perak royalty in Kuala Kangsar, they conclude "This somewhat sketchy reconstruction of Kuala Kangsar's early history is all that can be put together concerning the period before the middle of the nineteenth century for it is not until we reach fairly modern times that we are able to become more certain of our facts" (ibid., 76). Kuala Kangsar as a royal town, they assert, is fitting since though "soon it was over-shadowed by other towns like Ipoh and Taiping," it still "has an atmosphere of security and quietness which is suitable to the head of the state" (ibid., 81). The establishment of the Malay College in Kuala Kangsar is but a note in the text, placed between reports of recurring floods, official visits to the town, and road construction. The students conclude that "in this Merdeka [independence] year of 1957 the town can look back with pride on its history and look forwards with confidence towards the future" (ibid., 92). The independence of Malaya from colonial rule prefaces the history of the town, one separate from that of the school itself.

The College's history is solid, following the certainty of its own calendrical progression. The other publication given to me was Malay College 1905-1965 Past and Present, commonly called the Blue Book. The book commemorates the sixtieth anniversary of the College, which also happened to be the last year a British headmaster

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[13] Members of the Upper Sixth Form Arts 1957 and N.J. Ryan, editors, "Historical Supplement," Malay College Magazine, 1958, page 75.

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presided at the school (though this transition is not marked in the text). The foreword to the book explains it was "written largely by its past and present pupils" and that "the editors would like to emphasise that the opinions expressed in the book are not those of a detached observor but rather they are the opinions of persons closely connected with their subject" (ibid., iii). This, the editors note, provides two different tones in the writing, "the obvious contrast between the nostalgia of the past and the more committed attitude of the present" (ibid., iii). The criticism reported by the latter explains why their names must remain anonymous. The history of the College is not vague like Kuala Kangsar's past, and the book narrates easily from the establishment of the school in 1905 to the ongoing drama waged by students against College rules into 1965. Even the addition of a "young and dedicated headmaster" (though not specified as Malay) will only help maintain College traditions (ibid., 153). The Malay College will remain what it is, that is, also what it once was.

The school's history teaches the students their difference from Kuala Kangsar. The memories gained by Malay College students are integral to the relationship developed with the institution, not with the town of Kuala Kangsar as a location for the school. A section of the Blue Book entitled "The College in its Setting: Kuala Kangsar" explains "the town itself maintains a separate existence between the Palace and the College. It is a small place, just like any other small town, a Chinese kernel inside a Malay husk" (ibid., 100). Kuala Kangsar references any urban area in the peninsula, places familiar to Malays by their alien quality. The relationship to the town fixes in a remembered leaving and forgetting of it. The Blue Book explains Kuala Kangsar by what is separate from it, as "the new boy discovers soon after his arrival, the College and the Town form two different worlds, and his world is that of the College" (ibid., 104). A fear of present students is that the school might become an ordinary middle school, integrated into the town like that of their elder neighbor in Kuala Kangsar, the Clifford School. Clifford, named for a famous British

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administrator, once had but no longer maintains a national role.[14] Instead in 1965 the students think of the town in a hierarchy of authority, and "Indeed, it sometimes seems the collegians look upon Kuala Kangsar as a kind of colony" (ibid., 103). The Blue Book's informants search for metaphors for Kuala Kangsar that best describe their great distance from it.

The problems of Malay urban youth give present students a different language to describe their relationship to the town. They describe Kuala Kangsar as isolated, rustic, simple, and thus appropriate for their work. A common sentiment is that the town is boring and because of that the students have no place within it. Youth loitering, the obsession of the Malaysian press throughout 1994, could not occur in Kuala Kangsar because they saw no proper place to do it. One of the school prefects told me that cities have a culture that can influence young people, but Kuala Kangsar's culture was not that strong, making it easy for the students to concentrate unlike their peers in the bigger cities. Kuala Kangsar's status as a "cowboy town" is one of the sustaining references to the Malay College's location.[15] Their advantages in Kuala Kangsar include all the things that they do not have to think about.

Kuala Kangsar minus the Malay College

A key factor of studying at the Malay College in Kuala Kangsar is that the students will inevitably leave it to go elsewhere. Some of the Old Boys' measure the distance of the past through the country's new infrastructure network. The expressway and omnipresent (privatized) payphones place Kuala Kangsar much closer to the students' families about the country. Kuala Kangsar's railway station is still the scene of grand departures and arrivals of MCKK students during school holidays. The Blue Book notes that "the scenes at the railway station on the last day of the school year provide the most convincing testimony of

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[14] Hugh Clifford (1866-1941) was in the peninsular civil service from 1887-1903 and 1927-1929. He was in Perak from 1883-1887.

[15] In Malaysian slang, a cowboy town is any provincial town.

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the emotion of the occasion" of leaving school (ibid., 150). The appearance of such good-bye stories in the school magazine elicits thoughts about maintaining ties to the school in the absence of a familiar student cohort. As the products of a routinized nostalgia, they align with the serial appearance and replacement of each school class, as exemplified by the Malay College Magazine itself. These stories also suggest the difference of the College as an all-Malay, all-male school separate from larger society.[16] But it also has a deep anxiety, found especially in Malaysia's great integration efforts post-independence. A student writing for the school's magazine in 1974 notes with melancholy the sense of being shut off from the world:

> I am really uncertain of whether school and the college experience has been worthwhile. School taught me a lot and so has College but I do have nagging feeling that had I been outside among the people of all races, colours and creed, I would have learned much more.[17]

Some Old Boys repeated to me this sense of missing something when they meet other students after leaving Kuala Kangsar, highlighting an awareness of their urban counterparts' better facility in English as a shock. Since the students are sealed off in Kuala Kangsar from others they are due to meet, their sense of competition heightens.

What students recognize upon leaving MCKK is a particular relationship to the past and to the future. The "nagging feeling" is of the presence of others with whom they are to live with but do not yet know. This became especially acute in the mid-1960s, during the struggle over questions like the inclusion of Singapore in the newly-mooted Federation of Malaysia. The 1964 issue of the Magazine records

> The most important fact that all Malay students must realise is that we are faced with strong serious competition from our non-Malay counterparts. If we are not prepared to work at least as hard as they do, we can never expect even to become level with them in education, or for that matter in any other fields of life.[18]

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[16] The location of Kuala Kangsar, distant from the capital where nearly half of the present student body comes from, is part of this sense of separation.

[17] "After Twelve Years of Schooling," Malay College Magazine, 1974, page 104.

[18] "Editorial," Malay College Magazine, 1964, page 1.

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To be successful in the College is not enough. This sentiment repeats two years later in the acknowledgment that

> 'All men are created equal'--yes, this is a familiar enough statement. But what excuse can we give for the most outstanding student obtaining only five distinctions in the School Certificate Examinations whereas our non-Malay counterparts can score seven to eight distinctions? They have no intellectual advantage over us except that they have 'determination'. It is no surprise then that they dominate the key posts in most economic avenues. They really deserve those rewards for their untiring efforts. It is about time that we set about to equal or even surpass them in these fields through sheer hard work.[19]

These two lead articles, in a school magazine that summarizes the past year's events, recaps achievements as potential future failures. The ties within the school space of Kuala Kangsar produce a kind of spectral relationship to those who do not attend the school but with whom the students compete. The College prepares the students in an all-Malay setting to enter a world where one's colleagues and competitors are mostly not Malay.

Their future of competition with others lends poignancy in the good-byes to the world they leave behind. One of the students in 1967 wrote an essay titled "The Last Moments":

> The arrival of twilight this time was not as before. There were no more lights in the Big School. The dining-hall was dark. There were no shouts--no noise. Everything was silent. The main buildings had a sepulchral atmosphere about them. My mind could easily visualise the Big School as a sanctum of the 'Green Lady' and a place where evil spirits conduct conclaves before commencing their nocturnal activities. The eerie sight crept into my soul and my hair stiffened as I stood in the darkness gazing at the Malay College. ... It will take me a long time to forget--that is, if I forget. I will venture into the wide world--an unhappy man, a man stricken with an irrevocable loss. Dejected, I sat down and wept silently for the past.[20]

Leaving brings up the thoughts of what will remain, the well-known ghosts that inhabit the school grounds. The melancholic form of their relationship to the College and the experience of living in Kuala Kangsar is premised on the fact that they will leave, like all other students have in the past and will in the future, and that they will then enter a society of achievement different from that of their schooling. The reference to the "wide world"

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19 "Editorial," Malay College Magazine, 1966, page 1.

20 "The Last Moments," Malay College Magazine, 1967, page 103.

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outside of MCKK suggests a place where they need not imagine an empty scene made full by students.

Such familiarity sustains a relationship to the College but might also reference history outside the school's careful planning. In an article entitled "Believe it or Not," one of the students offers in a confident voice to "Ask any old collegian or query the seniors; they are always ready to spin a yarn about the Colleges' close association with the supernatural."[21] Though "ghostly activities" may be "on the decline,"

> College life with the ghosts is interesting and for those Collegians, who have been here from the first form till they completed their final in the Sixth Form, experiencing these incidents is one way of making sure that they never forget their Alma Mater (ibid., np).

As these student articles well predict, conversations about ghosts are a part of Old Boys' Weekend. While walking around the campus with an architect, I was told that as an Old Boy he still feels uncomfortable on the school grounds alone at night. Another former student told me that the most frightening stories were those that were not talked about, recalling how two classmates had returned to their dormitory obviously shaken by an incident but unable to explain what happened. Some of the stories, like the Green Lady and the Japanese soldiers performing drill at night on the school's central field, are well known in Kuala Kangsar even outside of the College. Others, as in the case of these two men, are remembered only as hidden. As a means to "never forget their Alma Mater" and as part of the sentimentality of returning to the campus, these specific stories tie the students to Kuala Kangsar by the invisible things that remain permanent there.

In fact most of the supernatural stories source specifically to the history of the College's site itself in Kuala Kangsar. In 1967 the author of "Believe it or Not" wrote that since the College was turned into a Japanese army headquarters during the occupation, and that it was notorious for the gory executions that happened there, "all these explain why the ghosts here have a link with the Japanese occupation" (ibid., np). Included in the vibrant

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[21] "Believe it Or Not," Malay College Magazine, 1970, no page.

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memories of the Japanese occupation is the lost collection of the school library. As a visitor to the school I was given access to the Library's collection. This included the Blue Book and copies of the School magazine extending back to the first post-occupation volume published in 1947. To read earlier material, I was directed to speak with the Old Boys. Students writing for the new post-war magazine of 1947 reported that their playing fields were used for growing vegetables, filled with small huts, "full of large holes and littered with derelict Jap tanks, armoured cars, and other military debris."[22] The occupation was the one point in its history when the College was not a school, when there were no students there who would remember it later. Memories of the Malay College during the war are the property of the non-student residents of Kuala Kangsar and the Japanese soldiers and administrators who left. The fixity of the war's non-experiences of the students helps retain continuity for future classes passing through the Malay College.

The other moment when the school was not itself, of course, was the time prior to its establishment. Malay College students experience Kuala Kangsar as a comfortable exile, fully expecting the nostalgia they will feel when they are no longer there. In this way they leave the school prior to their departure from Kuala Kangsar. The founding of the Malay College, and the mode of transience it provides, fits into a serial list of such experiences in Kuala Kangsar, an emerging way of life expressed vividly in the ceremonies held to mark the establishment of Kuala Kangsar's colonial infrastructure. Access to the narratives of these ceremonies themselves mark a particular relationship to power in the emerging colonial society of Perak and the Malay peninsula. None of these is stronger than the repeatability of MCKK's origin story.

For those considering the time prior to the College's founding, rumor replaces nostalgia. One of the relationships of Malay College Old Boys to the past is via a citation from R.J. Wilkinson in the Blue Book.[23] The Blue Book begins, appropriately enough,

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[22] "Foreword," Malay College Magazine, 1947, no page.

[23] R.J. Wilkinson (1867-1941) came to the Malay peninsula as a cadet with the Straits Settlements in 1889. He became Inspector of Schools, Federated Malay States, in 1903, Secretary to the Resident, Perak, in 1906, Resident of Negri Sembilan in 1910 and Colonial Secretary of the Straits Settlements the

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with a section entitled "Beginnings." The book opens with the quote explaining the need for Malay administrators in the peninsula:

> The type of education needed, said the Inspector of Schools of the Federated Malay States in 1903, was one which would produce 'a vigorous and intelligent race of young men who will be in touch with modern progress but not out of touch with old traditions; who will be liberally educated but not educated out of sympathy with their own families and people; who will be manly and not effeminate, strong minded but not strong willed, acknowledging a duty to others instead of being a law unto themselves and who will be fit to do something in the world instead of settling down into frops, spendthrifts or drones' (ibid., 1).

The Blue Book continues that the comments are those of R.J. Wilkinson, who "had much to do with the establishment of the Malay College" and therefore "his words give an important clue to the type of education which was to be given in the new school" (ibid., 1). Thus when Wilkinson spoke there was no Malay College but only the need of one, and the relationship of his statement to the College's establishment is left unspecified except as a "clue." The Blue Book continues that at this time Sultan Idris was worried, along with other unspecified "Malay leaders," about the situation in Malaya where few Malays were in the civil service.[24] The Blue Book notes that the Sultan "found a willing sympathiser in Wilkinson" and that "it was therefore proposed that a boarding school for Malay boys should be set up" (ibid., 2). Sultan Idris offered the land for the school and Wilkinson contributed its ethos, but the Blue Book does not describe who proposed the idea for the school. The editor's passive tense leaves the question dangling unspecified.

When speaking of the College's mission, former students often preface their comments with a recitation of Wilkinson's statement to describe the circumstances of MCKK's origin.[25] His words figured prominently in a 1989 symposium held by the MCOBA in Kuala Lumpur to chart the school's path into the 21st century. The brochure for the symposium opens with a section entitled "the establishment of MCKK" and begins,

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following year before leaving Malaya. In 1922 he retired from colonial service. See P.L. Burns introduction to R.J. Wilkinson, editor, Papers on Malay Subjects, Oxford University Press: Kuala Lumpur, 1971, pages 1-8.

[24] Two of the three Malays then in the colonial bureaucracy were the children of the banished Sultan Abdullah, both educated in Malacca.

[25] Wilkinson's words, for instance, lead the present boy's World Wide Web page describing the history of the school.

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in Malay, "in the meeting of the royalty (Durbar) held in Kuala Lumpur in 1903, His Royal Highness Sultan Idris from Perak stated his views toward British educational policy."[26] The report continues that Sultan Idris hoped positive steps would be taken to prepare the natives to meet the needs of the Malay states. Wilkinson speaks next, described as a man who "stated his opinion in 1903 about the form of education wanted" with his wish that the school produce

> a vigorous and intelligent race of young men who will be in touch with modern progress but not out of touch with old traditions; who will be liberally educated but not educated out of sympathy with their own families and people; who will be manly and not effeminate;, strong minded but not strong willed, acknowledging a duty to others instead of being a law unto themselves and who will be fit to do something in the world instead of settling down into frops, spendthrifts or drones (ibid., np).

Though the rest of the document is in Malay, formal enough that even the symposium title appears in Jawi [Arabic-derived characters] script on the cover, Wilkinson's voice appears in untranslated English. The words of Sultan Idris, who likely spoke to the Durbar in 1903 in Malay, do not appear in the text. Sultan Idris and Wilkinson appear in a conversation about the College, as if Wilkinson's description of the good student is an answer to the Sultan's plea that Malays be prepared to serve their native states. In both cases, the College appears as the solution to this problem of administration and education.

The continued viability of Wilkinson's statement requires modification. In a Berita MCOBA tribute to Datuk Abdul Aziz Ismail, the first Malay Headmaster of the College, Abdul Aziz is likened to Wilkinson:

> He wasted no time. He knew what and why he was sent to College. He knew by heart what RJ Wilkinson, the Inspector of School of the Federated Malay States, said in 1905: that he wanted Collegians to be "a vigorous and intelligent race ... in touch with modern progress ... liberally educated ... will be manly ... strong minded ... fit to do something in the world instead of settling down into flops, spendthrifts or drones".[27]

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[26] "Latar Penubuhan MCKK," Simposium MCOBA 1: MCKK Abad Ke-21 Cabaran dan Tujuan, MCOBA: [Kuala Lumpur?], 1989.

[27] Dr. Haji Nik Amrah, "Datuk Abdul Aziz Ismail, Our Teacher Our Pride," Berita MCOBA, October 1993, page 8. Ellipses in original.

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Wilkinson now speaks in 1905, when the College was founded as the Malay Residential School. His voice is clipped and the ellipses suggest partiality. Indeed the author notes "But to Encik Aziz, these words and slogans were not enough. He added more and translated them into action and practice" (ibid., 8). Datuk Abdul Aziz, who ended the colonial era of white headmasters in 1965 (eight years after independence) also appears in a dialogue with Wilkinson, but Wilkinson's statement might be insufficient. Wilkinson's words required translation if the Malay College was to retain their meaning under the new headmaster.

For the Malay College to remain into the future, the terms of the School's founding promise that no one need ever consider what existed before the College. A lead article in another issue of Berita MCOBA, "Malay Collegians and the Modernization of the Community," begins

> The objective of an MCKK education, in the words of R.J. Wilkinson, Inspector of Schools, Federated Malay States in 1903, was one which could produce, 'a vigorous and intelligent race of young men who will be in touch with modern progress but not out of touch with old traditions; who will be liberally educated out of sympathy with their own families and people ... acknowledging a duty to others instead of being a law unto themselves and who will be fit to do something in the world instead of settling down into fops, spendthrifts or drones'.[28]

For Ridzuan the meaning of the phrase might be forgotten, and he notes that "I have quoted the above to remind ourselves that the Malay College was formed to facilitate the modernisation of the Malay community through enlightened and disciplined leadership" (ibid., 1). Wilkinson's words remains contemporary, for "I believe that the 90 year old quotation is just as valid now as it was then" (ibid., 1). It manages to reflect no time, as a mark of an always receding goal that the Malays have not yet achieved. No other history, not even that of Sultan Idris, tells anything about the Malay College because it was not there before they were. As such, conversation with Wilkinson remains possible if the

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[28] Ridzuan A. Halim, "Malay Collegians and the Modernization of the Community," Berita MCOBA, April 1992, page 1. Ellipses in original.

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leaders of the school are able to remember him, and not be lost in the unknowable past before the Malay College existed.

Invitations to Kuala Kangsar

The ready citation of Wilkinson suggests stability in the Malay College's mission. It not only explains the past continuity in the transition to a Malay headmaster, it speaks to the present, and points the way to the future. The reference to Sultan Idris, unquoted, opens the possibility that his silence predicates Wilkinson's appearance. Each citation might repeat the Sultan's desire for the College to produce Malays capable of inhabiting the new administration. The colonial wish of Wilkinson proves appropriable, and the Old Boys who cite him almost evade the history of the school's establishment as part of a local, specific politics. As an institution, the Malay College narrative is part of the nation, not part of Kuala Kangsar. Yet the continued location of the school in the town marks a relationship to the Perak sultanate and especially to Sultan Idris. The Perak war fixed Kuala Kangsar as the only point along the Perak River with a road link to the hinterland. Sultan Idris, as the judge of the Perak rebels alleged to have killed Birch, gained great favor from the new power in Perak. Founding the Malay College opened an important pilgrimage circuit through Kuala Kangsar, like the roads that radiated out from the town. Kuala Kangsar's success in hosting spectacles of arrival and departure prefigures the appearance of the College that still remains there.

Part of the appeal of Kuala Kangsar for the British Resident of Perak and the Straits Government in Singapore was the power of invitation. The files of the Colonial Office include the hand-written reports of British Resident Hugh Low describing the installation of Sultan Yusuf, the Perak Raja promoted from regent by the British to the throne in 1887 (marking the close of a ten year period when Perak had no sultan).[29] Low writes his report

[29] Colonial Office 273/145/12750, "Installation of Sultan Yusof." Hugh Low (1824-1905) began work in the archipelago under James Brooke, the "White Rajah" of Sarawak, in 1843. In 1848 he was appointed Secretary to the new administration of the island of Labuan, an island with a coaling station off of Borneo. He held the post until 1877, when he was named British Resident, Perak, from which he retired in 1889.

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from "Kwala Kangsar" to the Colonial Secretary in Singapore, describing his experiences traveling across the river to Sayong village and the "Astana" of Sultan Yusuf in 1887. He begins with his own arrival, in the third person: "At 12 o'clock noon the Resident with a party of the European Officers arrived at the residence of the Sultan and found the large Audience Hall filled with the Chiefs and people" (ibid.). This crowd had already gathered prior to the arrival of Low's entourage. In the course of their dinner together, with "Raja Muda Idris presiding," Yusuf appears:

> After the removal of the soup, His Highness the Sultan came out; from the private apartments and standing at the head of the table said that he was desirous of thanking the Chiefs and gentleman who had come to congratulate him on this happy occasion and that he begged them to join with him in a prayer to almighty God for the happiness and prosperity of Her Majesty the Queen of Great Britain and Empress of India, and also in another short prayer that the people might be happy and the country peaceful and prosperous under his rule (ibid.).

Low is among those who have come to Sayong for the Installation, and hears the prayers that precede what is to be Sultan Yusuf's rule. Though these activities had been planned by the Council of State, the European collector of land revenue, and the European assistant Engineer, Low describes his position as that of another spectator.

Low's description of events include the assembly and entertainment of the guests. The chief activity of Sultan Yusuf's installation was in feeding "more than a thousand persons" and in engaging a fish drive on the river with "over 200 boats many of which contained women and children" (ibid.). On the day following the installation proper, the 1st Perak Sikhs and the Corps band played, and at night "an abundance of Chinese fireworks brought from Hongkong for the occasion delighted the 5 or 6,000 spectators most of whom had never before seen anything of the kind" (ibid.). This fascination with numbers and spectators dominates the brief narrative. The measure of success for the ceremony remained in the hands of "the chiefs and principal people who had come to Syong for the ceremony," and Low concludes with their estimation that "the attendance from all parts of the State is described to me as much greater than on any previous occasion

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See Emily Sadka, The Protected Malay States 1874-1895, University of Malaya Press: Kuala Lumpur, 1968, pages 160-162 and 389.

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of which they have record" (ibid.). Malays provide Low with wonder at their surprise toward the spectacle.

Though these records of Sultan Yusuf's installation were retained in the colonial files, they did not become the model for installing a Perak Sultan.[30] Eleven weeks after Sultan Yusuf was installed in 1887 he died, leaving Raja Muda Idris to succeed him. A file in the High Commissioner's office records the proceedings from a copy of Low's notes.[31] Low writes to Singapore this time from the address "British Residency, Perak" and informs the Straits Settlements Governor "that the installation of Sultan Idris as Yang di-pertuan of Perak took place at Bukit Chandan the residence of His Highness at 2 p.m. yesterday" (ibid., 1). This second report of Low's, different from the narrative style of Sultan Yusuf's installation, lists instead ten events that comprised the ceremony. After Sultan Idris read and signed the oath placed in front of the regalia, Low explains "The proclamation of the Sultan's accession then took place under a salute of 17 guns" and following that "Immediately after the investiture His Highness descended from the 'Royal Seat' and the European officers and gentlemen were presented" (ibid., 1). The installation then ended, for Low, when "the British Resident then proposed the health and prosperity of His Highness the Sultan which was received with great enthusiasm on which the proceedings terminated" (ibid., 2). At Sultan Idris's residence, a home not described as a palace (Istana), Low has the privilege of closing the ceremony.

Other events are also out of royal hands. Low's list includes five days of sports, "as races, plays, shooting and rowing matches with feasts were provided for the Chiefs

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30 A 1916 file of the High Commissioner's Office in Singapore looks back into how Sultan Idris was first installed as Sultan of Perak in Kuala Kangsar. Watson, the British Resident in Perak, sent a letter to the Chief Secretary of the Federated Malay States detailing the timing and expense of the events. He argued that the cost would be as high as $20,00 due to increased prices and "the increased number of His Highness' subjects who will wish to be present and whose entertainment according to custom, provision should be made." These increased numbers of subjects and their wish to be present dictated the scale of the ceremony, one whose form would follow precedent. Watson finished the letter "the ceremony will follow as closely as possible that adopted at the installation of His late Highness the Almerhum Rahamatullah, [Sultan Idris] as set out in Sir H.Low's letter to the Colonial Secretary of which a copy is enclosed." High Commissioner's Office 1090/16, "Installation of His Highness the Sultan of Perak."

31 From Perak Secretariat No. 1945/89, in High Commissioner's Office 1090/1916.

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and people who are said to have numbered more than 15,000" (ibid., 2). Their management was a bureaucratic challenge. Low's last two items in his list tell Singapore

> 10. The Government is greatly indebted to Major Walker, C.P.S. for his active assistance, to Mr. D.H. Wise, the acting Magistrate of Kuala Kangsar, and to Mr. E. Holmes, the Tutor to His Highness the Sultan, who deserve the greatest credit for the very satisfactory arrangements which had been made.
> 11. Mr. DeTrafford, Mr. Mohd. and the other officers and Kuala Kangsar at great personal inconvenience assisted the Government in the entertainment of guests and in perfecting the general arrangements (ibid., 2).

Low, with his "Government," was able to host the installation of Sultan Idris. The large crowds of people gathered in Kuala Kangsar for the spectacle were, in Low's eyes, under British invitation. Low does not remark on what the visitors did or how they behaved, simply that they greatly swelled the population of Kuala Kangsar.[32] The town appeared a suitable location where others could arrive to witness the unfolding events of the developing colonial society.

Raja Muda Idris was installed as Sultan in Kuala Kangsar though he had no palace there. Following the ceremony, the Perak Government Gazette ran a notice inviting tenders "for the construction of an Astana for His Highness the Sultan at Kwala Kangsar."[33] The notice advised that for interested parties "Plans and specifications can be seen at the state engineer's office in Taiping" (ibid.). The plans for Kuala Kangsar's official residence of the Sultan were conceived elsewhere, and those interested had to travel to the administrative center of Taiping to see them. When the palace, the Istana Negara, was completed in 1895, Sultan Idris himself already possessed property in the major centers of colonial governance outside of Kuala Kangsar, with two residences in Taiping, one in Penang, and one in

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[32] Though Kuala Kangsar's population at this time was 952 people, according to the 1891 census it was divided as follows: "11. The town of Kuala Kangsa and the villages of Bukit Chandan, Enggor, Salak, and Plang were included in this section. The population of the town was 952, and the number of houses inhabited and uninhabited 176. Enggor had a population of 516, Salak 636, and Plang 808; the population in each case being composed principally of Chinese. The villages neighboring Kuala Kangsar had a population of 1960 people, but as the census notes these were "composed principally of Chinese." The figure of 15,000 was likely off, as were the census numbers at this early date. Rather, what is curious is the fantastic sense of scale, one in which the count of Kuala Kangsar's population increased in great multiples for such event. However, as easily as these crowds could assemble, they could disperse. Report of the Central Committee on the Census of the State of Perak taken in April, 1891, Taiping: Perak Government Printing Office, 1892, page 2.

[33] Colonial Office 467, Perak Government Gazette, 1890, number 44.

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Singapore. The Perak Pioneer, a local newspaper which counted these purchases, noted "It seems to be a hobby with H.H. to purchase houses."[34] The Sultan, it seems, was working out a divide between his property and that of the Sultanate.

What the Resident said the Sultan wanted was a location suitable to be a host. Following the construction of the Astana, a long correspondence ensued between the British Resident and the Colonial Office over payment for its furnishings. Swettenham, then British Resident, wrote to London that the Sultan felt "the Astana was an official residence and not his private property, he did not consider that he should be called upon to furnish the reception rooms out of his private purse" and that "it would be a serious blunder to refuse to meet His Highness's wishes and make him feel that not only had he no authority in his own country, but that we do not think it worth while to do a little thing to please him."[35] The Kuala Kangsar District Magistrate argued that the Sultan's lack of such a place caused problems in the past:

> His Highness says that his object in asking that some portion of it should be furnished in European fashion was not so much for the entertainment of those living in the State as for that of distinguished visitors. For the little that he has been able to do in entertaining the former, he has found his houses at Bukit Chandan sufficient. But it is on occasions such, for instance, as the visit of the King of Siam that he feels the want of a better house, and one furnished in a manner more befitting his rank than that which he at present occupies. It was owing to this, that on the occasion His Highness refers to, he was unable to invite the King to Kuala Kangsar, and was only able to meet him as a fellow guest at the house of the Resident at Taiping.[36]

The indignity of Sultan Idris having to host as a guest in Taiping questioned his capacity to rule the state. Kuala Kangsar, as the royal town, needed a location where others could visit and then leave.

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[34] Perak Pioneer, 20 January 1897. The Perak Pioneer and Native States Advertiser was the first newspaper in the Malay States, published in Taiping from 1894-1912. The newspaper's optic focused on European life in the mining areas of Larut and Kinta, and as communications with Europe improved, to events there.

[35] Swettenham to Colonial Office, Colonial Office 273/190/1273, "Furniture of Sultan's Official Residence," page 2.

[36] Minute by Magistrate Arthur Butler, Colonial Office 273/190/1273, "Furniture of Sultan's Official Residence," page 4.

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The 1897 Durbar in Kuala Kangsar appeared to be the event that finally moved the Sultan into his proper palace on the town's Chandan Hill. But it was not without some worry by the European community in Perak that he might choose to live elsewhere, as the Pioneer lamented

> The new palace at Kuala Kangsar which has cost a mint of money and the furnishing a fortune has never been occupied; the fine furniture and bric-a-brac are rapidly being ruined for want of attention. What can be the reason of H.H. not occupying the Istana? It is incomprehensible.[37]

The newspaper's incomprehension is of a palace built in Kuala Kangsar but unoccupied, lavishly prepared for a purpose unfulfilled due to an unimaginable reason. Sultan Idris' attention was guessed to be elsewhere, away from the expensive furnishings for which he was charged with upkeep. The Istana at Kuala Kangsar was only occupied, and understandable, with the arrival of guests. Six months later the Pioneer switched from incomprehension to relief since "The Sultan will move into his palace for the forthcoming durbar and some of the purple born visitors will have the privilege of lodging with his Highness."[38] Their arrivals and departures fulfilled the purpose of the Istana in Kuala Kangsar.

The first Durbar brought an assemblage of visitors to Kuala Kangsar eight years after the first for Sultan Idris' installation. Sultan Idris hosting the leaders of Negri Sembilan, Selangor, and Pahang struck the British administrators in its novelty. Swettenham's excited report of the event exclaims

> From every point of view the meeting has been an unqualified success and it is difficult to estimate now the present and prospective value of this unprecedented gathering of Malay Sultans, Rajas and Chiefs. Never in the history of Malaya has any such assemblage been even imagined. I doubt whether anybody has ever heard of one Ruler of State making a ceremonial visit to another; but to have been able to collect together, in one place, the Sultans of Perak, Selangor, Pahang and the Negri Sembilan is a feat that might well have been regarded as impossible. People who

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[37] Perak Pioneer, 20 January 1897.

[38] Perak Pioneer, 9 June 1897.

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> do not understand the Malay cannot appreciate the difficulties of such a task; and I confess that I myself never believed that we should be able to accomplish it.[39]

The gathering itself within Kuala Kangsar produced Swettenham's wonder, that the Rulers were collectable in a common location. Swettenham's report reproduces this same sense in the voice of the Sultan, but in regard to his subjects' reaction:

> 15. The Sultan of Perak told me, with pardonable satisfaction, that though for seven days many thousands of people had been collected in Kuala Kangsar from all parts of the country, such good feeling had prevailed that not even the children had quarrelled and there had been neither crime nor accident (ibid., 6).

The Sultan does not speak, but rather assents to the good fortune that the events can proceed with such ease that even children might be congenial. The Durbar's occurrence, with many thousands of people from all over the peninsula collected together, charmed Kuala Kangsar as a location where not only the rulers might gather but thousands might witness them together. The Malay rulers were both spectators of, and spectacles in, the experience of coming to and leaving Kuala Kangsar.

Maintaining the new Istana as the site for these gatherings then entered the state's list of mundane duties. The Perak Public Works Department lists, all in a year's projects,

> The following works were completed: corrugated iron roof to servants' quarters and dead-house at hospital. Pound at Kati. Laying out new village at Karai, wire fencing Government gardens and Astana [Istana]. Permanent coolie lines, Kati, Kuala Dal, and Sungai Siput. The erection of 25 lamps along the Astana Nagara Road. The renewal of flat roofs to the Astana Nagara. Painting Astana Nagara. The Raja di Hilir's house at Bukit Chandan.[40]

The royal community that began to congregate in the area of Chandan Hill off of Kuala Kangsar town became an object of state governance aimed at beautifying the hill, and the beauty of the royal quarter on Chandan Hill further set it off from the town as a place separate.[41] A 1906 revenue survey map printed in Taiping shows Kuala Kangsar divided

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[39] Selangor Secretariat 127/1934, "Resident General's Report on the First Ruler's Conference held in Kuala Kangsar," Proceedings of the Durbars Held in 1897, 1903 and 1927, FMS Printers: Kuala Lumpur, page 5.

[40] Colonial Office 467, "Report on the Kuala Kangsar District for the Year 1903," Supplement to the Perak Government Gazette, 1904, page 3.

[41] The 1891 census enumerated Bukit Chandan as an area separate from Kuala Kangsar proper, "At Bukit Chandan, were there are 59 houses, including the two Istanas of His Highness the Sultan, the population was 240." Report of the Central Committee on the Census of the State of Perak taken in April, 1891, Perak Government Printing Office: Taiping, 1892, page 2.

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between Chandan Hill and the Chinese shophouses near the river by a long line of government buildings: the Court House, the Residency, the Government Gardens, the Government Quarters, the Rifle Range.[42] Kuala Kangsar was now just the thirteenth largest town in the state of Perak, and its non-Malay population substantial.[43] Even with the town's growing infrastructure, it grew progressively smaller amid Perak's population explosion in the early twentieth century.

The next gathering where Sultan Idris could voice his concerns about the changing conditions of his people was at the second Durbar, held in 1903 in Kuala Lumpur rather than Kuala Kangsar.[44] The official minutes of the Durbar record an English translation of his speech, which acknowledges the presence of certain officials in Kuala Kangsar back in 1889

> At my first installation Sir Hugh Low was present and assembled all the people of the country and arranged great celebrations. My second installation, which is known as the 'Mandi Tabal,' took place when the present High Commissioner was Resident of Perak, and similar celebrations were carried out and all the people rejoiced greatly.[45]

Hugh Low brought the people to Kuala Kangsar to witness the first installation.[46] Throughout the 1903 Durbar speech he focused on the new possibilities of transportation,

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[42] "Kuala Kangsar District A5," Revenue Survey Office: Taiping, 1906.

[43] By 1901 the census no longer listed Bukit Chandan separately, and the town of Kuala Kangsar had a population divided ethnically to total 167 Malay, 514 Chinese, 441 Indian, and 35 Other for a total of 1157 people. Report on the Census of the Federated Malay States, 1901, Government Printer: Kuala Lumpur, 1901, page 23.

[44] Though the capital of the Federated Malay States, Kuala Lumpur had almost no indigenous presence. A 1904 report on plans for the Malay Agricultural Settlement there noted "there are practically no native Malays in Kuala Lumpur, and except Raja Mahmud The Penghulu, and one or two others the population is entirely foreign." High Commissioner's Office 272/04, "Malay Agricultural Settlement Kuala Lumpur." The Pioneer's comment on this report was "They were formed with the object of keeping the Settlement entirely Malay and to encourage agriculture and useful handicrafts while providing the working Malays a suitable residence near the town proper at a small outlay within their pecuniary resources." Like Kuala Kangsar? "The Malay Settlement," Perak Pioneer, 16 April 1904.

[45] Selangor Secretariat Files 127/1934, "Minutes of the Conferences of Chiefs of the Federated Malay States' KL 20-23 June 1903." Proceedings of the Durbars Held in 1897, 1903 and 1927, FMS Printers: Kuala Lumpur, page 60.

[46] What Sultan Idris refers to as his "Second Installation" in 1889 sent Resident Low in a different direction. Low commuted from his residency in Taiping: a report notes that "3. The British Resident who, on the invitation of His Highness the Sultan, had come to Kuala Kangsa that evening to witness the performance of the above-mentioned rites, left for Taiping shortly after their conclusion." Colonial Office 467, Perak Government Gazette, January, 1890, page 89. Low was in town for the bureaucratic part of the procedure, out of town for its more spiritual portion.

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and he said that under Swettenham's tenure "the trunk roads were completed and railways were laid down from district to district" to alter the previous "long, difficult and costly journey through the jungle" from the Perak river to the town of Ipoh. In the new transport network, the Sultan marveled, "I notice traders can go there with great facility, making the journey in a day, reclining at ease in a railway carriage, smoking their cigars, and kept cool by the rush of air caused by the swift motion of the train" (ibid., 60). By 1903 the Sultan himself could travel to the Kuala Lumpur Durbar from Kuala Kangsar by train. His ease of movement about the newly federated Malay states coincided with interest in a permanent, specifically Malay, Kuala Kangsar.

Sultan Idris' presence in Kuala Kangsar suggested a proper line of state interest in governing the Malay population. Institutional plans for Malay Kuala Kangsar took a small scale. In 1901, a scheme for an art school in town had "the object of resuscitating the ancient Malay art industries" an aim that "has been warmly taken up by H.H. the Sultan and some of the chiefs."[47] The Sultan served as president of the ungainly-termed "Committee for the Resuscitation of Malay Art Industries" namely "carving, carpentering, turning, gold-smiths' and silver-smiths' work, pottery, needle-work, and weaving" (ibid.). These were to be saved on the basis of their ephemeral quality, and those industries deemed healthy in Perak without support did not need a place in the Art School. A report noted, for instance, that the pottery program was cut from the curriculum of the Kuala Kangsar Art School since "the potter's art is not one which there is any likelihood of dying out."[48] The Sultan's presence helped locate the "Malay" nature of the school as saving something unsustainable without his patronage.

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[47] "Education" in "Report on the Kuala Kangsar District for the Year 1901." Supplement to the Perak Government Gazette, 1902. In 1907 the Gazette reported "His Highness the Sultan takes a great interest in the school and a large proportion of the orders received come from members of the Royal Family." "Education" in "Report on the Kuala Kangsar District for the Year 1907." Supplement to the Perak Government Gazette, 1908.

[48] "Education" in "Report on the Kuala Kangsar District for the Year 1905." Supplement to the Perak Government Gazette, 1906.

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The Art School's program of resuscitation was part of the state's concern with the health of the Malay population.[49] Their health offered security in steady population increases. F.J. Weld, then district officer of Kuala Kangsar, surmised that "with proper management" of the new Malay hospital in town "the Malay prejudice will be overcome in time."[50] Weld was confident the Sultan's example would help rid the prejudice against visiting the doctor, for

> His Highness the Sultan is particularly keen that it should be a success, and will render all possible assistance within his power to ensure that it will be so. It is curious that the Malay has such faith in his Pawang [healer], for the results must be disappointing, and moreover their practices, as those of witchcraft and sorcery, are forbidden by Mahommedan teachings. His Highness the Sultan informs me it is because it has now obtained so long in Perak and has become an Adat [custom] in the country, and that it would not be possible to enforce a check against these practices. His Highness considers, however, that in time the Malay will become a believer in western methods of treatment and in the power of the White Man's medicines (ibid., np).

Sultan Idris provides assurance. Weld talks to the Sultan, who informs the district officer that the power of his position ensures the Malays will do as Weld wants them to. The Sultan's interest and his comments appear as proof. In 1909, the Perak Pioneer reported the new hospital's opening, noting that "as this town is the centre of a large Malay populated district, we have no doubt that an hospital exclusively intended for Malays will fill a long felt want."[51] Kuala Kangsar's new institutions offered Malays what their leaders wanted them to want, even if that was just somewhere to go.

The increasingly provincial town hosted in 1909 the opening of the Federal Council of the Federated Malay States.[52] The federal congregation that was gathered for the

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[49] The 1901 census reported with great satisfaction the increase in Perak's Malay population, noting "The Malay increase is steady, sustained and normal, and is that of a settled agricultural population, independent of immigration, and solely relying on natural laws for its increase" page 86. Such population increases answered critics who charged that "the bright phantasmagoria of the Malay Federation is but a passing one built on shifting sands" of dysgenic Malays, and unreliable immigration and migration. 1901 census, page 50.

[50] Colonial Office 467, "General, Report on the Kuala Kangsar District for the Year 1908," Supplement to the Perak Government Gazette, 1909.

[51] Perak Pioneer, 17 February 1909.

[52] The Federal Council was inaugerated in 1909 in a hesitant attempt to rationalize the administration of the various governmental bodies in the peninsula. Its members included the High Commissioner (i.e. the Governor of the Straits Settlements), the Resident-General of the Federated Malay States, the Malay Rulers with their Residents, and unofficial members nominated by the High Commissioner. The terms of its

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occasion also opened another related concern, Kuala Kangsar's enormous, recently-completed school building. The Malay Residential School, opened in 1905, was planned from the beginning to be of grand size. An early report on the school imagines its future with

> spacious and imposing buildings, extensive playing fields, comfort in boarding accommodation and, in fine, that kind of exclusiveness which is more a part of the character of the well-born Malay than it is of the well-born Englishman. It is further an important condition that it should be established in a place like Kuala Kangsar where in addition to natural advantages the High Commissioner has a residence and the Sultan of Perak his home.[53]

Though the "natural advantages" of Kuala Kangsar did not need to be listed, the town's occupants did--the High Commissioner occasionally in his residence, the Sultan in his home. The "imposing" buildings of the school would both stand out in the small town of Kuala Kangsar and meet the "exclusiveness" that the well-born Malays who were to be its students supposedly required.[54] The advantages of Kuala Kangsar included the "natural" presence of the Sultan (which each of the Crown Colonies of Singapore, Malacca, and Penang lacked) and its intimate size. The Perak Pioneer reported a comparison of the school's magnificent proportions:

> A very large building for the Malay Residential School is to be started soon on the site chosen on the station road. It is said that when completed, this will be the largest building to be found in Perak. Kuala Kangsar already possesses a huge structure, the residency, which is the finest of the existing buildings in the state.[55]

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authority were left vague, in deference to the resistance to forming a Federal Government in the peninsula with any real power. See Eunice Thio, British Policy in the Malay Peninsula 1880-1940, University of Malaya Press: Singapore, 1969, pages 198-204.

53 High Commissioner's Office 778/05, "Malay Residential School, Kuala Kangsar, Suggest the Extension of the School by Temporary Building," page 2.

54 As Kuala Kangsar receded in prominence in the early twentieth century to become just another town in the peninsula, the historical importance of the College increased in size to the point where it required explanation why the College had been established there instead of someplace else. Unlike the Art School and the Malay hospital that vanish in Kuala Kangsar, the Malay College continuity offers an origin story of this type. Koh Eng Kiat's research into the founding of the College notes that "Apparently too, the choice of a place had been considered and decided upon for in a letter dated 12th March, 1904 Treacher reported to the Officer Administering the Government, Mr. W.T. Taylor, that he supported the choice of Kuala Kangsar to Malacca (the latter, having been suggested by Swettenham) his reason being that it was 'within sight' of Sultan Idris, and because there was a Malay Art School there. A further reason was that the township itself was not a big one." Koh Eng Kiat, "Correspondence relating to the Founding of the Malay College," Jernal Pendidikan, 1970, page 101.

55 Perak Pioneer, 12 March 1907.

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The school could dominate these modest surroundings to an extent impossible in the peninsula's central towns. Malay students there would learn differently than in Singapore, Kuala Lumpur, or even Malacca.[56]

The dedication of the completed building occurred amid a spectacle of transit focused on the Federated Malay States High Commissioner arriving in his temporary home at Kuala Kangsar.[57] When he arrived at the train station, the Perak Pioneer reported, he was met by Sultan Idris and together they went by car to the British residency on Chandan Hill. Over the course of the drive, the Pioneer reported, "the natives, who lined the streets from the station to the town, loudly cheered the royal party as they passed by."[58] On the following day, another transport event again took the attention. An "Elephant Procession" including 900 spearmen from the neighboring villages "wound its way in perfect order to Government House" followed by a crowd that "must have numbered several thousands."[59] Their journey served to fill Kuala Kangsar in a way that made the Perak Pioneer reporter think of elsewhere, "a most picturesque spectacle of Eastern Life," though

> those who have had the good fortune to witness a similar pageant in India a few years back, may not think much of our elephant parade, still it was quite a unique affair and if the local gajas [elephants, Malay] lacked the rich caparisons of the hathies [elephant, Hindi] in India, they made up in size, and the accompanying spearmen lent quite a medaeval colour to the show.[60]

Kuala Kangsar as a location gathers the local population in a common spectacle of colonial life that is legible to some as a reduced size of similar productions elsewhere.

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56 Though Malacca was "rural" enough for the Malay College Malacca, which was opened in 1900 to train teachers for Malay-medium schools. See Ramlah Adam, Maktab Melayu Melaka 1900-1922, Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka: Kuala Lumpur, 1991, page 22.

57 J.W.W. Birch's son, E.W. Birch, then Perak's British Resident, saved the official program of this event as one of the few things retained in his private papers. In the course of his visit, the High Commissioner John Anderson and Sultan Idris traded off as hosts. See MSS Indian Ocean 242, E.W. Birch Papers. For more on E.W. Birch, see chapter four below.

58 "The High Commissioner's at Kuala Kangsar," Perak Pioneer, 10 December 1909.

59 Managing this crowd itself, motorized, was a challenge for the police: "Inspector Simpson with a posse of police looked after the vehicular traffic and kept order in the streets." "Opening of the Federal Council," Perak Pioneer, 13 December 1909.

60 "The High Commissioner at Kuala Kangsar, The Elephant Procession, A Most Gorgeous Sight," Perak Pioneer, 13 December, 1909.

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With the dignitaries gathered in Kuala Kangsar, one more function remained and that was to give the grand Malay College its new name. The building now known as the "Big School," white columns extending across the face of a building looking over the central field, opened on the occasion of the Federal Council. The Perak Pioneer focused on its grandeur, and reported "the building looms largely in this gay little town" with such magnificence "it is acknowledged to be, structurally, the 'Taj' of the F.M.S."[61] The story then continued by telling the history of the school. At the ceremony, Raja Kamaralzaman offered a speech in English in which he noted "thanks too were due to the Old Boys for giving the school a good name and a good example."[62] The Old Boys whom he thanked, of course, had not been in Kuala Kangsar long. They instead were the students who had gone to the school in its first four years and were, at some point, destined to leave it. They marked a relationship with the past, that the school's name would extend beyond the confines of the school's present population. Their old age was similar to the school building's large size. Their good example suggests even in the untested new school Malays had a destination.

Inhabiting the new world of Kuala Kangsar

The new students' journey to the school often marked the first in a lifetime of travel. Dato' Mahmud bin Matt was one of the early students to arrive at the College in Kuala Kangsar. His unpublished biography charts a history of moving, a life beginning in Pekan, Pahang in 1893 as the son of a Kelantanese shaman, his schooling there, and the years spent from 1909-1916 at the Malay College.[63] Typical of many MCKK graduates

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61 "The Malay College, Opening at Federal Council," Perak Pioneer, 15 December 1909.

62 Raja Kamaralzaman (1892-1962) was the son of Raja Mansur and the grandson of the still-exiled Sultan Abdullah. He spent 37 years in the civil service, was a member of the Federal Council from 1936-1941, and became Raja di-Hilir in 1948. See "Raja Kamaralzaman ibni Raja Mansur," Malaysia in History, December 1962.

63 Dato' Mahmud bin Matt was born in 1893 to a prominent family in Pekan, Pahang. Following his schooling at the Malay College, he served in 1915 in Negeri Sembilan as a Malay Assistant III, as Assistant District Officer of Kelang in 1920, from 1921-1924 as Assistant District Officer of Temerloh, and 1927-1929 as District Officer Kuantan, Pahang among many other administrative posts. See his Memoirs of Dato' Mahmud bin Matt, 1972, Arkib Negara SP25.

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taken into the bureaucracy, his subsequent career in the civil service extended to Kuala Pilah in Negri Sembilan, Tampin, Klang in Selangor, Temerloh, Kuala Lipis, and Kuantan all in his "home state" of Pahang, and then back to Perak at Setiawan and Hulu Perak, before closing his career in the administration with a brief stint north in Perlis. This movement about the administrative pilgrimage circuit frames an autobiography in which Dato' Mahmud strives to explain his relationship with hierarchy.

The autobiography lingers on an incident in his childhood that taught him about his father's relationship to other people. Dato' Mahmud defines part of his childhood as a liminal period because he was not in school, and he titles the chapter "The years between the Malay School and the Malay College." He calls the story in this chapter "The Abortive Amok of Panglima Raja." The memory of the amok attack marks the time in between his different institutional affiliations. Indeed between his father, the white colonial officials, and the Malay hierarchy are crossed signals over how to deal with Panglima Raja.[64] The search parties sent out to capture Panglima Raja include the district officer, the inspector of police, the medical officer, and members of the Pahang Sultan's court. Dato' Mahmud recalls the difficulty of the moment for his prominent father

> The District Officer took a full opportunity to harangue and to say a lot of harsh and nasty words to father as if father was the only person responsible for law and order in the place (Mahmud, 79).

The responsibility for capturing the amok is split between the Europeans and the Malays of the area. After capturing Panglima Raja, his father's groups hears the amok's boasts of how he eluded capture, attempted to enlist others to join him in "amoking Pekan town" and how he was supplied food by some of the villagers. His attack divided the town, and caught Dato' Mahmud's father in the middle. Returning to the area, their party runs into the Penghulu who is also upset at their handling of the case:

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[64] A man named Osman who received the nickname Panglima Raja for his "reckless courage during the Pahang Rebellion." Mahmud, page 75. The Pahang Rebellion was fought over the period 1891-1895 when British forces attempted to consolidate their control over the state. See Aruna Gopinath, Pahang 1880-1933 A Political History, Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society: Kuala Lumpur, 1991, pages 133-170; W. Linehan, A History of Pahang, Malayan Branch, Royal Asiatic Society: Kuala Lumpur, 1936.

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> On the way we met the old Penghulu coming down river in a boat with three others. He was furious because he said, he was slighted by bringing the man direct to the police instead of through him as he was the person in authority in the village (Mahmud, 79-80).

Mahmud's memory of the incident focuses on his father's uncertain position of authority. Between the District Officer and the old Penghulu his father cannot make a correct choice, and Mahmud would have to learn how to negotiate these differences.

These concerns over his position were partially solved when he went away to continue his studies. Chapter four, "At the Malay College Kuala Kangsar" firmly locates his presence and position in the school and determines his status. School preparations began with a set of unambiguous instructions and inspections, as "we were given clear directions as to what articles of clothing and beddings we should bring. We were subjected to a thorough medical examination" (Mahmud, 94). With this certain, much of his exposition narrates his journeys between Pahang and Kuala Kangsar, either via boat through Singapore or overland. These trips were exciting, and he notes that "in fact some times we had to face some adventures of one kind or another" (Mahmud, 119). School life was adventurous in a different way, the humbling adjustment from his privileged background to doing daily chores, dining on bad food, sleeping on poor bedding, and washing his own clothes. In this position he learned a new relationship to rules, such as being forbidden from smoking. He recalled that though smoking was "strictly prohibited amongst the college boys" nevertheless "clandestine smoking" went on, and this had consequences: "the usual punishment for smoking was caning. The caning was done by the head master in the presence of the other boys" (Mahmud, 115). He recalls this time as one where both breaking rules and their punishment for doing so brought the boys together, under their own eyes within school confines.

These lessons produce a private space, interior to the group of students in the school. Dato' Mahmud describes the rules they had to follow, like the punishments they faced, as a drama among MCKK students subject to discipline. The rest of Kuala

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Kangsar's population lived differently. They were his object of measurement, and he describes a school project of doing surveying work in the local community. When one of his fellow students died, Dato' Mahmud learned another lesson about the relation of Malay College students to the Malay populace of Kuala Kangsar. He recollects in the memoirs

> Strange enough the local Malay population did not show any co-operation as they had done in the previous case. When we brought the coffin to the cemetary, to our astonishment, we found that no grave had been dug; no grave digger was to be seen anywhere and no implement of any sort was to be found near the spot; our Malay class teacher, an elderly Malay from the Province Wellesley, was furious. He made no secret of his wrath against the local Malay population and expressed it aloud in some rashly swear words. Then he disappeared saying that he was going to look for some digging implements (Mahmud, 131).

The memory is a physical one, for in the absence of local help the students are required to do the labor themselves. Though he writes in English, he uses the Malay term for the cangkul, the spade they use to dig the hard dirt. The act of digging with a cangkul is for many Malays the stereotypic mark of peasant work. At the grave

> We waited patiently and after about an hour he returned bringing two 'changkols.' He, the senior boys assumed the role of grave-diggers and took turns in wielding the 'changkols.' The ground was hard literally like brick and progress was painfully slow. It was getting late in the afternoon. When we had dug to a depth of about three feet, we struck an underground spring and the water gushing out from it soon freed the half-dug grave. So here was yet another problem for us. Once more our Malay class instructor came to our rescue. He quickly went to look for some buckets with which to bail out--the water. He came back with a couple of empty kerosene tins. With these we bailed out the water at the same time continuing to dig the grave to the regrieved at depth. We were stripped to the waist and our bodies were covered with mud. Our hands were covered with blisters as we were not used to handling the 'Changkols' so rigorously. By the time the burial was completed, it was already past 8 o'clock and we did not get back to the College till about 9pm. I felt sore both in body and spirit. I realised then that for one reason or another the College boys had lost favour with the local Malay populace (Mahmud, 131-132).

The poignancy of the memory is like the ghost story, the students surrounded by their Kuala Kangsar neighbors who are not at the gravesite to help them bury their colleague. His memory is not of why they were not liked, as is the more common story told by students about their relations with the town's population.[65] They merely lose favor with the Malay populace "for one reason or another." Instead the memory is of the mud on his body, his blistered hands, his sore spirit. At the moment the students need the

[65] For example their reputed success with girls or their money.

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townspeople to help they are not there, and he learns his difference as a Malay College student in mimicking their peasant labor.

As a College student outside the classroom Dato' Mahmud learned a relationship to the Malay population of Kuala Kangsar. Inside their classrooms, the students were taught a relationship to the wider world. One of Dato' Mahmud's Malay teachers, Abdul Majid, also wrote an autobiography.[66] He begins his book with the epigraph "If I get into the mud and fall, it should be my duty to warn others of the muddy place" (Wandering Thoughts, 1). He notes that prior to the time of the book's composition, he took to "changkol work" as a means to keep healthy, but in the midst of working he collapsed. He recalls that "about this time, mental work in the shape of writing seemed to get hold of my spirit. For over a year I was at it" (Wandering Thoughts, 2). The memory of the humble work lead him to warn others of muddy places, of digging through the early years of his life as he prepared to die.

The earthy imagery runs counter to Abdul Majid's experiences of almost constant travel. According to Roff's introduction, he spent 13 years in Kuala Kangsar, having gotten into the school's first intake in 1905 by writing directly to Wilkinson (Wandering Thoughts, ix). Following two years as a student at the Residential School he became the school's Malay teacher, a post he held until 1918. From there he entered the educational bureaucracy in Telok Anson, became temporary principal at the Malay Teacher's Training College in Matang, and in 1924 was recruited by the police to become the Malayan pilgrimage officer in Jeddah. For 16 years he traveled back-and-forth between Malaya and Arabia with local Muslims making the Hajj. From years on the water in transit he began writing his experiences based in Kuala Kangsar, and as Roff points out, his "references to the school and the town should abound in the remainder of his narrative" (Wandering

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66 William Roff, Editor, The Wandering Thoughts of a Dying Man: The Life and Times of Haji Abdul Majid bin Zainuddin, Oxford University Press: Kuala Lumpur, 1978. Abdul Majid (1887-1943) studied at the Malay College from 1905 to 1907, and taught there from 1907 to 1918. For further details, see Roff's introduction, pages vii to xvi.

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Thoughts, ix). His remembrance of this time focuses on books of pedagogy, written to address those outside the College of what students and staff experienced inside of it.

Languages for Abdul Majid were matters of technique, of having a guide. His first book published in Kuala Kangsar was entitled Vocabulary and Grammar for Beginners atau Jalan Belajar Bahasa Inggeris yang Senang [the easy way to Learn English], published approximately 1910.[67] As the Malay portion of the title suggests, learning was a matter of following the jalan, or the path, that the book opened for the student. In his autobiography he said of this book

> There are many Malays today who would not have learnt English but with the use of that/book. It is so helpful that it explains to them very clearly the difference in the construction of an English sentence from that of a Malay one. Thus, the student using it grasps at once the correct way of stringing the English words (Wandering Thoughts, 16).

In the book's introduction he argued "the purpose of this book is to give those just beginning their studies a sturdy foot-hold, and the belief that they can then leap ahead, not to color those who study with all the extravagances in the English language" (Jalan Belajar, np). A teacher offered only modest help in this process: "the author strongly believes that all Malay children who have graduated from the Malay schools, or who can read and understand Romanized Malay [Romanized Malayu], can in a short time write and speak in simple English, with a teacher's help only in sounding out the words" (Jalan Belajar, np). English was only a technical problem for students, no matter where they should happen to study. With the proper guidance they could leap ahead like the author.

Malays faced special challenges in learning, because like Dato' Mahmud they had to struggle in special conditions. Abdul Majid attributed his success in teaching to this method of English instruction. As he later put it in the autobiography, his "extraordinary achievement was due to a large extent to the simplified form of studying the English language" given in the book.[68] But part of the book suggests the barriers that Malays face

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[67] Abdul Majid, Vocabulary and Grammar for Beginners atau Jalan Belajar Bahasa Inggeris yang Senang, Methodist Printing House: Singapore, [1910?].

[68] The simplified form remained desirable, and when he was writing the autobiography, he notes it was still in print in a seventh edition. Wandering Thoughts, page 60.

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in entering the world of translation, where Malays are compared to others. In its 28th lesson, under "adjectives," Abdul Majid gives as his third example "3. Itu orang Malayu ada yang lebeh malas sakali deripada semua bangsa" (Jalan Belajar, 21). This he translates as "the Malay is the laziest of all races" (Jalan Belajar, 96). Part of how Malay students will learn the simple steps to leap ahead is to master a truism about themselves as a people, a statement that they live in a comparative world, and that the comparison is not flattering to them. Abdul Majid's writing, however, in no sense evinces a belief that the "laziest of all races" might be incapable of mastering English. Dato' Mahmud learned that outside the College they would get no help, and this was the message for other Malays studying with Abdul Majid's book.

Abdul Majid's work at the College was a project of translation. In his autobiography he writes that during his time teaching there, he was "In the height of my enthusiasm as 'a builder of the nation,' as Hargreaves often fondly called his profession" and then he "translated a book on teaching by Professor Garlick (?) in Malay."[69] The foreign explanations here double, both of Hargreaves' teaching motto and of Garlick's books of pedagogy. But Abdul Majid does not translate completely, for "I called my Malay translation: Rahsia Mengajar--or the Secrets of Teaching--and confined myself to the chapter on Discipline which had among other things many useful 'tips' on character-building" (Wandering Thoughts, 62). Similar to the book on English, teaching was about learning a secret method from which the rest would follow, a secret of adopting a specific form of pedagogy. Like Jalan Belajar Bahasa Inggeris, Abdul Majid stresses in his autobiography that the book was distributed widely, as it "was introduced to the Malay School teachers by the Education Department of nearly all the Malay States" (Wandering Thoughts, 62). He wanted to replicate the Malay College experience throughout the peninsula.

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[69] William Hargreaves was the first Headmaster of the Malay College (1905-1918), Alfred H. Garlick published A New Manual of Method in 1896 and A Primer of School Method in 1905. Wandering Thoughts, page 62. Abdul Majid titled his book, Kitab Rahsia Mengajar, Singapore: Methodist Publishing House, 1914.

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The book imagines teaching as a means of placing students in a relationship to their teachers. The book's subtitle "Translated, altered and supplemented to meet the needs of Malay children that is from the books of teaching secrets in the English language" (Rahasia Mengajar, np) suggests that it emerges from elsewhere. The introduction notes that the book is a guide to the correction of students' mistakes, "so it is easy for those who teach lessons to do so orderly to prevent classrooms from being completely unruly [tiada huru hara adanya]" (Rahasia Mengajar, np). The means to do this, the introduction notes, is "already prepared" by the English books from which Abdul Majid translated.[70] The book opens by saying that "first, the greatest secret of teaching is to rule over [memerintah] every student taught" (Rahasia Mengajar, 1). The book emphasizes discipline as a specific program of punishment, detailing the proper method of caning and how to get lazy students to work. The concern with discipline is in forming a relationship of control over the students, regulating the things that they can and cannot do. The special challenge of the classroom, he describes, is that the teacher's management always risks a complete unraveling.

Abdul Majid added to and changed from Garlick's books based on his knowledge gained through the years of teaching at the Malay College. Though he was not of royal lineage, Abdul Majid speaks throughout Kitab Rahasia Mengajar from the position of one above the children of royalty. Given the position of the Malays themselves in the colony, the teachers need such control. In the introduction to the 1916 second edition Abdul Majid explains that this book is not for simply achieving successful exam scores but rather to allow teachers who do not have proper teaching methods to learn them, so that "we, gradually, enter the field of civilization and can reach the delicious fruit hanging on the branches as do the other races [bangsa2 lain]" (Rahasia Mengajar, np). He specifically addresses these fears of losing out to others in sections dealing with students who are "Shy or Lazy in Work" [Segan atau Malas Bekerja] and with those who copy [Peniru]. The

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[70] The Malay phrase is "Suatu jalan yang telah disediakan," Kitab Rahasia Mengajar, no page.

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secret of teaching the indolent is comparative, as "People from other groups [bangsa asing] say that Malays are lazy, and because of that it is proper for a teacher to be diligent in training the children under their control to be productive [usaha dan rajin]" (Rahasia Mengajar, 11-12). The challenges were double. This is also true in regard to copying, as Abdul Majid warned that "A person who cannot be trusted when small will also not be trusted when big. Apparently our Malay people do not know the heavy responsibilities and hopes that one places upon them, whether in money matters or in work" (Rahasia Mengajar, 27). The teacher's authority is based on the sense that Malays have specific problems, ones that require a teacher's scrutiny and craft if they are to influence students who have to catch up with others ahead of them.

Abdul Majid wrote a final book at the Malay College, one titled The Key to Knowledge, that is several English Words used by Contemporary Authors with Meaning and Explanations in Malay, which was published in Roman script in 1916.[71] Under the title, "Teacher, Malay College, Kuala Kangsar," Abdul Majid introduces the book as one written for "Malay school students" for three reasons: one, "the time has already passed when we Malays [kita orang Melayu] sit without paying attention to events in the other lands of this world" two, "our language of Malay is not sufficient to grasp the meaning of words necessary for this age" and three, "so that we know the origins of words that we borrow or that we create" (Key, np). In romanized Malay, however, the lists that the Key to Knowledge provides are for those who read newspapers and live in the world of politics.[72] In his autobiography he notes that the book's contents came to him in a flourish:

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[71] Abdul Majid, Anak-Kunchi Pengetahuan ja-itu Beberapa Perkataan Inggeris yang di-pakai oleh Ahli-Ahli Pengarang pada Zaman ini dengan Erti dan Shurah-nya di-dalam Bahasa Melayu, Methodist Publishing House: Singapore, [1913?].

[72] Abdul Majid's lists attempt to translate the new world, and other familiar words new within it: "King", "Prince of Wales", "Duke", "Emperor", even "Sultan" enters the list, the latter defined "Royalty in Islamic lands are titled Sultan," page 2. The lists continue for the different legislative and bureaucratic offices, terms like "Colony" as "a land that is possessed" [Negeri yang di-punya'i], page 5, "Straits Settlements" as "three lands, Singapore, Penang Island, and Malacca," page 6, "Federated Malay States" as "the united Malay states: Perak, Selangor, Negri Sembilan and Pahang," page 6. The book also includes war terminology, judicial and railway terms, educational, police, medical, legal, and financial, (with "Reuter" defined as "the name of a person who produces reports, collects and distributes news of the entire world: all newspapers pay him"), page 28.

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when dejected during a month of Ramadan because he was without money to buy his children new clothes for the coming holiday's festivities, he reports "One day, I sat down and thought and thought and thought. The result of this thinking was that I could not sleep the whole night. Early the next morning, the whole of the book: 'Anak Kunchi Pengetahuan' in MSS was prepared" (Wandering Thoughts, 94). Though the terms Abdul Majid lists are applicable to the Malayan context, only rarely does he refer specifically to the Malay reader.[73] One such instance is the entry for "Civilization," which is listed as "civilization [tamaddun] that is with a state [bernegeri], people [bangsa-bangsa] who have opened their eyes, do not sit in ignorance like aborigines [sakai], we call these people civilized [bertamaddun]" (Key, 29). The key for Abdul Majid out of his penniless condition was to write the book, knowledge that appeared to him as if spontaneously. Others could find the same instantaneous shift in position through reading and occupy the positive end of a civilizational comparison in doing so. Their situation as readers gave Malays the knowledge necessary to separate them from those regarded uncivilized.

Abdul Majid wrote his last book just after he had left Kuala Kangsar in 1920, when he had moved to the nearby Malay Training College in Matang (one of the precursors to the Sultan Idris Training College). This book was for foreigners, to fill the gap of communication with Malays who could not learn English. The book's dedication is to

> His Excellency the Hon. Mr. Richard James Wilkinson, C.M.G., Governor of Sierra Leone, West Africa, who, as Inspector of Schools, F.M.S.., in 1904, initiated the Malay College, Kuala Kangsar, where I received my higher education, both in English and in Malay. A.M.[74]

Wilkinson initiated the Malay College so that students like Abdul Majid would be able to work between English and Malay, leaving Europeans to exert only a minimum of effort. In the preface to Malay Self-Taught, Abdul Majid writes, "This handbook is prepared more particularly for those English-speaking persons who wish to acquire the language by

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[73] Another "local" reference is in the land-use terms, where Abdul Majid defines "certificate of mukim extract" as "this is what Malays usually call the Small Grant," page 12. The survey and revenue terms of the colonial state were well integrated into Malay life.

[74] Abdul Majid, Malay Self-Taught by the Natural Method. With Phonetic Pronunciation, E. Marlborough & Company: London, 1920, no page.

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themselves with the least expenditure of time and labour" (Self-Taught, np). Malays need a teacher to learn English, but with the phonetic pronunciation and natural method of his text native English-speakers can teach themselves Malay. The hierarchy emerged most strongly in this book, for Abdul Majid could not presume to teach English-speakers. The Malay College, and Jalan Belajar Bahasa Inggeris yang Senang, had their limits.

The book is clear about who was to speak and how. Abdul Majid explains that English speakers need to learn colloquial Malay, and "By 'colloquial Malay' is meant the language used by the natives in speaking with foreigners, especially Europeans."[75] The dialogues for study presume a life of movement, including ones titled "On the Road," "The Railway," "At the Hotel or Rest-house," and "Post Office, Telegraph, and Telephone."[76] But Malays only emerge occasionally in these discussions. Aside from the brief "Shopping at the Native Shops (Di-kedai Melayu)" and "Shopkeepers with Native Customers (Berniaga dengan Melayu)" they work in very specific contexts: planters are taught to say "Malays are no good as coolies" "kuli orang Melayu kurang baik" and "It is better to have Chinese as coolies" (Self-Taught, 105). Instead, in their place, the planter can say "I want the Malays to clear the jungle" (Self-Taught, 106). The only other place they appear is in the conversation "Doctors with Patients." Again the work of determining the proper relationship is already done: the doctor says "I know Malays believe it is the devils that make the child ill; but it is not so."[77] Malays are figured in Abdul Majid's Malay primer as largely absent, natives recognizable in their limitations of work and expressions of belief. Abdul Majid remembers Wilkinson as the initiator of an education that allowed him to translate this for others.

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[75] Self-Taught, np. Malay language, long developed as a lingua franca throughout the archipelago, had (and has) a vast range of compexity and sophistication of grammar and vocabulary; "colloquial Malay" here of course referring to its most simplified form.

[76] Self-Taught, page 98. Others function for a particular line of work, including "Conversations for Miners" and "Conversations for Planters." Some sites are less social than others, as the railway dialogue is much longer than that of the road, and the planters' conversations longer than those for the miners.

[77] Self-Taught, page 113. The Malay version reads, "Sahaya tahu orang Melayu perchaya budak itu terkena hantu, katanya itu lah yang menyebabkan-nya sakit; tetapi yang sa-benar-nya bukan bagitu."

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Translating Malay College

Abdul Majid's replacement as the College's Malay instructor was Zainal Abidin, better known by the nickname Za'ba. Abdullah Hussain opens his biography Pendita Za'ba dalam Kenangan

> Scholar Za'ba is no stranger to his admirers, a student and researcher of Malay language, letters, and culture. It may even be said that every person who wishes to study Malay language is not freed from having to read his works about Malay language that until today are regarded standard by the traditionalists.[78]

Za'ba arrived in Kuala Kangsar at age 23, after studying in Seremban and teaching in Johore Bahru. As Abdullah Hussain notes, through his long career in Malay letters Za'ba showed Malays yet another way to use their language in relation to the language of others.

Malay College students led by Za'ba followed Abdul Majid into publishing. Za'ba's memory at the school is tied to the College's annual magazine, which itself routinizes the memories of each school year. Its production and collection maintains links between past, present, and future students with those outside the college.[79] Za'ba's work was tied to language, to developing a means of translating new experiences and knowledge in school exercises and into print. He helped open a forum where Malay College students themselves could publish their thoughts and extend the College relationship beyond Kuala Kangsar itself.

The student authors of the first edition of the Malay College Magazine, published in 1921, write to the Old Boys, to the buildings, and to the future boys, and imagine a continuity sustained in Kuala Kangsar after their departure. To describe their interest in the magazine, they explain: "we want to have the chance to clap and give encouragement to the Old Boys who are now playing the great Game of Life, and to feel sure that none are

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[78] Abdullah Hussain, Za'ba Dalam Kenangan, Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka: Kuala Lumpur, 1972, page 1. Za'ba (1896-1973) was born in Negri Sembilan, educated at St. Paul's Institution in Seremban, and taught in Johor Bahru before moving to the Malay College. Following his work at the Sultan Idris Training College he worked in the administration in Singapore, and as a radio announcer during the Japanese occupation. Following the war he held teaching posts in London and Singapore.

[79] The early copies of the Malay College Magazine Za'ba collected and later donated to the National Archives. The private memories interior to the school become the property of the nation.

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drifting (terhanyut)."[80] Their sense of responsibility for those who have gone before them requires a Malay term to ensure they have connected. The students have to apologize themselves for their lack of adventure in Kuala Kangsar's surroundings:

> The strange thing is that though we live amongst the most beautiful mountains, none of us explore them or go on expeditions into the country. We have a wonderful river but none of us are keen fishermen or interested in boats.[81]

The relationship emerging in the Magazine is this one of displacement. In another article a student writes of Islamic study as "The Learning of Our Religion."[82] He describes a room on the second floor of the school that "is used for the students to study their own religion," and to do so they "all read the sacred book known as 'Koran'" (ibid., 20). The Koran in quotes and terhanyut in parentheses both express something that escapes translation. The possibility of "drifting" next to the "the great game of life," the "Koran" next to "their own religion" show the boundaries of maintaining, at this point, a relationship to the Old Boys in English.

The students also express failure in their inability to give encouragement to the Old Boys. Among their regrets in the first issue "is that we have little to offer which will make anyone laugh."[83] The potential for laughter suggests that they should know each other well enough to reference familiar things. Old Boys who laugh recognize themselves in the present students of the school, and the present boys imagine that this is something that the Old Boy's need who have left the confines of Kuala Kangsar. In reply the Old Boys wrote back to the magazine. One of the articles, signed simply by "Old Boy," recounts the "Reminiscences of the Malay Residential School."[84] His story is one about how his group of "first class boys" one night "unanimously declared the house 'Haunted'" (ibid., 16). Since the entire house of students had been kept up for an entire week by a "tremendous

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[80] Malay College Magazine, Criterion Press: Penang, Vol. 1 No. 1, December 1921, page 3.
[81] Malay College Magazine, Criterion Press: Penang, Vol. 1 No. 1, December 1921, page 3.
[82] "The Learning of Our Religion," Malay College Magazine, Criterion Press: Penang, Vol. 1 No. 2, March 1922.
[83] Malay College Magazine, Criterion Press: Penang, Vol. 1 No. 1, December 1921, page 3.
[84] "Reminiscences of the Malay Residential School," Malay College Magazine, Criterion Press: Penang, Volume 1 Number 2.

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buzzing sound," they then told their story to the "Chairman," Raja Abdul Rashid of Perak, who "related his past experiences of 'Hantus' [ghosts] and 'Butas' [ogres] " and suggested that they petition the headmaster about it. The story ends with a note of chagrin: "Luckily at the very last minute the Chairman told us what this 'Hantus' was. What was it? It was nothing more nor less than himself, armed with a buzzing whistle which he had specially bought to frighten us" (ibid., 16). In another such story some students describe a meeting with a rubber tapper frightened by a ghost. The author notes "we after laughing and winking at one another, proceeded towards that direction and when we came to the place where he had seen the ghosts, we found nothing. We jeered and mocked at him but he kept silence and when we reached his house he went in and shut his door in our faces."[85] The ghosts here mark their conversation with the Old Boys, the stories providing them with a familiar connection they might share as MCKK students who are unafraid.

Their exchanges in English express their desire for novelty. In this same issue the students describe the type of story that they want from the Old Boys. In the editor's call for news, they ask that "it should be as amusing and interesting as possible, and for that reason should not be a list of appointments but full of personalities and jokers and about the behaviour of old friends ... we badly want something to laugh at, not too many serious sermons."[86] These serious sermons risk boring the students. In a report on the celebration of "Hari Raya Haji" [the Muslim feast of Pilgrims] in the magazine the author notes that "after the service some went off to the neighbouring villages, and others to Taiping and Ipoh, it being too dull to spend such a Holiday at school."[87] Their attention is fleeting, caught not by the expected but by the familiar. The students can leave Kuala Kangsar for holidays as easily as the Old Boys take up their new appointments. Amusement and interest comes in building a familiar understanding of these expected situations.

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85 "L'Allegro," Malay College Magazine, Criterion Press: Penang, Vol. 2 No. 1-2, August 1923, page 19.

86 Malay College Magazine, Criterion Press: Penang, Volume 1 Number 2, page 27.

87 "Hari Raya Haji," Malay College Magazine, Criterion Press: Penang, Volume 2 Number 1-2, page 17.

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The one assurance the students have is the anticipation of their future return. One of Za'ba's students contributed an article entitled "Adieu to School," signed "By one on the eve of leaving for good."[88] He begins with a salutation that references elsewhere: "Farewell, Eton of Malaya!--But not for ever, you are not a cold and lifeless building, but a kind and sympathetic mother, who breathes into the very soul of your children the spirit of true citizenship, of loyalty, and of honour" (ibid., 20). The longevity of the school building promises to parent the students toward the abstract qualities of adulthood. This extends to whom the writer calls the "Future Boys"-- "The days before you are still long, and your opportunity to gain admission into the palace of invaluable treasures of modern arts and sciences, that are easily approachable" (ibid., 21). For these future students the school will remain in place, so that the writer can return and see past friends who have by then gone on to do other things:

> It will be present to return in after years, and revisit the old School, the dormitories, the masters, and perhaps young friends who will by then have reached positions of influence. My love will still be undiminished as was Johnson's for his old College (ibid., 22).

Thinking about returning to the future school is to retain one's love for it. Rather than the maternal image of the school, this wish makes eternal promises, something that produces the capacity for mothering. The College with its great building is not only parent-like, but also an ancestral village that one can return to and find kin relationships replaced in serial fashion.

Za'ba's students wrote in Malay, though not in the pages of the Malay College Magazine. The issues constantly welcome new arrivals and mourn transfers.[89] In August 1923 the students note with particular sadness one of the departures:

> During this term several changes have taken place: Che Zainal Abidin has been transferred to Kuala Lumpur. He was a popular master and did good work in

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88 "Adieu to School," Malay College Magazine, Criterion Press: Penang, Volume I Number I.

89 As one of the official reports for the College notes, "8. Admissions, departures, deaths. Including the six Probationers, 38 boys left in the course of the year, two others were expelled for indiscipline; one died from Cerebral Malaria; and twenty seven were admitted." Selangor Secretariat Files, 695/1921, "Annual Report for the year 1920."

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> encouraging a deeper study of our own language. It was due to his efforts that the new College magazine in Jawi [Arabic script], the 'Semayan' has started.[90]

Za'ba's disappearance is filled by the appearance of Semaian, and the first issue of the Semaian follows that of the Malay College Magazine by two years. It begins with a strong sense of novelty and mission, a venture newer than its English counterpart, where the students knew what they wanted. The first edition notes

> The reason why this magazine is published in the Malay language is because there already is an English magazine, and we do not want our readers to misunderstand that this is only a place for the study of English, but rather that the Malay language is also studied.[91]

Under Za'ba's tutelage Semaian aims to show in its form a message to outsiders who might not understand the College. Their articles in the Semaian focus on a different Malay life than that of the Magazine. In an article entitled "A View of the Malays" the jaunty tone of the English is replaced with a more formal address: not the joking Old Boys who might make them laugh, but rather the polite phrasing of old Malay.[92] The article opens with an apology to the "wise reader" who must read a composition likely marked with errors and omissions. The writer asks the reader to witness the problems of the Malays, who sit in ignorance, and from the viewpoint of the Malay College the writer directs the reader to "look at them trapped behind other groups [bangsa]" (ibid., 16). Only the constant appeals in the few Malay newspapers do "we [bangsa kita] begin to shine freshly, ready to tread upon that race track known as 'civilization' ['tamadun']" (ibid., 16). Readers have to be reminded that the College exists to prepare Malay students for this race in which Malays are already behind.

One of the students contributed a poem to the second edition. Entitled the "Duty to Study," the writer Tengku Ahmad bin Tengku Jaafar asks the reader to "listen" to the news carried in Semaian.[93] He asks, "if we do not study, how will our names later be praised?"

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[90] Malay College Magazine, Criterion Press: Penang, August 1923, Volume 2 Number 1 and 2, August 1923, page 3.

[91] "Pembukaan," Semaian, Bilangan 1, Jilid 1, August 1923, page 4.

[92] "Penglihatan atas Bangsa Melayu," Semaian, Bilangan 2, Jilid 2, March 1924.

[93] "Kewajipan Belajar," Semaian, Bilangan 2, Jilid 2, March 1924.

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Otherwise Malays "surely will be ignorant, despised, and cursed" (ibid., 12). Throughout the reader is addressed as "Tuan," a term of respect, and encouraged to go to school whether Malay or English, and not to be lazy:

> Study, Tuan, heartily / seek skills without stop
> Follow the instructor's teachings loyally / they are of great use to life's end (ibid., 12).

Tengku Ahmad then switches the focus from the student to the Malay people [Bangsa Melayu] and offers an exhaustive list of Malay poverty "in every shape and form" (ibid., 12). The reader is asked to help raise the Malays to a high level even as the writer apologizes for his unstylish writing and impoverished message. The address is more vulnerable than that of the Magazine, its imagined reader more diffuse.

The students' relationship to the Old Boys in the Magazine extends in the Semaian to broader affiliations. Another writer describes "Selected Parts of Malay Custom" as helping determine these relationships.[94] Though noting "surely people say that Malays [orang bangsa Melayu] are overly lazy and ignorant," he offers as an example the etiquette shared when Malay friends greet each other, share food, or invite people to a wedding to prove "there are positive things in what they do" (ibid., 18). The focus of Malay custom in the article is the relation of young people to old people. The writer describes "One thing praised in children [kanak2] is that when their elders speak, they leave the room because it is not good for them to mix with old people especially when they are speaking about private things [perkara rahasia]" (ibid., 18). Malay young people are also praised for knowing the proper means of addressing their elders:

> Our Malay children [anak2 Melayu kita] are adept at addressing their elders by using 'father,' 'elder brother,' or 'grandfather' and the like. Also 'sir' to those who have done the hajj and to whites. 'Your highness' and 'your humble servant' is used when speaking to royalty (ibid., 19).

Though of a different tone, it is not entirely unlike the Magazine in the distances these views project of student knowledge of private things. In the field of custom, Semaian

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[94] "Setengah daripada Adat2 Melayu yang Terpilih," Semaian, Bilangan 2, Jilid 2, March 1924.

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addresses a readership beyond the College yard concerned with public things. The sphere of College relationships extend outward to embrace any Malay context, whether kin-based, with royalty, or with whites.

The differences of Semaian in Malay and the Malay College Magazine in English fix around the question of hierarchy. The students' relationship to their Old Boy readership in the Magazine could be in the form of jokes and pranks, often with a comic distance from Malay village life. The pleasure in ghost stories comes partly from this stretch between village custom and school sensibility. The Magazine addresses the students as students, in the relationship they developed at Kuala Kangsar. Writing jokes to the Old Boys ensures that they will remain students, that they will remain in Kuala Kangsar no matter where they go. A student in the Magazine writing in 1922 titled his article "The Downfall of Malaya" and argues "But alas! Malay power has almost vanished entirely. Perhaps the still surviving tiny power will also pass away, which is of course not the desire of all Malays."[95] In English at MCKK Malay power might vanish. There are Malays concerned with power but they might not be in Kuala Kangsar.

In Semaian, as they do when they address elders in Malay, the students have responsibilities. The first issue notes that "students [ahli2 penuntut] who have succeeded in their exams will become the helpers of we Malays [kaum kita Melayu] in the race to progress."[96] The students' future role as Old Boys is clear. Their article on "The View of the Malays" emphasizes the importance of organizations, and for Malays "unity brings success and division danger" [bersatu jaya berpecah merbahaya] (ibid., 17). The article lists occupations newly opened to Malays by the government [kerajaan], including that of "steshen master" (with the note that previous this was only open to Tamils) and stresses the importance of selecting a "representative" in the new Supreme Council of the Four States [Majlis Mesyuarat Agung Empat Buah Negri]. "Representative" written in English, is

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95 "The Downfall of Malaya," Malay College Magazine, Criterion Press: Penang, Volume 1 Number 2, March 1922, page 22.

96 Semaian, Bilangan 1, Jilid 1, August 1923, page 39.

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translated as "seorang wakil" in Malay. The students reading Semaian must be concerned with these kinds of matters, a public politics in which they will one day stand in for other people. Semaian references a world outside of the College, where forms of politeness and address remain, where if they were not Malay College students they would be children excused from the room during discussions of private things. Theirs is an attempt to build a new relationship to outsiders.

Throughout the course of his teaching at MCKK Za'ba impressed upon his students the importance of translation.[97] In one section of his teaching notebooks he lists the "Essentials for good teaching," the first being "discipline," the second "having a definite method," and then "make all lessons interesting and attractive."[98] Much of the text records the writing assignments given to the students to realize these goals. Most of the exercises reflect general, generic subjects, but when asked to write regarding local topics the stakes become especially high. One assignment requires the students to translate the following from English to Malay:

> 3. According to Malay theory, a proper command of language is essential to success even in hunting or fishing. Loose language on the sea may bring on a storm; in a jungle may expose the speaker to the attack of a tiger may drive out the tin from a mine or the camphor from a forest. A Malay avoids expressions of undue familiarity in the presence of all superior powers, human or superhuman.[99]

Translation here takes on a specifically Malay problematic for working with language and forced students by the performative act of rewriting in Malay to risk the consequences of their own sentiments. Another translation exercise carries yet sterner punishment:

> 6. Some time later, my father moved to another house, not far from Kampung Pali. Every morning I went to school to study, and at night my father taught me at home. Many blows and slaps did I get, and many tablets were broken by being dashed on my head by my teacher. Many a rattan was broken on my body, and many a time did my mother weep for me, because I was beaten so much; and perhaps my fingers would even be swollen from the blows they received for mistakes in writing.[100]

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[97] Another set of items Za'ba left for the National Archives are his Malay College teaching notebooks. Throughout these notebooks Za'ba writes in elegant English, and they have a third person tone: "Time table from 23.1.1922 for Mr. Zainal Abidin" appears on the inside of one.

[98] "Book 2." March 1920, SP18/6B/100.

[99] "Translation from English," "Class I List," 1922, SP18/6B/99, pages 2-3.

[100] "Translation from English," "Class I List," 1922, SP18/6B/99, pages 3-4..

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Translation in these exercises themselves requires care (of this set of lessons, these are the only two that could be considered on "indigenous" topics). They confront the students with translation as an intimate exercise, from the mundane activities of hunting and fishing to the relations within Za'ba's family. In learning to translate, the students both risk these punishments and overcome the possibility of being subject to them.

Za'ba's writing assignments reflect an interest in opening secrets, for the students are asked to translate notions of belief. One of the exams for the Seniors asks them to "translate the following into good English":

> (b) ada pun segala adat raja-raja Melayu itu hampir-hampir semua-nya di-tiru daripada adat raja-raja Hindu asal-nya: seperti segala gelaran orang besar-besar, dan adat menganugrahi persalinan kapada orang kaya-kaya masing-masing dengan taraf-nya; dan seperti adat mendirikan pencha-persada pada ketika kahwin ... Demikian-lah juga adat pengantin-pengantin Melayu bersanding, semua-nya mengikut adat orang Hindu.[101]

Which one might translate as:

> The customs of Malay kings are almost completely copied from the customs of Hindu kings: like the titles of the nobility, the custom of providing clothing according to rank, and including the custom of preparing a stage for marriage ... the same goes for the custom of the wedding couple sitting in state, all of which follows from the customs of Hindu people.

These customs, even those of the Malay royalty, have an origin traceable elsewhere. Through translating the terms of custom the students doubly distance the language in which they are working. Another section asks the students to address the belief in ghosts:

> 26.6.22 Translate back into Malay: it is certainly a fact that the majority of our Malay people believe in the existence of ghosts. The place where ghosts are plentiful is, they say, the graveyard, for it is the dead people that turn into ghosts. Especially so is the case when the grave belongs to a murdered person or to anybody dying of bloodshed. There it is, they say, that the evil influence is most malicious and dangerous.[102]

Za'ba offered a ground to trace these kinds of distance. Within the repetition of "they say" the students have to represent a relationship to "our Malay people," and to specify those who are said to have a belief in ghosts.

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[101] Exam: "Seniors (1 hour) Malay August 1922 Part 1 translate the following into good English." "Class 1 List," 1922, SP18/6B/99, pages 22-23.
[102] "Translate back into Malay," No title, 1922, SP18/6B/101, no page.

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Another section in Arabic characters asks them to romanize this relationship between ghosts and the possibilities of belief, where the ghosts themselves vanish via a mistake made by one who trusts his senses:

> 1. Rewrite the following in romanised:
> After finishing the plan, he then emboldened himself via rolling up his sleeve and struck the figure he thought was a ghost, while punching as hard as he could in the direction of its face. Ahh! What else! When he connected with the face of the thing he thought was a ghost, it turned out to be only a wooden hull, one torn apart by lightning, that looked from afar without clear characteristics, perhaps even a ghost. After that the bumpkin ran home suffering from the pain in his hand, unable to work for a month.[103]

Za'ba asks his Malay College students to change in form a story about misleading appearances. In the instructions, Za'ba includes "Special marks will be given for good handwriting and neatness" (ibid.). The mistaken assumptions of others become the basis for language, for writing, for education. The genre of opening secrets is internal to the College, and yet became an important part of the school's publications. Through the act of writing students could establish contact with what other Malays believe.

Za'ba's exercises imagine an education where the distinction between the Semaian and the Malay College Magazine would not exist. The exercises attempt to provide an equivalence between outside and inside the College in Kuala Kangsar. One of the lessons in reading Jawi is about "modern machinery"; another asks the students to compare "modern achievement with the popular stories of Malay romances."[104] They did not write to each other as students but rather to him as their teacher, and any topic was appropriate for their composition assignments. Machinery and literature were in a comparable realm, and had similar schematics. Za'ba taught the "construction of Pantuns" as "6.6.22 'Construction of Pantuns' 1) four lines 2) 1st and 3rd; 2nd and 4th 3) two first lines

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[103] No title, 1922, SP18/6B/102. The Malay text reads, "Sa-telah habis ikhtiar-nya maka di-berani-berani-kan-nya hati-nya lalu di-sengsing-nya lengan bajunya sambil di-terkam-nya lembaga yang di-sangka-kan-nya hantu itu serta di-tinju-nya betul pada arah muka-nya dengan sa-kuat-kuat hati-nya. Wah! Apa-tah lagi! Serta kena sahaja penumbok-nya pada muka benda yang di-sangkakan-nya hantu-itu di-lihat-nya bahwa ia-itu hanya-lah kulit kayu yang sudah terkoyak berkas di-makan oleh peluru petir, menjadi nampak-lah dari jauh puteh sahaja sa-rupa orang yang tiada chukup sifat, di-sangkakan-nya hantu. Sa-telah itu berjalan-lah orang dusun iut pulang ka-rumah-nya dengan menghidapaan sakit tangan-nya sa-bulan lama-nya tiada dapat bekerja (np)."

[104] No title, 1922, SP18/6B/102, page 9.

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meaningless 4) each line 4 accented syllables."[105] They would reveal to others the secrets they shared among themselves, the plain secrets of how things came apart and fit back together.

Za'ba wanted to formalize the tie between the Old Boys and the current students. His biographer, Adnan Haji Nawang, describes Za'ba's interest in establishing a "Malay College Association, Kuala Kangsar," citing a letter from Za'ba where he says the Association's goals will be "to promote goodwill and unity among the boys in the College and to establish a feeling of brotherhood between them and the old boys."[106] In one of his notebooks Za'ba wrote of a monthly journal, in English and Malay, that the Association would publish concerning

> (1) conduct and progress of the College and other matters of news pertaining there to (2) education and methods of national advancement [the word 'progress' is crossed out] with special reference to virtues, vices and superstitions, (3) advice and discussion on studies, manners, morals and formation of character.[107]

Under "publications" Za'ba lists English and Malay, English to encourage the boys to write and Malay "for enlisting the interests of parents and outsiders who know no English" (ibid.). The Malay College students and their Association would provide the difference of translation to link the present and Old Boys. They would share kin-like relationships not based on father-son age hierarchy but rather the sibling ties of "brotherhood." Their capacity to translate, taught partly through Za'ba's exercises, would especially allow them to go back-and-forth between their group and that of "parents and outsiders" who do not have access to English. Za'ba wanted a pedagogical association similar to what he himself modeled in the classroom.

Za'ba's lectures attracted attention. As in the Magazine, the section on "School News" [perkhabaran sekolah] in Semaian reported the comings and goings of the student

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105 No title, 1922, SP18/6B/102.
106 Adnan Haji Nawang, Za'ba Patriot dan Pendeta Melayu, Yayasan Penataran Ilmu: Kuala Lumpur, 1994, page 70. Citation from the original letter in English to Muhammad bin Datuk Muda.
107 "MCKK, 1920," 1920, SP18/6B/100.

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body and the staff, normalizing the tremendous yearly turnover. The 1924 edition includes a particularly poignant such entry, the Semaian's good-bye for Za'ba:

> the departure of Mr. Zainal Abidin brings sadness to all the student [student] of this college [kollej] because he was friendly with students, especially the students in the upper ranks. When he is in the classroom he is diligent in teaching regarding custom, language, history [tawarikh] and the Malay condition [keadaan Melayu]. During recreation time he is also diligent in coaching the young boys to play soccer. He sometimes also teaches tennis.[108]

The Semaian writers do not refer to Za'ba as a teacher of "our own language" like the Magazine but rather term Malay as "bahasa Melayu" in a series with other subjects. The note includes that in 1920 Za'ba "was the one who voiced the need for this [Semaian] but because the matter did not progress then, he did not succeed" (ibid.). Only after a series of meetings was he "able to put out this magazine last April" (ibid.). Yet when it was sent to the printers "he was suddenly transferred to Kuala Lumpur and he was unable to receive the first issue at the College" (ibid.). Those working on Semaian's very first issue mourned its creator's absence, an absence that limited the types of things Malay College students could publicly say.

Outsiders were part of his Malay College classroom, and his students' laments over Malay weakness and impotence reached audiences imagining the type of state enemies Za'ba might be creating at the Malay College.[109] Sultan Abdullah's son was one of those listening. In 1921, as Adnan reports, Za'ba was asked to meet with Sir Raja Chulan, a prominent figure in Perak with a seat on the Malay College Board of Governors.[110] Raja Chulan warned Za'ba against involvement in public politics,

> I always read you in the newspapers especially the Malay newspapers saying the government [kerajaan] should not do this or that ... This I remind you, should you continue to do so, in the future the government will not look favourably on you. No salary increase, no promotion. Perhaps even expelled completely. If you want to do what's right, just stop. No need to write such things ... we people certainly

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108 Semaian, Bilangan 2, Jilid 2, March 1924, page 27.

109 The phrase about imagining enemies is from the preface to the second edition of Benedict Anderson, Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism, Verso: New York, 1991. page xvi.

110 Raja Chulan (1869-1933), the son of exiled Sultan Abdullah, studied in Singapore and Malacca, and entered the civil service in 1886. He became Raja di-Hilir in 1921 and a member of the Federal Council from 1924-1933. Wandering Thoughts, page 78.

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> feel it too, but do not say it ... if you speak so clearly in the newspapers, you being a nobody [orang kecil pula], later the government will not look kindly.[111]

Sir Raja Chulan in Perak felt uncomfortable reading what Za'ba's students heard, and ominously imagined others with the same feeling. Abdul Majid also saw Za'ba as a newspaper figure, and was introduced to him as such, writing in his autobiography "I had not met Inche Zainalabidin in person up to this time but formed my opinion of him from his articles that appeared in the Malay papers" (Wandering Thoughts, 107). Such renown proved to be dangerous to those with imaginations.

The police watched Za'ba closely for the ties he forged with his students, though they felt these to be mere translations of politics elsewhere. In 1922 the Malayan Bulletin of Political Intelligence published its first year report. The relatively late date of its establishment is perhaps understandable given British insistence that all worries in the peninsula were derivative of elsewhere: the report notes "the great problems which are stirring the East do not originate in Malaya, in which they are only reflected."[112] The only mention of the Malay population in the initial report is the notice that "it has been found comparatively easy to obtain the services of Malays of good class for special enquiries" (ibid., 16). As an exception to this Malay cooperation, Za'ba's activities at the College proved a special fixation of the new Bureau of Political Intelligence. The Bulletin for January, 1923 reports that

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[111] Cited in Adnan, page 78, though he leaves the source of this quote unattributed. Ellipses in original. Abdullah Hussain also describes this exchange, also without attribution, as "Raja Sir Chulan, a member of the Malay College Board of Governors, called him and asked about his activities writing articles in the Malay and English newspapers.

'I don't write' he answered evasively.

'But all people know you like to write.'" Za'ba Dalam Kenangan, page 40. Za'ba would not tell Raja Chulan what he wrote for everybody else.

[112] Colonial Office 537/906, page 17. They were initially frustrated to not hear what they knew people were saying: "But it has to be recorded that, with one or two exceptions, District Officers, to practically all of whom the policy was explained in a personal interview, have so far sent in little or nothing of any value. It is probably true that at the present time there is not much active sedition in Malaya, and it is by no means to be desired that District Officers should in any way become 'agents provacateurs,' but it is remarkable that they should have been able to communicate to the Bureau, for the information of the Government, so little of the common talk of the people--talk that is known to the Bureau from other sources to be not very friendly," page 5.

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> It has been proved that on many occassions Zain ul Abdin, a Master at the Kuala Kangsar College, has received the 'Muslim Standard,' a proscribed newspaper. In addition to this, he receives a paper called 'Light,' a far from satisfactory publication.[113]

Aside from his reading habits, Za'ba's work brought suspicion for making connections between the students. The Bulletin accuses him of passing on what he has read:

> In addition to the above activities, Zain ul Abdin has been found in communication with an ex-pupil, now holding official rank in the Negri Sembilan, to whom he is imparting his anti-British views. There is no doubt that he has also corrupted or endeavoured to corrupt the minds of some of his pupils at the Kuala Kangsar College.[114]

These activities might possibly spread, and indeed a year and a half later the Bulletin reports

> We can now trace the first thorough effort in Malaya at an Association to cover the whole Peninsula with the object of furthering Khilafat activities and a Muslim Empire (Pan-Islamism). Through Zain-ul-Abdin some of the boys at the Kuala Kangsar College have been tainted.[115]

The police noted that Za'ba's reading material originated from elsewhere, as did his Pan-Islamic ideology. This brought him a warning. What Za'ba did differently from others who reflected great problems was teach them to his Malay College students. Their combination in the school might produce something original.

Away from Kuala Kangsar and the students, Za'ba became a police curiosity rather than a problem. With his departure at the end of 1923 the Bulletin notes

> The 'Malay Mail' the Kuala Lumpur English Daily, published in its issue of 8th August a notice that a 'Malay Literary Association' had been formed in Kuala Lumpur. The moving spirit in this is Zeinal-a-bidin bin Ahmad, formerly of the

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[113] Colonial Office 537/908, January 1923, page 6. An earlier edition warned "b. the 'Muhammadan,' an equally objectionable paper, published in Madras, is also finding its way into the country, one of the recipients being a Malay teacher at the Malay College, Kuala Kangsar. This man was warned in May, 1921, not to continue taking in this paper and his further support of it lays him open to grave suspicion, though there is at present no evidence to show that he is preaching its doctrines to the boys at the College" In War Office 32/5628, "Proposals for the Organisation of a Political Intelligence Bureau Malaya," page 58. London did not collect a single set of these Bulletins, and they are scattered, sporadically, through the files of the War Office, the Foreign Office, and the Colonial Office. For more on the Malayan Bureau of Political Intelligence, see Cheah Boon Kheng, From PKI to the Comintern, 1924-1941: The Apprenticeship of the Malayan Communist Party, Southeast Asia Program: Cornell, 1992, especially the introduction to part one.

[114] Colonial Office 537/908. January, 1923, page 6.

[115] Colonial Office 537/913, June, 1923, page 7. The khilafat movement politically mobilized Muslims in India and elsewhere through the 1920s.

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> Malay College in Kuala Kangsar, now of the Headquarters Education Office in Kuala Lumpur. This man is known to have definately set his pupils at the Kuala Kangsar College against the British, and has in consequence been removed.[116]

At Kuala Kangsar his activities were not derivative. Datuk Mohamad Said, an Old Boy of the College and a Semaian editor, explains in his memoirs that the police thought Za'ba was creating problems rather than just passing them along, and explains "the reason why he was transferred to Tanjung Malim was of course to prevent him from infecting his pupils at the Malay College with his political views and to neutralize him by making him a translator rather than a writer of original articles."[117] Za'ba was ultimately assigned to the new translation bureau at Sultan Idris Training College, designed by O.T. Dussek on the model of the Indies' Balai Pustaka.[118] Left to refigure the words of others he was merely one threat to the authorities among many such threats.

The proper relationship to these outside authorities brought confusion for Malay College students comparing Abdul Majid and Za'ba. In his memoir, Mohamad Said transposed the two of them: "the textbook on English grammar used in Class Six was the one written by Cikgu Abdul Majid bin Haji Zainuddin, who succeeded Za'ba as Malay master at the College" (Mohamad Said, 121). They were linked to each other, as they crossed paths in the offices of the police. For Malay College students of Mohamad Said's time, there appeared different options for confronting authority:

> The battle was thus joined between the two embittered rivals and from that time on many friends and pupils of Za'ba thought that Haji Majid, who besides being

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116 The report concludes with the caveat that "the development of the Association will be interesting." Colonial Office 537/919, November, 1923.

117 Tan Sri Datuk Dr. Mohamad Said, Memoirs of a Menteri Besar: Early Days, Heineman Asia: Kuala Lumpur, 1982, page 120-121. Mohamad Said was born 1907 in Negri Sembilan and studied at MCKK from 1919 to 1925, and then at the King Edward College of Medicine in Singapore. While working as a civil servant, he won a Queen's Scholarship to study tropical disease in London in 1941 but was forced to wait until after the Japanese Occupation to do so. Upon his return to Malaya he entered politics and held the post of Mentri Besar of Negri Sembilan from 1959-1969, after which he retired, but continued writing. In the frontispiece to his memoirs he notes:
"Dedication. Charles Bazell, M.A. Oxon
Headmaster, Malay College, 1923-38."

118 The Sultan Idris Training College was opened in 1922 in south Perak to replace the Matang and Malacca teacher training colleges. Roff calls the SITC an antithesis of the MCKK, with its Malay-medium instruction and courses emphasizing the practical. See William Roff, The Origins of Malay Nationalism, University of Malaya Press: Kuala Lumpur, 1967, pages 142-157.

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> pilgrimage officer also worked as a member of the Political Intelligence Section of the Police, was responsible for reporting him to the government as anti-British (Mohamad Said, 162).

The students knew that their teachers' activities were security concerns. Za'ba's writing was perhaps not sufficient to tell the authorities his true feelings, and a betrayed relationship was required to doom him. In conducting school matters they had to be careful whom they trusted.

The two teachers left Kuala Kangsar under different terms. Abdul Majid tells in his autobiography that he left for Matang partially under the pressure of an illicit love affair, and "the reader can imagine how glad I was to get out of Kuala Kangsar" (Wandering Thoughts, 120). After moving to his new town Abdul Majid hosted Za'ba and his wife, and gave him advice to guide him in his new job at the College. Abdul Majid later learned from a teacher at the Malay Art School that Za'ba had been talking about him, recalling the words of the report

> 'your friend Inche Zainalabidin seems to me to have an unfriendly attitude towards you. Once someone remarked that you were a clever man and could do many things to help the public; but your friend said why should you get only $100/- as a teacher in the College for so many years; whereas he was given the $100/- on joining the College?' (Wandering Thoughts, 121).

Za'ba's words circulated around Perak, and his opinions were painful to hear. His famous 1923 Malay Mail article, "The Poverty of the Malays," was also published in the Malay newspaper Al-Ikhwan four years later.[119] Mohamad Said remembers in such articles

> he described in great detail the undesirable traits of the Malay character, the thinking of the so-called Malay elite and intellectuals, which he considered to be the real causes of Malay poverty, and suggested specific measures to eradicate these causes. In doing so, he did not mince his words and was so downright explicit that no one could possibly misunderstand what he intended to convey to his readers (Mohamad Said, 163).

In Kuala Kangsar, such writing by Za'ba "had the effect of sowing the seeds of political consciousness in the hearts and minds of some of the Malay College boys" (Mohamad Said, 163). People remember Za'ba speaking in a language different than any other, words

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[119] Reprinted in Ungku Abdul Aziz, Jejak-Jejak di Pantai Zaman, Penerbit Universiti Malaya: Kuala Lumpur, 1975.

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that meant exactly what they said. They even remember other people remembering his words, and this proved the mistake that forced Za'ba to leave town.

Abdul Majid knew what was wrong with the Malay College salary structure like Za'ba's correspondent Raja Chulan knew what was wrong with the British advisers in Perak. They recognized this because Za'ba spoke about it, and even more, spoke about the failure of their silence. Abdul Majid did not like that Za'ba spoke clearly, and when he heard the friend's comment of Za'ba he remembers that he "kept quiet." Though he acknowledges that what he said was true, still he remembers that

> I accepted him and his wife as my guests for some days in Matang. I only regarded his unfriendly remark about me as the words/of an unrefined man. I believed he would get out of that unrefined mentality as he grew older and studied the lives of great men. In short, being the elder man I thought I should have the patience to wait and see the development of my friend's mind into perfection (Wandering Thoughts, 121).

Abdul Majid sense of upset focused on their difference of age, and the propriety of offending a host. Visiting each other should have sealed the relationship of Za'ba as Abdul Majid's replacement, but it did not. Abdul Majid was the older man and the host. He should have rights of secrecy, but Za'ba did not respect them and left no doubt about his disrespect. As their correspondence suggests, they never did find a means to communicate, but Za'ba had to suffer for it.[120] Not long after the visit to Matang. Za'ba went from teaching Malay College student to translate, to himself working as a translator at Sultan Idris' other school in Tanjung Malim.

Resuming publication

The complications in publishing the writing of Malay College students without Za'ba appeared to condemn the two magazines, and when publishing resumed they took a different form. The September 1939 edition of the Malay College Magazine was published as volume one, number one. The lead editorial notes that "The last time the Malay College

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[120] Ungku Aziz includes a copy of the scathing letter Za'ba sent to Abdul-Majid from Syonan-To [Singapore] in the occupation year 2602 [1942] as an appendix to his book.

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published a Magazine was in 1927. Now, in September, 1939, we set Volume I No. I upon our cover in the confident expectation that volume will succeed volume uninterruptedly."[121] This hope, of course, went unfulfilled as only one more edition appeared before the Japanese military changed the College into an administrative base for their occupation of Perak. The editors of this first issue, Abu Zarin bin Omar and Raja Mohamed Nordin bin Raja Shahbudin, desired the return of the Magazine to fill "a very real need," as the "links between the past generations and present have until now been all too slender" (ibid., 1). Their establishment of an Old Boys Section in the Magazine was to "indicate the earnest wish of the Editors to provide an opportunity to Old Boys to circulate news of their affairs and any information which may be of interest to members of the College both past and present" (ibid., 1). They dedicate the issue to their past Headmaster, C. Bazell, retired in Somerset, "still a connoisseur of Malayan curried chicken."[122] In praise of his leadership they note "the progress of the College since 1905 has been remarkable, and her future has never been more promising than it is to-day" (ibid., 1). They wish for continuity in the future, and strive to publish a Magazine capable of communicating between the generations over ever greater space and time.

In the middle of the volume is a section entitled "Mengulang Kata," translated in the table of contents as "Malay Section." The editors introduce the section with the Muslim greeting "Assalamu alaikum" and explain that "with the permission of several people among our staff this small issue of the magazine 'The Malay College' is offering a place for articles in Malay" (ibid., 105). This section, they note, is necessary to show that the study of Malay is emphasized at the College and that the students "respect the spirit of Malay custom" (ibid., 105). The addition of the section will mark the difference between other Magazines from English schools in Malaya and "is hoped to tie together the College with Old Boys who both recently and long ago have separated" (ibid., 105). Nodding to the

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121 "Editorial," Malay College Magazine, September 1939, page 1.
122 "C. Bazell," Malay College Magazine, September 1939, page 2.

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profound growth of the Malay press in the preceding decade, the section aims to provide the seed for what might prove to be a "fruitful tree" of Malay literary production.

The public appearance of Malay essays in a College publication reminds the editors of something once familiar. They add that "about 16 or 17 years ago there was a magazine in Malay named 'Semaian' published with 'The Malay College'" (ibid., 105). However given a lack of support and

> especially that those leading it were forced to leave the nest [ibu kandongan-nya], that is this glorious College, some for higher schooling, some to carry the burden of working in this wide world, after just a few issues of publishing it, then ... silence![123]

The ephemeral figures of exit and entrance appear most clearly in regard to Malay writing. The editors close with the image of Malay language returning to "honor the children who have long since separated" in the fresh guise of new clothes, new spirit, and "perhaps also a slightly new stride" (ibid., 105). Their belief is that this somewhat unspecified appearance will "give the children new recollections, new memory, new feelings and the gamut of what will return, will be new" (ibid., 105). The difference of writing in Malay could be represented fully within the collection of the English Malay College Magazine.

This issue itself, together with the last pre-occupation issue and the first three of the post-war period, were themselves collected and reprinted in 1977 by MCOBA. When I approached the MCOBA staff in Kuala Lumpur to ask for historical materials I was kindly given a selection of Berita MCOBA, and after a telephone call for permission, allowed to purchase a copy of the reprinted issues.[124] The charge for the volume no doubt came from the expense of its production, sealed in a red cover and titled with embossed Old English script. The reproduction is introduced with an official message from Sultan Ismail, then the Sultan of Johor.[125] He says in his remarks that

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[123] Ellipses in original: the Malay text reads, "dan satengah-nya wajib bekerja menyandang tanggongan-nya dalam dunia yang luas ini, maka hanya-lah lepas beberapa kali sahaja terupaya di-keluarkan dia; sa-telah itu ..... senyap!" page 105.

[124] The notices of the Old Boys in the association newsletter were deemed more public than the 50 year old writings of their predecessors in the magazine.

[125] "Titah Aluan Duli Yang Maha Mulia Sultan Johor." Sultan Ismail reigned in Johor from 1959 to 1981.

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> I have been made to understand that the 1939 issue of the Magazine is not the first edition by the Malay College of Kuala Kangsar because there was an edition published in the year 1927. But for reasons not known publishing stopped (ibid., np).

Republishing the issues is an attempt to recall a past that might be forgotten, like that of the earlier editions of the Magazine that Za'ba had not yet given to the National Archives. These breaks in continuity mirror the experience of the Sultan himself at the College, as he explains that he studied there for two sessions in 1909, but because of his health he was unable to continue. Nonetheless he closes with his support for the new MCOBA building in Kuala Lumpur, his best wishes for the College in Kuala Kangsar, and his "pride in his connection with this famous Alma Mater" (ibid., np). The remembrance of this part of Kuala Kangsar's past occurs from the distance of such conditions of retrieval.

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CHAPTER THREE

DRIVING THE NEW ROADS: LEAVING KUALA KANGSAR

"In every direction, the jungle was pierced by roadways, mile was added by mile, until to-day no country situated in the tropical zone has a better road system."

--Malayan States Information Agency, Trade and Commerce, 1920, page 10.

"There is nothing more symbolic, both of the adaptability of the native of the country and of the phenomenal rapidity of Malaya's progress, than the picture of the Malay passing, almost at a step, from paddling a primitive canoe on a river winding its way through primeval forest to driving a car on a first-class tarmac motor road. Malaya has to-day nearly 1,200 miles of railway and approximately 3,700 miles of metalled roads, exclusive of the roads and streets of Singapore, Penang and Malacca. There is nothing 'colonial' about the roads, which have been described at a gathering of motor manufacturers in London as 'the best in the Empire with the possible exception of Great Britain itself.' The increase in the number of motor-cars in the past decade has made travel by car a commonplace in the life of all classes of the community, from the wealthy merchant of Singapore to the coolie on an estate or mine anywhere in the western States. The problems of traffic congestion and control in Singapore, Kuala Lumpur and Ipoh are becoming daily more acute, and the streets of Singapore are reminiscent of London during an omnibus strike."

--C.A. Vlieland, Preface to the 1931 Census of British Malaya, page 10.

"With the war and the Japanese occupation, all the road sense that has taken the people years to acquire seems to have vanished completely, and the introductions of jeeps and military trucks with the reoccupation has added greatly to the jumble and confusion on the roads of Malaya today."

--Editorial 'Road Sense' Straits Echo and Times of Malaya, 9 September 1946.

"In my thirty-two years of Government service I was transferred twenty-three times, and in some places we moved from one house to another. I have lost count of the number of houses we occupied, but my wife got [s]o used to setting up house that it presented no difficulty to us to move into any house."

--former Kuala Kangsar Assistant District Officer Datuk Mohamad Yusoff, Decades of Change (Malaysia 1910s-1970s), 1983, page 392.

Ethnography on the highways

In 1992, the new highway gradually emerged, visible to traffic on the old roads. At points of intersection on the north-south trunk road, the main highway stretching from

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Singapore to the Thai border, were great strips of cleared plantation trees, the red earth turned over in contrast to the green vegetation. Enormous white and green signs marked that this construction project was to be a new highway, built by PLUS [Projek Lebuhraya Utara-Selatan], one of the largest infrastructure projects in Asia. The new highway largely parallels the old road, though in several spots it removes bends around mountains and river crossings that earlier regimes felt uneconomic. Yet in my numerous commutes in those days over several thousand miles with people from Kuala Kangsar, there were few comments of anticipation of changes in the social geography following the new highway's completion, how journeys would be different.

The novelty of the project was perhaps such that no one referenced "after the highway is finished" to describe the future. Drivers were perhaps not the only ones; villagers along the Kuala Kangsar stretch recall their mistake in the 1980s in not pressing for roadside access for such things as selling fruit. As a village leader, a resident in the area off the highway between Kuala Kangsar and Taiping, told the New Straits Times, "It may have been an oversight by all concerned, including villagers here who only requested for the construction of subways below the highway for ease of crossing to their orchards on the other side."[1] A man managing a factory near Taiping told me that they did not account for the fact that with the new highway area workers would be able to commute to higher-wage factories in Penang, and thus his company was forced to import workers from other low-wage parts of Perak. Given Malaysia's heavy dependence on road travel, the opening of the PLUS highway offered changes, including the new term "jalan lama" [old roads] to describe the soon-to-be old roads.

The old trunk road, following in part the path from Kuala Kangsar to Larut staked out during the Perak War over a century ago, carries people and goods north-south along the west coast of the peninsula.[2] Over the decades since the Japanese occupation, these old

[1] "Fruit Sellers Welcome Parking Bay Plan," New Straits Times, 7 June 1994.

[2] For a detailed discussion of the colonial expansion of Malaya's transport network, see Amarjit Kaur, Bridge and Barrier: Transport and Communications in Colonial Malaya, Oxford University Press: Singapore, 1985.

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roads have developed a distinct rhythm of travel. The trunk road, for instance, forms the main street of many major towns, and in rural areas is lined with a frontage of village houses. This is especially true in north Perak, where according to demographer John Humphrey, the road between Kuala Kangsar and Butterworth was among "areas where the correlation between villages and transportation is particularly distinct."[3] Such older roads, as well-lived spaces, produce considerable traffic. Passing vehicles weave through a string of villages, mining land, rice fields, towns and cities, pass bicycles, livestock, and pedestrians, and stop at road side stalls, peddler shops, mosques, plantations, and temples. The traffic speeds and slows to the order of intersections and stop signs, mileage is marked by kilometer stones, and particularly dangerous passages are indicated by signs bearing skulls. For car drivers, however, the old highway's most prominent feature is the over-weight, under-powered lorries lumbering between commercial centers. Slowed to a crawl on inclines, the lorries pack cars and buses behind them, who one-by-one overtake at sometimes great risk of collision with oncoming traffic (lights flash to warn oncoming cars to pull off to the shoulder). Travel on the old main roads is necessarily aggressive, and relational to surrounding traffic--cars move quickly until blocked by slow traffic, pass, and repeat the sequence again.

Driving on the old roads presents situations strangers fear. People from the towns, and especially the cities, are afraid of unexpected appearances in the more rural stretches. One evening, driving on a narrow village road in the environs of Kuala Kangsar, a friend told me to slow down because kids in that area are not very smart, they might suddenly jump out onto the road. That, he said, is what frightens drivers. Car drivers are not apparently in danger from unpredictable kids playing near the roadsides. Such kids are, however, one of the signs outsiders watch for, so that they can read the relationship to the road of a particular area's residents. On another trip with some middle-aged men from Kuala Kangsar, we took the backroads toward the southwestern town of Teluk Intan.

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[3] John W. Humphrey, Population Resettlement in Malaya, PhD. Dissertation, Northwestern University, 1971, page 196.

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Driving through rural villages, in the plain of western Perak, the men commented that none of the local boys wore helmets on their motorcycles, and that vehicles were parked haphazardly along the roadside. This they attributed to the fact that people in the villages follow their own laws or what they called Dato' Sagor's laws, a reference to Resident Birch's death in 1875. Following this personal law makes the driver's position especially dangerous, for they can be held responsible by villagers should something go wrong, or so the driver told me. The men noted, for instance, that in an accident it was best to just keep going lest the villagers turn violent toward the driver involved. On another occasion, a Kuala Kangsar officer of the National Unity ministry pointed out to me that the only incident of ethnic strife he could recall during his tenure in the town was that resulting from a car accident. Driving on these old roads produces unexpected, and unpredictable, juxtapositions.

A most immediate relationship to Malaysian roads is thus through these accidents. The magazine Dewan Siswa reminds its student-readers that "Malaysia is a country with a rate of traffic fatalities that is the highest in the world."[4] People regularly cite such statistics that claim Malaysia's road/casualty ratio is the highest in Southeast Asia, or in Asia, or as Dewan Siswa asserts, in the world. Indeed everyday life is punctuated by news of road accidents.[5] My notebooks record their anxious, though steady appearance: a neighbor's cousin killed on the back of a bike just before a wedding; the car of a man from Ipoh's backseat covered in blood from the hit-and-run he took to the hospital; a palace attendant's brother dead in a crash; the long lines of cars slowly passing by several horrific wrecks on the outskirts of town; and the teen motorcyclists in the neighborhood showing off their road scars on their calves and forearms. Such daily violence is usually described as discrete stories of specific situations.

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[4] Dewan Siswa, February 1994. The Malay text reads: "Malaysia merupakan salah sebuah negara yang mempunyai kadar kemalangan yang membawa kematian jalan raya tertinggi di dunia."

[5] The Star, for instance, reports that between 1989 and 1995, the number of road deaths increased from 3,773 to 5,712. In 1996, the number of accidents increased yet again to over 6300, in 189,109 accidents (these totals are well above per capita comparisons to the U.S.). "On Growth and the Accident Rate," Star, 15 April 1997.

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The authorities (and the newspapers that print their comments) aggregate the accidents into general trends. The newspapers present traffic accidents as a problem of counting. Holiday periods gather great interest in road fatalities, and the newspapers publish charts tracking the number of deaths by state and by the various community's holidays as compared to the previous year. On one hand the numbers suggest a regularity to accidents, that the ebb and flow in frequency might be intrinsic to road conditions. As the transport minister explained, "If you put 100 people and make them walk around, a few will knock into each other. But put 200 into the same room and more will knock into each other because we have increased the number in the same size of room."[6] But those involved did not escape responsibility completely. Following 1995's festive season, the New Straits Times concluded "indiscipline among motorists has been identified as the main cause of accidents that resulted in 480 deaths during the recent Chinese New Year and Hari Raya holidays."[7] The danger of accidents was that other people's irresponsibility caused them, and on the road travelers could not escape this unpredictability of others.

The concerned authorities in government blame driver error and especially the reputed recklessness of motorcyclists for the high casualty rate. The police and the transport ministry therefore have attempted to shock motorists into safer driving. In Kuala Lumpur's Central Market in 1994, an exhibition was set up displaying the bloody after-images of car crashes, similar to the photos pasted up on public-awareness bulletin boards in Malaysian police stations. The transport minister reported, however, that these were only of limited value since "Individually organised campaigns and advertisements have not been effective as people seem to be immuned to statistics or visuals of mangled bodies and total accident wrecks."[8] Accidents might be curbed, however, if they were made more intimate, "They will only take notice if we can show them that their careless act can cost them their lives or those of their loved ones . . . this is one of the factors being considered

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6 "Drive to Cut Accidents 'Off Target,'" Star, 20 July 1996.
7 "480 Die in Festive Season Accidents," New Straits Times, 22 March 1995.
8 "Drive to Cut Accidents 'Off Target,'" Star, 20 July 1996.

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in the campaign," the minister added (ibid.). It was not enough to know accidents as gruesome, carelessness had to be brought into a domestic sphere of the driver's loved ones for the accident rate to decline. Yet the concept of the accident rate itself works against such a realization.

Since road accidents occur so frequently in Malaysia people are anxious that others remain concerned about them. A particularly deadly accident in 1995 on the outskirts of Kuala Kangsar town generated a significant number of stories. The driver was a woman, and people had heard from witnesses that just prior to colliding with a truck she had thrown up her hands, that she panicked. This left her in the wrong lane, not where she was supposed to be. Two weeks after the accident people in Kuala Kangsar were still talking about the details, and especially how much other people were talking about it. The everyday violence of collisions does not generate anger, but rather this anxious interest. When passing an accident, people frequently pointed out to me that others were slowing down to get a look, and part of the interest in traffic accidents is that others are interested in them. They term the others they see looking at the accident with the English-derived word "busybody." As Lee Su Kim observes in a book "born from a desire to capture the quirks, idiosyncrasies and piquancies of Malaysian life," this is a specifically Malaysian thing, for

> the moment there is an accident or a breakdown or a slightest deviation from normal scenery (it could even be two persons arguing over an accident), then, instantly, the brakes are slammed on, everyone stops and stares, craning their necks wondering why everyone else is doing so, causing massive traffic jams.[9]

The fascination in the accident is that people might be able to see the concern of others about something they all risk but feel they can do little about.

Part of the interest is that accidents should have a cause. Some accidents start chains of causality. A friend's car was scraped by a motorcycle while I was following in another car. Theories among his family focused on the fact that the rider had no helmet, likely no license, and that he panicked. That was one chain. Another chain was that we

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[9] Lee Su Kim, Malaysian Flavours: Insights into Things Malaysian, Pelanduk Publications: Petaling Jaya, 1996, page 136.

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were in the wrong place, for earlier we had decided not to stop for fruit earlier as planned. Had we stopped, we would not have been hit, there would have been another chain of causality. I assisted a young factory worker who was in a motorcycle accident in Kuala Kangsar. When he explained what happened to the police and to the nurse in his factory, he focused on the fact that other vehicles forced him to go down, rather than a mistake of his own. This was clearly in his favor, as he did not want to be held responsible for the situation. Though the circumstances might have suggested otherwise, his questioners appeared to accept the reasoning. If an accident was due to road conditions the roads would be dangerous. People would be frightened of driving for they would be a potential cause of accidents. The roads work to the degree that no one panics.

Accidents remain in memory as ghost stories. Many of the ghost stories that people tell in Kuala Kangsar involve cars, though Amin Sweeney notes that a generation ago they were about bicycles.[10] People who drive frequently tend to know the most compelling stories. There is the story of the old man hitchhiking who, after being picked up, sitting in the back seat slowly removes his head with his hands and calmly sets in his lap. Another describes a mother cradling a baby in the back seat of a taxi, which later turns out to be a blanketed grave stone. The most common is the figure that suddenly emerges walking by the side of the road, only apparent to the driver at the last moment. This ghost can cause accidents in distracting drivers startled by its appearance. But the ghosts not only cause accidents, they are also the result of accidents. Certain places are prone to traffic problems, especially a place that has had a serious accident before. The last bend on the road approaching Kuala Kangsar from Sungai Siput is a frequent site of accidents. A man told me the spot was once even more dangerous. Why, I asked, perhaps because of the highway opening? He answered that before there was a big tree at the corner, which is the kind of place that ghosts like. The sultan then ordered people to cut the tree down, which the Kuala Kangsar District Office did, so the number of deadly accidents declined. The

[10] Amin Sweeney, A Full Hearing: Orality and Literacy in the Malay World, University of California Press: Berkeley, 1987, page 145.

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history of accidents at this particular corner referred to a previous series that ultimately could be avoided.

Traveling in the black areas

For many in Kuala Kangsar the communist rebellion was experienced as a spate of road accidents. The colonial government declared the Emergency in 1948 after the violent deaths of three British planters in nearby Sungai Siput. Malay College students wrote in their school magazine of being in a train attacked by rebels, and of having to fly to Kuala Kangsar from the East Coast state of Kelantan in the absence of a safe overland option.[11] The men I spoke to at the shop near Dato' Sagor's grave identified a spot on the road running past it as the place where terrorists burned a bus. Mohamad Yusoff, a former assistant district officer in Kuala Kangsar during the 1950s, recalls in his memoirs "Buses were being burnt nearer and nearer to the villages all the way from Kuala Kangsar to Grik" and this journey from Perak to the north as one where "there were so many roadblocks and one had to queue up to pass each of these."[12] The weekly intelligence reports of the government's security forces note that the communists had decided in 1951 to focus on transport: "It is important to note that priority is to be given to attacks on road communications. From a study on recent incidents in Perak, it would appear that this part of their plan is being implemented."[13] As one of the MCKK students put it, "Whilst Kuala Kangsar itself, being so essentially a Malay centre, has had no trouble the area all round,

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[11] The 1948 issue of the MCKK magazine includes: "The news of the suspension of the only railway service connecting Northern and Southern Malaya came to us like a thunderbolt, for it meant the interruption of our schooling." "We Flew to School," Malay College Magazine, 1948, page 3; and also includes the story of a a three day journey to school from the east-coast town of Kuantan, in "How I travelled from Kuala Trengganu to Kuala Kangsar," Malay College Magazine, 1948, page 15.

[12] Mohamad Yusoff, Decades of Change (Malaysia 1910s-1970s), Pesaka: Kuala Lumpur, 1983, pages 339 and 343. Former MCKK instructor Anthony Burgess writes in his novella about travelling in the Emergency, "'It's a bad patch, this,' he said. 'You never know where they'll be. Sometimes they lay a bloody big tree trunk across the road. Then you know you've had it.'" Nabby Adams in Time for a Tiger, William Heinemann: London, 1956, page 141.

[13] Colonial Office 1022/13, 25 October 1951, page 210.

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particularly at Manong, Bekor, and Sungai Siput has been much disturbed."[14] The safety of Kuala Kangsar made leaving the town an especially frightening prospect.

The security forces, like the rebels, were uncertain if the roads made their aims easier or more difficult. Under "Bandit Tactics" the weekly intelligence reports list

> In the Kuala Kangsar area of Perak, a badly-sited ambush position was discovered on the main Ipoh road with a wire stretched between the trees at a height of three feet above the crown of the road. From this, wire strands were hung vertically down and anchored on the road by stone-filled tins.
> This method would also cause damage to a light vehicle or may have the effect of causing vehicles to halt within an ambush position.[15]

Anything on the road was potentially suspicious. Over the next two years these reports of road attacks continued, including

> 4. Perak ... two bandits stopped a bus travelling between Ipoh and Kuala Kangsar and burnt it.[16]
> 3. .... on Manong/Kuala Kangsar road in Perak, 15 to 20 communist terrorists ambushed a Land Rover and G.M.C. resulting in the wounding of 3 special constables.[17]
> 3. ... (a) Perak. Taiping area. Two land rovers carrying police ambushed by 36 bandits. Three police killed and three wounded. Two subsequently died. One bandit killed, several weapons were lost.[18]

But the road network produced contradictory views of the landscape. A captured Malayan Communist Party document entitled "Strategic Problems of the Malayan Revolutionary War" contains the complaint that

> We are frequently forced to 'move off elsewhere' on our own account. This is because the rural districts in Malaya are both cut off and surrounded by a close network of public roads and railroads, enabling the enemy to launch a sudden attack at any time and place, thereby making such areas unstable and changeable.[19]

A supplement to the report notes that "Speaking frankly, there is practically no such thing as an isolated spot in Malaya" (ibid., 199). However to an analyst for Army Quarterly in 1950, this apparently fully-surveilled Malaya looked dangerously unknown: though the

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[14] "The Emergency," Malay College Magazine, 1948, page 50.
[15] Colonial Office 1022/13, 1 November 1951, page 190.
[16] Colonial Office 1022/14, 3 April 1952, page 51.
[17] Colonial Office 1022/9, 28 March 1953, page 147.
[18] Colonial Office 1022/9, 2 February 1952, page 204.
[19] "Supplementary Views of the Central Political Bureau of the [MCP] on 'Strategic Problems of the Malayan Revolutionary War,'" Assault Press: [np], 15 December 1950, appendix in Gene Z. Hanrahan, The Communist Struggle in Malaya, Institute of Pacific Relations: New York, 1954, page 194.

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size of England and Wales, "it is for the most part covered with dense jungle and has also considerable areas of swamp. It has very limited communications--road, rail or signal--so that many and large parts of the country are normally never visited except possibly by aborigines. Much of the country is uninhabited and unadministered."[20] The vast jungle in the north central part of the peninsula, just northeast of Kuala Kangsar, was a long-term battleground in the struggle and afforded secure refuge for guerrillas right up to their official surrender in 1989.

The tactical operations in much of the peninsula ended in 1952, and the regions like Kuala Kangsar deemed free of communist infiltration were pronounced "white areas." In the remaining "black areas" like those surrounding the town, however, the military presence continued much longer.[21] This concentration of rebels in Perak greatly expanded the road network from Kuala Kangsar. The roads from Sungai Siput, midway between Kuala Kangsar and Ipoh and the point where the Emergency first flared, retained road blocks into the 1980s. Families in Kuala Kangsar with relatives there recall Australian soldiers moving through the area and the opening of the road as a complete change in local life, with social, commercial, and educational opportunities greatly expanded. Road life around Kuala Kangsar is inseparable from military contingency. As Abdul Zakaria, who in the 1950s served as Assistant District Officer in Sungai Siput, recalls in his memoirs

> I think what really hastened the end of the Emergency in Sungai Siput during that time were the roads built by the Royal Engineers to cut off the communists from their source of supplies, especially food.
>
> Actually there were two secondary roads in Sungai Siput, one was the Jalong Road and the other was the road to Lasah. By the side of these roads were rubber plantations and whenever the military wanted to go to the jungle in search of communists, they had to go through these plantations. The communists had their lookouts and when the military were seen in the plantations, the lookouts would inform the communists and they would retreat further into the jungle. It was to

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[20] J.L. Hillard, "Tactics in Malaya," Army Quarterly, 1950, page 79. For Hillard, the answer was simple if not terse: "the development of the argument of this article has now reached its climax, namely, the assertion that the primary solution to the problem in Malaya is the construction of roads," ibid., page 82.

[21] In 1956 Kuala Kangsar became the headquarters of the Second Royal Australian Regiment, based there to attack rebel positions around Sungai Siput. See Peter Dennis and Jeffrey Grey, Emergency and Confrontation, Allen and Unwin: Sydney, 1996; and Colin Bannister, An Inch of Bravery: 3 RAR in the Malayan Emergency, Directorate of Army Public Affairs: Canberra, 1994.

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> overcome this problem that RE roads were built along the jungle fringe on both sides of the two secondary roads.[22]

The royal engineers reworked the land for access, and the term "RE Roads" remains current. As F.H.P. Williams reported to the Colonial Office in 1957, "Owing to the emergency in Malaya, the resources of the P.W.D. [Public Works Department] are being very heavily taxed in constructing emergency roads and with a very much increased building programme."[23] People in Kuala Kangsar told me the road across the river, from Sayong to Parit, was a security road [jalan keselamatan], and even young people note in traveling these areas that they were previously black areas [kawasan hitam].[24] The Emergency roads rebuilt the old structure of Perak, and the road network expanded to reduce the likelihood of road incidents.

Some stretches of the less populated emergency roads engender fear in drivers from Kuala Kangsar. The portion of the trunk road between Kuala Kangsar and Sungai Siput is for many people I drove with a frightening road. Several friends of mine would not drive it alone, and few would drive it after dark. There were several explanations for this, but a more common one was that there were highway robberies. At one point the road narrows to a single lane for an underpass beneath the train tracks, with a stop light that was frequently out of order. Drivers explained to me that cars waiting at a red light were victimized by thieves, thus they advised me to just keep going, even if the light was red. Though these dangers were never reported in the newspapers, the fear was expressed often enough, and people would lock doors and worry about having enough petrol on the dozens

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[22] Tan Sri Datuk Abdul Aziz bin Zakaria, British, Japanese and Independent Malaysia, a Memoir, INTAN: Kuala Lumpur, 1989, page 58.

[23] F.H.P. Williams, Report on Roads and Road Problems in South East Asia and the Caribbean, Colonial Office: London, 1957, page 11.

[24] These projects continued decades later. "With specific reference to the East West Highway, its construction (estimated to cost $123.7m) will mark the second East West link in West Malaysia, linking Kota Bahru and Butterworth via Grik and Jeli. Initially the alignment was proposed to link Marang in Northern Trengganu to Sungai Siput in Central Perak, but because of strategic military reasons, a more northerly alignment was thought to be more beneficial in combating communist terrorist activities along the border areas of Malaysia and Thailand." Khoo Yoke Kuan, The East-West Highway Project: Analysis of the Potential Impacts of Transportation Investments on Regional Development, M.A. Thesis, Universiti Sains Malaysia, 1975, page 68.

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of times we passed through this stretch. The same goes for the road to Lasah, just off of Sungai Siput town in the area once patrolled by the Australian soldiers. The old roads carry a relationship to Kuala Kangsar's past, one increasingly possible to articulate as other options opened.

This road, in fact, was one of the first stretches selected in 1970 to be bypassed. The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development funded a study for a direct road link (part of a 1967-8 plan for a "future north-south expressway") between Ipoh and Kuala Kangsar that would not include Sungai Siput.[25] Doing so would save 12.6 miles from the 30 mile course through the town, one that "passes through rubber estates, occasional quarrying and tin mining areas, and tapioca gardens" (ibid., 2). The planners felt the old road to be irretrievable as a social space, since "there appears to be little scope for commercial traffic to be generated" (ibid., 7). When the new route was finally built by the Malaysian Highway Authority in 1987, it not only by-passed lonely Sungai Siput but also Kuala Kangsar itself. When PLUS took over the road from the government as part of the privatization package, the new highway soon connected to an entirely new network linking the country without the frightening thoughts produced by driving in places like the old Kuala Kangsar-Sungai Siput road.

PLUS Projek Lebuhraya Utara Selatan [north-south highway project]

Travel on the new highway--a limited-access, toll expressway of 458 kilometers--thoroughly changed these older traffic patterns. Officially opened by the Sultan of Perak with the completion of a final stretch in his state in February 1994, the flexibility of private capital finished the project 15 months ahead of schedule, emblematic of a project about reaching a destination faster.[26] From Johor Bahru in the south to Bukit Kayu Hitam in the north, the new highway forms an unbroken line of private property down the entire length

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[25] Sudhir Anand, "Appraisal of a Highway Project in Malaysia: Use of the Little-Mirrlees Procedures," Bank Staff Working Paper No. 213, International Bank for Reconstruction and Development: Oxford, 1975, page 2.

[26] "King Opens Last Leg of Highway," Star, 8 February 1994.

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of the country, forty meters of right-of-way on either side. Though the project was long studied by the government, responsibility for completing the project was given in 1988 to a private company, PLUS, in the now popular infrastructure scheme of build-own-transfer: PLUS finishes the highway, runs it until the year 2018, and then surrenders control of it back to the government. Allegations of corruption in giving the huge contract to a tiny company figured in a severe political crisis in the late 1980s, opposition figures terming the privatization of the road network "piratization."[27] The traffic flows, given the enormous growth in the Malaysian economy, make profitability projections haphazard. Yet in 1993 estimated revenues were projected at billions dollars over the 30 year tenure of the highway contract. The publication Business Times termed the highway to be for PLUS a "cash cow."[28] Since the Malaysian population of twenty million people owns seven million motor vehicles, access to the roads is a loaded social, political, and financial issue.

The company rules its swath of the country in corporate uniformity. The PLUS corporate color is green. All along the western half of the peninsula huge green signs in towns along its fringes direct people to the PLUS highway, pointing vehicles either north or south. Toll plazas form the highway entrance, together with administrative buildings, all green-roofed in shapes subtly designed to reflect the traditional architectural style of the particular state passed through. Within the highway's territory, vehicles (excepting motorcycles, which are exempt from toll) are tracked by the green toll tickets they possess, computer-read at exits to assess payment. On the highway's shoulder green signs mark kilometers and exits to nearby towns. The eighteen rest areas, also roofed in green, offer food stalls, toilets, prayer rooms, and petrol stations. The entire length of the highway is meticulously landscaped and kept clean by PLUS staff, those working in areas with slow

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[27] Political fighting over the road contract contributed to severe political tension in Malaysia in 1987, leaving many oppositionists jailed and newspapers closed in a police action called Operation Lallang (see chapter four). See also Lim Kit Siang, The $62 Billion North-South Highway Scandal, Democratic Action Party: Kuala Lumpur, 1987.

[28] Given a Malaysian per-capita GNP at the point when economists say car ownership takes off, such predictions of fantastic PLUS wealth look well founded. "'On the Home Run' Plus is on Easy Street From Here," Malaysian Business, 1 June 1993; and "North-South Expressway Takes Malaysia into 21st Century," Building and Construction News, May 25-31, 1994.

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traffic clothed in green, those in the high-speed areas wearing orange. In the first two years of its operation, PLUS claims to have planted 100,000 trees over the length of the highway, and aims to manage it with this kind of meticulous attention to detail.[29] Travelers on the PLUS highway enter a cash relationship with a private company managing the quasi-public space.

After the highway opened PLUS attempted to extend its reach over the experience of traveling. In 1995, PLUS argued for an increase in its corporate sovereignty over the roadway's territory. The company argued that since it was "beset with problems such as vandals, toll evaders, unauthorized towing operators, pedestrians and animals straying onto the expressway" it needed the transport ministry to table an "Expressway Act," since with police-like powers PLUS could "take action against trespassers and vandals on the north-south highway."[30] Though the Government said no, PLUS did later win more control like the right to tow broken-down vehicles on the highway. Even the beauty of the passing highway scenery itself falls under PLUS' jurisdiction. A report in Utusan concludes, "in short, the duty of protecting the beauty of nature and the comfort of highway users will always be guarded with care."[31] These extended PLUS services come at a price, and "all this means that road users will not feel cheated paying the toll."[32] PLUS serves travellers comprehensively but with minimal ties to the users of its road.

The relationship between drivers and PLUS is mediated by the toll payment for which users receive safety, speed, and pleasure. When the highway opened it had its own magazine, the PLUS Networker [Rangkaian PLUS]. Driver-readers were encouraged to send in contributions, "whether suggestions, experiences, or recommendations to be

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29 "Jangan Berhenti di Lorong Kecemasan," Berita Harian, 27 April 1997.

30 "Expressway Act not Needed, says Moggie," The Star, 20 January 1995.

31 "Panorama Indah di Lebuh Raya," Utusan Malaysia, 25 February 1994.

32 Ibid. The main PLUS threat to road users since the highway's opening has been to raise the toll charges. In the three years of its operation to 1997 the newspapers have printed the ongoing exchange between PLUS and the Cabinet over toll rates, while printing anxious letters from drivers always uncertain about the future price of access to the highway.

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included in this space."[33] Their contributions, some printed in English and some in Malay, asked for various security improvements and adjustments on the highway: the signboards not to be solely in Malay, a coupon system for paying toll, punishments for drivers who do not stay in the correct lane, a request for postal services, ATM machines, and a pharmacy at rest areas. Almost all of the letters, though, were unanswered in Rangkaian PLUS, since the newsletter was not about establishing communication with the driver/writers. Rather all writers with printed suggestions were invited to the main office to receive a free gift. PLUS advertises the fact that drivers on its highway are under constant surveillance, with green PLUS ronda [repair vehicles] patrolling the highway to assist with accidents or breakdowns. Press releases at the highway's opening note that "Anda Sentiasa Berteman" [you are always with friends] while traveling it: "no matter day or night, your are always 'befriended' by PLUS workers ... this means in the journey from the north or the south, highway users will never sense any loneliness that might compromise the guarantee of safety."[34] The relationship PLUS extends to its drivers is one where PLUS always watches but chooses to reply, that the PLUS accompanies all drivers with interest in their money but not their consent.[35] Drivers on the highway need not worry about where they are.

In return for payment PLUS promises people this freedom in travel. After the PLUS highway opened, a column in Utusan compared the old and the new roads. Utusan points out that though the north-south distance on the two highways is not much different, PLUS highway users need not worry about directions or the risk of accidents, can enjoy comfortable and safe rest areas, and enjoy panoramic views while driving. The new highway is not confusing, and Utusan claims "on the highway users do not face the

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[33] "Sumbangan Anda," Rangkaian PLUS, April 1994.

[34] "Lebuh Raya Sentiasa Berteman," Utusan Malaysia, 24 February 1994.

[35] In its English-language call for advertisers, PLUS offered its users as readers so that "Advertisers in the Rangkaian PLUS enjoy the twin benefits of an unrivaled, unmatched circulation reach with a responsive readership. So take the Expressways and ride on Rangkaian PLUS to reach your market." Rangkaian PLUS, May 1994.

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problem of getting lost, but on the old road the probability of becoming lost is high."[36] Once returning from Singapore with some friends, we turned off the highway to go to Malacca so I could see the sites. Driving back to Kuala Lumpur north through the backroads my companions were certain that their foreign friend had gotten them lost, and that we would be in trouble. Even with reference to a map, they insisted we were going in circles. Relief only arrived with reaching a big PLUS sign directing us back to Kuala Lumpur.

The PLUS highway differs from other highways because it has a name. Known commonly in Kuala Kangsar in both Malay and English as the "highway," people also call it "plus," "lebuh raya," "jalan tol," and "NSE" (for North-South Expressway). It is therefore the only highway in Perak with a name other than the destination that it reaches. People reference other roads as "the road to Ipoh," "the road to Taiping," and "the road to Lumut" and so on, and these roads generally have few signs for guiding drivers other than ones that point to towns.[37] The people I traveled with from Kuala Kangsar did not as a rule use road maps and tend to know directions from experience, and only within the last few years was it even possible to buy one with any detail (for security reasons and as a legacy of the Emergency, a map of Kuala Kangsar district remains only available to those with police clearance). The oft-cited Malay adage, "if you are shy to ask, you will be lost along the way" [malu tanya, sesat jalan] takes on special meaning on the PLUS highway since no one need ask, for there is no where else to go. Returning to Kuala Kangsar one day on my motorcycle, I stopped at the rest area near the Perak River. I asked one of the PLUS workers for the directions to a backroad into town that I had used before. He advised me against following it, for he said there would be many problems that might occur with turning here and there, especially the risk that I might run out of petrol. He told me the back road was local property, implying that the highway was not. The Star adds that

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36 "Keseluruhan Lebuh Raya Utara-Selatan dibuka," Utusan Malaysia, 5 February 1994.

37 See for instance the map of Peninsular Malaysia in The Star A-Z Malaysia, Star Publishing: Petaling Jaya, 1995, page 309.

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use of the highway is so transparent that "even foreigners should not have a problem with directions."[38] But it is this generic space, one transparent even to foreigners, that PLUS wanted to teach Malaysian drivers how to use.

Magnificent, but boring

The increased familiarity with the highway produced the new term "jalan lama," the old roads in contradistinction to the new possibility for travel. PLUS felt proper use of the new highway would be unclear to its users. Prior to its opening, the newspapers and PLUS printed primers to instruct proper behavior on the new roadway. Drivers were told to plan their trips carefully and to get proper sleep, fully inspect their vehicles, maintain a careful distance from other cars, obey the proper speed limit, use emergency flashers if in trouble, and pull off to the far edge of the guard rail.[39] Utusan warned drivers to carefully plan their stops, because at a rate of travel of one kilometer every 45 seconds, a half-hour rest "will cost the driver forty kilometers."[40] It also notes that given their speed, drivers had to be wary in populated areas since people still walked across the road "even though the speed limit was 110 kilometers/hour" (ibid.). Though the old roads are tiring and challenging, the very features of the highway's comfort and efficiency are dangerous.

Another new problem for drivers along the highway is staying awake. In an article titled "Tips for Whizzing Down the Highway," the Star's writer points out that this tendency toward sleepiness is potentially dangerous. The danger of the highway becomes not what one will run into, but rather what one will not run into:

> Frequent and occasional travellers alike will probably jump with glee at the news but before whizzing down the highway to your planned destination, take note: a danger of a different sort lurks on this endless stretch of miles.
> Seasoned drivers have warned that the monotony may be overwhelming, especially if you are driving alone.[41]

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38 "The Long and Winding Road," Star, 30 April 1994.
39 "Keseluruhan Lebuh Raya Utara-Selatan dibuka," Utusan Malaysia, 5 February 1994.
40 "Keselesaan Lebuh Raya," Utusan Malaysia, 11 March 1994.
41 "Tips for Whizzing Down the Highway," Star, 8 February 1994.

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The Star adds in another article that the highway is "magnificent but boring."[42] The article goes on to say that nearly one-fifth of the accidents occurring along the highway are due to those who fall asleep while driving. The two Utusan writers comparing the old and the new highways argue that one has to leave the PLUS highway every now and then just to regain the "spirit of driving."[43] Another strategy for drivers to combat the boredom of the highway is to drive faster. Several commuters complained to me about a government suggestion to reduce the speed from 110 to 90 kmph, that they were already sleepy at 110. PLUS chairman Radin Soenarno reported that "PLUS had received many complaints that the 110 kmph speed limit was too low and was slumber inducing."[44] Attempts by people in Kuala Kangsar to make the journey shorter include racing against time, comparing the duration it took them from say the Kuala Kangsar toll booth to the Damansara exit on the edge of Kuala Lumpur, or the Penang bridge in the north. The focus on speed on the PLUS highway makes the journey an anxious one, as if even mundane journeys are under pressure for efficiency.

These both dulling and agitating qualities of the PLUS highway promotes a politically dead space. During elections, the jalan lama are the center of the campaign, as busy intersections flutter with partisan posters, flags, and banners. During the general election of 1995 the PLUS highway had no posters, an absence most noticeable near villages or intersecting roads festive with campaign paraphernalia. Though the highway serves as what might be called an "election free zone," it is promoted in ads for the ruling party as an icon of the government's ability to facilitate investment and modernization. Since privatization is the key to reaching Vision 2020, PLUS ads claim

> if the construction of the highway was fully under the government, the cost would be a heavy burden to the state and the people. By privatizing the construction of the

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42 "Heading for Better Highways," Star, 8 September 1994.

43 "Keselesaan Lebuh Raya," Utusan Malaysia, 11 March 1994.

44 "PLUS to Look into Speed Limit on Highway," New Straits Times, 27 March 1994.

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> highway and giving the right of concession to the private sector, the government has succeeded in guaranteeing the main infrastructural construction goes quickly.[45]

Private companies like PLUS do what the government wants, only better, since they are free from the burdens of constituencies. Malaysian democracy reflects the struggles of the past in its party structure, campaign practices, and coalition accommodation. The government's speed and guarantees of action are limited, and the length of the highway is one beyond its politics. The highway is safe enough for anyone to travel, even alone, to new places.

PLUS' achievement appeared to bind together the peninsula into a new Malaysia. Utusan's conclusion that the highway "provides a symbol of privatization's success while bringing closer the ties among the people" shows how PLUS could out-perform the state in providing for Malaysia's citizens.[46] In large advertisements marking the official launch of the NSE, a headline called the PLUS highway the "Way to the Vision," referring to the Vision 2020 program. The PLUS ad refers to the road as the "infrastructural development to form the backbone on the journey to Vision 2020."[47] The highway promises "not only to save time, but to bring together the people of the nation" since its completion would "open areas that were before not well known to the Malaysian people" (ibid.). PLUS promotes the highway in English as certain to be "one of the main arteries in Malaysian lives."[48] The New Straits Times called it "smooth travel, an economic vein, a symbol of progress and a classic example of Malaysia Incorporated."[49] Infrastructure filled out and brought to life a body called Malaysia, one visible even to visiting foreigners. The PLUS chairman promised that the company "would also enhance all complementary services with the objective of making travel on the expressway a tourist attraction in itself."[50] Press

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45 "Lebuhraya Utara-Selatan Hijau Sepanjang Jalan Menghubungkan Rakyat Dari Utara ke Selatan," Plus Advertisement, Berita Harian, 8 September 1994.

46 "Keselesaan Lebuh Raya," Utusan Malaysia, 11 March 1994.

47 "Jalan Menuju Wawasan," Berita Harian, 8 September 1994.

48 North-South Highway, PLUS: Kuala Lumpur, 1992.

49 "An Economic Vein, Symbol of Progress," New Straits Times, 5 February 1994.

50 "North-South Expressway is a Major Attraction for Foreigners," New Straits Times, 9 September 1994.

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coverage of PLUS continuously mentions the highway's tourism potential: "PLUS' care will certainly serve to introduce the nation's culture to the international community that uses the highway to reach tourist destinations."[51] PLUS could take pleasure in itself, as Malaysia, being an object of appreciation. Yet for these images of the supportive, sustaining qualities of the highway, there is another sense in which the highway has drained the lifeblood of the communities that it has bypassed, referred to as "bandar sunyi," or lonely towns.

Exit here for Kuala Kangsar

Though the highway itself was not new in north Perak, its extension north to the Thai border and south to Singapore sparked great fascination. Thinking about the highway reminds many in Kuala Kangsar most immediately of mortality. For this reason, not surprisingly, there is a split over its pleasure and over its dangers. Many people in Kuala Kangsar told me their reluctance to use the highway, especially if there were neighboring roads in which they felt more comfortable. A retired teacher related to me the story of how he three years before had heart trouble while traveling down an old highway, and had to stop at a nearby house though it was late. The occupants were able to take care of him. He said he would never use the highway at night because without such houses it was risky. For motorbikes, or car drivers of more meager means, the highway is also a less advantageous prospect. A factory worker in his 20s told me that on his bike he always uses the old roads because he can stop temporarily at a house should anything go wrong. The high speeds make motorcycling dangerous on the highway, particularly at night or during inclement weather. An Utusan piece in 1996 argued, following a terrible accident on the PLUS highway, that though Malaysian roads had now become "world class," "behind the comfort in driving on the nation's highways is the fact that they are no longer a

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51 "Lebuh Raya Terbaik di Asia," Utusan Malaysia, 11 March 1994.

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safe place for drivers, particularly drivers of small cars and motorcycles."[52] An Utusan editorial asked if Malaysian roads should be called "highways or death ways?" since "the smoother and larger the highways get the more their victims."[53] PLUS partially blamed this on drivers and Utusan argued six months after the opening, "PLUS is faced with new problems because there are still many people who do not know how to use the NSE [North-South Expressway] in the proper meaning of the term." [54] Using the highway properly or improperly did not necessarily decrease one's risk.

Kuala Kangsar as a town did not avoid these concerns about mortality. The presence of the new expressway so close by, yet not through it, raised anxiety about the death of the town itself. The royal town became not a highway destination, as planned in the 1970s, but rather just another exit off of it. The one concession PLUS makes to the town's status is yellow lettering [the Sultan's color] that marks "Bandar di-Raja," the royal town. In 1988 Utusan hinted that even with the Sultan's palace Kuala Kangsar might vanish: "When the highway between Ipoh-Changkat Jering was first used in the month of October, 1987, the worry appeared that perhaps the royal town would die along with the small towns of Padang Rengas, Sungai Siput, and Cemur."[55] In 1989 the New Straits Times repeated this by warning "the opening of the Ipoh-Changkat Jering highway dealt a severe blow to some of the businessmen in the area."[56] The death of Kuala Kangsar tied to its economic viability. In 1995 Berita Harian described the money the old roads brought into west coast small towns: "before the construction of the highway, the trunk road was always busy giving local residents the opportunity to carry out various economic activities."[57] However, the newspaper continued, "since the highway was opened the

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52 "Hak Bersama Di Lebuh Raya," Utusan Malaysia, 5 December 1996.
53 "Jalan Raya Atau Jalan Maut?" Utusan Malaysia, 8 December 1996.
54 "Masalah Guna Lebuh Raya," Utusan Malaysia, 8 September 1994.
55 "Kuala Kangsar Kekal Sebagai Pusat Kebudayaan Dan Adat Istiadat Melayu Perak," Utusan Malaysia, 19 April 1988.
56 "Kuala Kangsar Struggles On, Reports on Several Towns that have been By-passed by New Highways," New Straits Times, 16 August 1989.
57 "Perak Kaji atasi Bandar Sunyi," Berita Harian, 2 February 1995.

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traffic in numerous cities, including Tanjung Malim, Slim River, Trolak, Sungkai, Bidor, Tapah, Kampar, Gopeng, Ipoh, Sungai Siput, Kuala Kangsar, Taiping, Bagan Serai dan Parit Buntar, were increasingly forgotten by travellers who before made these rest stops" (ibid.). A later prediction in the New Straits Times claimed that towns like Kuala Kangsar were simply "one the way to being 'dead.'"[58] As an article in Utusan Malaysia puts it,

> If before this town was always lively and festive because of its position on the north-south road, now there is palpable loneliness [kesunyiannya] given the opening of the North-South Highway. The Federal Highway which used to go through this town of Kuala Kangsar is now only an alternative for highway users, tourists, or those with private concerns.[59]

The vitality of the new highway sharpens the sense of inertia in the areas just off of it. Through over eight years of stories predicting Kuala Kangsar's imminent demise, the news of the town's death appears to be a sustaining way to refer to it. Loneliness becomes an appropriate part of social life in a town out of the action in Perak and beyond.

Fascination with the highway as an active, almost urban space attracts rural people around Kuala Kangsar to watch the traffic as spectators and service it as peddlers. In the early evenings one would find groups of people gathered on the overpasses talking and gazing down at the highway below. Closer access to the roadsides, to sell fruit to the passing cars, led to a struggle with PLUS and the police.[60] The rich orchards of north Perak have long supplied durian, rambutan, mangosteen, and other tropical fruits to the commercial centers. The trunk road was like a river of money to such peddlers, whose stands on the shoulder offered a profitable market without going through wholesalers. As the more affluent traffic shifted to the PLUS highway, the sellers followed suit. Colorful umbrellas clustered along the stretch between Kuala Kangsar and Changkat Jering, the exit north before Taiping. According to the New Straits Times, "Although no accident has

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58 "A Better Road To Growth," New Straits Times, 9 Feb 1994.

59 "Kuala Kangsar ... Destinasi Pelancongan Baru," Utusan Malaysia, 6 July 1994.

60 The stretch from Seremban to Kuala Lumpur, for example, has been plagued by cows wandering onto the highway. Fences developed to keep people and livestock out of the right-of-way area were cut, and PLUS officials sent in to discuss with local villagers the need to keep out of the highway space were chased away with machetes. PLUS resolved to check the fences twice a day, and to build a one-meter trench in the said area to protect the highway from trespassers. "Masalah guna lebuh raya," Utusan Malaysia, 8 September 1994.

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resulted from their presence so far, motorists have complained that their presence--and that of their makeshift tents, huge umbrellas and customers' parked vehicles--is a hazard to highway users."[61] PLUS answered back. Flyers handed out at toll gates reminded drivers in English and Malay that "stopping your vehicle along the carriageway without reason permitted by the law is an offense...which carries a maximum fine of $300."[62] It highlighted that buying fruits was especially illegal.[63] High speeds on the highway often exceeding the legal limit of 110/km hour leave precious little room for error, and double the need for precise, proper use of the new road.

Dying Kuala Kangsar clings to life through the visits of those who return via the highway. A common scene brings the roads into Kuala Kangsar's neighborhoods during moments of arrival and departure. A column in Utusan called "Balik Kampung" [going home] is illustrated with a graphic of a car from the rear view, heading down a curving highway twisting off into the distance.[64] This is both the perspective of those left behind in the city as others go home, and of those left in the village as visitors return to work. The "home" in "going home" is ambiguous. Over and over people in Kuala Kangsar would say that Kuala Lumpur is now nearby, that the 243 kilometers of highway make the capital city "feel" increasingly closer. In fact people do try to live out the new possibilities that this felt proximity presents. Household turnover heightens as commuting longer distances by car or bus is more practical, and a common greeting among neighbors asks who among the family is home at the moment. Their return embodies the historical ties between families who a generation or two ago themselves moved to Kuala Kangsar. In fact in the frequency of its heavy use the difference of the highway is soon lost, and not long after its opening it receded as a topic of conversation or a newsworthy item. Within a year reports of the

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61 "Fruit Sellers Welcome Parking Bay Plan," New Straits Times, 7 July 1994.
62 "Peringatan Lorong Kecemasan," Plus leaflet, 1994.
63 In 1996 the police issued over 6,000 summonses for illegal use of the road side along the highway. "6,042 Emergency Lane Violations," Star, 5 December 1996.
64 "Balik Kampung," Utusan Malaysia, 11 March 1994.

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highway's difference shifted to other issues, and the experience became familiar as the PLUS expressway itself developed characteristics of the old roads.

Looking back

The highway's safety should make driving only a technical problem. The mountainous terrain of Perak includes several expensive stretches of road PLUS contractors cut from the hillsides in their way. On January 6, 1996, a huge landslide crashed into the highway in Perak near Gua Tempurung, burying alive a Malay truck driver and closing the highway for the first time since its opening two years earlier. PLUS reacted with panic, the highway blocked to traffic and the double holiday celebrations of Chinese New Year and Aidil Fitri marking the end of the Muslim fasting month only five weeks away. Long articles in the newspapers explained the geology of the area in question, and the American engineering principles used by contractors in the highway's design.[65] The highway's well-documented construction scheme promised to avoid such landslides typical of older roads in the country.

The highway's careful construction increased interest in the cause of the accident. Newspapers recounted the actions of the deceased driver that suggested his prior knowledge of his impending death. His mother said that he was unusually chatty, and that he had recently surprised her with a gift of perfume, and a friend remembered at the previous Friday's prayers that the driver was abnormally quiet with his friends after praying.[66] But most of the attention was on Perak itself. An article in the Star pointed out that the buried stretch of highway ran through an aboriginal burial ground.[67] The chief of the nearby village old reporters that his ancestors' graves had been atop the hill cut away for the highway. The spot was also the site, he said, of a bitter battle fought between Japanese and British troops, and that "Bodies of soldiers were just left to rot in the open"

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[65] "Gov't May Build Parallel Highway," Star, 24 January 1996.
[66] "Victim Was nNot Himself tThe Day Before, Says Mum," Star, 7 January 1996.
[67] "Highway Runs Through Burial Ground," Star, 8 January 1996.

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(ibid.). The police appeared to back up the sense of something wrong in the area, and told the Star that the particular stretch of the highway was accident prone with 55 accidents in a nine month stretch, including 3 deaths. The dangers to the highway in Perak appeared contagious. Following the incident, an article in Berita Harian reported that people were noticing other vulnerable-looking patches along the highway, and that the long tunnel down the road from the scene of the landslide had visible cracks.[68] Berita Harian quoted a teacher saying she was fortunate using the highway which she regarded as "not that dangerous" (ibid.). Now, however, the buried history of its scenic terrain posed a threat to PLUS drivers.

Given the occurrence of accidents even the PLUS highway cannot always avoid the past it passes through. Malaysian roads are both historical and contemporary--they are a colonial network that still guides the traffic habits of the present. British officials in the late colonial era were convinced that the colonial roads would remain in Malaya longer than they themselves would. As Victor Purcell, a former Malayan Civil Servant termed it,

> The impression I received of the public works in Malaya, as compared with those in Indonesia, Indo-China, and even India, was of a far greater solidity and durability ... Malaya's roads, at least, are likely to be still in use many centuries after most of the administrative and legal institutions of the British have been absorbed into Malayan nationalism, and their origins forgotten.[69]

Purcell's confidence in colonial immortality required a glance into the future, to a time when the past would be obscured. Looking back at the roads from the perspective of the future produced a different historical sensibility, one confidently uninterested in the past. In this future the roads would appear visible only when they failed to work.

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[68] "Pengguna Lebuh Raya Bimbang," Berita Harian, 8 January 1996.

[69] Victor Purcell, The Memoirs of a Malayan Official, Cassell: London, 1965, page 289. Victor Purcell (1896-1965) fought in the Great War and studied at Cambridge before entering the Malayan Civil Service in 1921. Trained in Chinese language, he held the post "Protector of Chinese" in the colonial administration. He returned to Cambridge for a doctorate in 1939, and following brief stints in Malaya before and after the Japanese occupation, retired in 1946. From 1949 he lectured at Cambridge and took a vocal role in arguing against the militarization of Malayan society in the last years of colonial rule. See the memoir in Jerome Ch'en and Nicholas Tarling, editors, Studies in the Social History of China and South-East Asia, Essays in Memory of Victor Purcell, Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1970, pages 3-20.

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Yet Perak's splendid roads did sometimes encourage consideration of their origin. In April 1930, the Sultan Idris Training College, named after the first Sultan of Perak to reign in Kuala Kangsar, published a history of Malayan roads in its monthly journal called Cenderamata [Keepsake]. Titled "Roads in the Malay Peninsula from the Beginning to the Year 1924" the teacher/author marks the starting point of "the beginning" as the emergence of roads in the peninsula.[70] The article opens "There have been roads in the Malay Peninsula only for a short time. In former times [zaman dahulu] there were only paths made by people traversing the thick jungle, which connected the state's big towns and the mining centers" (ibid., 61). The author argues that such growth was a steady progression:

> As the state grew prosperous it became necessary to have an easy means for people to travel and transport goods from one place to another. Thus those early paths were enlarged to become wide roads, and those wide roads were enlarged and improved again until they became highways like the ones we have now (ibid., 61).

However, this general story of the roads has a very specific historical beginning. The author describes how "the very first road in the federated states was done by the royal engineer during the Perak war in 1875, to connect Matang with Larut (Taiping). At that time Matang was a Perak port town and Taiping was a large mining center" (ibid., 62). The military relationship of the early roads in Perak, like the one that linked Larut and Kuala Kangsar did not figure into this history of roads in Perak. Instead the economic logic of the routes, by 1930, appeared to explain the royal engineer's interest in opening the thick jungle during wartime.[71] Increased tin mining necessarily produced overland travel.

In this 1930 story of highways, Malay political power left Perak as the jungles were opened up. The writer continues "when the federated states came under the British each developed its own roads, as at that time the states were amid huge jungles so thick and dark that the engineers who opened the roads could not see 20 hela ahead of them" (ibid., 62).

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[70] "Jalan Raya di Semanjung Tanah Melayu daripada Mula Hingga Sampai Tahun 1924", Cenderamata, 1930. The Cenderamata, published twice-yearly from 1923-1941, offered its readers practical advice, with articles on such things as the importance of parents setting a good example for their children, and the recommended tools for gardening. For more on the Sultan Idris Training College, see chapter two, note 118.

[71] Written in the article as both "engineer diraja" and parenthetically as "royal engineer."

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The author then turns to the reader, and remarks "surely we can imagine how difficult it was for them to open those highways" (ibid., 62). The writer imagines the reader can still see, but no longer remember, the old jungle paths of before. Like the engineers that cannot peer through the thick jungle, the past becomes shrouded precisely as the highway makes another story visible. What the highway opens is British Malaya itself. The writer describes how the first motorcar's arrival changed the relationship to the roads: "because of that the distances decreased" and the placement of white posts by the roadside enabled people to drive at night. The roads made a Malaya where "in the present one can drive a motor car from the island of Penang to Singapore" (ibid., 62). The north-south trunk road offered a linear relationship via land that linked the old entrepot towns off the peninsula's coast once reachable only by ship. Cars driving from Penang to Singapore passed Kuala Kangsar on their way elsewhere, and the whole of Perak itself shrank in the frame of a history that necessarily reached beyond any one state.

The difference brought by the Malayan roads invited this regular looking back to an unfamiliar past. In 1926, Ipoh's Times of Malaya reported the reminiscences of G.A. LeFroy, who served from 1882-1896 as the head of the Perak Public Works Department. Subtitled "Days When Perak Had No Roads" the article asserts "There must be few men alive today who knew Perak when it possessed no roads. Mr. LeFroy had a hand in making the first roads in the State and in introducing the trigonometrical survey."[72] The end of the old problems brought something recognizably new. Also in 1926, a similar tone of return and disbelief described the differences brought about by Malaya's roads:

> If an old States hand, like a re-embodied spirit, revisits Malaya in 1926, the first thing that strikes him is that the country has shrunk. One used to think of the native States as a pretty wide territory, sprinkled over sparsely with a few Europeans here and there, centred round a district office, or more or less isolated on an estate or a mine ... To-day the country is geographically larger inasmuch as the 'U.M.S.'

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[72] "An Old Perak Man; Days When Perak Had No Roads," Times of Malaya, 19 July 1926, page 7. As Swettenham put it at the 1903 durbar: "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 accomplishments of scientific administration." In Selangor Secretariat 127/1934, "Resident General's Report on the First Ruler's Conference held in Kuala Kangsar," Proceedings of the Durbars Held in 1897, 1903 and 1927, FMS Printers: Kuala Lumpur, page 4.

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> [Unfederated Malay States] have been added to the 'F.M.S.,' [Federated Malay States] but essentially it has become much smaller. In fact, a great deal of the overcentralisation one hears so much of seemed to me, when I was there the other day, due to the contraction, as it were, of the physical features of the country. When your world is shrinking there are apt to be earthquakes.[73]

Malaya has fundamentally changed, but only a reembodied spirit could measure it. The corollary of this spectral old Straits hand was the Malay population, who registered the shock of the earthquakes. Malays had to be part of the breathtaking changes:

> Apart from obvious effects upon the problems of administration, the revolution in transport conditions has produced a complete change in the conditions of life of all sections of the population. I was explaining to an old Malay gentleman about telephotography. He betrayed so little surprise that I thought I had failed to make him understand what I meant. I said so, but he replied: 'When the Kreta Api [train] first came, I was astonished; and when later the Kretah motah [motorcar] arrived I was surprised. Then I saw an aeroplane, and now nothing will surprise me.' Everyone moves about; everyone reads newspapers.[74]

These changes were beyond the grasp of the those who remembered what Malaya might have been like before. They were all moving about, they were all involved, they knew about it through the newspapers. These dynamics made the past seem dangerous, and perhaps frightening. A 1935 Federated Malay States crime report recalled

> the country was less developed; the prevalence of jungle along main roads which were narrow and torturous gave much more scope for highway robbery, an offence extremely rare nowadays to-day it is difficult to realize that in 1909 the main roads between Ipoh and Kampar and Ipoh and Kampong Gajah were dotted with temporary block houses built of attap wherein Sikh police were stationed to deal with the highway robbery menace.[75]

The roads reminded the writer of former police problems, that made the past seem remote.

The motorization relentlessly shrinking Malaya brought Europe ever nearer. An article in British Malaya called "Motoring in Malaya: A Glance from the Past to the Future" notes that cars had been imported into Malaya since 1900, and the first organization

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73 "Other Times, Other Ways," British Malaya, June 1926, page 46.

74 Ibid., page 46. Such cliches beared repeating, and the same magazine 11 years later ran: "it is certainly causing consternation among the natives all around who were getting used to the white man's weird inventions. But, as an old Haji said to me, nothing as extraordinary as this K'reta ribut [storming cart] was ever dreamt of. Now he won't be surprised at anything the white Tuans bring into the land." "Early Motoring in Malaya," British Malaya, February 1937, page 235.

75 "Report on the State of Crime and the Administration of the Police Force for the Year 1931, Supplement to the F.M.S. Government Gazette," 1935, page 2.

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devoted to them was the Perak Motor Union, founded in 1907.[76] In 1923, 18,000 motor vehicles were registered, increasing to 50,000 by 1933 (ibid., 302). The appearance, confederation, and continual increase of cars lent them to such precise figures. British Malaya concluded that in the Malaya of 1936 "Now a car is essential for the European" (ibid., 302). Looking further ahead, cars might really be capable of connecting Europe and Malaya in a single, traversable link: "It is probable within a few years that he will be able to motor from Singapore to London" (ibid., 303). Roads are historical but they help remind people of history's end, that nothing will surprise them anymore. The roads were proof of Perak's progress, and gave the sense that one was traveling in space without a history, before which travel was an impossibility.

Highway robbery

To think about Kuala Kangsar is to consider the roads that radiate out from it, the time required in moving to someplace else. A 1962 history of Ipoh notes that in the 1880s

> no overland route (feasible for the conveyance of passengers and goods) existed between Kinta and the other districts in the West, such as Kuala Kangsar and Larut. The traveller from Kinta to Kuala Kangsar was obliged to travel downstream to Teluk Anson, catch the government-subsidised steamship to Penang, tranship there for Larut and then travel overland from Port Weld to Kuala Kangsar. This journey could occupy the best part of a fortnight.[77]

In 1888, just 12 years after the Perak war, the Taiping Omnibus Company offered service between Taiping and Kuala Kangsar, departing every morning at 7 and arriving at 11.[78] The horse-drawn buses secured the route opened earlier for the military. Traveling south was a different matter, and the Gazette reported "notice is hereby given that the hill bridle-path from Ipoh to Kwala Kangsa is unsafe for horses on the Kinta as well as on the Kwala Kangsa side, and that persons riding along it do so at their own risk."[79] One could go

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[76] "Motoring in Malaya: A Glance from the Past to the Future," British Malaya, April 1936.
[77] Desmond Tate and Chai Hon Chan, Ipoh: The Town that Tin Built, Phoenix Communications: Kuala Lumpur, 1962, page 14.
[78] Perak Government Gazette, 1888.
[79] Perak Government Gazette, 1888.

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overland between Larut and the river on a regular schedule, but travel elsewhere entailed chance.

Traveling meshed with a new world of local newspapers. In 1894, when the Perak Pioneer was first published in Taiping, the newspaper agonized about crime and travel, and these were the topics the Pioneer stressed in regard to Kuala Kangsar. A short-lived column called "Kuala Kangsar News" records how the roads made the area seem dormant: "This sleepy district has nothing much to show in the way of mining enterprise but still hope is not quite dead in the breasts of some few Chinese at Salak, Padang Bala, Kati, Kantan, Plang, and one or two other places."[80] Another similarly ephemeral Pioneer column, the "Kuala Kangsar Monthly Report," records in the same year that "Numerous robberies and thefts occur on the Kuala Kangsar-Kinta road, between Salak and Choumor, and it is very difficult to detect or arrest the offenders when crime is committed in this vicinity, where there are many miles of lonely road, bordered on each side by thick jungle, and with police stations far apart."[81] "Sleepy" Kuala Kangsar held inside of it criminals difficult to arrest or even detect, the "lonely" road itself suggesting something ominous.

The road's danger brought unfamiliar appearances since the local inhabitants were capable of deceiving those who traveled its distance. In 1896 the state engineer was the victim of a "gang robbery" in the Kota Lama area outside of Kuala Kangsar: "It appears as his boy was conveying his master's things from Kinta to Kuala Kangsar in a bullock cart and just as he approached Kota Lama a party of five Malays, disguised as Chinese, attacked him and stole the hats."[82] Malays working the road might try to appear as Chinese, but apparently they retained something that gave them away. They perhaps also worked in collusion with the local leaders charged with policing the remote areas of Perak, and a week later the Pioneer reported

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80 Perak Pioneer, 2 August 1894.
81 Perak Pioneer, 4 August 1894.
82 Perak Pioneer, 12 December 1896.

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> The Kuala Kangsar police have so far been unsuccessful in their attempt to break up the gang that is giving so much trouble and annoyance to travellers between Kuala Kangsar and Kinta. There is no doubt whatever that these miscreants are abbetted a great deal by the people residing in the locality, and one or two of the outrages were perpetrated immediately opposite the penghulu's house.[83]

The "sleepiness" of Kuala Kangsar district held Malays who acted in ways that were almost unrecognizable; and the penghulu meant to replace the colonial military in Kota Lama did not provide security.[84] Traveling to Kinta, colonial officials could have encounters with Malays that were not supposed to be.

Certain dangers of travel proved ephemeral and such stories of highway robbery in the Pioneer did not last. When the Pioneer reported a "Reign of Terror" between Kinta and Kuala Kangsar, one where "Armed bands hold the road, and even small kampongs have been successfully attacked. Murders are committed almost daily" letter writers later questioned the newspaper's judgment.[85] Just three years after they started, such stories in the Pioneer ceased, much like the Colonial Office's declining interest in Perak just a few short years after fighting the Perak War that founded road building in Kuala Kangsar. The road experience in Perak, uneventful and undramatized, changed the relationship of Kuala Kangsar as a safe place for travellers moving between the tin areas of Larut and Kinta. The replacement for the highway robbery narrative was one describing the construction of yet more roads.

Robbery was a threat from outside the colonial bureaucracy, but the achievement of a network of roads elicited self-conscious delight within it. The roads were known as good roads, making the project a proper one: "Mr. Caulfield, the State Engineer, is able, with

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83 Perak Pioneer, 19 December 1896.

84 Perhaps the trouble was in not treating the Malays of the area as they were supposed to, and the Pioneer lamented: "A detective of Kuala Kangsar while passing through Kota Lama Kiri was set upon by a couple of rowdies, in all probability members of the gang that is responsible for the robberies perpetrated in that vicinity, and severely handled. The mata-mata glap had his head smashed. They were fined $25 each by the magistrate which is, in our opinion, a totally inadequate sentence for the brani of these people, thus bearding the lion. A touch of the cat would have produced a far better effect. We have noticed that a great deal of indulgence is shewn to the Malays of Kuala Kangsar district, and wonder what the reason can be that the people of this district, even the budmashes, are dearer to the heart of the Government than those in other places. So long as this partiality lasts that they will continue to rob people and break their heads with impunity is not to be gainsaid." Perak Pioneer, 6 January, 1897.

85 Perak Pioneer, 21 March 1896.

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justifiable pride, to point out that Perak roads have become widely celebrated for their alignment and condition."[86] Given the straight, smooth surfaces, pride was justified through someone else's acknowledgment of the accomplishment. Yet the exactness of Perak's roads suggested extravagance, and a measure of defensiveness crept into their description, for "I have perhaps referred to these roads at greater length than is necessary, but they are important works, and when completed our expenditure on the construction of main roads may cease for awhile."[87] Too much might be said about the roads, and these discussions hint of a desire for a moment when the bureaucracy need not speak of the roads anymore.

Kuala Kangsar was part of these administrative plans because of its strategic location where the main road crossed the Perak river. The town marked a junction on the way to someplace else, "the pontoon bridge over the Perak River at Kuala Kangsar" critical because it forms "an important link on the main trunk road through the State from Province Wellesly to Selangor."[88] This important intersection, however, fell outside of Kuala Kangsar town proper. When the Public Works Department conceived of a plan in 1905 to improve the pontoon bridge that crossed the Perak River, they argued that they could "give an impetus to the town of Kuala Kangsar if this means of communication were set up there, instead of four miles away."[89] The bridge itself could be likened as a "means of communication," expressing something that Kuala Kangsar might miss in its present location. But the positioning of the road suggested Kuala Kangsar had nothing intrinsic that could not be bypassed.

The roads themselves, as locations, became an impetus. The movement registers in land records, as the frontage to roads from Kuala Kangsar is alienated into smaller and smaller plots at the close of the nineteenth century. In Kuala Kangsar, land records mark

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86 "Reports on the Protected Malay States for 1895; Roads" page 13.
87 "Perak Annual Report 1896; Roads, etc," page 16.
88 "Reports on the Protected Malay States for 1898, Roads and Bridges."
89 "Perak Administration Report for the Year 1905, Kuala Kangsar," page 5.

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increased commercial activity around road frontage, especially off the highway to Ipoh, as the land increased in value.[90] A Kuala Kangsar report for 1907 argues that

> the great want of the district is improved means of communication. There are only 64 miles of metalled cart road in the district, which is one of the largest in Perak. If the proposed road from Kuala Kangsar to Parit is put in hand in 1909, it will prove of immense benefit to the district, opening up thousands of acres to mining and agriculture.[91]

Again the roads are regarded not as a means of transport but rather as a means of communication, one whose message is mining and agriculture. What Swettenham engineered and termed the "Perak system of road-making" allowed for

> the opening of the country and the opportunity--quickly seized--of putting up small native houses in the middle of a few acres of good land, on the side of a track which was almost certain to become a great highway. Malays, Chinese, and Indian, but specially Malays, were thus induced to take a large interest in the earlier stages of development. A bridle road was no sooner completed than small houses, plantations, and fruit and vegetable gardens sprang up along its whole length. When funds were available and the traffic showed that the road was proving its use, it was widened and metalled, villages sprang up beside it, and all the land served by the road appreciated in value.[92]

The message was translatable as a story for the new Singapore Malay Paper Utusan Melayu.[93] "A New Town in Ipoh, Perak," notes the development's surprise

> Apparently a new town has just risen near Ipoh Perak that is to one side of the road to Gopeng and Tambun. Sixty houses have been completed and occupied by people there. There are 400 more that are in the midst of construction, a quarter of which are near to the wide roads between them. Many people are astonished to see the speed with which this became a town given that before it was only marshland.[94]

The Perak roads do not connect locations as much as they create space through a powerful attraction. Swettenham's plan was Utusan's surprise, the astonishment that new settlements in Perak could spring up so fast. The messages the roads provided were legible and readily transmitted to Malays. These kinds of description became familiar in the new possibilities for visiting Kuala Kangsar.

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90 See especially the land-grant registrations between 1894-1920 in Entry in Mukim Register Kota Lama Kiri, Pejabat Tanah Daerah Kuala Kangsar.

91 "Perak Administration Report for the Year 1907, Kuala Kangsar," page 6.

92 Frank Swettenham, British Malaya, George Allen and Unwin: London, 1906, page 239.

93 For more on the Malay press, see chapter four.

94 Utusan Melayu, 28 December, 1907.

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Roads in the royal town

The increased expanse of Perak brought about by the road network contracted the grandeur of Perak's royal town on the bank of the Perak River. In 1904, the Pioneer described quaint Kuala Kangsar by noting "But the little town itself! Here lies the site for the true federal capital."[95] The little town's renown was as a bedroom community, and the Pioneer defined it as a place that "maintains pride of place as the residence of the Sultan" (ibid.). In growing Perak, only the royalty seemed prominent in Kuala Kangsar, and this caused problems. A visitor noted in the Pioneer, "the Anak Rajah [problem of the royal children] is not to be solved altogether by an attempt at encouraging Malay art, or football, nor even by the projected school for the sons of Rajahs."[96] As for the rest of Kuala Kangsar

> The population is largely Malay and thriving gardens and horses abound. The ubiquitous rikisha is establishing itself, and is treated with all possible scorn from a boat using population, who indeed do not hide their scorn for all but Malays, for in the Kuala Kangsar district only did we find rude Malay youths.

Kuala Kangsar appeared "largely Malay" though its population was largely not so, and these were stubborn Malays oriented toward the river and insolent perhaps because of it.[97] Perak's Malay royalty in Kuala Kangsar, taught with varying degrees of success things like art, sports, and rikisha riding, appeared oddly stationary traveling by boat.

Palace events packed in travellers, their great numbers crowding out Kuala Kangsar's own. In 1907 Kuala Kangsar hosted Straits governor John Anderson to witness the installation of the new Raja Bendahara. The Pioneer claims

> Never in the history of Perak had so distinguished a gathering assembled to witness an Installation ceremony. In the throne room His Highness the Sultan took his seat in front of the Singasana (throne). On his right there sat Sir John Anderson, Miss

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95 "Kuala Kangsar," Perak Pioneer, 8 November 1904.

96 "Kuala Kangsar," Perak Pioneer, 8 November 1904.

97 In 1911 Kuala Kangsar town had 38 Europeans, 24 Eurasians, 712 Malays (427 Male, 285 female), 788 Chinese (663 Male, 125 Female), 666 Indian (516 male, 150 female) and 11 others. An almost all-male town. The Census of the Federated Malay States: 1911: Review of the Census Operations and Results, Darling and Son: London, 1911, page 98.

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> Anderson, and Mrs. Birch; while Sir William Taylor (who arrived only a few minutes before the ceremony) and Mr. EW Birch sat on his left. His highness the Sultan and the three high British officials mentioned above wore white uniform and the decorations of the order of St Michael and St George.[98]

The VIP guests all had their positions around the throne of Perak, including J.W.W. Birch's son and his wife. The problem with this concentration of visitors in Kuala Kangsar was that the town had insufficient means to transport them around. The Pioneer lamented, "When everything went off with such success and eclat in connection with this memorable function, it was indeed a pity that the vehicular conveyances available in Kuala Kangsar were wholly inadequate to deal with the very heavy influx of visitors."[99] The infrastructure of Kuala Kangsar proved unable to serve its crush of visitors.

The struggle to transport a distinguished audience led the next year to gain efficiency through ceremonial concentration. Another throng arrived for what the Pioneer called "an auspicious triple event viz the installation of Raja Abdul Jalil, the eldest son of the Sultan as Raja Muda, the election of Che Wan, son and heir of the late Datoh Panglima Kinta, to the position held by his father, and the wedding of a younger son of His Highness to his cousin, a daughter of Rajah Ahmad."[100] The arrangements for the multiple festivities were "in the hands of practically an European Committee" who were "all pucka ful and pageant lovers," and promised "a week of intense gaiety and good cheer as well as plenty of fun and frolic." The intensity promised included football matches at the Malay Residential School, fireworks, a bull fight, "the marriage," and a procession of 27 elephants led by "European motor cars."[101] Afterward the Pioneer reported that the festivities have

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98 In Anderson's speech he pointed out that "The office to be filled by his eldest son, is one of the oldest and most honoured posts which has remained in abeyance during many years, in fact during the reign of the present ruler. During the period it has remained in abeyance, Perak has changed beyond all knowledge ... his highness has administered the State during the past 30 years prior to which it had no history. It is now in the fortunate postion of having a history of achievements in art, progress and peace which are unparalleled." Perak Pioneer, 26 February 1907.

99 Perak Pioneer, 26 February 1907.

100 "Local & General," Perak Pioneer, 11 March 1908.

101 "Festivities at Kuala Kangsar," Perak Pioneer, 7 April 1908.

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> just been celebrated at the pretty little town of Kuala Kangsar. This place, which is usually deplorably quiet, has been stirred to unusual life. The streets have been thronged with Malay beauties in their picturesque garments, and almost dangerous with a multitude of motor cars.[102]

Privately-owned motorcars driven in from elsewhere meant Kuala Kangsar did not have to provide its own transportation. But it also created a new danger to traffic management, as if Kuala Kangsar was too small to fit both Malay beauties and European cars on its streets.

Like these guests, the Sultan left and returned to Kuala Kangsar via motorcar in serial fashion. This process, initially at least, raised concerns in the royal town. When Sultan Idris went to visit King George in 1911, the Pioneer reported "there is a silly talk going around the bazaar, especially amongst the Sultan's own subjects, to the effect that his highness is not likely to return to the state after his trip."[103] But the scenes of arrival and departure, like such rumors, themselves offered a relationship to the Sultan. After a reception in 1911, the Pioneer described his departure: "The inspection over, His Highness got into his handsome car and drove to the Astana, preceded and followed by his body-guard of 12 men in their gay uniform. The Raja Muda followed in another, when the crowds which had assembled to see their ruler back, began to disperse."[104] The ease for others in Perak to come to Kuala Kangsar matched the Sultan's ability to leave. A "public" could be described in Kuala Kangsar via participation in these departure scenes. In 1911 the Pioneer reported a "Motor Service to Lenggong," in which "Passengers have now the facility to travel from Kuala Kangsar to Lenggong and 'vice versa' more quickly and at less expense. Mr. Finch's motor service is indeed a boon to the travelling public in these parts."[105] The traveling public moved with the advent of motorized transport, moving about from place to place in the manner, if not the fashion, of the Sultan.

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102 "Festivities at Kuala Kangsar," Perak Pioneer, 7 April 1908.

103 "H.H. the Sultan," Perak Pioneer, 13 May 1911. The newspaper included that on this trip "the Sultan, it would appear, travelled incognito."

104 "Reception of His Highness the Sultan of Perak," Perak Pioneer, 28 July 1911.

105 "Motor Service to Lenggong," Perak Pioneer, 12 August 1911.

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The Pioneer reported these movements, of lavish or mundane occasions, as often the only news of the Sultan to appear in the paper. In 1912, they announced "HH Sultan of Perak and his wife, Raja Permeisuri, arrived at Ipoh by motorcar yesterday from Kuala Kangsar. His Highness was apparently in the best of health and spirits. His last visit was made five years ago. He is residing with Dato Sri Adika Raja."[106] The same trip was covered in the Malay press, and Utusan Melayu notes that "because His Highness liked his stay in Ipoh so much, he has an interest in building a palace in the town so he can always travel there."[107] This particular interest in the mundane travels of the Sultan ended, as forever did such detailed newspaper coverage of Kuala Kangsar, with the last issue of the Perak Pioneer on 4 July 1912. With other places to go the interest to stay in Kuala Kangsar declined.

In 1916 Sultan Idris died. His successor, Sultan Jalil [r. 1916-1918], followed the same pilgrimage trail to Ipoh. The Times of Malaya, an Ipoh newspaper, highlighted the journey in an article headlined "The Sultan in Ipoh; Arrival by Motor-Car Yesterday":

> H.H. Sultan Abdul Jalil, Sultan of Perak, arrived in Ipoh by motor-car from Kuala Kangsar yesterday afternoon and motored straight to the Datoh Sri Adika Rajah's house in the Malay Settlement.
>
> As is generally known, His Highness has come to Ipoh for the Empire Day celebrations.
>
> H.H. the Sultan was accompanied in the car by his A.D.C. Raja Abdul Rashid, while his Private Secretary, Mr. H. Velge, and the suite travelled by train.
>
> It may be mentioned that the bodyguard, comprising a duffadar [petty officer] and twelve sowars [horsemen], also travelled by train, but they have not brought their horses with them, which is a matter for regret, as it would have added considerably to the military part of to-morrow's celebrations if they had been mounted.
>
> This is His Highness' first official visit to Ipoh as Sultan, and he may rest assured that he will receive a most hearty welcome from every section of the community.[108]

To be part of the Empire Day the Sultan had to leave town. Sultan Jalil's journey from Kuala Kangsar did not require the attendance of his bodyguard, traveling separately without their horses on the train. The road to Ipoh appeared safe enough to travel without

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106 Perak Pioneer, 8 June 1912.

107 "Yang Mahamulia Sultan Perak di Ipoh," Utusan Melayu, 13 June 1912.

108 "The Sultan in Ipoh; Arrival by Motor-Car Yesterday," Times of Malaya, 23 May 1916. The Times of Malaya & Planters' & Miners' Gazette was first printed in 1904, at the time the only English newspaper outside the Federal capital or the Straits Settlements.

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guards or his private secretary. Like everyone else, by 1916 the Sultan's safety in travel could not be guaranteed by bodyguards.

Just driving through

Along with the familiar image of the Sultan's car, the roads in Perak produced figures and statistics. Amid the expanding road network of 1908, Dennys Dictionary of British Malaya notes "the very central position of Kwala Kangsa" and the statistics that described it:

> Excellent metalled carriage-roads connect Teluk Kertang, Matang, Thaiping, Kamunging, and Kwala Kangsa, while from this last centre 50 miles of bridle-road have completed towards the northern limit of the state; a road 150 miles in length joins Kwala Kangsa with the Eastern boundary at Ulu Bernam, while a branch one of 24 miles runs from Tapa to Teluk Anson. These roads are all graded to nothing steeper than 1 in 20, and will be converted into cart roads as the traffic justifies the increased expenditure.[109]

The numbered terrain brought challenges in driving that increased the desire for expansion. In 1908, the state's administration report notes that "most of the sharp bends in the roads throughout the state were eased or removed to the great convenience of motorists."[110] The "completion" that Dennys mentioned meant the ability to leave Kuala Kangsar via road and reach any extremity of the state. By 1911 "the bridle paths of the District were improved, and the District Officer reports that it will shortly be possible to ride or bicycle without difficulty from Kuala Kangsar to the boundry with Lower Perak on the one hand and from Kuala Kangsar to Kuala Plus on the other."[111] Bicycling the gently graded roads removed the difficulty from travel over the breadth of the district, one that the measurements meant to specify and to make accessible.

From the increased road mileage, movement itself became a statistical interest. The 1922 census, the first with the expansive title Census of British Malaya, was also the first

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[109] N.B. Dennys, A Descriptive Dictionary of British Malaya, London and China Telegraph Office: London, 1908, page 298.
[110] "Perak Administration Report for the Year 1908; Kuala Kangsar," page 23
[111] "Perak Administration Report for the Year 1910; Kuala Kangsar; Bridle Paths," page 8.

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"made to deal with the population of British Malaya as a whole."[112] The census takers were concerned with movement, and not just of the newly-arriving Chinese and South Asian populations, whose "immigration and emigration have almost entirely altered the constituents of each age group" (ibid., 61). Malays came from Java and Sumatra, and "from these two islands a steady stream of immigrants pours into Singapore, Johore, and West Coast of the Federated Malay States," people who could also return: "the fall in the price of rubber in the autumn of 1920 not only checked the flow of immigration but drove many settlers, who were dependent on their small holdings of tappable rubber, back to their native islands."[113] The census-takers reveled in the challenge of tracking the highly mobile population.

Given the great mobility in the new British Malaya, peninsular Malays seemed static. In comparing the movement of the indigenous population, the Census notes

> it is clear from the above figures that the amount of interstate migration among Malays is practically negligible. The Malay peasant is conservative in the extreme, and the construction of roads and railways and greater ease and rapidity of communication have not made him eager to try his fortune outside his native state. In any of the UM [Unfederated Malay] states one may meet hundreds of Malays who have never travelled more than 20 miles from their own home, and though the younger generation is more adventurous than its elders and more desirous of seeing the world, the great majority of the Malays still live and die not merely in the state, but in the village in which they were born (ibid., 100).

From the perspective of the census, to remain in a village was a mistake. In Perak the stationary Malays had at least given up one thing, river travel. Modern transport saved time and effort: "But the multiplication of roads, the opening of railways and the hired motor car have altered all that and the modern Malay performs in two hours a journey which cost

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[112] This was the first census headquartered in Singapore, and with this expansion the census area shrunk considerably: "there can be no doubt that the statistics of a population relatively so small as that of British Malaya are more useful when shown in one than in seven separate reports," Census of British Malaya 1921 (The Straits Settlements, Federated Malay States, and Protected States of Johore, Kedah, Perlis, Kelantan, Trengganu and Brunei), Waterlow and Sons: London, page v. Malaya had also lost its complexity, because "4. British Malaya is only 56,602 square miles in area, and there is little difference in climate between the various states. The great diversity of races and languages of the Indian Empire, with its area of over 1,800,00 square miles, is not found here," ibid., page 2.

[113] Ibid., page 20. Kuala Kangsar district was among those with heavy immigration, in 1911-1921 increasing in population by 37 percent, its total population of 76,743 comprising 47,458 males and 29,285 females. Kuala Kangsar town, now the sixteenth largest in the Federated Malay States, had 41 Europeans, 24 Eurasians, 941 Malays, 1378 Chinese, and 968 Indians, ibid., page 160.

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his father three days labourious paddling," though "Twenty years ago the volume of traffic on them was considerable" (ibid., 144). The end of their past on the river meant the Malays might join the future moving on the road.

Cars emerged in their ubiquity as an icon of modern Malaya. The Malay journal Suara Perniagaan [the voice of Trade] in 1919 advertised "the famous sarong with the "Motor" trademark," featuring the image of a car stamped onto the fabric to distinguish it on the market.[114] Cars themselves signaled the presence of consumers. A trade pamphlet in 1920 advised "The British motor-car manufacturer who desires fresh fields for the expansion of business could find no better territory for his operations than the Malay peninsula."[115] In 1926, the Times of Malaya headlined the fruits of this expansion as a: "Motor Car 'Boom;' New Showrooms in Ipoh; Cars for All Pockets and Tastes; H.H. the Sultan of Perak's Latest Purchase."[116] The Sultan's choice of a two-seater Austin sports car advertised his immediate interest in the proper vehicle: "His Highness the Sultan of Perak, who has a partiality for cars of this description, was so taken up with this model that he purchased it right away."[117] The enormous wealth of the mid-1920s in Perak made possible a huge expansion in the presence of cars in the rubber and tin areas surrounding Kuala Kangsar.[118] The Sultan himself as consumer of the latest models advertised the fulfillment of new desires.

As the Times noted, the Sultan of Perak figured as a prominent consumer of automobiles, the recipient and spender of the state's wealth. In 1925, The Automobile

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[114] See for example the front cover of Suara Perniagaan, 6 October 1919.

[115] Trade and Commerce, Malay States Information Agency: London, 1920, page 10. The capacity to move was itself the proof of Malaya's modernity: "although as yet only in her early commercial infancy, and with all of her 4,000,000 population--except half of one per cent,--Asiatic, British Malaya enjoys a per capita value of external trade exceeded only by New Zealand." In A Review of the Trade of British Malaya in 1928, Great Britain Department of Trade: London, 1929, page 4.

[116] "Motor Car 'Boom,'" Times of Malaya, 7 September 1926.

[117] At the exhibition in Kuala Lumpur where Sultan Iskandar saw the new Austin, "the two pillars on either side of the entrance each carried a map of the Malay peninsula through which a white line was drawn indicating the course taken by the Chevrolet car when it made its famous Prai to Singapore run in 13 hours and 54 minutes," ibid.

[118] Lim Teck Ghee describes how estate wealth in particular was increased through a restriction of rubber production primarily handicapping smallerholders. See Lim Teck Ghee, Peasants and Their Agricultural Economy in Colonial Malaya 1874-1941, Oxford University Press: Kuala Lumpur, 1977, chapter 5.

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Guide of Malaya described Kuala Kangsar as "where H.H. the Sultan of Perak has his headquarters. The situation on the river is remarkably fine and taking into account the handsome places and residences located on the high ground Kuala Kangsar may well claim to be the 'gem' of Malaya."[119] To the Guide, Kuala Kangsar was but one stop on the "peninsular trunk road, Penang to Singapore."[120] Those who could use the trunk road appear in the Guide's main section in a list of all the motor cars owned in Perak, identified by owner, by number plate, by type of vehicle, and whether their car was for hire. This list stretches for over fifty pages, placing all of the vehicle owners in Perak in the same series.[121] These car owners in Perak were federated together, with their organizational trappings specific to the state's royalty. The Guide describes the Perak Motor Union's special badge, surrounded by the crown marking it as an Associate of the Royal Automobile Club, one in which "the badge represents a 'Kris' (a Malay weapon) lying on the flag of the State of Perak. The flag is white, yellow and black which signifies, it is said, white for the Almighty, yellow for the Sultan, and, last and least, black for the People" (ibid., 569). The Sultan, however, traveled under his own sign. A 1926 administrative dispatch, "Car for the Sultan of Perak," requests instructions "as to correct coat-of-arms, or other mark, to be placed on the car."[122] Only the Sultan's car was different from the others identifiable by their presence in the Automobile Guide.

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[119] Full title: Automobile Guide of Malaya 1925 in which is Incorporated the Year Book of Penang Automobile Club Perak Motor Union Selangor Automobile Association and which outlines the development of Aviation and Broadcasting in British Malaya, Compiled by Broughton Richmond, C.A. Ribeiro & Co., Ltd.: Singapore, 1925, page 495.

[120] The Automobile Guide describes the directions to Kuala Kangsar from Taiping in the following intricate detail: "59 Taiping take the main street to the South and about half a mile out of town turn to the left on road for private cars (hire cars barred) see signboard. 62 1/2 cross railway. 65 turn to left--Police Station at cross roads. 71 pass under railroad. 73 cross railway. 73 3/4 pass through Padang Rengas. 79 3/4 cross railroad go straight. 81 turn to left at Kuala Kangsar at first road beyond main building where cannon stands outside. 84.8 cross Perak River on pontoon bridge. 89 Salak. 90 pass under railroad. 94 Sungei Siput. 100 1/2 pass under railroad. 103 Chemor. 112 turn to left, cross railroad then turn to right. 115 Ipoh," ibid., page 99.

[121] In 1925 there were 82 car owners listed in Kuala Kangsar, a plurality of whom were Malay (guessing through names Malays owned 33, Chinese 23, Indians 11, Eurasians 1, Europeans 14). Precisely 32 of these 82 cars registered in Kuala Kangsar were used for hire, and similar lists were offered for motor lorries and for motor cycles.

[122] Colonial Office 717/50/3277, "Car for Sultan of Perak," 9 February 1926.

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Counting and identifying the cars was only part of a new project of measurement. The arrival of these motor cars changed the discussion of the roads themselves, from measuring mileage to that of measuring vehicular traffic.[123] The perception that high numbers of cars moved through Perak produced amazement. The Perak State Administration Report for 1925 records that

> There has been an extraordinary heavy increase in the traffic carried by the roads in the State, and the traffic census has revealed astonishing figures--increases of 130 per cent on the trunk road approaching Taiping, 200 per cent between Ipoh and Chemor, and 200 per cent on the Bruas-Sitiawan Road.[124]

The periodical Malayan Motorist reported that in a period of four months in 1933 97,500 vehicles used the Iskandar and Belanja bridges over the Perak river, 24,500 paying toll and 73,000 crossing for free.[125] The volume of traffic meant Malaya had sophisticated problems. Malayan urban areas, with their vehicles, were described with other modern cities: a guide to a conference on modern town planning and housing held in Ipoh in 1927 argued "the extraordinary changes and difficulties in modern cities due to increasing motor transport are only beginning in the Federated Malay States. The growth of motor vehicles in Kinta from 827 (1921) to 4,141 (1926) is significant of the new conditions affecting street traffic and urban growth generally."[126] A particular understanding of Perak accumulated through its roads and in its cars.

For British men imagining a possible administrative career in Malaya, the roads promised that they would never have to leave home. A guide for prospective British civil servants in Malaya describes

> A very useful privilege conceded to officials by the Government is the loan of money to buy a car or motor cycle. Malaya has now over 3,000 miles of excellent public roads, and an unknown mileage of roads through estates and up to mines.

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[123] Between 1924 and 1928, the total mileage of metalled and gravelled roads in the Federated Malay States only increased from 2,515 miles to 2,672, while the number of motor cars tripled from 5,247 to 15,276. From C. Alexander, editor, Malayan Statistics 1928, Malayan Information Agency: London, 1929.

[124] "Perak Administration Report for the Year 1925; Roads," page 10.

[125] "AAM Official Notes & News," Malayan Motorist, June 1933, page 29.

[126] Modern Town Planning and Housing Explanation and Catalogue of Second Exhibition in British Malaya, Charles Grenier & Sons: Federated Malay States, 1927, page 72.

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> There is a very large number of cars, lorries, and motor cycles of all kinds in the country, and in this respect it is no different from Europe.[127]

Those with cars could see themselves more distinctly as "through traffic." In 1933 the Malayan Motorist argued

> The AAM [Automobile Association of Malaya] scheme for erecting signs on the Main trunk roads throughout the country from North to South (i.e. for through traffic) is progressing favourably. The general idea is that these signs, of a slightly better design than the present 'to the North' and 'to the South' signs are seen in Ipoh, will be erected at all Junctions, cross roads, and difficult points through the Towns, and on the Main road, so that Motorists passing through strange country will have no difficulty, or bother, in finding their way. It is proposed that each Branch will erect these signs in its own territory.[128]

Automobiles sealed a life for British civil servants in a smaller Malaya where they imagined being able to travel the country without difficulty or bother, the directions for reaching a destination entirely interior to the highway space itself. Malaya's colonial difference was the degree to which for some it was elsewhere but no different from being in Europe.

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[127] Cuthbert W. Harrison, Some Notes on the Government Services in British Malaya, Malayan Information Agency: London, 1929, page 34. The pleasures in the automobile were multiple: "The excellently-surfaced and well-graded roads in Malaya make motoring a pleasure, and the breeze raised by the car's motion is always grateful. Motor transport has effected an immense change for the better in the conditions of life for the dweller in the tropics, giving him change of scene whenever he wishes for it, making all his pursuits, whether at work or at play, more accessible, saving his time and his energies and generally widening his life. There is no need to be always stuck within a few miles of one's own house now that the car is available and the roads are good. Motoring has done much to dissipate that feeling of monotony which used to be somewhat in evidence in the smaller stations: almost all of them are now within reach of the larger centres of social life," ibid., page 34.

[128] "AAM Official Notes & News," Malayan Motorist, July 1933, page 63. The desires for uniformity themselves seemed to push for political rationalization, and a Malayan Motorist editorial argued: "We reiterate that if the colony and each of the states is to administer and control road traffic in that portion of Malaya's road system, the *whole* of which can be covered by a car in fourteen days, which lies within its boundaries, road traffic conditions will become impossible instead of merely unnecessarily irksome as at present." "30 Odd Thousand Private Car Owners in Malaya Today," Malayan Motorist, May 1933, page 82.

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Organizing drivers

The Malay relationship to the automobile in Perak extended from the Sultan to the more humble figure of the chauffeur (in Malay, the dreber). A series of drawings in the Automobile Guide shows the proper warning signals for motorists, as given by a figure who is clearly Malay: a male wearing a buttoned-up tunic with a black Muslim fez prominent on his head. The figure shows "right arm horizontal" to signal "slow down," "right arm waved low from rear to front" to signal "pass" and so on (Guide, 55). Though Europeans, of course, had far greater access to automobile ownership, in these instances it was the Malay who was the icon of the car driver. The stereotype of the Malay driver, in heterogeneous Malaya, became a figure of identification. As an American journalist wrote in 1930:

> At last the object of our searching eyes came--a Malay or a Javanese. Here were the people of the Malay straits and a kindred country. It would seem that the Malay is the 'gentleman of the Asiatics in Singapore', as has been reported. ... If he is a chauffeur he will wear a European pair of trousers and a coat, either white or khaki. If he is not a chauffeur, there is really no telling what he will wear or when he will wear it--or how, but the fact remains that he does wear it!?.[129]

Malays were lost in the urban space of Singapore, visible only in the European uniforms that marked them as automobile drivers.

The proximity of Malay drivers to the machines called for careful regulation, since cars maintained a private space in public. In 1930 the Motor & Cycle Directory of Malaya & Dutch East Indies reprinted a Straits Settlements enactment detailing

> 18. Driver entering into contract of service to be included within term 'labourer.' The ordinance no. 197 (labour) shall apply to contracts of service entered into by drivers licensed under this ordinance, and every such drive[r] shall be deemed to be a 'domestic or menial servant' so as to be included within the meaning assigned to the term 'labour' in that ordinance.[130]

Employers had to be reminded by law who their drivers were, that to drive was merely to serve in an employer's domestic space.

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129 "The Unanswerable Answer," Review of Malaya, February 1930, page 29.

130 Motor & Cycle Directory of Malaya & Dutch East Indies, Motor & Cycle Dealers' Union: Singapore, 1930, page 7.

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The burgeoning Malay press of the 1920s associated travel and danger, and this combination meant that automobile users needed new kinds of connections. Newspapers circulating in Kuala Kangsar came from Penang and Singapore, the largely immigrant entrepot ports that supplied the peninsula and beyond.[131] A Penang newspaper, Idaran Zaman [The Changing Age], regularly ran large advertisements for Fiat and Ford cars.[132] The Penang paper also promoted the Hotel Glam, a new place for travellers in Singapore distinguished as "a hotel owned by Muslims newly opened using electric lamps with healthy air. And the food, prepared by Muslims, is guaranteed clean and safe."[133] Idaran Zaman exclaims that such "progress is helpful!" and that the dangers of temporary accommodation for travelers, such as unclean air and food that did not meet Muslim dietary restrictions, had solutions. For Dunia Sekarang [The World Now], a racy journal published in Singapore to evade the publication controls of the Malay states, the port city was a place where one could get anything: as one of its ads promotes: "what would you like to buy? Singapore is a big city. Nearly every product in the world is sold here. If there is anything you [tuan] would like, please write a letter to us."[134] Malay drivers traveled in the decidedly cosmopolitan urban areas where they faced issues of cleanliness, safety, and choice.

Their work as drivers emerged as a newspaper topic through accidents, the motorized corollary of highway robbery. The stories identified the random danger of moving through the transport network. Utusan Melayu regularly published these reports. In 1912, under the title "Perak," they wrote: "a few days ago a bicyclist moving at great speed toward a hill in a place called Kati on the road to Lenggong ran into a motor bus,

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131 In Perak, like the other Malay states, Malay newspapers appeared sporadically, most disappearing after a few issues.

132 "Idaran Zaman--Malay Weekly Paper." A Penang weekly paper, edited by Mohd. Yunus b. Abdul Hamid and Othman Kalam, printed from 1925 to 1930. An advertisement for the paper in English shows the stretch of its readership: "Has a wide circulation throughout The Straits Settlements, Federated and Unfederated Malay States, Borneo, Sarawak, Celebes, Sumatra, Java, Siam and Colonies, Indo-China, Egypt and Hejaz. Best advertising medium for the information of Malay communities," Idaran Zaman, 12 January 1928.

133 "Kemajuan itu Berbantu!" Idaran Zaman, 19 January 1928.

134 "Apa Tuan Hendak Beli?" Dunia Sekarang, 1 October 1934.

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which cracked his skull and led to his death."[135] Accident reports identified certain people. A few months later, under the title "News from Kuala Kangsar," ran the following story: "a motor car accident occurred last week not far from town. A motor car owned by the Datoh Setia hit a Malay walking in the road. The unfortunate person was taken to the hospital and died there."[136] The Datoh Setia appeared in the news in a way he was powerless to control, and made him responsible for the fate of a person described only as "Malay." The other daily accidents of newspaper life, like drownings and crimes, were recorded according to the victim's ethnic identity: "Malay," "Chinese," "Tamil" and so on. Kuala Kangsar news in Utusan largely consisted of these reports of accidents and other problems of transportation.

Stories about accidents raised the problem of ownership and responsibility. The Times of Malaya reported in 1916 an "Exciting Street Smash in Ipoh" in the following progression

> The fore part of the overtaking car (PK507), which is said to belong to a Malay, Hadji Eusope, caught the rear right wheel of the hired car, damaging the brakeguard, but seemingly not injuring the tyre, although the full extent of the damage could not naturally be ascertained until the two cars were released, and this took a considerable time.
>
> Both cars were driven by native chauffeurs, but fortunately neither was injured.
>
> An investigation will likely be made into the affair later, to ascertain which party is responsible for the collision, which attracted a large crowd to the spot, vehicular traffic being maintained along Belfield Street with difficulty until the obstructing cars were at length freed from each other.[137]

Accidents brought attention to the native drivers and the Malay owner of car number PK507. In 1924 the Times called the frequent collisions in Perak "The Motor Peril" with the headline "Victim's Foot Amputated; 'Sais' who had only driven for three months."[138] Updating an earlier story with details of the inexperienced driver, the Times printed

> The following is a fuller account of the case in which Abdullah bin Karim, the driver of a privately owned car was convicted on a charge of causing grievous hurt

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135 "Perak; (Daripada Penulis Kita)," Utusan Melayu, 9 November 1912.

136 "Perak; Perkhabaran Kuala Kangsar," Utusan Melayu, 15 February 1913.

137 "Motor-Cars in Collision; Exciting Street Smash in Ipoh," Times of Malaya, 23 May 1916.

138 "The Motor Peril," Times of Malaya, 16 December 1924.

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> by knocking down and running over a Chinese opposite the fire brigade station on Brewster road on November 21.

In narrating the accident the newspapers focus on a particular form of identity of those involved. A 1929 Perak collision in the Times was recorded "A motor accident occurred on Saturday afternoon at the 2nd mile, Gopeng Road, when motor car no. pk. 7327 which was driven by a Malay and a car driven by a European had a collision."[139] The car's identity, and its right to be on the road, came through the number plate. Those caught in the violence of road traffic were known by similar identifiers to those carried by the cars themselves.

The cars brought opportunities. The use of motorized vehicles was not only for the living. In 1925 Idaran Zaman ran "A Means of Moving Corpses in Penang," a story that questioned "if the motorcar is proper transport for living people, why isn't it used as proper transport to move those who have died?"[140] The article argues "before we would place the corpse on human shoulders (the shoulders of the poor!) because there was no other procedure" (ibid.). By forming an association, Muslims could purchase a vehicle especially suited to transfer dead bodies to the cemetery. The means to do so, according to Idaran Zaman, was for Muslims in the area to buy a vehicle on credit. "We could get two motorcars for the price of $4000" and it could be paid for "by installments if everyone contributed one ringgit, two ringgit, five or ten ringgit or whatever they like" (ibid.). But these opportunities presented high stakes. A 1928 photograph in Majallah Guru [the teacher's magazine] shows four cars and several Malay men standing proudly outside of their workshop. The caption notes "Raja Osman Company in Raub, Pahang: motorcar and motorcycle repair owned by Malays. This company was opened on 19 January, 1927, and until now they have received many damaged motorcars that they have repaired. Who is

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139 "Motor Car Accidents, Collision on Gopeng Road," Times of Malaya, 15 October 1929. Near Kuala Kangsar, no one was safe, not even the royalty travelling without their bodyguards. In the world of accidents, the roads were not safe for anyone, even for the Royal Family of Perak: as the Times reported, "Motor Fatality at Kuala Kangsar; Raja Kamaralzaman's Mother and Child Killed; The Raja Seriously Injured," Times of Malaya, 1 November 1930.

140 "Peraturan Mengangkat Jenazah di Pulau Pinang," Idaran Zaman, 30 July 1925.

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next?"[141] The question at the end cuts two ways, asking who might be the next Malay to open a shop, and who might be the next to need those services.

The dangers for drivers meant that drivers needed associations, and Malay newspapers offered a forum where Malay drivers in control of other people's vehicles might congregate. The dangers they faced called for protection, and the form of protection taken expanded the field of association. Each issue of Dunia Sekarang, Singapore's racy newspaper, carried a small box devoted to the improvement of the Malays, written in English as "The Five Principles of the Malays" and in Malay "Lima Rukun Melayu":

> One--all Malays must study
> Two--all Malays must work, not one can be lazy
> Three--all Malays must be healthy and strong
> Four--all Malays must be tidy and energetic
> Five--Malays must engage in trade.[142]

This paper, with its concerns over Malay advancement, established a column called the Motorcar Driver's Column [Ruangan Drebar Motorkar]. In 1934 Dunia Sekarang advised its readers "This column is given freely every issue for the use of drivers [kaum drebar]. All letters and pictures received from drivers will be included. For that reason it is hoped that motorcar drivers in the peninsula will take this opportunity to earnestly write articles or stories regarding their work as drivers that they think will bring benefit."[143] The letters to Dunia Sekarang did indeed arrive from all over the peninsula, including Kuala Kangsar. A correspondent from Singapore thought of a specifically Malay position behind the wheel:

> In the Directory of Malaya page A-A there are the words [written in English] 'The Malay is often employed as a motor car driver in which profession he proves more satisfactory than most other races.' [then continued in Malay] This means that Malays who work as motorcar drivers bring greater satisfaction in that position than

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[141] Majallah Guru, June 1928.

[142] Dunia Sekarang published in Singapore from 1934-1935, edited by Suleiman bin Ahmad. It regularly ran articles concerned with Malay problems, like "What is the cause of Malay difficulties?" in "Kesusahan Melayu apa Sebabnya," Dunia Sekarang, 1 September 1934. An article "Obsolete beliefs must be erased," judged the Malay position numerically: "this is the state of Malay beliefs at the present time: 10% Islam and 90% mixed-up and old fashioned," "Kepercayaan Karut-Karut Patut di Hapuskan," Dunia Sekarang, 1 July 1935. But it also did so from the perspective of its English-languate motto, "an Illustrated Malay fortnightly newspaper devoted to amusement and worldly pleasure."

[143] "Ruangan Drebar Motorkar," Dunia Sekarang, 1 September 1934.

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> other groups. Because of that I think that if Malay drivers study and work diligently our people can progress over other groups in this profession.[144]

The directory's citation served as proof that the Malays were capable in this role, even when compared to others. Another driver's letter, from a Raja Abdullah of Kuala Kangsar, was concerned that Malays in the state of Pahang allowed too many Chinese to be drivers. The editor replies: "Malays must take a share in every kind of work and trade that exists in this Malay peninsula. Rid feelings of shyness and hesitancy. As a rule, do not violate the law. What else is to be awaited. There are not less than 5000 types of jobs and trades that await Malays."[145] The drivers are an example of possibility, of a future Malaya in which any position is open to Malays.

In the Motorcar Driver's Column the drivers became writers. Their driving and writing both raised questions of identity. They had to write carefully, and the driver's section advised that "letters should be brief, not more than one quarter of a sheet of paper."[146] Allied with Raja Abdullah, Dunia Sekarang driver-correspondents were concerned with who was driving. They wrote from Kuala Lumpur, Ipoh, Penang, and Kuala Kangsar to the Dunia Sekarang office in Singapore to encourage Malays to be drivers. But the newspaper's editors in turn were concerned about who their writers actually were. The editors asked "Why not give a correct name?" and lamented

> In the thousands of letters sent to us from every last village and hamlet throughout Malaya, we receive many from writers who are afraid to give their proper name and address. Letters written by teachers have their students' names on them. Men use women's names, half use names that have no connection to the contents, and there are also those that give false names and addresses, when checked it turns out that the name or address does not exist.[147]

The editors of Dunia Sekarang thought their correspondents were trying to deceive them by being someone they were not. For the drivers risking accidents, this was like the Chinese

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144 "Ruangan Drebar Motorkar," Dunia Sekarang, 15 October 1934.
145 "Ruangan Drebar Motorkar," Dunia Sekarang, 15 July 1935.
146 "Ruangan Drebar Motorkar," Dunia Sekarang, 15 July 1935.
147 "Mengapa Tidak Beri Nama Sebenar?" Dunia Sekarang, 15 October 1935.

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attempting to enter a profession in which they were not skilled. A letter from Tapah in South Perak to Dunia Sekarang addresses fellow drivers with a solution to these problems:

> to my friends who hold the position of motorcar driver, engine operator, or even railway employees who are Muslim, our numbers are in the thousands, many in the Malay states and because of that if we were to form a union [sharikat] solely for drivers, we can train together to expand our thinking.[148]

In Dunia Sekarang, drivers wrote from anywhere. The sharikat, or union, sought to organize the Malay drivers into a single organization, one in which they would be able to identify each other as being Malay drivers from the peninsula.

The largest such organization, the Perak Malay Drivers Association [Persatuan Drebar-Drebar Melayu Perak (PDMPK)] formed in Ipoh in 1934. Its head first head was Abdul Wahab bin Toh Muda Abdul Aziz, who held the hereditary title Datuk Panglima Bukit Gantang.[149] The institutional structure for the PDMPK was formed in London, where Abdul Wahab studied law along with other prominent Malays, including the future first Prime Minister of Malaysia, Tunku Abdul Rahman. A biography of Tunku Abdul Rahman points out that in 1927 he "conceived the idea of forming a Malay society to keep Malay students together and to promote their social activities and well-being."[150] Abdul Wahab became the third president of this "Malay Society of Great Britain" (ibid., 35). The biography tells the following anecdote about Abdul Wahab, when the Sultan of Johore visited London and joined the Society for its annual dinner:

> In his presidential speech, Enche Abdul Wahab said that he was forced to speak in English that evening as he had forgotten to use the Malay language with proficiency. The Sultan of Johore, in replying to the speech, criticised Enche Abdul Wahab saying he was surprised that any person could stand up in public

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148 "Ruangan Drebar Motorkar," Dunia Sekarang, 1 October 1934.

149 Abdul Wahab (1905-1959) was born near Sayong across the river from Kuala Kangsar, his mother the only child of Dato' Setia Bijaya Jeragan Abdul Syukor. See Kamaruddin Yaakob, Riwayat Hidup: Menteri Besar-Menteri Besar Perak Darul Ridzuan, Yayasan Perak: Ipoh, 1988, page 16. Abdul Wahab went to London from 1925-1930, worked as a lawyer in Ipoh, and in the post-war period was involved in UMNO politics and became the first Mentri Besar of Perak. According to Emily Sadka the Panglima Bukit Gantang was the territorial chief for the pass between Larut and Kuala Kangsar, but the title lapsed in 1871, not to be revived until the twentieth century. The Protected Malay States, University of Malaya Press: Kuala Lumpur, 1968, page 384.

150 Abdul Aziz bin Ishak, The Architect of Merdeka, Tengku Abdul Rahman, Tan Kah Jee: Singapore, 1957, page 33.

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> unashamed and confess that he could not speak his own language well. One may be sure that immediate measures were taken to remedy the situation (ibid., 35-6).

Other anecdotes record Abdul Wahab's disinterest in cooperating with the other Malays in London, though he was president of their society. Yet his disaffections did not preclude the idea of fraternity and organization. On his return from London he turned, among other things, to work with the drivers.

In 1931 Abdul Wahab returned to Perak and opened an office as the first Malay lawyer in Malaya. The drivers wanted what he could provide, organizational skill and legal protection. Kamarzaman Mat Tuah, a Perak school teacher, offers a vivid sketch of Abdul Wahab. He claims "surely his arrogant ways vanished after he returned to Malaya in 1930."[151] According to Kamarzaman, Abdul Wahab as a lawyer helped determine the laws forming the PDMPK and then registered them with the government. After a meeting with the drivers in Ipoh, a house was given for the PDMPK head office at number 8, Horley Street. Abdul Wahab became the head of the new organization. In an interview in 1976 with a former head of the PDMPK, Kamarzaman reports that the aims of the organization were to

> (a) demand employers give pocket money to drivers when they leave Ipoh
> (b) ask employers to prepare houses for drivers
> (c) if an accident occurs to a driver or a member of his family, employees are asked to give compensation
> (d) ask for overtime pay for work exceeding eight hours
> (e) cooperate with drivers from other states
> (f) establish a benevolent fund for drivers
> (g) help members in difficulty (ibid., 98).

The organization spread from Ipoh to include branches in Penang, Teluk Anson, Tapah, Bagan Serai, Kuala Kangsar, and elsewhere, the head office in Ipoh forming the center from which the drivers' affiliations radiated out across the peninsula. From 100 members in 1934 their numbers increased to over 1500 by 1937.[152]

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151 Kamarzaman Mat Tuah, "Haji Abdul Wahab bin Toh Muda Abdul Aziz, Menteri Besar Perak Yang Pertama," in Adnan Haji Nawang, editor, Perak Dahulu dan Sekarang, Persatuan Muzium Malaysia: Kuala Lumpur, 1988, page 97.

152 Kamarzaman, page 99. His figures come from an incomplete log-book retained in the 1970s by Haji Cik Abidin bin Abdul Rahman called Daftar Ahli-Ahli PDMPK Tahun 1937 [List of PDMPK Members for the Year of 1937].

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The newspapers followed the activities of the drivers' associations. Most of Kamarzaman's information about the PDMPK comes from the pages of Majlis, the most famous Malay newspaper of the 1930s, renowned as an early nationalist organ.[153] Majlis was a nationalist paper because it tried to fit everyone in, making room for columns including "cafe friends," one for children, one for "news from the villages," one even called "various things." Readers in Kuala Kangsar also wanted to be included in the pages of Majlis, and the paper noted: "two or three of our Majlis readers in Kuala Kangsar who buy from our agents there have asked that we always write Kuala Kangsar news, so to raise the spirits of our readers, we shall God willing do so as long as we receive such news from the editors."[154] The drivers were like the people in Kuala Kangsar, but writing to Majlis was different from other newspapers. The Dunia Sekarang offered the drivers an address to write, but Singapore was a place where people could get anything. When Majlis included in 1937 the Drivers' Column [Ruangan Drebar], they offered a specific, political place in the Malay states to which the drivers could write.

The name of the PDMPK provided a problem for the aspirations of Majlis. The association's drivers might be too closely associated with Perak. In an editorial entitled "The Malayan Malay Drivers' Association," Majlis argued that since there are plans to open branches of the Association in Kuala Lumpur they might also "be formed in Negri Sembilan, Pahang, Pulau Pinang, and elsewhere."[155] This goal "certainly pleases Malay drivers but before the matter of establishing branches of the Malay Drivers' Association in other states, in our estimation it would be most proper should the name 'Perak' in 'The

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153 Majlis was first published in 1931, edited in its first five years by Abdul Rahim Kajai. Like Dunia Sekarang its headlines asked bluntly, "The Difficulties of Malays in the Era of Cheap Rubber" (30 June 1932), "Why are the Malays Weak?" (25 April 1935), "Where are Malays Going?" (6 May 1935), "If the Malay Language Vanishes so will the People" (16 May 1936). See also William Roff, The Origins of Malay Nationalism, University of Malaya Press: Kuala Lumpur, 1967, pages 170-174.

154 A Majlis column in 1935 reported from Kuala Kangsar "The number of motorcars, all of them taxis, can be considered numerous here." "Kuala Kangsar (from our writer)," Majlis, 24 June 1935. Kuala Kangsar had developed into a town where outsiders who arrived by train or omnibus could readily get a taxi, as could those with cash looking to leave the town for points elsewhere. Kuala Kangsar was in a series with other small towns in Perak full of empty taxis.

155 "Persekutuan driber Melayu," Majlis, 11 January 1937.

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Malay Drivers' Association in Perak" be replaced with the name 'Malaya.'" For Majlis to write about Abdul Wahab's association some changes were needed, since they wanted the organization to signify something more than just Perak, especially for an organization with branches throughout the peninsula. Though the home of the original association might be in Ipoh, only with a new name could the PDMPK spread around (what Majlis seemed to describe as) a "country."

In Majlis the drivers were writers as in Dunia Sekarang, but the PDMPK's existence ensured their letters would not come in from just anywhere. The first Drivers' Column opened with a piece entitled "a suggestion from a driver":

> Surely several suggestions put forward by writers in this paper have fallen like stones into a hole, but let me modestly offer an idea, made in agreement with my friends and colleagues who are in the Association and in the ranks of Malay drivers, who want to have a Malay drivers' column in this newspaper Majlis as there is for the Malay Pen Friends Association in the newspaper Saudara of Pulau Pinang.[156]

The driver imagines the PDMPK as an association of writers, comparable to the Pen Friends Association based in Penang.[157] The drivers could write to other drivers, but not in the anonymous fashion of the Dunia Sekarang whose correspondents could pretend to be anyone. The writer notes that "we Malay drivers now have several associations, one in Kuala Lumpur and one other in Perak, the Perak Malay Drivers' Association having spread throughout the entirety of Malaya."[158] The article continues that with the establishment of the column it will become easier for drivers "in every corner of Malay to give notices of the actions and movement of the Association." The writer then describes how drivers will get news not so much about driving but rather about associations. The editor of Majlis approved the suggestion, and promised Majlis would add a column so drivers could publicly speak to each other as people in associations they already knew.

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156 "Hidangan dari Seorang driber," Majlis, 7 December 1936.

157 The development of the Sahabat Pena Melayu is detailed in William Roff, The Origins of Malay Nationalism, University of Malaya Press: Kuala Lumpur, 1967, pages 212-221.

158 "Hidangan dari Seorang driber," Majlis, 7 December 1936.

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To be a part of the Drivers' Column required skill. Drivers could write anything in their column--"various matters of drivers and their association"--but as in writing to other newspapers they had to do so carefully. One column quoted the Malayan English press that "in the various matters of driving motor cars Malays are more skilled than Chinese (or Indians), but in working with engines Chinese are better--so says the local English language newspaper Malay Mail."[159] The response in Majlis was brief: "there might be something to what was said above about Malay drivers, but also part that is wrong. There are plenty of Malay drivers who are adept with engines and machines" (ibid.). To correct the mistaken English press the Malay drivers needed the same knowledge of technique in writing. Immediately following this exchange is another letter by a driver, offering "thanks to the editor of Majlis for the generosity of giving this space in each issue to the drivers" (ibid.). He notes that he was specially chosen to organize the material sent in by drivers to Majlis and

> because of that, I request that drivers or drivers' associations who send an article or news for this special section be brief and neat, without mistakes, and beyond that may the writing be clear and on one side of the paper only, not on both (ibid.).

Drivers writing in to Majlis needed to conceive of reports and news with brevity and clarity. The editor reminded correspondents to the column: "wait for the next issue! There are many more matters to be written by drivers requested to do so, but please remember that writing must be concise and tidy" (ibid.). Majlis driver-correspondents needed the same exactness in their column as they displayed on the road, to prove the appropriateness of their perhaps vulnerable position behind the wheel.

This same Drivers' Column also offers an historical sketch of the Malay drivers' associations in the peninsula. Majlis notes

> The oldest Malay drivers' association in Malaya is the Singapore Malay Drivers' Association. Now Johor, Perak, and Kelantan have their respective associations, the biggest with the most branches being the Perak Malay drivers under the

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159 "Pikiran Akhbar Inggeris," Majlis, 11 January 1937.

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> leadership of the respected Datoh Panglima Bukit Gantang (Tuan Haji Abdul Wahab, Malay lawyer in Ipoh).[160]

Though Abdul Wahab's organization in Perak had exceeded the organizational abilities of drivers in Singapore (as if Singapore did not require the extra-regional organizational ties of Perak), Perak did not work well as the center of such a big alliance. To the Majlis editor this offered an opportunity:

> The Perak Malay Drivers' Association has branches throughout Perak, in Selangor, in Negri Sembilan, Johor, Pulau Pinang, and elsewhere. In this city the Association's office is on Ipoh road. If the Malay drivers' associations were united then there would result greater utility and benefit for drivers. Kuala Lumpur is the center or capital for the Malay states and thus it would be proper should the headquarters of the organization be moved here (ibid.).

Abdul Wahab's association presented a problem for Majlis in Kuala Lumpur as something within the Federated Malay States (unlike Singapore or Kelantan which were under different administrative units) but not centered there. The association's growing renown raised suspicions in where it was located. Since the PDMPK had responsibilities to drivers beyond Perak it could not remain in Ipoh.

Majlis itself as a newspaper had responsibilities, and looked beyond the limited perspective of the drivers of any one particular association. The Majlis editor was concerned that the various association's names would exclude some drivers from participation in the column (an involvement that did not risk the confusion of anonymous writers to Dunia Sekarang). In an address to the whole community of drivers, the editor notes:

> I write this to remind my colleagues that my idea to open this drivers' column was not specifically for one association only (that is only for members of the Perak association or for the Selangor association) but rather my idea was open to all drivers--whether members of the Perak or Selangor associations, or even those who are not members of any association at all--they are allowed to use this column toward increasing drivers' knowledge.[161]

The column spoke to drivers who were not known to the associations, who simply by being drivers might recognize Majlis as a place to participate. The editor pointed out that

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160 "Persekutuan driber Melayu," Majlis, 11 January 1937.

161 "Terima kasih dan sedikit peringatan," Majlis, 18 January 1937.

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even if they were not members of an association, as drivers they still had a name, and this "is why the editor named this column of ours 'the Drivers' Column' and did not use the title of Perak or Selangor or anything else" (ibid.). The newspaper's responsibility to its driver-correspondents extended beyond that of the associations, though the associations marked the driver as the object of its attraction.

The drivers learned new ways to meet each other in the Majlis column. By 1925, the Federated Malay States had elaborate regulations and rules for motor traffic. The states added "special orders" particular to individual towns, mostly to regulate hire car drivers, and for the Perak town of Temoh:

> (d) Motor cars for the conveyance of passengers for hire when going North or South out of Temoh shall assemble in Temoh Station Road, opposite the Police Station, and proceed east along Temoh Station Road bearing to the left at the junction of the Temoh Station and Main Trunk Roads, if going North, and to the right, if going South, into the Main Trunk Road.[162]

Majlis specified a routine for drivers gathering in these spots. A piece called "Drivers to other districts and States" advised that "we drivers always arrive from outside districts or states to others where we are not familiar," and that to assuage feelings of separateness those local drivers should "address and befriend any of our colleagues who have just arrived."[163] Majlis wanted to detail these anonymous interactions. Left waiting for employers or other passengers, the drivers needed to know how to associate with others of whom they knew but were not familiar.

The complexity of their machines produced challenges for the Malay drivers. As drivers they were in competition with others, and driving was a means to improve the Malay position. With the associations they were united as drivers, but there needed to be more. A correspondent argued that "In the mind of the writer it has now reached the time when we Malay drivers should put forth the goal of having a place for motorcar repair," knowing "if we examine carefully there are already those drivers among us who understand

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[162] Broughton Richmond, Automobile Guide, C.A. Ribeiro: Singapore, 1925, page 499.
[163] "Drebar-Drebar ke Lain-Lain Jajahan dan Negeri," Majlis, 21 January 1937.

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the workings of motorcar engines."[164] But understanding how engines work was not the sole expertise needed. The Drivers' Column urges Malays, "to take as an example and a reminder, look at the immigrants squatting here, first they earn wages, then they own a motorcar, increasing until not long after they are able to open a motorcar repair shop" (ibid.). Malays might be better than the immigrants at driving, but the immigrants aimed beyond the position of driver. According to Majlis, Malay drivers also needed to want more.

The seriousness of their job performance offered a means to start. Majlis reminded drivers of ways to avoid traffic accidents, advice on how to negotiate unfamiliar towns, and statistics and trends in global motoring. As part of this big motoring world, the drivers deserved respect. Following a report about a deceased member of the association,

> the writer wants to add his thoughts to the illustrious pages of Majlis for the fraternity of Malay drivers in the peninsula, that we can see what interests some of our Malay youth is earning a living by becoming a motorcar operator, surely the duty undertaken by them seems a light one but if we think deeper we can understand the gravity of this line of work. Because anyone with the duty of running a motorcar is not separate from the other traffic that uses the roads. Bicycles, trishaws are in a large portion of accidents, none of which is wanted by drivers.[165]

The drivers shared the road with others who were vulnerable to the risks they took. This increased their responsibility and therefore their visibility to the Malay youth who might aspire to be like the drivers.

The drivers' duty to protect lives needed to be matched in their pay. They endured the 1930s slump in rubber and tin prices like other wage earners, but as a correspondent argued, now "the world has recovered to conditions more to one's liking. Global prosperity can be seen in the better fate of coolies in the plantations, in offices, in trains, in factories, all becoming better off but alas! Drivers must suffer a difficult lot."[166] As travellers they live in a world subject to fluctuating costs, rising beyond their means: "the

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[164] "Pikiran Seorang Drebar Melayu oleh Bunga Raya," Majlis, 25 January 1937.
[165] "Nasib Drebar-Drebar Motokar Melayu oleh Bunga Raya," Majlis, 28 January 1937.
[166] "Dunia Mulai Pulih," Majlis, 1 February 1937.

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prices of food, clothes, and furnishings increase from day to day and the wages of drivers do not budge--forced to receive the same wage that they got in the time when goods were cheap" (ibid.). Their stingy employers were like the Malay youth who looked at the drivers everyday but did not comprehend the nature of the job. This carried a subtle threat: "The men who employ drivers must be aware of their driver's livelihood, because their own safety is in the hands of those they employ and who drive them, we who always guard their personal safety and their possessions should also have our lives cared for" (ibid.). Malay drivers needed to remind employers of their capacities and the consequences of neglect. The drivers compared to all other workers but with a difference.

In the pages of Majlis they told these stories and complaints to the other drivers. They shared the domestic space of the automobile with their (often white) employers but asserted to Majlis readers their control over the vehicle. One driver wrote to offer thanks that as he drives around the Perak town of Taiping each Tuesday and Friday he sees groups of drivers reading the Drivers' Column.[167] The attention to themselves as both readers, writers, and objects of representation raised possibilities. The drivers recognized that their due social prestige (like that of Malays themselves) should be evident but was not. In a column simply subtitled "work," the correspondent reports to the Drivers' Column

> the writer has never heard or even read anywhere in press reports about our work as drivers, or that to be a driver is the best profession. On the contrary, what is heard and read is that driving is greatly looked down upon as a profession. But to this writer, driving is an important profession, since drivers protect property worth thousands and drivers protect men of renown and wealth from injury.[168]

Drivers need to remind each other of the precise stakes of their responsibilities. The writer in Majlis notes the threat that this implied to the men of renown's safety, and "if a driver does not follow his training, as well their wives and children" (ibid.). The driver going against his training

> easily can destroy property worth thousands or bring injury to the car's owner. It is hoped that drivers will not follow the above thoughts, to do so would be

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167 "Menaikkan Kebangsaan," Majlis, 15 February 1937.

168 "Pekerjaan," Majlis, 31 March 1937

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> something hated by our God. Guard oneself against thoughts of jealousy or treachery. No matter what is done by employers it is hoped that drivers will be patient. Like our Malay adage, flowers are not one bud, nor is there only one bee.[169]

As cars were more fully integrated into Malay life reminders of their formidable power were repeated in Majlis. The training to be a driver meant Malays realized this, together, as a threat each of them possessed. The thought of threatening the employer offered access to power, but what made the driver Muslim and Malay was in not carrying it out. Majlis with its Drivers' Column offered a place for drivers to share with each other the private thoughts that linked them together when they remained only as possibilities.

In the newspaper's daily measurement of speed and mechanical power the drivers careened through and away from Kuala Kangsar. One of the few Malay papers in Perak, Warta Kinta, occasionally covered the activities of the PDMPK. In January 1940, a meeting at the association's head office attracted the newspaper's attention.[170] The Brewster Road office was full of numerous prominent people from Perak, but minus the once-head of the association, Abdul Wahab. Warta Kinta notes,

> The Perak Malay Drivers' Association was founded, if we are not mistaken, in the year 1934 with the leadership of the esteemed, most important Datoh Panglima Bukit Gantang as its head. In a year or two this association of drivers went on with a strong foundation, and was able to establish branches in other states. After this the most important Datoh Panglima Bukit Gantang stepped down as the head of the Perak Malay Drivers' Association, the reasons for his doing so we do not need to elaborate in this editorial today (ibid.).

The PDMPK did not need its aristocratic patron anymore, nor did they have to explain to their readers why this might be the case. The drivers in Kuala Kangsar and elsewhere achieved new relationships without him.

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169 "Pekerjaan," Majlis, 31 March 1937. The drivers here are likened to lovers, of whom there are many fish in the sea: "Buat kata pepatah kita Melayu, kampung tak seekor bunga tak sekuntum." See Mubin Sheppard, The MBRAS Book of Over 1,600 Malay Proverbs, MBRAS: Kuala Lumpur, 1982, page 47.

170 "Persekutuan Melayu Perak mendapat semangat baru," Warta Kinta, 23 January 1940. Warta Kinta was published sporadically in Ipoh from 1937 to perhaps 1941, edited by Raja Mansor bin Raja Abdul Kadir, and according to Roff was associated with the Times of Malaya. In its short life Warta Kinta covered Kuala Kangsar via the happenings of the Perak royal family and in "news briefs" [perkhabaran pendek] that reported accidents like drownings and car wrecks.

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Road stories

The return of Malay College Old Boys, as car owners, sparked dull Kuala Kangsar. According to the Times in 1925,

> Kuala Kangsar, which is usually a quiet town, compared to its neighbours, Taiping or Ipoh, and which enjoys a quiet sleep on the seventh day of the week, was wide awake on Sunday last and on all hands there were signs of new faces and festivity. The reasons for this change in the otherwise normal existence of this pretty town in Perak was the decision which prompted the old boys of the Malay College, twenty-four years after its birth, to foregather at *alma mater* to discuss the formation of, and bring into being, an Old Boys' Association.[171]

The Old Boys drove to Kuala Kangsar from the bureaucratic postings in the various states. The Times was able to read their points of departure to Kuala Kangsar by the address of their cars: "There were about 150 past students of the College who had come to Kuala Kangsar from all parts of the Malay peninsula as was broadcast by the number-plates on the numerous cars that swelled the traffic" (ibid.). The cars at the reunion marked the realm of the Malay College into states beyond Perak, and broadcast as well that Kuala Kangsar's reach exceeded the borders of its home state.

Other means offered opportunities to participate in this private world of the graduates in their cars. Melor Kuala Lumpur [The Rose of Kuala Lumpur], a novel published in 1930, dramatized the experience of young Malay men driving about.[172] Harun Aminurrashid describes a Perak town as a place of dispersal, but does not name it: "then around this town there are several Malay villages, and in the center an extremely large and very beautiful school, that is a native school [sekolah bumiputera] that was the greatest in the state. Every year its many graduating students would leave for official posts all over" (Harun, 2). Hashim and Sulaiman are two of the school's students who leave the anonymous town for places with names, Singapore and Kuala Lumpur respectively. They

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171 "Malay College, K. Kangsar; Twenty-four Years After; Old Boys Form an Association; Sunday's Happy Reunion; Some Interesting Remniscences," Times of Malaya, 19 March 1929.

172 Harun Aminurrashid, Melor Kuala Lumpur, Pustaka Melayu: Singapore, 1930[1964]. Harun Aminurrashid (1907-1986) was born in Singapore and studied in a Malay school there before entering the Sultan Idris Training College in 1924. Though he went on to worked at SITC as a teacher until 1938, he does not specify by name the Perak school described in Melor Kuala Lumpur. After SITC he taught and wrote in Brunei and Singapore.

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are geared for success, Sulaiman settling into business in the Kuala Lumpur Malay Settlement of Kampong Baharu, and Hashim beginning medical training in Singapore. Modern transport moves the story along, as when Sulaiman travels (by train) to Singapore to meet Hashim. The novel offers a vision of them together in a car, "in the afternoon, see Sulaiman and Hashim sitting in a Fiat motorcar, with strong builds and handsome faces, dressed in Western fashion that with their posture could easily lead people who spotted them to believe they were not natives" (Harun, 37). They slip into the car as anyone, and see Singapore as tourists. Hashim describes Singapore in this fashion: "This is Changi Road, this is Newton Station, this is Whatever Street, this is the turf club, this is the Whatever Club, this is the Central Police Station, this is Whiteaway Store" (Harun, 37). Through Hashim's narration Sulaiman sees the landmarks of Singapore as an unrelated progression, brought into view by the rented Fiat's driver. But who that driver might be is not mentioned.

In Harun's story, drivers are like an extension of the car, ever ready to respond to the orders of passengers like Sulaiman. After Sulaiman returns to Kuala Lumpur, the reader meets the driver only at a glance: "in front of his office waited the motorcar that he bought with monthly payments, and in a moment Sulaiman was sitting inside of it. With a commanding voice Sulaiman ordered the driver to drive his motorcar to Kampong Baharu" (Harun, 45). A journey undertaken with a driver allows a passenger to think of anything except the journey being taken. On the way from work, Sulaiman is consumed with thoughts of Nurisa, Hashim's love. He could lose himself in his car: "but he did not remember where he was or what time it was, gazing out adrift in his thoughts, when suddenly his driver asked Sulaiman, 'going straight home?'" (Harun, 49). Even the car that can go anywhere does not allow Sulaiman complete freedom to dream.

Indeed Sulaiman, aside from his dangerous feelings for Nurisa, also comes under accusations of embezzlement at work. He decides to go to jail rather than suffer the indignity of "living without hope" (Harun, 88). Nevertheless, with a fantastic revelation,

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his name is cleared. To celebrate, he goes driving in the car: "by circling around Kuala Lumpur Sulaiman intended to exorcise all that had just happened, so that he would feel calm like he usually did" (Harun, 97). In the car his imagination takes over, and he decides to go overseas: "it was like Sulaiman was a young man who really, really wanted to travel because seeing the beauty of nature that afternoon, his feelings flew away to circle about the surroundings, wildly [bermaharajalela] like his body was run by a motorcar, not alive anymore" (Harun, 98). Yet just as Sulaiman is transformed into a machine he again hears from his driver. The driver breaks off Sulaiman's thoughts as he questions "where do you want to go, sir?" The driver reminds Sulaiman that he has to go somewhere, and "only then did Sulaiman realize he had looped about Kuala Lumpur for a half an hour following his recent wishes -- then Sulaiman answered curtly, 'Straight to Kampong Baharu'" (Harun, 99). Amid his private thoughts in the car Sulaiman still cannot escape from the demands of his position as passenger. The unnamed driver of Melor Kuala Lumpur remained a nuisance to Sulaiman by constantly asking for directions, a follower from whom Sulaiman could not be freed.

Only later did drivers become protagonists. Abdul Rahim Kajai, the long-time editor of Majlis, wrote in 1941 a short story titled "The Modern War with Perpatih Custom."[173] The story opens with an incident on the road in an ambiguous location. A man named Si Dawi is knocked down off his bicycle by local toughs. The narrator says the action is near Taiping, at a place called Simpang Empat between Larut and Kuala Kangsar, though from the rest of the story it appears the scene must be near Malacca,

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[173] Abdul Rahim Kajai, "Pungguk Merindukan Bulan--Peperangan Moden Dengan Adat Pepatih," in Hashim Awang, editor, Cerpen Melayu Sebelum Perang Dunia Ke-2, Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka: Kuala Lumpur, 1992. Abdul Rahim Kajai (1894-1943) was born outside of Kuala Lumpur, studied in a Malay school and then furthered his education with three years of religious instruction in Mecca from 1906-1909. He returned and worked in the colonial bureaucracy before returning to Mecca in 1913, living there off and on until 1927. From 1927 he was deeply involved in Malayan journalism, telling in his biography prepared for the Japanese "I am now 50. As my association with Malai journalism began in 2578--about 24 years ago--I can claim that nearly all the present Malai journalists came after me and many have been working under me." "Summary of Life History of Abdul Rahim Kajai, Chief Editor, Malai Sinbun Sha," appendix to Abdul Latiff Abu Bakar, Abdul Rahim Kajai: Wartawan dan Sasterawan Melayu, Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka: Kuala Lumpur, 1984, page 382.

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where a woman named Tiyana lives with her father. But given the plot's frequent changes of location, it could be anywhere in the peninsula. The scene establishes Si Dawi's importance to the story: as the driver for Tiyana's wealthy family Si Dawi assumes their burdens. He is the ideal figure of the driver, and "to Tiyana there was no driver on earth better than Si Dawi. Diligent, his car always clean, careful, enduring both scolding and working from day to night" (Kajai, 49). Si Dawi is woven into the narrative from the start, and his position proves greatly attractive: "when just the two of them were alone in the car Miss Tiyana always sat at the side of her driver, and sometimes Si Dawi would drown in her perfume" (Kajai, 49). She keeps taking the wheel as they drive about, but the flirtations do not, initially at least, lead very far.

Tiyana marries Encik Khalid, a man who though Muslim, is not Malay. This causes great concern for Si Dawi, who worries that her children will lose their Malay status as a result. Si Dawi's disappointment about the marriage forces him to leave, but he proves irreplaceable as the family driver. Encik Khalid looks for a driver to replace Si Dawi, but the other drivers stand in solidarity, and Encik Khalid complains, "there are many unemployed drivers here, but not one of them wants to work. They even ask how much the wage is, but each of them is unwilling. How can Malays progress if they think sitting in coffee shops chatting about the Malay Association is a bigger thing than working?" (Kajai, 57). Since the local drivers are united against him, Encik Khalid has to drive himself, and only once he is "willing to be the driver to Malacca" does he "finally find a hirable driver" (Kajai, 57). Si Dawi then leaves the scene, with the remarkable ability to "leap upon his bicycle and in five minutes of riding, vanish" (Kajai, 59). The story only has room for one driver.

The family's undependable drivers become a great worry. The drama becomes an extended search for the right one:

> The wealthy Abdul Rauf had changed drivers almost seven times after Si Dawi's departure, and every time a driver stopped working Cik Tiyana would say, 'Si Dawi's kind is difficult to find.' Ironically she did not chance upon Si Dawi though

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> she traveled through Singapore and Penang. No one knew the whereabouts of Si Dawi (Kajai, 59).

He appears, though, at just the critical time. When the family is driving on their way to Ipoh, their driver Si Kaslan falls asleep at the wheel and their vehicle plunges into a dry mining pool. Si Dawi happens to be passing by, and is able to rescue Cik Tiyana and the others, though the driver is dead. While she recovers, the "Perak Malay Association" visits them in the hospital and takes care of burying the dead driver. The accident scene in Perak shows Tiyana that Si Dawi and the others in his Association will be able to take of her as her husband cannot. Si Dawi vanishes again, though ready to reappear at the next moment of crisis.

The couple's next trip proves the undoing of Tiyana's marriage. Encik Khalid and Tiyana leave for their honeymoon aboard ship, and find that one of the cabin stewards is none other than Si Dawi. When Encik Khalid insults the Malay Association badge Si Dawi wears, the offended man punches him. But before Encik Khalid can have him arrested, the ship blows up, and they are all tossed into the water. Si Dawi, yet again, saves Cik Tiyana and then once again vanishes, presumed by the couple to be dead. But having proven his virtue, Cik Tiyana realizes the impossibility of her marriage to Encik Khalid. She decides to follow the example of Si Dawi. The driving instruction with Si Dawi pays off as she steals one of her father's cars to run off to Singapore. Since she also takes the keys to the other car, when Abdul Rauf and Encik Khalid realize what she has done and attempt to chase her, they are reduced to trying to flag a taxi along the street: "they ran into the middle of the street to try and flag a hire car. Only after more than an hour were they finally able to get one" (Kajai, 71). Cik Tiyana now controls the family vehicles and is on her own.

Cik Tiyana's three-month stay in Singapore changes the relationships entirely. Becoming a Malay nationalist, she vows to "defend the Malays and in doing that defend Malay women [kaum ibu], because women are the solid base of the people" (Kajai, 78). The marriage to Encik Khalid ends after he runs off with a cabaret girl. Si Dawi learns of Tiyana's conversion to the Association's cause since she has written to the newspapers.

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When he hears she is leaving Singapore to return home he writes a letter to Abdul Rauf requesting his job back as the man's driver. Si Dawi is at Abdul Rauf's home for less than an hour before being sent off on a trip, "he got the order from Cik Tiyana to take the car out because she wanted to go to Malacca. Cik Tiyana held the steering wheel and Si Dawi sat next to her, and the motorcar started up" (Kajai, 83). Over the course of their journey, they have a discussion in which they announce their love for each other, a conversation that follows the rhythms of the car: "the motorcar had already arrived in Malacca and stopped in front of the market but the story had not yet finished" (Kajai, 83). They complete it on the journey back, and "the motorcar arrived at the house and their discussion also stopped" (Kajai, 83). They find that the great feast that has been prepared by Abdul Rauf is to be for their wedding, and after the ceremony they return to Malacca (by car?) to visit Si Dawi's parents. The story ends with the lovely line, "it is only proper that Si Dawi became a driver, able to go anywhere" (Kajai, 85). The driver could indeed be anywhere and everywhere a Malay driver, the protagonist of ever larger stories.

A driver like Si Dawi disappeared, but Tiyana still searched for him. Good drivers might be a rare quality but she was certain she could find one. The first issue of Suara Malaysia, a journal published in Penang in 1939, informs its readers, "this magazine uses roman characters, because with them we can write anything clearly, all the more our people, especially youth just out of school, they who will be our hope, all of them can read it. Aside from that, other people will be able to know our feelings."[174] Suara Malaysia began to look to others as part of a public conversation. In a column in the same issue called "Joking!" is the following exchange between two characters Lapok and Rapoh. Lapok has just returned from Singapore, and complains that over the course of the train trip down to Singapore he saw no one reading Malay newspapers, giving the excuse they were all of low quality. He faced one problem after another: "One entire day I walked searching for a Malay hotel, but didn't find one. And another day I looked for a Malay restaurant,

[174] "Bergurau!" Suara Malaysia, 8 May 1939. Suara Malaysia was published in Penang for perhaps four months in 1939.

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but did not find that either" and follows this with similar stories about looking for a Malay coffee shop, a Malay cigarette seller, even a Malay drink seller, all without luck (ibid.). The story continues, "finally, I went to see New Wordls [sic, the cinema]. There I saw plenty of Malays, but none of them working, the lot of them just watching! In other places it was the same!" (ibid.). His friend Rapoh asks, "but certainly you saw Malay Drivers?" Lapok answers "only they can become the Malay standard bearers. I don't think there is any other better way" (ibid.). Even in a Malaya with precious few Malay things the roads could be theirs, the drivers from Perak and elsewhere with the means to become something more than everyone else.

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CHAPTER FOUR

CRIMINAL IMPOSSIBILITIES: ASSOCIATING AMOK

"29. Some day Malaya, now apparently so safe, may well become one of the weakest links in our whole chain of Empire. By taking thought in time we may save the stitches nine. A loyal and patriotic Malay nation, trained to arms and ranged under its own chieftains, might well prove, in a future not so far distant, a fitting guardian for the Western portal of the Pacific and a doughty defender of one of the richest and fairest portions of the British Empire."

--Ian Hamilton, General, Inspector-General of the Overseas Forces, 22 January 1913, War Office 32/4816.

"Generally speaking, the Malay is not a violent character, and only in abnormal conditions will he attack and murder. His gregarious instincts being still very strong (as Latah showed us), he generally will commit violent acts only when in a crowd or a group. One man will practically never attack a European, but a group of them will gather and suddenly attack ... here again the 'mob-spirit' arouses and strengthens the low murderous instinctive tendencies."

--F.H.G. Van Loon, "Protopathic-Instinctive Phenomena in Normal and Pathological Malay Life," British Journal of Medical Psychology, 1928, page 273.

"The Police is one of the essential service of the country, and in present conditions too vigorous retrenchment might prove very false economy. At the same time compared with the numbers of police per head of population in other countries the numbers of the Federated Malay States police appear to us to be excessive. We realize that comparison with other countries is apt to be misleading, but there is some significance in the fact that Ceylon has one police officer to every 1,695 of the population, the Gold Coast one to 1,704, while the Federated Malay States has one to 390. In many ways, too, the police distribution and organisation has changed little since the days when the lack of communication necessitated the maintenance of numerous isolated posts throughout the country districts. As nearly every part of the country is now accessible to motor transport, a reorganisation of the distribution of the police force should be considered."

--Report of the Federated Malay States Retrenchment Commission, 1932, page 42.

Introducing Malaysia

Tun Mohamad Suffian, in 1935 the first Malay to win a Queen's Scholarship, grew up near Kuala Kangsar. In A Man of His Time, a biography of Suffian, these early years in Kuala Kangsar appear in a chapter called "Born in a Kampung."[1] Suffian's early

[1] Tun Mohamad Suffian bin Hashim was born in 1917. Following his legal training in Britain he returned to Malaya in 1946, and his distinguished legal career was capped with being named Lord President of the Malaysian High Court from 1974 to 1982. J. Victor Morais, A Man of his Time, [np]: Kuala Lumpur, 1974.

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recollections of his childhood focus, perhaps not surprisingly, on his father: "Suffian described his father as a man of principles" (ibid., 11). As a local religious leader, Suffian's father had a special relationship to the community, though not one he always relished. His principles forbade him from serving them as they wanted:

> Unlike most of the religious leaders of his time, he didn't believe in pawangs [shamans] and bomohs [curers]. But he himself was regarded by the kampung [village] people as a good bomoh! Often the simple kampung folk sought his assistance in solving their health problems! To satisfy them and to allay their fears, he tied the tangkal--the black thread--on their wrists which was supposed to rid them of all sorts of diseases including tuberculosis, heart-attacks and even cancer! (ibid., 11).

His father's explanation to the children of why he did so was concise:

> 'If they choose to believe in the efficacy of the tangkal, that's their business,' his father used to tell him. His father discouraged his children from believing in ghosts and spirits. 'In fact, he ridiculed ghost stories,' says Suffian (ibid., 11).

According to his biographer Suffian remembers his father as someone who knew what other people did but did not follow them. This belief story prefaces another memory about his father: "Among the landmarks deeply rooted in his memory is the narrow escape his father had when he was going in a taxi from Lenggong to Kuala Kangsar. His taxi was shot by an amok who had already killed several people in Lubok Merbau" (ibid., 12). The short passage explains something fundamental about his father, but unlike the tangkal story, Suffian does not explain what that might be. As a landmark it suggests that Suffian's father had avoided something that happened to other people, like the black thread that he tied for people but did not believe in. His father's memory is itself one of Suffian's memories of his childhood, something his father experienced that Suffian reports as an important part of his past.

Such amok stories in Perak sometimes offer an entrance into the past. These include ones told to me by a man in the Kuala Kangsar neighborhood I lived in, a man who sold noodles there for a short period. He worked in another state and lived in Kuala Kangsar only off and on, moving temporarily to Perak after quitting his job as a bank clerk in Kuala Lumpur. In one of the first of our many conversations he told me that to his mind

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there were too many immigrants in Malaysia. In Kuala Lumpur, from a certain angle, one could take a photo and not identify where in the world it is. Though the Malays were easy-going about the management of their country, when pressured, he said, they go amok. Next we talked about heroes, or more accurately the lack of them. He said one person Kuala Kangsar people think of as a hero is really not one: the Dato' Maharaja Lela. He is famed for leading the rebellion against the British that killed the first British Resident, Birch, in 1875. The noodle-seller said that the Maharaja Lela was not important because he did not do it himself; he ordered someone else to amok. The Dato' Maharaja Lela felt the pressure of Birch's presence in Perak but did not act himself to protect his people from colonial encroachment. In heroizing Dato' Maharaja Lela, some people in Kuala Kangsar might misunderstand his historical responsibility to protect Perak.

Amok stories also figure in the more recent past. Datuk Mohamad Yusoff served in Kuala Kangsar as an Assistant District Officer during the Emergency period of the 1950s. His memoirs of his experiences are like those of Suffian and my friend in Kuala Kangsar, who reflected on older incidents of amok. Following a passage about guerrilla fighting during the communist rebellion in his book, Mohamad Yusoff adds

> Malays are a fighting race. That was how the British found them when they first came to Malaya. After the Rulers had agreed to accept British protection the Malays gave up fighting and became peaceful in their way of life. This does not mean that the spirit of fighting has died down. Normally a Malay is polite and tactful but one should not push him too far. The fighting spirit in him comes out again and he is likely to run amok. In fact the word 'amok,' which has crept into the English dictionary, is a Malay word. It means that a Malay labouring under a grievance either real or imagined would go all out for revenge and in the process he puts very little value on his life.[2]

Amok's efficacy and lineage is as a "spirit." Though amok has been translated and transferred to other languages, it is something recognizable to Malays and repeatable to others as a warning. Toward the close of the book he states, "Malays by nature are tolerant but when driven against a wall they hit back. This was precisely what happened on 13

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[2] Datuk Mohamad Yusoff, Decades of Change (Malaysia 1910s-1970s), Pesaka: Kuala Lumpur, 1983, page 335.

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May 1969" (ibid., 406). Yet the events of May 13, the riots in Kuala Lumpur following 1969's national elections, do not figure into Mohamad Yusoff's autobiography as the shooting of his father's taxi does for Suffian. Mohamad Yusoff does not describe his presence when Malays "hit back." Rather the definition of amok substitutes for his own presence in 1969, and Malays might be said to have "hit back" in 1969 without specifying what then happened. The amok incident can stand in to explain a wide range of Malay grievances about their position.

References to amok in Malaysia can also introduce an outsider to Malay society, and help those who might not be able to read Malay writing. One day in Kuala Kangsar I met a friend's uncle who lives in Sarawak. A retired teacher, he has lived all over Malaysia. We had a long conversation about Malay language, writing, the communists, the ethnic divide, and the propensity of Malays to run amok. He told me that amok formed part of the Malay soul, and that it was a justified response to rudeness. He said in the 1950s he had shared a house with a British man for three years. The man spoke Malay well, and knew Malay adages, and even read the Jawi [Arabic-derived] script. Because of that you could not fool him, the retired teacher said. This story of the good foreigner who understands Malaysia well is a typical one, often marked by the ability to read the old Arabic characters, which carries great prestige because they have to be learned. Jawi teaches foreigners to avoid being rude, as those who do not know it might help show where amok is within the Malay soul. References to amok tie to custom and to writing, especially archaic writing.

In the Malay chronicles

The relationships to the word "amok" in these biographical sketches suggest a historical link. History can prove that "amok" is, in fact, a Malay word and therefore something Malay. A 1991 article in the Malay literary journal Pelita Bahasa [The Language Guide] has a title that might be translated as "Amuk: the Word that Cannot be Translated

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into Another Language."[3] The article argues that though readers meet the term in the classical Malay chronicles, it is still popular to the present. The author, Aripin Said, begins by making these old texts contemporary:

> incidents of 'amok' are not only in classic stories and chronicles, the word is also used until the present. That is, 'running amok' did not occur only during the age of the Malay dynasty of Melaka, or in the age of the Majapahit dynasty, but it also happens in the modern age. If before amoks used daggers, in the present they use not only machetes, but also guns! (Aripin, 46).

Aripin then cites two passages from the well-known chronicle Hikayat Hang Tuah that feature the term amok, and concludes "from these incidents, we get a picture of the chaotic conditions whenever someone ran amok, because the amok [si pengamuk] did not choose victims. Whoever was run into was attacked" (Aripin, 47). Next Aripin cites two passages from the famous history Sejarah Melayu, and notes that both of the scenes show that people amok when ordered to prove their loyalty. He concludes that "when we study the classic chronicles, meeting the word 'amuk' and the incidents behind its use are the parts of the story that most attract us" (Aripin, 47). The selections of these scenes for the article itself indexes this fact of their desirability. They make the old texts legible for contemporary readers.

The modern appearance of the word "amuk," for Aripin, merits another means of citation. Aripin argues "the word 'amuk' and incidents of 'running amok' still occur in our lives. Nevertheless, the word 'amuk' and incidents of 'running amuk' now terrify us" (Aripin, 47). To illustrate this he cites one article and two headlines clipped from Malay newspapers in 1990 and 1991 that feature the word.[4] He adds that from such clippings, "since June 30, 1964 to the present there have been as many as 31 cases of amok in our country" (Aripin, 47). The counting of these incidents in the newspapers from the unspecified dates substitutes for the analysis done with the passages from the chronicles. That all of these cases end in death and injury is one thing, Aripin says; but he emphasizes

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[3] Aripin Said, "Amuk: Kata yang Tidak Dapat Diterjemahkan ke Bahasa Lain," Pelita Bahasa, October 1991.

[4] The clippings are from Utusan Malaysia, 14 August 1991 and 4 February 1990; Berita Harian 8 February 1990.

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that what is even "more interesting about the word 'amuk' is that in the treasury of Malay words, this word is the most frightening" (Aripin, 47). The fear amok evokes marks its modern attraction, an attraction that Aripin does not specify. The citations of amok in both the chronicles and the newspapers prove a transhistorical meaning of amok that resists translation into other languages as anything else than itself.

The use of the classic stories and the newspaper accounts is akin to the biographical references, memories recalled but from a moment in the past. A children's book, part of the series "Journey into the Past," develops the sense of separation that joins the chronicles to the newspapers. Titled The Amok Defeated, the story begins with two children, Alif and Nurul, in their grandfather's fruit orchard, talking in a nostalgic tone. Alif says to his younger sister: "yes, if we were in the city we would never get a chance to eat fruits like this."[5] Amid their playful conversation, Nurul asks her older brother if he still remembers the story of Hang Tuah. Alif replies "Yes, I remember, but which part? I have not finished reading the book" (Intan, 9). Nurul answers that she wants "to hear the part where Hang Tuah defeats the amok" (Intan, 9). His partial reading of the story does not prevent Alif's repeating the tale to Nurul and he answers, "oh, the story where Hang Tuah defeated the person running amok? Yes, I've read past that section" (Intan, 10). Alif and Nurul trade off explaining how Hang Tuah went to study esoteric knowledge from Aria Putra. After doing so, Hang Tuah and his famous cohort returned home, and Hang Tuah set to work helping his father with household chores. Then "as fated by God, someone ran amok in the town center. Many people died" (Intan, 16). The result was significant: "the state of Bentan was in tumult. The amok stabbed whomever he met without favor. It was as if he was crazy. The people ran here and there to save themselves" (Intan, 16). The reference to God, the only such one in the text, shifts the story's nostalgic tone to a supernatural one.

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[5] Intan Jaafar, Orang Mengamuk Dikalahkan, Siri Kembara ke Zaman Silam, Marwilis Publisher: Shah Alam, 1992, page 1.

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Amid such conditions astonishing things can happen. The drawings that accompany the text show first the two sitting in the orchard, then their path to the days of Hang Tuah. As the first report of the amok's activities reaches Hang Tuah, Nurul and Alif "suddenly are in the state of Bentan" and amid the people running about, the two children are confused: "Nurul did not know what had actually happened" (Intan, 18). The two children are only partly in the story, as "Alif and Nurul stood at the roadside watching the people there run in fear" (Intan, 18). With their limited comprehension of the scene they do not pay attention to the admonitions of people from the village ordering them to get inside. Instead Nurul and Alif "stood at the side of the road watching the villagers running without aim. Some crashed into each other. Nurul smiled [tersenyum geli hati] watching their actions" (Intan, 19). Nurul could still take pleasure at the people struggling to get away from the amok. A man named Talib came to save them, yelling, "hey! Apparently you are strangers. It is understandable you do not know about the person running amok in town. Let's hide quickly" (Intan, 21). After they began running to Talib's house, young Nurul asked her older brother the reason why the person is running amok. He answers: "who knows, not even me. Yet, quick lets hide ourselves" (Intan, 22). Nurul's pleasure in the chaos was developing into fear that they might not be completely outside its danger. Talib was wounded protecting Nurul from the amok, and she scraped her knee as they struggled to get out of his path. But as Alif explained, the attack had no discernible meaning. Events have proven, even as outsiders they have to hide because the amok might be after anyone without any particular aim.

The one who did not run, even after the imploring of his mother, was the young boy Hang Tuah. He drew the amok into a fight, and with the handaxe he was using to chop wood succeeded in killing the amok. The story notes that the people "who witnessed the event were astonished at the agility and deftness with which Hang Tuah used weapons," amazed that a ten year old boy could do what the adults could not (Intan, 27). This ends the story, with Hang Tuah's dexterity sufficient to end the unspecified crisis. By

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not listening to his mother and showing courage superior to the others, Hang Tuah evaded Bentan's hierarchy. Hang Tuah told his friends, "Ha! Forget about it. The amok has been defeated. What other problems are there. Now let's go to my house" (Intan, 30). Like the chronicle of Hang Tuah that Alif had not finished reading, this part of the adventure into the distant past does not reveal Hang Tuah's esoteric power for dealing with the amok, as if Hang Tuah had no secret other than his bravery. The overcoming of the amok is enough for the two children to be able to go back to the present. The amok runner, with no human qualities (no past, no aim) could only prove Hang Tuah's extraordinary bravery. As Nurul and Alif returned to their grandfather's orchard, all traces of their journey into the past are brushed clean, even Nurul's scraped knee miraculously healed. The two representatives of the present, Alif and Nurul, looked for meaning in the amok's attack but could not find one. Amok is recognizable as the most attractive part of a random past, one familiar for being not understood.

Reading the newspapers

In contemporary Malaysia amok is frequently a national, newspaper phenomenon. When the Pelita Bahasa writer wanted to check and see if amok is still part of the Malaysian experience, he turned to newspaper stories. The figure of 31 cases in Malaysia since 1964 suggests that the newspapers are the repository of amok knowledge. In the Star's clippings library, a story qualifies for the "amok" file if it has the word in its headline. The usage of the term in the headlines shifts between amok as a verb and as a noun, seemingly interchangeable in both Malaysia's English and Malay dailies. In the headlines, it is the incidence of violence itself that makes it newsworthy, not its location or other details: recent headlines include "Man Runs Amok and Attacks Cop"[6] "Pemuda Mengamuk Ibu Tiri Terbunuh" [Youth Running Amok Murders Step Mother],[7] "Woman Shoots Man Running

[6] Star, 14 April 1994.
[7] Mingguan Malaysia, 9 January 1994.

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Amok,"[8] "Pemuda Mengamuk Ditembak" [Youth Running Amok Shot].[9] Although these events occurred in Klang, Muar, Sibu, and Kota Tinggi respectively, the place is apparently not newsworthy enough for the headline. Though they might later explain, the newspapers do not highlight the particular local contexts out of which these situations developed.

Like the classic texts, newspaper accounts of Kuala Kangsar record instances of amok otherwise peripheral to the town. The two most recent cases of amok, according to the newspapers, occurred in Kuala Kangsar in 1993. One incident in September of that year occurred in Kampung Jalan Bar near Kuala Kangsar: a bomoh/martial arts teacher was killed and two of his family wounded "when attacked by a male running amok with a parang in his house last night."[10] The attack of the assailant, a certain Jefri, came as a complete surprise to the deceased's wife, Norazian, who explained: "we had no idea at all such a thing would happen because before this there were no misunderstandings between Jefri and other members of the family" (ibid.). As the reporters sought a cause, one of the members of the silat group hinted about their instructor: "when studying with him the past two months, he always emphasized discipline and the responsibility of each member" (ibid.). The attack is one inside the home, its cause either in the family or in the teacher's circle of students. According to Norazian, Jefri "had never been involved in anything that was a police matter" (ibid.). The affected community was interior to their home, and did not include outside authority. Though reported in a national newspaper, the story was not a national matter.

A similar result came a month later when Utusan Malaysia carried another amok story whose dateline was Kuala Kangsar.[11] The story explains "Police with the help of firefighters succeeded in detaining a youth aged 27 who went amok in his older sister's

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[8] New Straits Times, 8 October 1993.
[9] Berita Harian, 24 March 1993.
[10] "Amok: Bomoh Mati, Menantu Para," Berita Harian, 17 September 1993.
[11] "Lelaki Mengamuk Berjaya Ditangkap," Utusan Malaysia, 18 October 1993.

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house" (ibid.). The attack was not in a remote village, but rather in an upper-income housing estate just off Kuala Kangsar's main road. The police were "forced to work at calming the youth from continuing to amok in the house and smashing household fixtures" (ibid.). The attack in the house is a household emergency, and, according to a police spokesperson, "firefighters were forced to turn their hoses on the youth before he was successfully overcome almost two hours later" (ibid.). In this case of a youth turned violent against his sister's house, the firefighters are called in to attempt a capture, and the hoses usually used against a house fire turn against him to prevent further destruction of property. In describing his sister's property in her well-to-do home, the case is again domestic and sealed inside the family. The police and newspaper involvement signals the limits of what the family can contain.

When people in Kuala Kangsar use the word amok, such stories are not generally what they reference. In conversation many Malays use the term amok to describe the outbursts of infants, young children, and domesticated animals like water buffalo. Amok in these terms describes a feeling of anger that is difficult to express to others. Babies frequently are described as amok, their angry outbursts noted but not always understood. A cartoon in Utusan expresses this frustration with communication. A housewife throws a pot against the floor in her kitchen while another says "hey ... why are you amok like this?" The angry woman replies "to release my frustration and anger, because there are still fathers who abuse their children ... don't they know, children are trusts from God?"[12] In the cartoon, amok is an ineffectual release of what might otherwise find no means of expression. The term describes something that is effective in gaining notice but ineffective in accomplishing anything more, as the housewife suggests she is incapable of reaching the guilty fathers. Like the violence in the newspaper clippings from Kuala Kangsar, the cartoon's reference to family abuse and its kitchen setting are strictly domestic problems in

[12] Ranum, "Suri," Utusan Malaysia, 10 Jun 1996. The cartoon's caption reads: "Eh ... apa hal nya ngamok ni ...?" "Lepaskan rasa kesal dan geram, sebab masih ada bapa yang dera anak nya ... tidak kah dia tahu, anak itu amanah tuhan."

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a Malaysia increasingly beset with family stress and conflict. The cartoon's reader, and the woman's friend, stand outside and ask what the problem is. The woman's amok inside her kitchen is an attempt to communicate frustration at the limits of effectual communication.

Tensions of national security

Although the domestic pain and frustration of Malaysia's rapid development continues to produce local amok stories (which over the last five years appear in newspapers with a frequency of about one a month), they do not generate considerable discussion. In contrast violent incidents involving members of the security forces labeled amok become part of public debate. In October 1987 Malaysia was in the midst of a social crisis, with the economy in recession, a major political party struggle, and rare public rallies readied in Kuala Lumpur. On the 18th of the month an army private started shooting an M-16 in the Chow Kit area of Kuala Lumpur, a place famous as the site where the May 13 riots started in 1969. Only one person was killed (as the newspapers emphasized, a Malay from outside KL) before the shooter was apprehended after a long stand-off.[13] However, the event ignited a blaze of rumor, and people throughout the city began stockpiling canned food and other emergency supplies. The soldier involved, Adam Jaafar, was attached to a ranger company based at Camp Syed Putra near Ipoh. After his arrest ended the sixteen-hour drama, media reports quickly attempted to diffuse the public anxiety about the gunman's motivations.[14] Yet the tense political situation surrounding the incident only ended with a widespread crackdown, called Operation Lallang.[15] Police road blocks in Kuala Lumpur, the forced suspension of three newspapers, and the detention of

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13 "Gunman Surrenders," New Straits Times, 20 October 1987.

14 "Shooting Purely a Criminal Act," New Straits Times, 20 October 1987.

15 For background on the events leading to up to October 1987, see Committee Against Repression in the Pacific and Asia, editors, Tangled Web: Dissent, Deterrence and the 27 October 1987 Crackdown in Malaysia, CARPA: Haymarket, 1987; Harold Crouch, Government and Society in Malaysia, Cornell University Press: Ithaca, 1996, pages 106-113; Anne Munro-Kua, Authoritarian Populism in Malaysia, Macmillan Press: London, 1996, chapter 7.

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over a hundred leading dissidents, activists, and academics resulted in quieting the modest voices of dissent in a society not known for challenging state power.

Private Adam's actions, however, were not connected to state politics. The government explained their repressive action in a White Paper titled "Toward Preserving National Security" published in 1988.[16] The White Paper notes that "the present leadership" of the Malaysian government prior to 1987 had "practised a liberal policy" toward the people, and "control over publications was relaxed, and more permits to publish were issued. Restrictions over assemblies and meetings in public places were also relaxed" (ibid., 127). The strategy, however, went wrong as "this liberal and tolerant attitude was exploited in an irresponsible manner by various quarters for their own selfish interests" (ibid., 127). The misuse of the government's liberalism, the White Paper argues, "led to a highly tense situation in October 1987." One could measure this tension in Private Adam's actions:

> This was clearly evident when a shooting incident involving a military personnel in Jalan Chow Kit, Kuala Lumpur on the night of 18 October 1987, which was unrelated to the communal problem, created concern and anxiety among the people throughout the country following rumour that racial disturbances had broken out in Kuala Lumpur (ibid., 127).

In the "rising tension" narrative of the White Paper, which includes sections on "exploitation of sensitive issues;" "the Chrisitianisation of Malays and the exploitation of the Christianisation issue;" "manipulation of the Islamic religion;" "activities of the Marxist group;" "the continuing involvement of the Communist Party of Malaya;" and "the involvement of the newspapers;" Private Adam is just one of the ingredients but the only one not connected to any political strategy.[17] The security problems of open political

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[16] "Kertas Perintah 14 Tahun 1988; Towards Preserving National Security," reprinted in Suaram and K. Das, editors, The White Paper on the October Affair and the Why? Papers, Suaram: Kelana Jaya, 1989.

[17] The White Paper repeats that "all the above developments led to a critical situation. This was clear from the tension that prevailed among the people throughout the country as a result of the Chow Kit incident the next day, 18 October 1987, even though it was an isolated incident that had no racial bearing whatsoever." In a footnote the White Paper explains "The incident on the night of 18 October, 1987 in the Chow Kit area, Kuala Lumpur where an army personnel, Private Adam, who was under psychological stress, went on a shooting spree with an M16 rifle, resulting in the death of a Malay and serious injuries to a Chinese and another Malay" ibid., page 135.

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discussion in Malaysia were crystallized by Private Adam's unrelated journey to Kuala Lumpur. The coincidence of his presence--"tension was clearly high in Kuala Lumpur following the Chow Kit incident" (ibid., 127)--showed everyone what they already should have known.

The apparent disconnection of Adam's actions in Chow Kit from national politics meant that he could be released from detention. In 1994 the New Straits Times reported "Former soldier Adam Jaafar, who went berserk in the Kampung Baru-Chowkit area and allegedly killed a Risda smallholder in 1987, was acquitted by the High Court today on a charge of murder."[18] The newspaper describes the incident as one of insanity, and for this reason Private Adam was outside of criminal law: "The High Court on Nov 19, 1990, ordered him to be detained at the mental institution after he was found guilty under the Internal Security Act for possession of firearms, but that he was insane at the time of committing the act" (ibid.). By reason of insanity, in 1994 Private Adam was quietly let go. The court, in effect, took his actions to be insane rather than volitional, in a sense, to be nonsense. To be prosecuted, the court had to find logic to his action. From a police matter, to a newspaper item, to a court case, Private Adam's incident was left as another story.

The memories of Private Adam's actions focus on family problems. His calculations on those October days in 1987 still linger among people in Kuala Kangsar. His former camp is not far from the town and so when people talk about amok often his name comes up. People tell different versions with different emphases, but the most important ingredient is revenge. Adam's younger brother, they say, was killed by one of the country's royalty when he was caddying for him on the golf links. They say that the man missed a shot and that Adam's brother laughed, and that he was beaten to death with a golf club. This part of the story of course never appeared in a newspaper, people point out, but the person alleged to be involved was said to be known for his violent temper.

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[18] "Charge Against Soldier Adam is Withdrawn," New Straits Times, 6 October 1994.

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The important point was that Adam had a target in Kuala Lumpur, but because of the story's sensitivity it could not be told. The violence of his actions were repeatable as both something without foundation and one of exact, though censored, specificity.

One person in Kuala Kangsar who told me Adam's story does odd jobs in a neighboring village. He also has special powers in such things as curing, dealing with spirits, knowing the past, and fixing computers. These talents, he told me, just came to him one day in 1984. He knew this much about Adam: that morning Private Adam dressed in his military uniform, put grenades around his waist, his M-16 over his shoulder and drove on his motorbike from Ipoh to Kuala Lumpur. The vivid image translated on the highway to one of anonymity, as being a soldier, who are often in transit with their weapons, he did not attract any attention going to Kuala Lumpur. Adam's plan was to wait in Chow Kit and then avenge his brother's death. But his plan went awry. Because he had a reason for doing what he did my friend said he could not be punished, and that is why he was released later. The domestic reasoning in the particular narrative escaped state punishment since Adam's grievance could be understood by the state.

The intentions of Private Adam did translate to something larger than a personal vendetta. In 1993, UMNO underwent another strong challenge to its rigid hierarchy when Anwar Ibrahim challenged Ghafar Baba for deputy president of the party.[19] In his book, Anwar Against Ghafar?, Ahmad Lutfi reprints press clippings to illustrate the analytical arguments of the book.[20] Following a chapter "Divide and Rule: the Mahathir Legacy that must be Defended," Ahmad includes three photographs of the incident in Chow Kit in 1987. One of them shows Private Adam in his fatigues being led away by ashen-faced police and military officers; another shows a Volvo with military plates speeding away

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[19] UMNO, as the dominant partner in Malaysia's ruling coalition, selects a party hierarchy that then becomes the national hierarchy. UMNO's President becomes the Prime Minister, and the party's Deputy President becomes the Deputy Prime Minister. Ghafar Baba, who took over the two number-two posts amid the crisis in 1987, was himself challenged in party elections (and defeated) by rising-star Anwar Ibrahim in late 1993. See "End Game," Far Eastern Economic Review, 28 October 1993.

[20] Ahmad Lutfi Othman, Anwar Lawan Ghafar? Penerbitan Pemuda: Kuala Lumpur, 1993. The author has worked for the PAS newspaper, Harakah.

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under heavy guard through Kuala Lumpur; and a final photo depicts a soldier with an M-16 crouching from Adam's fire behind a car on Chow Kit's streets. The caption underneath reads "the threatening milieu preceding Operation Lallang, 1987. Was it understood by the nation's political leaders what Private Adam Jaafar tried to say?"[21] What Adam might have tried to say in 1987 might be heard in 1993. The book does not specify what Adam's communication might be. The caption suggests that this perhaps was not understood by the nation's leaders, though others might hear it, and be aware of the politicians not hearing it. The book's criticism of the UMNO leadership is that they rule arrogantly and do not listen, especially Prime Minister Mahathir who Ahmad Lutfi says practices the tactic of "divide and rule" in his party. Political danger comes from these moments of not listening, of not understanding.

Listening, and being heard, can challenge organizational rights to discipline. A few weeks after the announcement of Private Adam's release, the newspaper Watan ran the headline "Military Police Amoks."[22] The story follows, "a member of the military police with the rank Lance Corporal went amok by firing several shots in an incident considered 'dramatic' at the Batu Kantomen Army Base here, this morning, before surrendering almost four hours later" (ibid.). Lance Corporal Raja Kazim, from a village not far from Kuala Kangsar, fired his pistol in Kuala Lumpur through the morning until his magazine emptied. The drama of the event was marked by Utusan in a chart depicting the specific footsteps of Raja Kazim over the course of his standoff with his colleagues and superiors. Such detail was possible since reporters had arrived at the camp as the episode began unfolding. In fact, a cameraman representing Radio Television Malaysia entered the camp and succeeded, as Watan put it, in "capturing almost the entire incident" on videotape.[23] The Watan story became one about the fate of the tape, after the cameraman was roughed

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[21] The caption to the photographs reads in Malay: "Suasana gempar menjelang Operasi Lalang 1987. Apakah yang cuba disuarakan oleh Prebet Adam Jaafar itu difahami oleh pemimpin-pemimpin politik negara?," page 413.

[22] "Polis Tentera Mengamuk," Watan, 20 October 1994.

[23] "Wakil RTM Dikasari, Damera Dirampas," Watan, 20 October 1994.

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up by military police and the tape taken. Filming "the entire incident," even if not shown, meant that anyone could have access to the events. Raja Kazim's actions were not a mystery and not a crisis.

The causes of the Lance Corporal's actions seemed clear enough. The Sun wrote a story "Conduct Unbecoming" noting the security problem of military stress: "The stressful and sometimes harsh conditions of army life can trigger the phenomenon of armed soldiers running amok. The dangers are not only to themselves and their comrades, but also to society at large."[24] Another article in the same issue noted that though there are few studies of amok, a professor of forensic psychiatry at Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia pointed out that the cause is "stress which cannot be overcome."[25] An editorial in Watan headlined "Amok: Discipline must be Humanitarian" reminded its readers that in carrying out social discipline, leaders needed to use psychological methods.[26] "The process of maintaining discipline among each member of society," is especially dangerous, the story claimed, for "members of the military or police who we know carry great responsibility, not only to their household, wife, and children, but also for national security" (ibid.). The security personnel attempting to defend their homes and homeland require discipline, but such discipline risks causing stress, itself a dangerous balance to be maintained by those in charge.

These bureaucratic binds might be made more difficult given the specificity of amok incidents to Malays in the armed forces. Two weeks later Utusan asked in an editorial if "amok was a Malay illness?"[27] The article begins with a depiction of Raja Kazim:

> on Wednesday, last October 19 the nation was again rocked by an incidence of amuk. This time by a member of the military police at the [Kuala Lumpur] Batu Kentomen Camp who amoked for nearly four hours because he was not given leave to visit his sick child who was in his home village in Taiping, Perak.

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[24] "Conduct Unbecoming," Sun, 22 November 1994.
[25] "Out of Control," Sun, 22 November 1994.
[26] "Amuk: Disiplin Mestilah Berlandaskan Kemanusiaan," Watan, 21 October 1994.
[27] "Amuk Penyakit Melayu?" Utusan Malaysia, 5 November 1994.

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The editorial continues that such acts of amok, according to "some scholars and Western Orientalists is something that only appears in Malay society" (ibid.). According to the anthropologists Utusan cites, amok is a "culture bound syndrome," that is "an illness said to occur only in one particular society" (ibid.). To this, though, Utusan argues that amok is not an illness, but rather "a repeating occurrence, moved by various causes, among them physical, psychological, and socio-cultural."[28] Among these causes, Utusan summarizes "in short, Malay society through its socialization and values system creates an individual who is loyal to cultural norms and values. Nevertheless, the same process can be the basis for the formation of aggressive acts and when conditions permit, the opportunity will be used to its fullest" (ibid.). In the case of Raja Kazim, these causes were the stress of being in Kuala Lumpur when he knew he had family responsibilities in Perak. Being a military police gave the opportunity to have his grievance heard.

People in Kuala Kangsar read these unfolding accounts. I spent a lot of time in Kuala Kangsar in a particular coffee shop talking to old men who read the newspapers, usually retirees who passed the time in such places. One man explained to me that Raja Kazim's commanding officer was to blame. The chain of causality he offered was entirely mundane--his child was sick, he had vacation coming to him, it is only humane to let him go home. About two months later I was at one of the many wedding feasts I was able to attend in Kuala Kangsar. One of the people I was introduced to there was Raja Kazim's mother. As we exchanged greetings my friend explained that it was her son who had recently amoked in Kuala Lumpur. They talked about it a little, where he was, if he was still in confinement and so on, and then we moved on. Later when we were returning I remarked that I was surprised that she seemed open about everything. My friend said that she should just keep on doing what she does, this is not a matter of shame. He spoke of her situation as a family problem with her son, one that did not get entangled in politics greater than their own. But the point of view in Kuala Kangsar was a domestic one, that

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[28] "Amuk Bukan Sindrom Melayu." Utusan Malaysia, 7 March 1995.

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Raja Kazim should have been allowed to go home but was not. His problems were in Perak but he was unable to go there.

Understanding the problems is on the level of rules, of communication. Certain instances of violence are repeatable and others are not. The security forces have a spectacular quality to their actions because they carry guns. As a legacy of the Emergency laws promulgated during the communist rebellion there is a strict ban on the possession of weapons. Those caught with an illegal weapon face a mandatory death penalty, which puts the criminals into an especially desperate situation, and therefore criminals usually go down shooting. Many police carry M-16s, even in the cities. They have to have heavy weapons to guard the nation, and they are under tremendous pressure because of it. The Malay word for pressure, especially in youth slang, is "tension." Institutions like schools, factories, and barracks produce considerable tension because of too many rules. The Raja Kazim incident brought up memories of Private Adam. An Utusan editorial the day following the Batu Kantomen incident addressed the "communication gap and psychological problems," and claims that "Private Adam and Lance Corporal Raja Kazim might not have done anything outside the law if their difficulties had been heard and action taken to overcome their problems."[29] The domestic problems of the security forces become national issues, but only when they are not communicated. Their violent outbursts take the place of the communication that has not happened, and like the videotape of Raja Kazim, refer to the existence of a message that is not publicly available. Something was not being heard that should have been, and cases of amok were the consequence. Private Adam and Raja Kazim are men who publicly say they are speechless to the Malaysian public.

Private Adam and Lance Corporal Raja Kazim traveled opposite directions, Private Adam heading from Perak to Kuala Lumpur, and Corporal Raja Kazim wanting to do vice versa, which matches the great difference in the political moment. In talking to a man in

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[29] "Jurang Komunakasi dan Masalah Psikologi," Utusan Malaysia, 20 October 1994.

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Kuala Kangsar about such incidents, he explained to me that amok is an explosion, a Malay can be pushed before lashing out without awareness of doing so. He described a very specific tension between outside pressure and losing control, as if the impetus for violence was both exterior and interior. Another man in Kuala Kangsar, when I asked how people know in these incidents whether it is an amok case or not, explained that a measurement device in the hospital can differentiate, like a scale for rating earthquakes. In 1994 a police officer was charged in court for being absent without leave. The officer told the court "he deserted for fear he would run 'amok' and shooting [sic] someone."[30] The outside danger of these public problems is inside of oneself. In Private Adam's case, people said that they knew the causes but they could not speak of them publicly, and that made the politics of the case dangerous. Raja Kazim's problems were in the newspaper for everyone to read, and his was just a police case.

There is a slightly-deranged middle-aged man in Kuala Kangsar who periodically yells at people in town, lecturing those who cross his path in a mixture of English and Malay. Another well-known person is an elderly Chinese woman who, wearing a shredded dress, walks the town collecting garbage, all the while engaged in an animated discussion with herself. Yet another man in our neighborhood, who was said to have lost his mind on drugs, occasionally scolded me for acting Malay. Though each of these characters yelled at me in various instances, a man told me not to worry because they would not harm me. They are from familiar families in town, he said, they were not a problem precisely because they are noisy. We should, rather, be fearful of those who are quiet. The ones who just keep quiet are the dangerous ones, they might be violent. They are the ones people might not be listening to, that might be tense from not being heard.

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30 "AWOL Cop Feared 'Going Amok,'" Star, 26 November 1994.

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The tension of national censorship

The sense in Kuala Kangsar that messages are blocked creates tension that might result in violence. As part of the 1987 Operation Lallang crackdown concurrent with the Private Adam incident in Kuala Lumpur, three newspapers were shut down. The government's White Paper argues that in 1987 "wild criticisms and allegations of a racial nature were hurled at the Government" (White Paper, 127). These appeared in the newspapers "some of which gave coverages which deliberately exaggerated issues and pitted various parties against each other" (ibid., 127). One of the issues the newspapers had lobbied against was a 1986 amendment of the Official Secrets Act, which stipulates mandatory jail terms for media people who use leaked government information.[31] In one of the indoor rallies in 1986 held to protest the amendments to the OSA, a poster proclaimed "Secrets, a government way of life."[32] The claims against increasing the scope of government secrecy were part of the reason given for closing down the newspapers and detaining those alleged to be dissidents.

Another issue appeared in 1994 suggesting that access to the newspapers was limited. Throughout the year news reports focused on the increasing strength of Al Arqam, a Muslim sect devoted to economic self reliance and independence from greater Malaysian society.[33] Building up a large business empire and recruiting from the middle classes, Ashaari Muhammad, the sect's leader, managed to raise a high profile among people in the country. The presence of Arqam members in night markets and villages was a source of both derision and unease among some Malays in Kuala Kangsar. The Arqam members in their Arabic outfits represented Islam gone too far, Islam that perhaps challenged the piety of other Muslims.

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[31] For more on the 1986 amendments to the Official Secrets Act, see Gordon Means, Malaysian Politics: The Second Generation, Oxford University Press: Singapore, 1991, pages 197-199.

[32] "An Act of Approval," Far Eastern Economic Review, 18 December 1996.

[33] "Al Arqam the Talk of the Town," Star, 10 July 1994; "Arqam: Kata Dua Kepada Anggota ATM," Utusan Malaysia, 11 July 1994.

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The government's gradual crackdown against Al Arqam seemed appropriate to many. The struggle grew more heated, however, when Arqam leader Ashaari remained in Thailand refusing to return to Malaysia. In a bold move, Ashaari was suddenly arrested near Chiang Mai and deported to Malaysia, where he was held under the Internal Security Act.[34] During this time of crisis, Arqam representatives came to the Kuala Kangsar mosque at prayer time to circulate their side of the story. As the moves against Ashaari in Thailand built to a head, I was given a leaflet that Arqam members had distributed in Kuala Kangsar, one titled "The Arqam-Islamic Center Issue: The Official Al Arqam Answer to the Accusations of the Islamic Center via the Malaysian News Media (Utusan Malaysia, New Straits Times, and Berita Harian) on 13 and 14 June 1994."[35] The leaflet specifically refuted the accusation by the government's Islamic center, Pusat Islam, that Arqam had a "Tentera Badar" [holy army] in Bangkok among other allegations. In the course of discussing their story a friend expressed fears that there would be trouble or that Ashaari's followers might amok.[36] Arqam, blocked from replying in the mass media, had to turn to its own means of getting out its message about its aims and activities. The message that was not getting out, the existence of which was proved in the leaflet, raised the fear that a specific kind of violence might result, in the worry that Arqam members were not being heard.

Elections develop a similar relation between messages and the possibility of violence. In 1995 Malaysia's national parliamentary elections were held in April. Throughout the 1995 election in Kuala Kangsar, the contest formed around public messages. Since campaign rallies are banned, and the mass media is unavailable to the opposition parties, the course of the campaign develops in the "poster war" over partisan banners hung in public places. Kuala Kangsar has been firmly an UMNO district, and

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34 "Asaari Tahanan ISA," Mingguan Malaysia, 4 September 1994.

35 "Isu Arqam-Pusat Islam, Jawapan Rasmi Al Arqam Terhadap Tuduhan Pusat Islam Melalui Akhbar-Akhbar di Malaysia (Utusan Melaysia, New Straits Times, dan Berita Harian) Pada 13 dan 14 Jun 1994," photocopy, 1994.

36 See "Keep Calm; Junid: Govt Acting Against Arqam in Public Interest," Star, 28 August 1994.

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even opposition leaders were deeply pessimistic about their chances of winning there. Nonetheless, during campaign week reports came to the UMNO nerve center of struggles over posters between UMNO supporters and those who backed two largely-Malay opposition parties, Parti Islam se-Malaysia (PAS), and Semangat '46. Elections offer one brief period when loyalties are publicly aired in this way, that households, neighborhoods, and villages register their support or disapproval of the ruling coalition. One story a young man excitedly told one evening in the neighborhood was of a struggle in a neighboring town between UMNO and Semangat 46 supporters over the taking down of posters, a struggle that they described as an amok incident. A similar story tells of a Pas supporter who hung his poster high in the air from one of his coconut trees, only to find it later in his septic tank replaced by an UMNO banner. In what was described as an amok rage he took his sickle to the police station to lodge a report. Such stories arrived in Kuala Kangsar from its outskirts, the message that someone's message had been blocked. "Amok" in this semantic realm figured as a term for political rumors, communicating the struggle to have messages to the government be legible to others.

Just prior to the opening of voting, Utusan Malaysia printed as part of its "Election Analysis '95" three pictures of Kuala Lumpur from 1969, which ran under the headline "Do Not Repeat the Black History."[37] The photographs were all taken in the aftermath of the riots in Kuala Lumpur following the elections of that year. One shows burned-out cars with the caption "May 13 in Kuala Lumpur ... destroyed cars on Jalan Bangsar" (ibid.). Another shows a parade with a large broom held in the air in the middle of the photo, and says "a picture of the 'victory' parade where the opposition supporters held up a broom to sweep out the Malays" (ibid.). The third shows a group of people marching behind the banner of the opposition Democratic Action Party, with the caption "former chairman of the DAP, Goh Hock Guan (walking in the middle) underneath the symbol of his party" (ibid.). Each of the photographs is a blunt reminder of the high costs paid during the civil strife of

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[37] "Analisis Pilihanraya '95; Jangan Ulangi Sejarah Hitam," Utusan Malaysia, 23 April 1995.

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1969. The newspaper's headline emphasizes that election votes can have powerful consequences beyond the voter's control.

The election reference to May 13 in Utusan is itself a rare occurrence. May 13, 1994 marked the 25th anniversary of the 1969 riots, but the newspapers and television did not mark the occasion. I spent the day at an elementary school in Kuala Kangsar. When I asked about the anniversary some there said they did not realize it, others said best not to recall such things, and several asked me how I managed to hear about the incident in the first place. After martial law was declared and parliament was dissolved as a result of the incident, the country was run by the National Operations Council. They felt everything was at risk, and NOC head Tun Abdul Razak prefaced the official report of the incident

> May 13, 1969 will go down in our history as a day of national tragedy. On that day the very foundation of this Nation was shaken by racial disturbances whose violence surpassed any we had known. It was only the firm and prompt action of the Government, together with the loyal support of the Armed Forces and the Police, which quickly brought the situation under control. Had it not been for the immediate preventive measures, there is no doubt that the whole country would have been plunged in to a holocaust.[38]

The NOC made several important changes in Malaysia's constitution aimed to prevent a repetition of such violence. Among the most sweeping were strong limitations on public discussion. Gordon Means describes how in 1970, prior to reinstating parliamentary rule,

> the government issued an emergency decree amending the Sedition Ordinance, limiting freedom of speech and of the press, making it an offence to 'question any matter, right, status, position, privilege, sovereignty or prerogative established or protected by the provisions of Part III of the Federal Constitution or Article 152, 153, or 181 of the Federal Constitution.'[39]

Means notes that the proscribed topics--generally called the "sensitive issues"--include citizenship, Malay special rights, the status of the Malay Rulers, the status of Islam, and the status of Malay as the national language (ibid., 14). In several ways the May 13 incident in Malaysia has become a sign of people not talking.

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[38] The May 13 Tragedy, National Operations Council: Kuala Lumpur, 1969, page iii.

[39] Gordon Means, Malaysian Politics: The Second Generation, Oxford University Press: Singapore. 1991, page 14.

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Some say the May 13 incident was caused by language overwhelmed by emotion. Goh Cheng Teik, then an academic and now a leader of the political party Gerakan, wrote in 1970

> The mass *amok* which took place in Kuala Lumpur on 13 May has its origins in the perceived change in the ethnic configuration of power and the resultant sense of anxiety and alarm discussed above. The insults and abuse hurled at UMNO and the Malays by unruly Opposition activists and sympathizers during the post-election processions acted upon this insecure state of mind and led to an overflow of racial emotion.[40]

In June 1969, following May's violence, Mahathir Mohamad, then a member of parliament, wrote a famous letter to the Prime Minister, Tunku Abdul Rahman. Means cites Mahathir's accusations in the letter to the Tunku, and quotes Mahathir's ire at the prime minister "giving the Chinese what they demand ... The Malay, whom you thought will not revolt, have lost their minds and run amok, sacrificing their lives and killing those whom they hate, because you have given them too much face."[41] During a critical by-election in Johore state in 1988, the first big test of the ruling coalition following the 1987 crackdown, Means notes "This letter was circulated unofficially again, the second time against Dr. Mahathir, during the Johore Bahru by-election of September 1988" (ibid., 17). The letter explains what cannot be said, that the government perhaps did not protected Malay interests prior to 1969 by giving too much to the ethnic Chinese community, or in 1988, vice versa. The messages made possible during elections (that one's vote might tell

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[40] Goh Cheng Teik, May Thirteenth Incident and Democracy in Malaysia, Oxford University Press: Kuala Lumpur, 1971, page 18.

[41] Means, page 9. Means notes that there are different translations of this letter available. The one he prints phrases Mahathir's words as "The Malay, whom you thought will not revolt, have lost their minds and run [sic] amok." Means, page 9. The "sic" suggests that to his translator Mahathir makes a mistake in choosing the word, but that the translator has no choice but to use it and note that it is incorrect. In Means' own language, he describes the events of May 13 as ones which were "not the expression of overt economic grievances or of class animosities. Rather, in the atmosphere of crisis and with the irrational mechanisms of crowd psychology, primal emotions surged in uncontrollable waves combining racial antipathies, anger, fear, hatred, and self-justifying rationalizations for barbarous behavior," Means, page 7. Means also cites Karl Von Vorys, who offers another translation of Mahathir's letter: "The Malays whom you thought would never rebel went berserk, and they hate you for giving too much face." Democracy Without Consensus, Princeton University Press: Princeton, 1975, page 373. "Amok" and "berserk" might mean two different things in these different translations, though their precise difference is unspecified, but claimed to be apparent enough in the May 1969 events in Kuala Lumpur to not need comment.

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the government something) describes amok as something whose occurrence has been censored.

Following the 1987 crackdown, Tunku Abdul Rahman criticized Prime Minister Mahathir for referring to May 13 as a means to blunt criticism of the Operation Lallang arrests. He wrote

> For the Prime Minister to repeat [the story of] the violence of the May 13 Affair as a warning of what would have happened if the Government had not taken appropriate action immediately is like telling ghost stories to our children to prevent them from being naughty. This is not a childish matter but a matter of national importance, and this tale should not be repeated because it shows us to be politically immature.[42]

In this view the suspension of civil liberties infantilizes the Malaysian population. The White Paper on the October 1987 crackdown includes a "list of racial incidents involving Malays and Chinese from 1945 to 1969" as an appendix. It stops with "13 May 1969" listing this event as "the most serious Chinese/Malay clashes in Kuala Lumpur, felt throughout the Peninsular [sic]. Originated from political campaigns of a chauvinistic nature and exploited by communists. Curfew imposed. 248 Malays, Chinese, Indians and others killed" (White Paper, 148). According to the White Paper, 1969 is the end of a history of conflict that 1987 recalls, but one that should not be spoken of. At an October 1987 UMNO rally in Kuala Lumpur, one of the banners the White Paper cites is one which says "MAY 13 HAS BEGUN" (ibid., 135). The reference to May 13 was proof in 1987 that politics might go too far.

Dramatic expressions of fictional amok cases, in certain forms, are themselves censored. These struggles are described, as Watan put it in its description of the Raja Kazim incident, in a form "considered dramatic" [disifatkan dramatik].[43] In 1995 the director Adman Salleh released a film entitled "Amuk." As Adman describes it, the idea for the film came from reading Mahathir's book The Malay Dilemma, a book published in 1970 and then banned given its strong opinions and his controversial statements to the

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[42] Preface to K. Das and Suaram, editors, The White Paper on the October Affair And the Why? Papers. Suaram: Kelana Jaya, 1989, page iv.

[43] "Polis Tentera Mengamuk," Watan, 20 October 1994

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Prime Minister.[44] The book remained banned until he himself took office as Prime Minister in 1981. As Adman told Berita Harian, "I long wanted to do a film about Malay amok. After reading The Malay Dilemma, I realized the notion of amok in that book was the same that I was thinking."[45] As Mahathir argued in 1970,

> Amok is a Malay word. It is a word now universally understood. There is no single word that can quite describe amok. And the reason is obvious--for amok describes yet another facet of the Malay character. Amok represents the external physical expression of the conflict within the Malay which his perpetual observance of the rules and regulations of his life causes in him. It is a spilling over, an overflowing of his inner bitterness. It is a rupture of the bonds which bind him. It is a final and complete escape from reason and training (Mahathir, 118).

In reading the book Adman realized that Mahathir's thoughts were the same as his own. The film indeed opens with a quotation from The Malay Dilemma, in Malay and in stylized Jawi script though the book was originally written in English. The then future Prime Minister's banned writing helped express Adman's thoughts that led to the movie.

Though Adman claimed to be thinking like the Prime Minister, the film did not pass the government's censorship board. The New Straits Times, reporting "Ban on Amuk Shocks Filmdom," cited director Anwardi Jamil who noted the shock at the decision, for "It's sad that Amok has become a victim of this sudden frenzy by the Censorship Board."[46] The Malay Mail quoted Professor Abu Bakar, Chairman of the National Censorship Appeals Board Committee, that the film has "too many scenes in it which contain negative elements" and that "the title of the film itself carries a negative meaning."[47] The Home Ministry, drawn into the discussion, backed up the decision of the censorship board. A statement by the Deputy Home Minister, Megat Junid, said that even though the movie was filmed in Malaysia "it does not portray anything resembling a Malay film."[48] Megat Junid claimed Adman's "Amuk" to be unMalay because "it contains scenes which

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[44] Mahathir Mohamad, The Malay Dilemma, Federal Publications: Singapore, 1970.
[45] "Jalan Cerita Cetusan Malay Dilemma," Berita Harian, 10 Jun 1994.
[46] "Ban on Amuk Shocks Filmdom," New Straits Times, 18 March 1995.
[47] "Let's Talk All Must Agree on Standard Guidelines, says Censorship Board," Malay Mail, 18 March 1995.
[48] "Amuk: KDN pertahan JKRPF," Utusan Malaysia, 18 Mac 1995.

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should not be acted out by them [Malays]" (ibid.). The negative elements in a film, the name of which carries a negative meaning, cannot be screened for the public since its message for them might be unintelligible.

For the filmmakers these claims of the unintelligible are like the film guidelines themselves. Prominent director Shuhaimi Baba told the New Straits Times "she and her fellow film-makers are very shaken and concerned about the ban on Amok, says as far as she knows no one has ever seen a copy of the much-talked-about guidelines."[49] Adman Salleh himself said that since at least three acclaimed Malay films "showed a man running amok" and were run on Radio Television Malaysia, "the film industry now is confused and fearful of the censors because there are no clear guidelines."[50] Anything could happen. When the film was finally released after major editing cuts, clarity became a concern for viewers. Utusan said the cuts made it difficult for the viewer to follow the plot: "viewers would have to bring their full attention to grasp the intended message."[51] Adman's intended message, the once-banned writings of the Prime Minister, receded again in the tangle of censorship. "Amuk" the movie could be another sign of Malays not talking about the secret everyone knows.

Developing a colonial definition

The certainty that amok was a part of colonial Perak took time to develop. In the Perak Pioneer, amok incidents were problems of identification and administration. In 1894 the paper wrote of amok with quotation marks around the term, and questioned Malay participation: "would it have not been for the courageous conduct of Ng Thye it is very likely that more than one person would have been killed or wounded, as all the Malays who were about the place acted in a most cowardly manner, and ran away from the scene of this

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49 "Ban on Amok Shocks Filmdom," New Straits Times, 18 March 1995.
50 "Ban on Malay Movie Sparks Call for New Rules," Straits Times, 20 March 1995
51 "Amuk Filem Mekanisme Baru," Utusan Malaysia, 11 Julai 1995.

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unfortunate occurrence."[52] These incidents brought great suspicion about both the community's reaction to the violence and its origin. Two months later the paper reported

> In Perak we have had several instances of homicide by insane persons who at their trial appeared perfectly capable of knowing what they were about and yet subsequent experience of them showed them to be lunatics of a most dangerous kind.[53]

The Pioneer linked "Instances of homicide" to insanity. Even their appearance of sanity at the trial proved their insanity. The insane acts produce sane trials, the result of which might prove Perak has dangerous Malay lunatics.

The Pioneer as a newspaper helped disseminate a trove of "cases" identified as amok. The newspaper put them in a list with other violent acts that cited a similar chain of events, and brought Perak into a wider world of newspapers. In 1895 the paper reprinted an amok story from Pahang via Singapore, reporting "the Pahang correspondent of the Straits Times reports a pitiful case of amok from the Temerloh District."[54] These incidents could be ranked, and the Pahang incident showed "the fact that the persons attacked were mere babes, renders this probably the most piteous case of amok on record" (ibid.). Such events in the peninsula could come to Perak from as far away as the India: "the following is an account of the Kaiser-I-Hind tragedy as it appeared in the Times of India."[55] People in India were concerned and interested in what was happening in the Malay states, and people in Perak were interested in this interest. In this inter-newspaper circulation of amok stories the story itself develops a particular chronology of reporting.

Incidents occurring in Perak had a special significance for the Pioneer. The newspaper lingered not on the violent details but rather on the question of responsibility. The stories in Kuala Kangsar differ in that the attention is not to the violence per se but rather its antecedents. The Pioneer column "Legal Intelligence" contains the following passage from 1895:

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[52] "Ran 'Amok,'" Perak Pioneer, 4 July 1894.
[53] Perak Pioneer, 8 September 1894.
[54] Perak Pioneer, 7 January 1895.
[55] Perak Pioneer, 6 March 1895.

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> the prisoner, a Malay named Kulop Wahid, was put on his trial on the capital charge of Culpable Homicide amounting to murder, of four other Malays at Kuala Kangsar whom he ran amok and killed.
> The charge having been read to the prisoner he took no notice of it, and would not plead, and to all appearances seemed to be insane.
> ... The evidence of the State Surgeon, Dr. Wright, inter alia, was that the prisoner's previous state of mind as deposed to by the witnesses was not unlikely to induce him to break out into a sudden frenzy, perpetrating deeds for which he could not be held responsible.[56]

The developing legal precedents of the cases provided a means for administering Malays. The newspaper focus on responsibility developed a relationship between the accused and the court. In 1896, the District Magistrate passed this on to others through the Pioneer as a rumor among the Malays. The Pioneer notes that

> Mr. Hulbert, the D.M. of Kuala Kangsar, throws a new light on amok cases. He says, 'I have heard it more than once stated by Malays that in these cases of amok, the man often is not really mad. My informants have stated that they have good reason to believe the man in the first instance, often from jealousy, murdered the person against whom he had a spite.'[57]

The paper notes "this is original if not startling" (ibid.). The originality of the informants' claim is that the Malays know that amok cases are now within the realm of the courts. Malays appear to the District Magistrate to know the murderer is supposed to be mad, but often is not. The District Magistrate's report shows that the newspaper's own representation of violence might be part of the Malay murderer's calculation.

Malays, then, became involved in the reporting of the violence. They were part of the drama of specific amok cases that the Pioneer earlier had claimed they ran from. In 1897 this included the Perak royalty:

> A case of amok is reported from Kampong Low, Kuala Kangsar. It appears a Malay while seated at his food with his family suddenly developed insanity and attacked his wife and two men, inflicting such severe wounds that two them [sic] are not expected to live. One of the victims is said to have lost his nose and has also a fearful gash on his forehead. The murderer then belted and meeting a woman on the way wounded her also, and then took to the jungle. A chase ensued and the datohs Panglima Kinta and Sri Adika Rajah, who happened to be in the vicinity of the place, joined in it and eventually succeeded in capturing him. He is now safe in the police lock up but unlike other cases of amok the homicidal fit has not yet

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56 "Legal Intelligence," Perak Pioneer, 12 October 1895.
57 Perak Pioneer, 27 May 1896.

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> passed off him and he keeps the gaol an continual uproar. He is so violent that he has to be securely fastened with strong ropes before food is administered to him.[58]

This particular description emerges from the most domestic of scenes, a family eating food together. But Kuala Kangsar is safe from such incidents because the Malay royalty, who happen to be there, will help police these cases. The focus shifts in the descriptions to the details of the chase. In an 1898 incident on the Perak River, the Pioneer reports

> particulars of the Bhota amok case are just to hand, and, as will be seen, they are very gruesome. We are sorry to say the murderer still remains at large, but this is not due to any want of endeavour on the part of the police to catch him. District Inspector McKeon of Kuala Kangsar has received Mr. Conway in the hunt for this murderous brute, and we hope soon to hear of his capture. if he is not shot down like a dog, as he deserves to be.[59]

Chasing the amoks makes them like animals, and the police need not worry about their motives.

Europeans could then take pleasure in their understanding that Malays despised the practice of running amok. For the travel writer Ambrose Rathborne, writing in 1898, "some people entertain a spurious sentimentality respecting amuck runners, but amongst the Malays the man who does it is looked upon as some wild beast--a fit subject for extermination--and there is no false feeling of commiseration for him."[60] The following year Roundsvelle Wildman adds

> if you run amok in Malaya, you may perhaps kill your enemy or wound your dearest friend, but you may be certain that in the end you will be krissed like a pariah dog. Every man, woman, and child will turn his or her hand against you, from the mother who bore you to the outcast you befriended. The laws are as immutable as fate.[61]

But the help in capturing the amok cuts two ways, containing anxiety that the Malay populace might help capture the amok, or that they might help in maintaining the amok on the loose. The assistance of the royalty in Kampung Low suggests there is no "false

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58 Perak Pioneer, 27 October 1897.

59 Perak Pioneer, 21 December 1898.

60 Ambrose Rathborne, Camping and Tramping in Malaya, Swain Sonnenschein: London, 1898, page 234.

61 Roundsvelle Wildman, Tales of the Malayan coast, from Penang to the Philippines, Lothrop: Boston, 1899, page 101.

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feeling" toward those engaged in violence. The "some people" sentimental about amuck runners for Rathbourne are clearly not Malay. Amok is a language for setting Malays against themselves, one that foreigners can appreciate but only at a distance.

For the colonial authorities an elaborate medical discourse developed over the nature of Malay violence. This was at once specific to Malays but not wholly reducible to an essence in 1908. W. Gilmore Ellis, a chief student of amok, corrects Norris' 1846 claim "that Amok has something to do with Mahomedanism" since "never was there a greater error; Amok is a peculiarity of the Malay race, and the fact of their all being Mahomedans has really nothing to do with it."[62] Eight years later he concluded that this meant Malays could not be held accountable for their actions, as

> those who run amok from a sudden impulse are, in my opinion, quite unable to refrain from obeying that impulse, and therefore should not be held responsible for any action they may commit during their paroxysm of mania.[63]

The "impulse" itself was something interior to the Malay but not connected to Islam. But as this did not tie Muslims together, nor did it manage to link Malays.

In 1906 the Federated Malay States administration received a letter from a correspondent in Boston, who wrote to request information about the "problem" of amok-runners in Malaya.[64] The bureaucrat assigned to answer the request claims that there is in fact no "problem" since amok runners have no social affiliations. The file contains the following "draft reply" sent back to Boston

> 2. As regards the practice of running amok, I am able to state that it is now generally recognized that an amok runner is not influenced by religious motivation. It has been pointed out that the victims generally fall quite independently of creed, nationality + relationship + the general opinion of those who have studied that subject appears to be that amok runners should be regarded merely as homicidal maniacs. Cases have been infrequent in recent years + no special measures are taken to deal with them (ibid., 6).

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62 W. Gilmore Ellis, "The Amok of the Malays," The Journal of Mental Science, July, 1893, page 329.
63 W. Gilmore Ellis, "Some Remarks on Asylum Practice in Singapore," The Journal of Tropical Medicine, December 16, 1901, page 414.
64 "Running Amok," Colonial Office 273 324/10997, 29 May 1906.

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Those who do run amok indulge in a specifically Malay practice that does not tie them by creed, nation, or any other type of relationship. Mere homicidal mania describes those cases that to outsiders might see as a potential problem in Perak.

As something almost only Malay, amok need not be proven as something genuine. N.B. Dennys A Descriptive Dictionary of British Malaya claims

> 'Running amok' describes a species of murder-madness peculiar to the Malays. Inflamed by some real or fancied injury, or in some few cases insane, the amok runner rushes through the streets, cutting down with his sword or parang every one he can. As an illustration we quote the following: 'on the 8th of July, 1846, Sunan, a respectable Malay builder ...' .[65]

Dennys can repeat the story told by Norris (and corrected by Ellis) a half-century earlier in the Journal of the Indian Archipelago and Eastern Asia, a story titled "Malay Amoks Referred to Mahomedism."[66] Norris cites the trial transcript of Sunan that concludes "such are the murders which Mahomedans alone have been found capable of committing" (ibid.). But for Dennys, the case illustrates amok in its new, general colonial sense, a timeless appearance, under which

> British rule has almost exterminated amok in the settlements, the prospect of being hanged in cold blood causing a disinclination to run the risk. An amoker always expects to be cut down while under the influence of his simulated passion (Dennys, 4-5).

The reference to "simulated passion" and "real or fancied injury" shows that running amok is a rational form of murder-madness. Only colonial rule, strictly policed, is capable of holding back its power. Within his descriptive dictionary each incident called amok could reference the British presence. In Dennys' definition of Latah he explains

> The nervous impressionability of the Malays in other ways is well known to all who have lived amongst them. A very slight cause will change an ordinarily placed and inoffensive native into a demon of rage, the extreme illustration of such a mental condition being known as 'running amok'--or as foreigners usually call it, 'amuck' (Dennys, 192).

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65 N.B. Dennys, A Descriptive Dictionary of British Malaya, London and China Telegraph Office: London, 1908, page 4.

66 William Norris, "Malay Amoks Referred to Mahomedism, Sentence of Death upon a Malay Convicted of Running Amok," Journal of the Indian Archipelago, 1846, page 462.

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Amok illustrated something fundamental. He adds that the "The subject presents a wide field for pathelogical research" (Dennys, 193). Research into amok-running, medical, criminal, socio-cultural, helped tie Malays to foreigners and foreign rule.

Yet even these increasingly general descriptions of amok hinged on reports of specific instances of violence. An ethnographic sensibility emerged periodically in Malayan administrative reports.[67] The Perak Administrative Report for 1908 contains the prosaic details of the state--road repair, mail service, fiscal data--given in the increasingly concise mode of statistics. Within the descriptions summarizing Perak state's accomplishments is a long passage titled "Amok by an Old Woman." With intimate detail the report describes

> On the afternoon of the 7th June there were in the house of Haji Brahim at Changkat Jong, Haji Brahim, his wife Piah, their infant son, Piah's mother Jeriah (an old woman of 70 years) and Haji Minah (Haji Brahim's sister) aged 75 years. Haji Brahim left the house, to work at a sampan which he was repairing, and Piah followed him towards the river to fetch water. They left the two old women squatting on the floor, quite amicably, with the infant lying on Jeriah's lap. Haji Brahim and his wife, after a few minutes absence, were startled by cries from Jeriah that their child had been killed and she herself stabbed. They ran towards the house and, as Haji Ibrahim mounted the ladder to enter, Haji Minah rushed at him. She made several attempts to stab him with a golok (cutting knife), but he, after a struggle, managed to wrest it from her hand. He found their child dead, with his head nearly severed from the body, and Jeriah lying badly wounded in the right side. After gasping out a few words she too expired. Haji Minah had hitherto given no signs of insanity and her terrible action is quite inexplicable. In the Judicial Commissioner's Court she was found incapable of standing her trial and was sent to prison for detention during the Sultan's pleasure.[68]

The appearance of this story with its domestic detail proves that the state can enter Malay homes. "The house of Haji Brahim" could represent any such Malay home. Citing the incident as inexplicable explained why the anecdote appeared in the Perak Annual Report against earlier orders not to burden readers with such ephemera. Reports of amok cases flash up with the surprise of non-sequiturs, offering an opportunity for Malays to be part of Perak's administrative ledger. The Sultan, in this scheme, held the power capable of handling cases that exceeded the state's measurements.

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[67] This after specific warnings from Swettenham that "The Colonial Office has already on several occasions called attention to the reports from the Malay States, pointing out that they are far longer than necessary, that they contain local and personal details which are of no general interest." Reports on the Protected Malay States for 1895, "Circular to Residents."

[68] "Crime," Perak Administration Report for 1908, page 23-24.

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Translating amok

The ethnographic vignette of the amok story readily translated into Malay newspapers. In its early years the Malay newspaper Utusan Melayu in Singapore regularly reported incidents it referred to as instances of "running amok."[69] These are cosmopolitan descriptions, where the surprise of amok itself, like the car accident, is the definition of a newsworthy event. Malays could be anywhere in the world via reference to amok: in March 1910, Utusan ran the headline "A Malay Runs Amok in Australia."[70] The report reads "Some news was received from a place called Geraldton in Australia that says on the night of February 19 last, several people were sitting eating dinner in the kitchen of a hotel named Shamrock" (ibid.). The focus is on the names, what they describe, these places outside of the peninsula. The Shamrock meal was disturbed when "a Malay cook called Tommy entered the kitchen and broke all the dishes on the floor, then took out a pistol and shot at the people sitting eating" (ibid.). After wounding two, the diners succeed in pulling the pistol from Tommy's hands. Finally disarmed he explains the reason why he did what he did: the report explains "he was angry because all of the kitchen utensils had been mixed around by someone" (ibid.). But this is not the end of the story. To close, the newspaper adds that as a cook "he worked very diligently and his work was very clean" (ibid.). Tommy's actions appeared an extension of his work habits, his anger a result of careful arrangements being upset. Malays, even in Geraldton, could make themselves heard.

Stories printed in Perak in English could also arrive via another route in Malay. Utusan's story "Mengamok di Pekan" printed on 25 June 1910 is a close translation of "Amok at Pekan" printed in the Perak Pioneer of 18 June 1910. No doubt the Pioneer took

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[69] Roff notes that Utusan, as a Malay edition of the Singapore Free Press, was "much more than a translation" and published thrice-weekly in its first eight years from 1907-1915. William R. Roff, Bibliography of Malay and Arabic Periodicals Published in the Straits Settlements and Peninsular Malay States 1876-1941, Oxford University Press: London, 1972, page 32.

[70] "Sa-orang Malayu Mengamok Dalam Australia," Utusan Melayu, 15 March 1910.

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its story from another paper, as perhaps did the Singapore Free Press before the Utusan published its Malay version. Nevertheless both Utusan and the Pioneer found the story newsworthy, and the structure of their respective plots reads quite the same. Yet for their similarities translating the events, amok itself opened up new possibilities. The Pioneer starts its account "A shocking case of amok is reported from the Pekan District." The incident is a case that refers to a series, this one in Pekan district particularly startling compared to the others. Utusan opens "a large amok happened in Pekan in Pahang." The reference to the event's size in Malay replaces the shock in the English text, differentiated not as a series but rather as a greater or lesser event in Pekan, itself identified not as one district among many but rather as part of Pahang. The stories could readily translate between the languages, but in 1910 the instance of amok in Malay is not yet separable to Utusan as a repeated instance of itself.

Reporting amok incidents in Utusan also pointed to place and identity. In March 1912 Utusan described how "A Sikh Police Runs Amok in Kedah."[71] Though the story occurs in Kedah and is published in Singapore, the dateline reads Penang. The news follows these kinds of circuits. The story itself marks how people could shift between different possibilities. Utusan describes how a policeman took a gun from his room, shot a man five times and then "entered a Chinese shop, changed his clothes and cut off his hair, beard, and mustache" and then "after that he took a Chinese cap from the shop and left resembling a Chinese" (ibid.). In this disguise the policeman entered the Government Advisor's office in Alor Setar and there killed a guard before heading off into the jungle, and eventually committed suicide. The story leads from one detail to the other like its report that weaves from Alor Setar to Penang to Singapore. Malays anywhere can read about a Sikh policeman running amok via becoming Chinese, as if running amok means being able to be anyone in Malaya.

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[71] "Saorang Mata Mata Sikh Mengamok di Kedah," Utusan Melayu, 28 March 1912.

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Amok stories in Utusan led with information of who was involved: "A Malay Runs Amok in a Theater,"[72] "An Achehnese Runs Amok."[73] These were the details around which the story hinged. Even, or especially, the insane were included as a discrete category. Utusan reported in February 1913. "A Crazy Person Runs Amok."[74] The story reports that a Malay man named Pihi was charged with the death of a Chinese pharmacist named Leong Choi. Pihi's trouble with the law came from killing a man in Kuala Selangor, being sentenced to prison for ten years, and then striking a doctor while in detention. He was judged to be insane and moved to the Kuala Lumpur Mental Hospital. On the date of the crime, 22 January, he was working on clearing one of the hospital yard's drains "with three other insane people" (ibid.). He was no longer described as "a Malay named Pihi" but rather "a crazy person," one among many. The pharmacist took a risk in approaching them, and the situation's details are confused: "How Pihi got the changkul was not clear, what was known was the changkul was extracted from the deceased, something that clearly violated the laws" (ibid.). The report ends that "the investigation received was in accordance with the explanation that was given" (ibid.). In the insane asylum the story made sense. Sufficient information could make the actions of those considered crazy to be clear.

Forgetting 1875

For early twentieth-century colonial society to flourish in the Perak, other amok stories needed to be consigned to history. In Kuala Kangsar the Pasir Salak rebellion still retained specific consequences, and because of that some people had to think about it. In 1910 the Perak Pioneer printed a biography of E.W. Birch, whose impending retirement would mark the end of seven years as the British Resident of Perak.[75] The newspaper

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72 "Orang Malayu Mengamok di Rumah Wang," Utusan Melayu, 18 Mei 1912.
73 "Orang Acheh Mengamok," Utusan Melayu, 9 July 1912.
74 "Saorang Gila Mengamok," Utusan Melayu, 13 February 1913.
75 "The Resident of Perak," Perak Pioneer, 5 November 1910.

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notes that Birch "at the age of eighteen had the irreparable misfortune to lose his father, whose cruel murder at Pasir Salak in November, 1875, is still green in the memory of the people of Perak" (ibid.). The date itself was sufficiently auspicious that when Birch called the first Perak State Council meeting he did so on the 20th anniversary of father's death. The Perak royalty helped to mark the occasion of Birch's retirement. A month later the paper reported on the farewell party hosted by Sultan Idris, with the headlines that promised Birch would become Perak royalty: "Mr Birch as Malayan Chief."[76] At the close of the Sultan's party, the Pioneer reports

> Mr. Birch was then recipient of a complete Malay costume, including a splendid gold buckle and kris. He retired to an adjoining room and attired himself in his new clothes and then, returning to the company in the garb of a Malay chieftain, was presented with an address in Malay, signed by the principal chiefs of Perak, which was sonorously read out by the Dato Sri Adika Raja. Mr. Birch replied in a brief historical speech and the pleasing ceremony terminated, the party dispersing about midnight (ibid.).

When Birch stepped down as Perak's British Resident, memories of his father's death in the same capacity surfaced. Perak was losing another Birch. This time, dressed as a Malay and addressed in Malay, he could close out the ceremony by reciting a pleasing history.[77] The green memories provided the pleasurable irony of the exchange.

Birch lost his own social connection to Perak after his retirement as resident. He opens his unpublished autobiography with the note that after he left Perak in 1910 "then Sultan Idris of Perak died and later the Dato Sri Adika Raja. I had lost the two closest and most interesting of my Malay friends."[78] In a note he describes them as "the two most

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[76] "Whom the King Delighteth to Honour; Sultan Dines Resident; Mr Birch as Malayan Chief," Perak Pioneer, 2 December 1910.

[77] E.W. Birch (1857-1929) was the oldest son of J.W.W. Birch. In 1876 he was given a position in the Colonial Office, and appointed a cadet to the Straits Settlements in 1878. After administrative appointments throughout the Straits Settlements and North Borneo, in 1904 he was appointed British Resident in Perak, and as an obituary notes, he "thus achieved his ambition of being appointed to the office his father held at the time of his death," a post he held until his retirement. A photograph of Birch in his Malay costume was reprinted upon his death in 1929 in British Malaya, along with his obituary. "Ernest Woodford Birch," British Malaya, January 1930, pages 263-265.

[78] E. W. Birch, "Draft of Autobiography," in MSS Indian Ocean 242, E.W. Birch Papers, Rhodes House Library, page 2.

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enlightened and most loyal Malays of their time" (Birch, 2). Sultan Idris and the Sri Adika Raja were relationships that he could not replace, as they recalled his father. He considers

> it is to be marvelled at that after the tragedy of my Father's death the Malay Peninsula called to me. He was Killed in Perak on 2nd November 1875, when I was eighteen at home on holiday and I heard the news at the Scarborough Railway Station. I craved to see his grave at Bandar Bharu and the river in which his life was taken. I became keenly interested in the Malay people amidst whom he was, at his own request, appointed to live, because he thought he could help them (Birch, 5).

He describes his journey to the beautiful grave, and the obelisk with the warning that "this spot be kept desolate for ever." He met Malays who knew his father, and one of them gave Birch his father's watch and another his father's gun (Birch, 16). They returned what they once felt a right to but now had lost. Near the end of the book he points out how well colonial administration advanced in the peninsula, "for eight years Federation progressed swimmingly. All Sir Frank's [Swettenham] first officers were tried men, all knew the Malay, his language, customs and idiosyncracies. All laboured to perfect the machine" (Birch, 7). The memories of 1875 were not ones of those now staffing the federation, a machine calibrated to match the aspects of the Malay. Like the returned watch and gun of J.W.W. Birch, the events of 1875 were to be returned from Birch to the Malays of Perak.

The Pasir Salak rebellion loomed largest in the minds of the British officials in Perak charged with nominating new members to the Perak Royal hierarchy. Long correspondence argued whether the branch of the Perak royal family represented by Ex-Sultan Abdullah and the Pasir Salak rebellion could be made eligible for positions opened up after a death.[79] In March 1915, "The Undersigned Members of the Family of Ex-Sultan Abdullah of Perak, F.M.S." sent a memorial from Kuala Kangsar to the Secretary of State for the Colonies. They argued "that Your Memorialists having all been trained on European lines and taught to appreciate the principles of British justice and fairness, cannot believe that His Majesty the King Emperor's Government would wittingly punish innocent

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[79] Colonial Office 273 208/4836 "Ex-Sultan Abdullah + Murder of Mr. Birch," 18 March 1895. For a detailed discussion about Sultan Abdullah's struggle to be returned from the Seychelles to Perak, see Cheah Boon Kheng, "Letters from Exile--Correspondence of Sultan Abdullah of Perak from Seychelles and Mauritius, 1877-1891," Journal of the Royal Malaysian Branch, Royal Asiatic Society, 1991.

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descendents for the unhappy events of 1875 that led to the banishment of Ex-Sultan Abdullah to the Seychelles."[80] A dispatch from Perak to the Colonial Office in reply to the memorial argues that "On the one hand it can be said that constantly in history the deposition of a leader has led to a change of dynasty; also that the events of 1875 cannot be considered as ancient history and the question itself cannot be re-considered until those who have participated in them have passed away" (ibid.). But the dispatch goes on to note that the sons of Ex-Sultan Abdullah, Raja Mansur and Raja Chulan, two of the memorialists, have not been "treated as members of an outcast family; they have received from the Government special consideration and kindness" (ibid.). They were both, in fact, among the first Malays in Perak to be educated in English and among the few Malays allowed in the Perak civil service. Nevertheless their experience with the government was not sufficient to end the ban: "The fact remains the work of Ex-Sultan Abdullah and the events of 1875 are not yet matters of the past, and the time for removing wholly the restriction has not yet arrived" (ibid.). Rather than appoint Raja Chulan to a position in the Sultanate's hierarchy toward succession, the Perak administration asked the Colonial Office for approval to "take the necessary steps for the appointment of Raja Alang Iskandar to the office of Raja Bendahara" (ibid.). The Raja Bendahara, second in line of succession behind the Raja Muda, was poised to take Perak's highest Malay office given the advanced age of Sultan Idris. After Sultan Idris' death in 1916, and the brief 30-month reign of his son, Sultan Jalil, Raja Iskandar was installed in 1919 as the 30th Sultan of Perak.[81]

E.W. Birch in retirement encouraged that the ban on Ex-Sultan Abdullah's family be rescinded. In 1920 during the first year of Iskandar's reign, the issue came up again to fill the newly-opened positions. A visit by E.W. Birch to A.E. Collins produced the following exchange, after Collins told Birch about the considerations to overturn the ban: Birch "agreed that it would now be well to take this step, and so allow the unhappy events

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[80] Colonial Office 273/426/32435, "Memorial of Descendents of ex-Sultan Abdullah of Perak," 17 June 1915.

[81] The ceremony for the installation of Sultan Iskandar is in Programme of Festivities in Connection with the Installation of H.H. Sultan Iskandar Shah, Sultan of Perak, Commercial Press: Ipoh, 1919.

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of 1875 to fall into oblivion."[82] There remained one problem, though, of recalling in 1920 the exact terms of the 1909 ban. Collins notes that Birch "was, however, quite positive that in 1909 (14193/09) [the document's file number] the late Sultan Idris wished the ban to be imposed" (ibid.). The memorialists among the Perak royalty themselves were mystified about these 1909 documents that held their fate but had only been publicly recorded in 1914. For those British administrators charged in 1920 with determining who should hold Perak's royal offices, the crucial decisions also appeared to have been made in 1909, though that information was missing.

But these bureaucratic problems opened possibilities. Lawrence Guillemard, the Governor of the Straits Settlements, sent a long statement to Viscount Milner in the Colonial Office who was against the change. The missing 1909 files provided Guillemard with an opportunity:

> The absence of any papers here recording the reasons for the original ban against the family of Ex-Sultan Abdullah in 1909 leaves me in doubt on one important aspect of the problem. These reasons may be such as to lend Your Lordship to hold that on grounds of imperial policy it is impossible to remove the ban at the present time, however favourable the position to-day may appear to me and my advisers here. On the other hand the reasons may be such as to allow your Lordship to reconsider your decision, if I were able to convince you that in the interests of the good government of the State of Perak the immediate removal of the ban is desirable and its postponement undesirable (ibid.).

Careless filing of the 1909 documents made possible good government in 1920. Guillemard used this chance to recite a history of Perak, one that would explain to the Colonial Office why the affair of 1875 is now past. He explains it in familial terms, from Birch to Abdullah:

> The murder of Mr. Birch, the first Resident of Perak, in 1875 led to war and the banishment in 1877 of ex-Sultan Abdullah to the Seychelles, whence he was allowed to return in 1893 to Singapore, being further permitted in 1905 to live anywhere in the Malay Peninsula except Perak, and finally to reside in Perak itself (ibid.).

Next appeared the sons, Raja Mansur and Raja Chulan, who Guillemard notes "may be said to have been adopted by the British Government" (ibid.). The Perak royalty alleged to

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[82] Colonial Office 717 4/55832, 3 December 1920, "Family of ex-Sultan Abdulla, Removal of Ban on--".

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have killed Birch have become part of the British family. These family ties could fill in for the missing documents and vouch for their deserving a royal position in Perak.

But it is precisely this confusion that promotes the rumors that 1875 might not yet be history. A handwritten note over an indecipherable signature on the bottom of the minute papers reads "there is a curious divergence of opinion on what should be matters of fact. I wonder where the truth lies" (ibid.). The 1909 papers would make the matter of the ban fact but they were not there. Guillemard argued that 1920, just after the Great War, was the best time to remove the now-mysterious ban, because doing so would serve in "reminding Malays of a day when Perak was not loyal to the British" (ibid.). Another manifestation of the reminder was the impending visit to the peninsula of the H.M.S. Malaya, a battleship given to the British navy in 1912 and paid for by the four Sultans of the Federated Malay States. The gift and visit were tied to these familial relationships:

> The father of the present Sultan of Perak initiated the idea of presenting a battleship to His Majesty the King-Emperor, and I know that nothing would gratify the present Sultan more than to be able to announce the removal of the Abdullah ban before he takes a leading part in the reception in the near future of a battleship which is a symbol of the implicit loyalty of his house (ibid.).

W.G. Maxwell, the Perak Resident then on leave in Oxford, gave his strong assent to the ban's removal. This "unequivocal statement" from Maxwell assured that Ex-Sultan Abdullah's family would be loyal like the battleship in service to the British navy. The British battleship would symbolize the familial stretch of the Perak royal house, including in it even the descendants of those who were once not loyal to the British administration in Perak. A minute notes "The removal will come at a singularly opportune moment, and will no doubt be associated with the visit of the H.M.S. Malaya, on which will be Sir E. Birch, the son of the murdered Resident" (ibid.). This meant that Birch could safely return to Malaya as if his father had not been killed there. Pasir Salak was now an incidental part of Perak history, removed from memory by the removal of the ban.

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Kongsi glap Melayu [Malay secret societies]

In 1919 Raja Alang Iskandar was installed as the Sultan of Perak. His experience in the colonial administration differed from that of Raja Chulan, who was initially banned from joining the higher ranks of the nobility. At age 24 Raja Alang Iskandar joined the police, a measure hoped to ease recruitment of Malays into the police ranks: "a new era in Police history began on Aug. 1st 1905, when Raja Alang Iskandar was appointed Assistant Commissioner of Police and was made responsible for Malay recruiting at the Police Depot, at Bluff Road, Kuala Lumpur. Raja Alang Iskandar had been serving in the Secretariat in Taiping but found office work uncongenial, and he accepted the challenge of the new appointment willingly."[83] According to one of his biographers, Raja Alang Iskandar even helped design the police uniform consisting of a khaki tunic, khaki shorts and puttees, black boots and a black bakul cap.[84] When called back to Perak to be the Raja Bendahara, Raja Alang Iskandar had over ten years of police experience.

Other affiliations among Malays outside the royal family and the state bureaucracies were difficult for the authorities to see. The police reports that recorded Malays working together in crime were stray reports, like amok stories. Careful links had to be made. A 1906 police report contains a "Perak case" in its "Detailed Report of Murders, Etc."[85] The report notes

> 19. On the 13th October, near Utan Melintang, a Malay named Seman ran amok after severing his wife's foot with a slash of a parang. He attacked several people and wounded them badly, and one Haji Esah died on his way to the Police Station. Great trouble was taken to find Seman, who there is very good reason to believe is a member of the White Flag Secret Society, and has consequently received a lot of assistance from the members thereof. A reward of $500 was offered for his arrest without result so far. It is reported, and I believe it to be true, that Seman has made good his escape in a Tongkang to Deli in Sumatra, and as there exists no extradition treaty between the Netherlands and the Federated Malay States there is little hope of getting him and others that have made good their escape across the Straits brought to justice (ibid.).

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83 Mubin Sheppard, "The First Malay Assistant Commissioner of Police," Malaysia in History, March 1970, page 40.

84 Ahmad Sabki Jahidin, Iskandar Shah of Perak 1881-1938, B.A. Thesis, University of Malaya: Singapore, 1958, page 4.

85 "Report of the Police force for the year 1906," in Selangor Secretariat Files 4046/07.

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Seman went missing. The police only heard rumors about him, his believed membership in a secret society, his supposed journey to Sumatra, the others that might be with him. The only detail the police knew for certain was that Seman had run amok. Because of the murders the police were forced to express impotence in bringing justice. Amok referenced grander plots being prepared in Perak.

The Pasir Salak incident involved families. The chain of amok stories was one where families dropped out of the colonial relationship in Perak, since ties between the police and Malay criminals were ones between individuals. The Malayan Police Magazine, started in 1928, contains news and anecdotes about police work in the peninsula. The Magazine ran in 1930 a story titled "Mat Ali, a Famous Malay Criminal."[86] The writer notes that notions of Malay criminality are generally false:

> The average conception of a Malay among those who have not been fortunate enough to meet the race is probably that of a fierce swaggering pirate armed with two or more 'krises' and liable to run 'amok' on the slightest provocation. Fortunately for those who have to live in Malaya and more especially for those whose duty it is to maintain law and order, the conception is founded rather on fiction than on fact and while the image may have been true in the 19th century, it is certainly not a faithful picture of the Malay as he is known to the Police during the last three decades. The Malay generally is, nowadays at least, a peace-loving and pleasant gentleman with charming manners and an attractive personality (ibid., 309).

"The Malay" behaves as a gentlemen because others in Malaya do not. The writer notes that

> Organized crime among the Malays of the Federated Malay States is practically unknown and speaking generally petty thieving and forgery are the only offences which brings them with any frequency into conflict with the guardians of the peace. This is fortunate for the serenity of mind of the Police, who are fully occupied coping with the machinations of the Chinese, whose assiduity, patience and natural guile make him a very formidable opponent (ibid., 309).

It was difficult for the police to think, with their minds full, of the Malays as criminals. The criminal qualities of the Chinese displace those of the Malays in the mind of the Police, which do not have the capability to consider Malays except as individual exceptions.

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86 "Mat Ali, a Famous Malay Criminal," Malayan Police Magazine, 1930.

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The sense that the Chinese overwhelmed the police focused attention on the peculiarities of Malays who did cause problems. In the case of Mat Ali,

> Occasionally, however, there arises a Malay who either by the originality of his methods or the cold-blooded daring of his deeds, proves himself to be a criminal something out of the ordinary and yet possesses an indefinable something which seems to go a long way towards palliating the blackness of his deeds. Such a man, I think, was Mat Ali the villain of my story (ibid., 309).

The Malay criminal is something extraordinary, so much so that the criminal quality itself is indefinable. Only as a lone individual are the police able to think of the Malays, who then are not named as "Malays" but rather "Mat Ali." As part of his story, Mat Ali, in his confession, explains his experience of staying in a Japanese hotel in Taiping when two Chinese police came to his room. He claims they tried to frame him by placing a knife under his bed, so he overpowered them and ran off to the local Malay Mosque. The next day he took the train to Penang, went to Kedah, returned to Penang, and left for Kedah again. On the road as he travelled the country Mat Ali continually met up with various Chinese and Tamils, some of whom he robbed, some of whom he shot, and some of whom helped him. After the police captured him, they questioned his sanity

> That Mat Ali was not at all times mentally normal there appears to be little doubt and it is, more than probable that in his lucid moments he realised this and determined to kill somebody so that he might be hanged. As soon as the offence was committed he began to repent and to regret his lapse. Despite his record some police officers find it easier to pity than to blame him (ibid., 312).

Mat Ali's only sane action, the police felt, was to kill someone, and the police pitied him because he had to do it. Malay criminals in the Malayan Police Magazine travelled the country alone, isolated like the amok-runners.

Malay criminals did not always remain solitary, and the events of 1875 did not always remain historical. In the early 1930s Mervyn Wynne of the Malayan Police began writing his tome, Triad and Tabut: A Survey of the Origin and Diffusion of Chinese and Mohamedan Secret Societies in the Malay Peninsula A.D. 1800-1935. Completed in 1936, the book was marked "confidential for authorised use only;" it was later published in

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1941.[87] By "tokong" Wynne meant Chinese associations, by "tabut" he meant a religious "processional emblem," one used in nineteenth-century Penang. These were the two symbols Wynne used to reflect the Chinese and Muslim influences he felt were operating in Malaya. Wynne's attempt "to trace the activities of Chinese and Malay secret societies, working in concert in Malaya during the period of the British Connection" (Wynne, vii) is motivated by a lack of information: "But against maleficient secret societies whose power is known, whose vengeance is feared, and whose genius for concealment opposes an almost impenetrable wall to objective study, there can be no excuse for disinclination or apathy in investigation" (Wynne, xix). The ready assurance that previous problems in Perak were securely in the past was the proof that they were not, as Wynne argues:

> In this search for the past the better to read the future; the wise administrator familiarises himself as best he may with those great modern currents, movements, influences and discoveries, racial, historical, religious, social and anthropological that lie within his ambit and rigorously rejects the comfortable voice that whispers 'nothing ever happens' (Wynne, iv).

Wynne needed to search Malaya from every angle possible if he was to make a connection between Chinese and Malay criminal societies. The heavy notation and the grand scale of the five hundred-page text makes Wynne's work stand out from the general brevity of such colonial interest in Malaya.

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[87] Mervyn Wynne, Triad and Tabut: A Survey of the Origin and Diffusion of Chinese and Mohamedan Secret Societies in the Malay Peninsula A.D. 1800-1935, Government Printing Office: Singapore, 1941. In 1957, Wynne's work was redistributed with a new foreword by W.L. Blythe, author of the basic text on the subject The Impact of Chinese Secret Societies in Malaysia, Oxford University Press: London, 1969. Blythe served in the administration as both Colonial Secretary in Singapore and as Secretary for Chinese Affairs and notes that Wynne refers in his volume to several appendices and extra chapters in the study, but (like Wynne himself), "these did not survive the Japanese occupation" (v). For Blythe, reading after the Emergency, the focus of Triad and Tabut was solely the Chinese in Malaya: "the main theme of his study is that there were two opposed roots from which the Chinese Secret Societies in Malaya stemmed" (iii). This main thesis is wrong, Blythe asserts: "from evidence now available it becomes clear that some of his conjectures were erroneous" (iii). Nevertheless Wynne's work was once useful: "not only have the Malayan Governments found this book of considerable practical use in the investigation of post-war secret societies, but the presentation of the theory enunciated therein, even though it has now to be abandoned, has kindled the enthusiasm of other searchers in the same field" (v). However, even this measure of usefulness in 1957 was now finished and the book was to be read as history: "As the material contained in this book may be of interest and use to a wider group of research workers, permission has been given by the Governments of the Federation of Malaya and the Colony of Singapore for the issue of such copies as still remain, to libraries and centres of learning" (v). Wynne might have been wrong but Blythe thought his mistakes might still be useful to someone.

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Most research on Malaya was brief because Malaya, to Wynne, was too small in scale to allow the grand kind of investigation that interested him. The scope of influences upon criminal practice in the peninsula radiates out over several continents and nearly a millennia, as Wynne argues:

> We submit that it may have been thus, through the Batini-Assassin-Thug link, that the perverted Shiah doctrine of the Dar-Ul-Hikmat lodge of Cairo of A.D. 1004,--which, in turn, may have had its origin in the Yin Yang of China,--reached Sunni Malaya eight hundred and thirty years later. Its criminal influence remains to the present-day (Wynne, 171).

Malaya' influences cannot be located in any local context. Wynne notes that the perspective that the reader requires reaches beyond what police work can account. Somewhat defensively he argues

> True, the background as drawn has a world-wide sweep, whereas we are only concerned in this work with the detail of one tiny corner of the imperial picture. But without this background whose subdued but all-pervading tone is the arcana of man's mind, anything we might record of secret societies in the Malayan corner would have no real meaning unattached to the main gigantic theme, the vast turmoil that is human life and relationship. Any purely local record would have but a transitory significance, --a seven days' wonder, or perhaps just, 'a matter for the police' (Wynne, 214).

The sweep itself renders any shred of evidence potentially vital to the project. Wynne in Perak wants the study of Chinese and Malay secret societies to be much more than merely a local phenomenon, he wants it to be one that can speak to others. The tremendous immigration into Malaya of people from all over the world renders the peninsula's own historical specificity of limited interest.

Wynne's central concern, like that of the police intelligence reports before him, was that criminal societies in Malaya had their origins outside the peninsula. The Red and White "Indo-Malay Flag Associations" and the "Chinese secret societies of triad and 'tokong'" affiliated together in Penang in the 1860s, he says, as reported in the Penang Riot Commission Report of 1868. This does not, though, assume that such Malay-Chinese cooperation happened only in Penang for

> There can be little doubt but that it was taking place concurrently in all three settlements [Penang, Malacca, Singapore] unobserved. Even on such occasions as it broke surface elsewhere and attracted attention to itself, little or no record seem to

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> have been made, no doubt because its significance was not recognised or understood (Wynne, 194).

The lack of proof in the police archives that Wynne searches means that the authorities did not know what to look for. The Malay relationship to these criminal influences was as something pure infected from outside: "It seems to have been the fact that all four of them ["thugs," "Shiah," "Tokong," "Sufiism"] drew their initial inspiration from imported sources, Indian, Chinese, Siamese and Arab, and that the indigenous Malays only later became involved in them, or exploited by them" (Wynne, 220). Since the police archives fail him, to tie together the Malay flag associations with the Chinese Triad and Tokong Wynne depends on scientific arcana. He uses (among other things) genealogy, etymologies of red and white, the nature of Sufism, research in Chinese symbolism, and the anthropological lore of India to develop his case. Amid the vast compendium of knowledge about the imported agents of crime, he displays less interest in writing about Malaya itself.

One peninsular period that attracts Wynne's attention is that of 1870s Perak. He reads the struggles of Chinese miners in Larut as ones of Tokong and Triad, and that between Abdullah and Ismail for the sultanate as one between red flag and white flag. The lack of evidence of this in the archives available to him is again proof of the point:

> It must be remembered that throughout the whole of official and unofficial records of the period 1870-1877, there is no mention of the White and Red Flag organizations which we have seen flourishing in Penang in 1867 ... the authorities in those days were clearly not aware of the extensive and unseen rival organisations of White and Red and Triad and Tokong into which the Malays and Chinese of Perak were divided. Their absence from the records need not, therefore, surprise us (Wynne, 300).

These invisible machinations killed Birch, since "The murder of Birch was no chance affray but the culmination of the Red and White flag conspiracy traced above" (Wynne, 316). As Wynne argues, "this is the saddest chapter in Perak history. It is the story of the retribution that followed the short-lived triumph of those unseen forces, which encompassed the death of Birch" (Wynne, 329). The unseen forces of the flag associations allied with the Chinese groups produced the history of Perak that was not written.

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When Wynne shifts his attention to Kuala Kangsar in part two of the report, he was running out of time.[88] His focus shifts to the Kuala Kangsar area itself. To do so, in the report's final hundred pages, he cites the official documents describing the specific historical events in the Perak River Valley of the past half-century. These events, in an uncertain manner, refer to something earlier:

> reference has been made in Chapter XI to the importation into Malaya during the nineteenth century of certain Shiah religious and criminal influences and the manner of their importation. There was still earlier Shiah influence latent in Perak which seems in some not-clearly refined way to have become mixed up in recent years with the undercurrents of Malay secret society intrigue in Kuala Kangsar (Wynne, 443).

As he moves closer to Kuala Kangsar in the colonial police files, his analysis is without strong evidence: "In this section of our work, we are still very much in the dark and are forced back upon theories, but unless some theory is recorded, if only to be rejected, we cannot make any advance in research into the most difficult aspect of our subject" (Wynne, 444). The relationship between Malays and Chinese, the empirical interest of Wynne's project, could only be rendered as a theory.

The evidence suggests to Wynne that the very appearance of Kuala Kangsar as the seat of the Sultanate might have caused Perak's present criminal problems. Raja Yusof and Raja Idris both had the "unpleasant duties" of judging those alleged to have killed Birch, and this served to "widen the breach between the supporters of British intervention and the nationalist faction among the Chiefs, who remained silent but defiant" (Wynne, 445). To spite his enemies, and show his support for the British, Wynne claims Sultan Idris settled in Kuala Kangsar:

> Again it was Sultan Idris who, in 1904 first broke the ancient Perak custom, which we have suggested may have descended from the Children of the Sun, and built himself a palace on the right bank of the Perak River (F.M.S. history part II page 72) and may thus perhaps have shocked orthodox Malay opinion and have thrown out a challenge to the family of the Megats, who after their loss of the Bendaharaship in A.D. 1770, had ever kept to the right-bank (Malay left) of the river at Kuala Kangsar, while the sultans kept to the left (Malay right). May not this challenge--flaunted perhaps by a Son of the Sun in the face of ancient custom

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88 This portion of the book detailing Perak was not part of the manuscript included with the Blythe introduction in 1957, one was not deemed of sufficient historical interest.

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> and possible only because of the sense of security in his throne which Sultan Idris with the British support, doubtless felt,--have helped its little bit to revive the latent hostility of the still living 'irreconcilables' to the present reigning house in Perak and have added at the same time an incentive to recruitment for the ranks of the two mutually hostile, but equally irreconcilable, opposition parties to the reigning house in Perak (Wynne, 445-446).

As long as Kuala Kangsar housed the palace, it contained latent hostility to those unreconciled to colonial rule. The palace itself, on the wrong river bank, might recruit members for the very secret societies giving the police their worries.

As Wynne looks closely at Kuala Kangsar he cannot see beyond the Perak War. He shows the minor Perak chiefs, penghulus, and village headmen split between the different factions struggling for power in the 1870s. Careful scrutiny, he says, of Plunket's Enquiry to the Perak Outrages, and of the war's Parliamentary Papers, will serve to name the names of those involved. The associations formed back then continue into the present, and for Wynne it is as if the Birch killing was the only political event to happen in Perak:

> Again there is scope for similar research in respect to the descendants of those who paid with their lives for the actual murder of Birch ... the present-day representatives of their descendants might reasonably be expected to be found among the leaders of that political secret society intrigue which is still being fostered in Perak (Wynne, 446).

As he describes the campaign of the Perak War and the struggle for the Sultan's regalia, Wynne admits Malay memory retains these events: "We have no wish to conjure up imaginary bogeys, but anyone who knows something of the Malays knows that the whole history of their relations with the British is a very vivid reality to them" (Wynne, 452). Wynne worries that his research might raise something the Malays already know, something that others who know the Malays know must be a reality in Perak.

Throughout the course of Wynne's research in the 1930s police reports detailed the activities of what they called the Perak River Society. A 1933 police report records

> The most powerful secret society in the Federated Malay States is the Perak River Society in which Malay membership preponderates. This is a very long-standing organisation with ritual based on the Triad Society and activities very similar thereto; it has probably existed for 50 years or more. The secrecy of this society's

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> activities and the loyalty of its members have made suppression a matter of very great difficulty.[89]

The Perak River Society comes to life for Wynne through this series of police reports detailing it. The Taiping Print, the History of Perisoc by K.J.N. Duthie, the Goodman Report, the Lee Warner Report, the Adams Report, the Hussey Report, the Bain Report, all form the police archive tracking the activities of Perak Malays.[90] Such a range of available information does not comfort Wynne. For him the "intrigue" and "royal dissatisfaction" in Perak did not quite produce politics: "Up to this point no direct evidence has been produced of the existence of any political organisation in Perak, distinct from the two criminal flag societies [red and white], which could properly be described as the Perak River Secret Society" (Wynne, 455). His advice to trace specific Perak Malay families to see their commitments does not completely satisfy, for "there is no proof that any of the above-named were in fact headmen, but as so much obscurity surrounds the whole subject, we should re-open enquiries where there is some hope of progress" (Wynne, 461). His recourse is to argue again that this lack of evidence is its own proof, and Wynne writes with emphasis

> **We have now reached a point where the reader must have become aware that there is a great atmosphere of make-believe and humbug about all this professed ignorance by Malays of all classes upon the existence, aims and leaders of Tabut in Malaya. Any unbiased reader must feel as we feel, that all this mystery is unreal and the only possible explanation is that it is feigned and feigned deliberately, as part of that vast conspiracy to silence of Triad and Tokong, of which we have spoken in Part 1.**[91]

The Malay relationship to the Perak River Society is ignorance, mystery, and silence. Wynne knows, from reading the police reports, that this must hide something in Perak.

To detail the hidden quality in Perak, Wynne returns to the analysis he undertook in part one of the report. The mix of Chinese and Malay in the associations particularly

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89 "Supplement to the F.M.S. Government Gazette, Report on the State of Crime and the Administration of the Police Force for the Year 1933," page 14.
90 It is unlikely any of these survived the Japanese occupation.
91 Bold in original, Wynne page 465

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worries the police, but provides proof for Wynne that events in Perak are following an old, discernible pattern. In his citation of the Goodman Report he lists

> The societies are mixed Chinese and Malay and exist for purposes of mutual protection. Practically all the small agriculturalists in the areas have to belong and it is practically impossible for an outsider to live in any of the river villages unless he subscribes to them. The subscriptions are raised amongst Malays under the guise of subscriptions for religious purposes (Wynne, 478).

Wynne describes certain crimes where "the large number of licensed arms in the district occasioned some misgiving, and it was very generally believed that in most cases of armed robbery and gang robbery by Chinese, licensed weapons were loaned by Malays to the Chinese concerned" (Wynne, 500). In the Hussey Report, which describes how some Chinese steal a Malay household's gold and cash, Wynne notices "throughout the enquiry there is an undercurrent of suggestion that Malays had instigated the crime. Indeed it appeared impossible for Chinese to know anything about the possessions of the household" (Wynne, 500). But secret society involvement was more natural to the Chinese, according to Wynne, than for the Malays: "We can easily understand that the greatest confusion must exist in the minds of Malays about the precise difference between White and Red and the variations in ritual, signs etc., when the whole system is utterly alien and repugnant to their natures and has been thrust upon them by fear" (Wynne, 502). The Malays involved with the Chinese must be doing so as old Malays, those still foreign to the criminal influences from outside.

Yet from the police reports, Wynne also concludes that everyone knows what is going on with the secret societies, and that everyone else knows what they fear. The Bain Report quotes a certain Mohd Yit bin Mohd Yatin, an informer: "My name as an informer has now been circulated and I am in great difficulty now and dare not go out at night. I have in fact no friends now, as no one will speak to me among the members of the society. There are only a few Malays left in Kuala Kangsar who are not members. Even the telephone operators are members" (Wynne, 516). The telephone operator's knowledge means that there is no safe place to talk. Bain concludes:

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> I have had great difficulty in obtaining really definite information. There is no difficulty in discussing in secret with Malays of some standing the effect of the society in the kampongs, but none of these are prepared to come forward openly and assist in the suppression of the society. Their reason is in every case the same, that is, that it would be made impossible for them to continue to live in the district (Wynne, 516).

As another Perak police official claimed, crimes went unreported and there was "reliable information that the reported crime bore very little relation to the actual crime in the area. 'Everyone is too afraid to give information'" (Wynne, 517). A confidential Perak file notes how an informant's "demeanour was that of a man thoroughly scared" (Wynne, 520). The police were surprised by this fear and could only note its presence. Wynne concludes that developments in Perak might be "solely criminal and amount to nothing more than a share of stolen booty" (Wynne, 540). The other possibility was that "there are political interests hidden therein" (Wynne, 540). The Malays might be frightened of the information, but Wynne was not: "only further patient research along the right lines can finally determine" the nature of the secret activity, and with thorough study the government could take "remedial measures" (Wynne, 540). The exact evidence of 1875's legacy only needed to turn up.

Can a Malay be banished?

In the mid-1930s, there were no Malay newspapers published in Perak. For the Penang and Singapore Malay papers, Perak was just a small part of their peninsular beat. Thus the means of communication in Malay was not clear to the British authorities in Perak. Wynne, for one, was certain that the unknown nature of Malay communication was proof that there was a conspiracy among the members of the Perak River Society. The police were confident that in controlling the group's access to print the Society would wither, since "the seizure by the police of the books of this society in October, 1931, has enabled action to be taken which should cripple its activities for a long while."[92] Sultan Iskandar, though he knew police methods from his tenure in Kuala Lumpur, was not so

[92] "Report on the State of Crime and the Administration of the Police Force for the Year 1933," page 2.

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confident the society would die without its books. He demanded that Perak Malays publicly renounce any involvement with the secret societies.

The Sultan in Kuala Kangsar was the one able to take care of the Malays. Fear of the police. and under Sultan Iskandar's order, people began moving to Kuala Kangsar to perform what the police called "tobat." Wynne reports

> Then followed a stampeed by those who for the most part sought 'safety-first' or relief to their consciences by resort to the 'tobat' or public renunciation of their membership of the society. ... for the four months, October to December, 1933, the strange and unprecedented spectacle was to be seen daily of large numbers of Malays on foot, in motorcars, in boats and on bicycles making a pilgrimage to Bukit Chandan, Kuala Kangsar, to 'take the tobat' before the Sultan (Wynne, 521).

The sheer numbers exceeded the town's capacity and the Sultan sent notice that there was no need to go to Kuala Kangsar to tobat for a pardon. But the public involvement of all these people gave Wynne his evidence of the secret society's existence:

> Before the end of the year 1934, over 5,000 Malays living on the Perak River between Kuala Kangsar and Teluk Anson had from mixed motives, voluntarily renounced their membership of 'Perisoc' which membership in many individual cases dated back thirty and forty years ... this almost spontaneous and large scale public confession and recantation proved in an unique and unexpected way how wide-spread and numerous was membership of the association in that particular area, and gave the lie to much past scepticism and misgiving on this subject (Wynne, 521).

The message of tobat given by Malays to the Sultan was also the proof that Wynne was looking for, a message for the Sultan that the members of the Perak River Society appeared unwilling to say to anyone else.

The journey to Kuala Kangsar was not as important for tobat as the opportunity for Malays to meet Sultan Iskandar, wherever he might be in Perak. On October 17, 1933, the Sultan replied that it was no longer necessary to go to Kuala Kangsar to give tobat (Wynne, 523). The Sultan's subjects who wished to do so had to meet him on his journeys elsewhere. When the Sultan went to Parit in 1933 there was competition for his attention, as the Times reported "the Malay and Chinese communities of the district vied with each other in honouring the Ruler of the State."[93] At the luncheon given by the "members of the

[93] "Chinese Beginning to Consider Themselves Perak Citizens; H.H. the Sultan Expresses His Pleasure; Equal Conditions for All Stressed in Speech; Large Gathering Welcomes Ruler at Parit," Times of Malaya,

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Chinese community," the Sultan replied to the toasts that "he was pleased to see that not only the Chinese of Parit but the Chinese of Perak were beginning to consider themselves citizens of the State" (ibid.). Only after the meeting with the prospective Chinese citizens do the Malays approach him:

> When the Sultan of Perak visited Parit on Saturday, the opportunity was taken by ex-members of Malay secret societies, resident in the district, to mengadap [face the Sultan] for "tobat."
>
> On his return to the Rest House from the lunch given by the Chinese Community, His Highness found a gathering of Malays standing on the lawn opposite the portico. His Highness was informed that the gathering had come there to beg for clemency from His Highness for having become members of "perisoc," as the secret society is known in Malay.
>
> His Highness in granting pardon (tobat) to the supplicants advised them as to their future conduct and told them that to belong to a secret society was contrary to the law. He warned them not to be lead astray by people who came from outside and advised them to go to the penghulus [district chiefs] and ketuas [village heads] of their respective mukims [districts] for advice (ibid.).

The excessive interest of the Malay population in tobat was a part of the closely-choreographed trip because, the Sultan announced at the tea hosted by the Malay Community, unlike his predecessors the "raiats [people] could have access to him at all times" (ibid.). At his next stop they had such an opportunity when "former members of secret societies in Bruas approached His Highness to mengadap for 'tobat' and His Highness in granting them pardon gave them advice similar to that given at Parit for those who had begged for the pardon."[94] When the Sultan traveled in Perak, his Malay subjects had something important to promise him.

Later, in 1935, these promises of tobat became challenges. The Times reported the drama when some Malays gathered near Kuala Kangsar to hold a secret society meeting:

> A sensational raid was carried out by the Perak detective department when eleven people were arrested on a lonely island north of Kuala Kangsar, attempting, it is alleged, to a hold a secret society meeting. The men were charged this morning in the Kuala Kangsar court with being members of an unlawful society.[95]

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9 April 1934. Immigrants at this time had only limited rights of domicile in Malaya: "a Chinese or Indian could gain citizenship only if both parents had been born in the country and resided there for at least fifteen years." See Gene Z. Hanrahan, The Communist Struggle in Malaya, University of Malay Press: Kuala Lumpur, 1971, page 37.

[94] "At Bruas; Rain Mars Tea Party," Times of Malaya, 10 April 1934.

[95] "Arrests on Perak River Island; Alleged Membership of Unlawful Society," Times of Malaya, 27 May 1935.

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Over the next five months the Times printed the trial details of what they termed the "kongsi glap Melayu" [Malay secret society]. One Malay giving evidence at the trial "said that he was at one time a member of a secret society known as 'Kongsi Glap Melayu,' but in 1933 he made a 'tobat' and was given a free pardon. Since then he had nothing to do with such societies" (ibid.). The Times reminded readers that

> It will be recalled that during 1933 a secret society among the Malays was unearthed by the police and several were arrested. Those who made 'tobat' were given a free pardon and the society was dissolved. During May this year the Kuala Kangsar police received certain information regarding an attempt to resuscitate the activities of the society.[96]

The Times highlighted the Sultan's betrayal in its headline "Men Who had Paid 'Tobat' Witness Initiation Ceremony."[97] These people did not mean what they said to Sultan Iskandar, and for that reason Malay interest in the Kuala Kangsar trial was heavy: "The Court was uncomfortably crowded and several Malays stood outside and followed the proceedings with interest. The accused appeared quite at ease and was highly amused when witnesses failed to give what he considered as a satisfactory reply to his cross-examination" (ibid.). Officer McNamara, in an exchange with one of the witnesses about why he joined the secret society, asked:

> Mr. McNamara: What was the nature of the advantages explained to you?
> Witness: I was told that I would be protected from all troubles and nobody would dare rob me (ibid.).

But even with this kind of protection they had to admit they had gone back on their word to the Sultan:

> Magistrate: if you were not in sympathy with the 'Kongsi Glap' why did you drink the milk?
> Witness: I was afraid of the accused. He was a 'kepala' [head].
> Accused (to witness): Why should you have been afraid?
> Witness: I was afraid because you were the head of the 'Kongsi Glap' and for another reason, because I had already paid 'tobat' and obtained a free pardon from the Tuanku [Sultan] (ibid.).

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96 "Secret Society Case Ends; Two Accused Get One Year; Sentence at Kuala Kangsar Today; One Wanted Man Still at Large," Times of Malaya, 17 July 1935.

97 "Strange Malay Secret Society Ritual Revealed; Koran Extract Stirred in Milk with Knife; Another Prosecution At Kuala Kangsar; Men Who Had Paid 'Tobat' Witness initiation Ceremony," Times of Malaya, 8 October 1935.

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McNamara needed to establish why anyone would join a secret society, and the trial suggested the people needed protection from what others were saying about them. Then the defense questioned another involved:

> Alang Mohamed Daud, the accused, electing to give evidence on oath, said that one Kubat Abdul Rashid was arrested on a charge of wrongful possession of a gun, but the charge was later withdrawn. This man went about telling everybody in the village that he (accused) acted as informer and had got Rashid arrested.
> As a result of these rumors [the] present case had been engineered against him and all the witnesses had told lies. Regarding Rashid's conduct he had reported him to certain Chiefs of the State.
> Magistrate: Was Rashid charged?
> Mr. McNamara: He was charged but I withdrew the case against him, being entirely satisfied that the gun had been planted on him.
> Two witnesses summoned by the accused denied any knowledge of the accused having told the Chiefs about Rashid's conduct. In fact, witnesses said, they know nothing about this case. This closed the case for the defense (ibid.).

Alang attempted to prove that he could be an informer, that he could tell the chiefs of Rashid's criminal behavior. However, Alang was left alone, both by Officer McNamara and the witnesses called to corroborate his testimony. Alang might not have told the Chiefs anything.

If they wanted to be part of something larger than Perak, the English newspapers warned that Malays should not surreptitiously assist or communicate with each other. A new competitor of the Times in Ipoh, the Tribune, warned that the secret societies were "Traps for Good Citizens" and "What Malayans should Avoid."[98] Those in the secret societies risked a possible place as a citizen of Malaya. What the Tribune called the "notorious" kongsi glap Melayu was meant to aid its members: "the aim of this mysterious Malay brotherhood is mutual help. The society is to help any member in need no matter what is the nature of the assistance required" (ibid.). If they wanted to be citizens, this is what they could not do. The newspaper also told its English readers in Perak the kongsi glap's special signal to communicate with each other: "rolling up the sleeves of the shirt, coat or baju inwards shows that the person doing so desires immediate assistance from the

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98 "Traps for Good Citizens; What Malayans should Avoid," Malaya Tribune, 12 October 1935. The Malaya Tribune, founded in 1914 in Singapore, began to print a northern issue in Ipoh in 1935. See C.M. Turnbull, Dateline Singapore: 150 Years of the Straits Times, Singapore Press Holdings: Singapore, 1995, page 92.

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society" (ibid.). They helped each other, had their own signals, and even secret places of assembly: "The meeting place for the initiation ceremony is generally a very lonely spot and it may be of interest to note that recently Malay members of a Malay secret society were about to hold a meeting on a lonely island on the Perak River near Kuala Kangsar when they were arrested by the detectives" (ibid.). Their schemes of assistance, communication, and meeting made the Tribune think of Perak Malays as if they were Malayan citizens, like Sultan Iskandar felt of the Parit Chinese. But to become citizens they could not be in the associations of their choosing.

In fact, the involvement in the associations questioned the very right of Perak Malays to live in the state. Throughout its tenure in Malaya, the British administration used the threat of banishment to control the immigrant population, and, in 1932, troublesome Malays as well.[99] The revival of the Perak River Society in 1935 reversed the tobat many had made to the Sultan in their trips to Kuala Kangsar and revived interest in banishment as a solution to the secret society problem. The Times reported a warning from Sultan Iskandar that those who contravened the secret societies ban would no longer be able to live in Perak:

> His Highness the Sultan of Perak issued a proclamation from the Istana Iskandariah, Kuala Kangsar, notifying all his subjects in Perak that any of them found to be members of the unlawful secret society known as the 'Kongsi Glap,' and particularly members who had paid 'tobat' and had obtained a free pardon, would be banished for the rest of their life.[100]

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99 "It became standard policy to arrest all suspected labour agitators and Communist agents, deporting them post-haste." See Gene Z. Hanrahan, The Communist Struggle in Malaya, University of Malay Press: Kuala Lumpur, 1971, page 37. The right to banish Malays from the Federated Malay States was established in a 1932 court case involving a Megat Ibrahim of Kuala Kangsar. E.C. Watson, representing Megat Ibrahim, unsuccessfully argued that he "did not dispute the right of banishing a British subject, an Indian subject, a Chinese subject or a subject of any other power. If a natural-born Malay was banished it deprived him of his patrimony and birthright in addition to which it would only send him away starving. It would be like a ship in mid-ocean putting out a person with enough food to get away with and not caring what would happen to him later." "Can a Malay Be Banished? Important Test Case; Legal Adviser's Arguments; F.M.S. Banishment Laws in Review," Times of Malaya, 1 October 1932.

100 "His Highness's Warning to Malay Peasantry; Banishment as Penalty for Unlawful Activities; Effort to Stamp Out Secret Society Menace; To be Enforced against All Who Are Convicted," Times of Malaya, 15 October 1935.

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The paper added that "even if the person concerned were of royal blood or were a chief of the state, the punishment would be the same" (ibid.). The Sultan threatened his Malay subjects that their very right to live in Perak was contingent on the avoidance of the societies. Wynne published the Malay version of this proclamation, posted all over the state:

> Sultan's proclamation, August 1935
> The Command of His Highness the Sultan of Perak
> Let it be known to all in the State of Perak, that from now on anyone who joins a kongsi gelap, especially those who already have been granted pardon for that offense, will not be granted reconsideration but rather banished from the state of Perak until their death, without respect of rank whether among the royalty or other prominent heritage.[101]

When Ex-Sultan Abdullah and others allied with him were charged with complicity in killing Birch, they were banished from the peninsula. In the tense conditions of 1930s Perak, amid the slumped economy and political ferment, others risked following the Ex-Sultan into exile, sent there by order of one of his police-trained successors.

The amok alone in Perak

The police were concerned about other social ties among the Malays. The Federated Malay States Police Force, in its annual accounting of crime in the states, distinguished murder by its motive. In 1935, the police crime report lists among the "motives" for the 48 murders in the states to be "Gang-robbery," "Robbery," "Quarrels or feuds," "Sexual jealousy," "Revenge," "Homicidal mania," "Fight," "Not ascertained," and "Amok."[102] This was a means of organizing criminal behavior in the peninsula. Of these, the two cases listed under "Amok" carry their own narratives in the report. From the clipped prose of the administrative report the tone switches to one specially descriptive:

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[101] "Titah daripada Duli Yang Mahamulia Sultan Perak,
Bawah sa-nya di-beri ketahwi kepada isi negeri Perak, yang akan datang ini siapa-siapa di-dapati menjadi atau masok ke-dalam kongsi gelap, terutama sekali kapada orang-orang yang sudah di-ampun bagi kesalahan itu, tiada-lah apa-apa fikir kenang lagi melainkan di-buang daripada negeri Perak sampai mati dan tiada peduli baik raja-raja dan orang besar-besar," Wynne, page 540.

[102] "Supplement to the F.M.S. Government Gazette. Report on the State of Crime and the Administration of the Police Force for the Year 1935," page 5.

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"The two cases of 'amok' resulting in seven deaths occurred in Malay villages, one at Kampong Sungei Rabit some 1 1/2 miles from Temerloh in Pahang, the other at Telok Bakong on the Perak River on the opposite bank to Bota" (ibid., 6). The narratives both name the accused and describe their relationships to their victims, and the men are known as individuals. The details of their capture are also part of the story, as in Pahang the "Police from Mentakab accompanied by the District Officer, Temerloh, surrounded the house," and in Perak there were "encircling police parties searched day and night" (ibid., 6). But this focus on the details of the perpetrator's capture contains suspicion about the villagers' relationship to the accused. The police in Pahang note "this case was one of the very few instances where members of the public came to the aid of the police. A forest guard and one Karim, a motor-car driver, took part in the capture. It is of interest that Karim had recently been discharged from prison after serving a sentence for assaulting a constable in the execution of his duty" (ibid., 6). Over the course of the five-day search in Perak, the police report "it is almost certain that his relations supplied him with food" (ibid., 6). The police are suspicious about the reactions of those peripheral to the violence.

In September 1935, the same month that the Times and the Tribune were covering the Secret Society trials in Kuala Kangsar, another sensational news event occurred along the Perak river. The Times headline in late September reads "Four Killed in Perak Amok; Tragedy Near Parit Yesterday; Police Hunt for Malay; Help Summoned from other Circles."[103] The newspaper reminded its readers that the area had previous problems: "It will be recalled that Parit was the scene of the murder of a Tamil, who was mysteriously hacked to death recently" (ibid.). The headlines covered the daily progression of the Parit amok drama, on September 27 announcing "Malay Amok Still At Large; Vigorous Police Search Continues."[104] The paper lead the following issue with "Malay Amok Still at

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103 "Four Killed in Perak Amok; Tragedy Near Parit Yesterday; Police Hunt for Malay; Help Summoned from other Circles," Times of Malaya, 26 September 1935.

104 "Malay Amok Still At Large; Vigorous Police Search Continues; Houses Set on Fire; C.P.O. Visits Scene This Morning," Times of Malaya, 27 September 1935.

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Large; But Believed to have Visited Village and Set House on Fire" and suggested that the man on the loose tried to find assistance from his neighbors:

> The Malay who ran 'amok' at Parit, appears to be hard pressed for food and is alleged to have visited houses in Teluk Bakong for food.
> In one house there were distinct traces of a hurried retreat, an unfinished meal and a possible change of clothes. The 'amok' appears to have returned to the village on Friday night and it is surmised that, on being refused food, he set fire to another house.[105]

In the October 1 issue the Times announced "'Amok' Shot Down By Police; Pandak Ibrahim Refuses to Surrender Yesterday."[106] In the headlines Malay "Amok," in quotes, became identifiable with just one name, that of Pandak Ibrahim. Only following his death in the police ambush, could Parit return to normal. For the Times the evidence of peace registered physically, for among the villagers "To-day the look of fear has gone from their eyes. They are back on the 'bendangs' working hard to save the crops and the peaceful life of the 'kampongs' has been resumed" (ibid.). Those who refused to feed Pandak Ibrahim could return to their daily activities.

As with the reporting about the Perak River Society, the Tribune followed up the story of Pandak Ibrahim, and questioned its consequences for the larger community. The Tribune reported at the end of 1935 about the general topic of "Amok Running in Malaya," and asked "Can Public Safety be Better Insured? Terrible Toll of Innocent Lives."[107] The paper notes that the Malayan public was at risk,

> In recent months there have been a number of cases of 'amok' in different parts of the country and it may therefore be interesting to read the following article in which the writer explains some of the theories concerning running amok and summaries of the most atrocious crimes committed by amoks (ibid.).

The way to understand amok was through theories arising from case details. One theory given was that amok is a result of loneliness, produced by a lack of association:

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105 "Malay Amok Still at Large; But Believed to have Visited Village and Set House on Fire; Early Arrest Generally Expected," Times of Malaya, 30 September 1935.

106 "'Amok' Shot Down By Police; Pandak Ibrahim Refuses to Surrender Yesterday; Encounters Police Ambush on 'Kampong' Outskirts; Peace Returns Again to Riverine Padi Areas Near Parit," Times of Malaya, 1 October, 1935.

107 "Amok Running in Malaya; Can Public Safety be Better Insured? Terrible Toll of Innocent Lives," Malaya Tribune, 27 December 1935.

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> Let us take the case of the kampung Malay who lives far away from the bustle of town life. Generally he lives a very quiet life. He spends several hours of the day all alone in the bendangs and as a result some of them become introspective. According to a medical expert such people are likely to lose their self-control on the slightest provocation (ibid.).

The people who spent their time alone were the dangerous ones, the ones who brooded over their quiet life. Wynne was worried that Malays in associations were security risks, that they held a threat to colonial society. The Tribune notes that "according to some old Malays the death of a very close relative is also sufficient to make a man temporarily insane" (ibid.). Old Malays might understand these plausible sources of stress, but the Tribune notes the limits of such wisdom: "the last mentioned factor applies, of course, to the Malays in kampongs only" (ibid.). "Of course" amoks posed a threat to public safety. But the police did not always trust that the public felt sufficiently threatened.

The English newspapers in Perak wondered, for instance, how Pandak Ibrahim was able to eat. His story raised fear akin to that of the kongsi glap at the same time their tobat to the Sultan appeared in question. The story of Pandak Ibrahim ran in a literary form in the Malayan Police Magazine of 1935.[108] The story opens with the image of "the typical Malayan riverine village of Telok Bakong." The writer, under the pseudonym Batu Hidop,[109] describes a young girl named Ngah returning home with her aunt through a rustic scene--"woman and child made their carefree way" (ibid., 369). The attention then shifts to Pandak Ibrahim in his house, knife in hand, "no longer human and with the lust for blood surging through his veins and thundering in his ears" (ibid., 369). After a passage where he wounded his son and killed Ngah and her aunt, Pandak Ibrahim headed

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[108] Batu Hidop, "Amok! Amok!" Malayan Police Magazine, 1935.

[109] Batu Hidop might have been Abdul Majid. In the preface to one of his later books he notes "Most of the stories and essays herein offered now to the Public have appeared in the Malayan Police Magazine for whom they were originally written.

The author contends that the outstanding feature of this collection lies not on its literary merits, but on the fact that each and every narrative is based on true incidents that actually occurred in this country.

The Malay is progressing, though but slowly perhaps; and his ideas and ideals (the mental strings that pull the human heart to actions) naturally are affected thereby. The transitory stage teems with examples of paradoxes, amusing both to the Oriental and the Occidental. Sketches of Malay life written in the past mostly portray conditions and modes of thinking among a generation that is fast disappearing." Abdul Majid, Malayan Kaliedoscope, Selangor Press: Kuala Lumpur, 1935, no page.

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toward the village, described in the text as "frenzied," a "madman," a "maniac," the "terrible thing that had once been Pandak Ibrahim," and a "wild beast." After an "urgent message" the police arrived but the people of the village were in a panic, "the story of Pandak's invulnerability had spread and this combined with reminiscence concerning his feats of strength in the past rapidly drove the villagers into a state of fear that required strong re-enforcement's of Police to ease if not dispell" (ibid., 370). The villagers trusted their own messages, and as the search continued "many of the men preferred staying on guard over their wives and children to accompanying the Police in their search" (ibid., 370). To illustrate the case the magazine provides a hand-drawn map of the particular section of the Perak River with a black box marking what they call the event's "scene" (ibid., 371). The Perak River was graphically produced under what was couched as war-like conditions.

The tension raised questions about loyalty and affiliation. Batu Hidop praises the penghulu of the area who "rose to the emergency magnificently" in putting together an armed party "for the hunt" (ibid., 372). When for nearly two days no trace of Pandak Ibrahim turned up, suspicions arose about who might be helping him:

> No trace of Pandak was found that day nor until the evening of the next when the house of his uncle, also on the edge of a bendang was seen burning. By this time there was some muttering amongst the villagers that Pandak's relatives were putting out food for him, particularly as one of them--an old woman--told of a wonderfully realistic vision she had had the previous night when she saw Pandak near her house and he had asked for food (incidentally there was an alert Police and villager guard about 20 yards away at the time) (ibid., 372).

This dream provided the uncanny clue that Pandak might have been around. The old woman provided the possible link to finding him:

> So clear was she in detail that she was closely questioned and finally induced to have another vision. She collected some odds and ends and murmured incantations over them and then said 'Go straight behind this house and then turn left. Look up as you go.' The advice was followed and in a strip of secondary jungle on a muddy path were found the foot prints of Pandak! They were identified positively by the villagers. No trace of him could be found however and his relatives were collected and told that no harm could possibly come to Pandak if he threw away his knife and surrendered. They were also informed of the unpleasant consequences to persons found harbouring people wanted as badly as Pandak (ibid., 372).

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The police feared that Pandak Ibrahim's family was still engaged with him. If he would only "tobat" nothing would happen to them. Pandak Ibrahim was recognizable to members of his family, and only attacked again when his male relatives joined the search party. He refused to quit.

The police only succeeded in ending the search when they set up an ambush in the fields for him. After a day and a half of waiting, the police saw him walking from a distance, and as they recognized him the police called to him (like his family and the villagers who could recognize his footprints in the mud). Only on the third call, however, did he answer: "Pandak took no notice till called the third time when he stopped and made a fierce gesture of drawing his golok" (ibid., 372). Upon seeing the police Pandak Ibrahim recognized them, too, and immediately vanished into the long grass. He nearly escaped through it to the other side where "the amok would have many women and children completely at his mercy" (ibid., 373). The police lance corporal in the ambush depended on extraordinary measures to protect public safety, and though he could not see Pandak Ibrahim he "fired at where he knew Pandak to be. Pandak fell with a bullet through his heart" (ibid., 373). Once Pandak Ibrahim communicated his threat to the police, his whereabouts were no longer a mystery. At this point even their bullets knew where to find him.

His death, though, did not mean the end of his village ties. Pandak took on a quality of immortality through his actions. Batu Hidop concludes "so ended the Bakong amok who had dealt dreadful death to two little girls, a young woman and an old man" (ibid., 373). Yet the death of the most vulnerable of the kampong, to the writer, did not end the story. In a wry wink, Batu Hidop closes with the note "villagers swarmed to the parched bendangs and found the tender seedlings little the worse for the six days' neglect and they were happy in the belief that after an amok the rice and fruitcrop in the area is a always a bumper one" (ibid., 373). Pandak Ibrahim, known as "The Bakong amok," represents a rural fable. He remains tied to the villagers, by nourishing their crops, even

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after his death. The unelaborated quip turns the village violence into a mythic relationship, one without politics or sociology. Those who help Pandak Ibrahim seem to do so out of something grander than their immediate interests, motivations that were just out of the reach of the police.

The modern amoks in the East

The extreme pressure of change in Perak villages of the 1930s encouraged police fantasies that Malay violence was mythological.[110] Malay newspapers also used the term "amok" to describe the expanded world brought to the peninsula via the newswires. In his 1941 survey of Malay journalism, Za'ba notes the grand reach of this expansion:

> There is no doubt the Malay newspapers and magazines are exerting a strong influence in shaping public opinion among their Malay readers, in spreading general knowledge of the world, and in awakening and shaking off the apathy of the Malays towards progress. To say nothing of the towns where these papers are always available at every Malay bookshop and some of them at the various Malay clubs, and read even by motor car drivers, one notices that the peasant folks of the kampongs are also taking keen interest in what is said in the surat khabar [news paper] about other parts of Malaya and the world. Often, of an evening, one sees at the wayside Chinese shop some lettered man, perhaps an old guru [teacher] of the local school or perhaps the local penghulu, reading one or other of these papers, and a little crowd of elderly people less literate than he eagerly listening, questioning, and commenting around him.[111]

This durable quotation has been cited often by researchers to highlight the omnipresence of Malay newspapers in late colonial peninsular life. Readers and listeners in these rural settings encountered the term "Amok" used to describe almost anywhere but a Malay village.[112] In the headlines of certain papers the term describes the unusual. Idaran Zaman, for instance, headlined in 1926 its column about Penang with "Another Water Buffalo Runs Amok," the animal breaking free of its reigns and running through the city

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[110] Lim notes, for instance, that Malaya's principal export commodities earned in the 1930s barely a quarter of what they were worth in the boom years of the 1920s. See Lim Teck Ghee, Peasants and Their Agricultural Economy in Colonial Malaya, Oxford University Press: Kuala Lumpur, 1977, page 181.

[111] Zainal-Abidin B. Ahmad, "Malay Journalism in Malaya," Journal of the Malayan Branch, Royal Asiatic Society, 1941, page 249.

[112] The term was very rarely used in the short stories and serial novels that filled the Malay press of the late 1920s and the 1930s.

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streets killing two horses and wounding a small child.[113] Lidah Benar, a Klang newspaper, in 1930 led with a story from Scotland "Speeding Train Runs Amok."[114] These reports did not refer to earlier instances of surprise. They only connect the verb to describe the action of the water buffalo or of the train. The old term's rare appearances in Malay newspapers in its new guise signaled how "amok" could describe unexpected things.

In other instances the term describes local, specific struggles. Majlis, in its column "News From the Malay Realm," ran a story in 1932 "Chinese Run Amok Because of Hunger."[115] In Ulu Langat, near Kuala Lumpur, the story begins in a shop where Chinese coolies make demands from the shop owners:

> The story goes at first, two coolies entered the stores and asked the taukehs [business owners] for four bags of rice with the explanation that they had not worked for six days because of heavy rain. Because of that they had no money and also had no food, wanting to eat. If the taukehs did not want to cooperate they said they would just take the food. But the taukehs said that though they were unable to give four bags, they could give four gantangs (ibid.).

Frustrated with this answer, Majlis reports, the coolies signaled to their colleagues outside to come into the shops and take the food they wanted. At the same time they shouted "Malays don't get involved, we are stealing because we need to eat" (ibid.). They tell the Malays that this is not their concern, they have set limits. Within 15 minutes, however, police from nearby Kajang and Kuala Lumpur appear on the scene "to reestablish peace, but the greedy coolies fought the police and it became a situation of shooting back-and-forth, and eight of the coolies were hit" (ibid.). One coolie died and thirty were locked up, leaving Ulu Langat a town "guarded by police." In a similar tone Singapore's Warta Jenaka in 1937 reported from the Philippines "Head Hunters: Amok in Manila."[116] In this account, Manila had to send four policeman into the jungle in search of soldiers feared lost to the headhunters. The soldiers were looking into a family quarrel that escalated into clan

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[113] "Lagi Kerbau Mengamok," Idaran Zaman, 4 February 1926.
[114] "Kereta Api Kilat Mengamok," Lidah Benar, 15 April 1930. Lidah Benar published in Klang, Selangor, from 1929 to perhaps 1933.
[115] "Perkhabaran Alam Melayu, Cina Mengamok Kerana tidak Makan," Majlis, 4 April 1932.
[116] "Pemburu Kepala, Mengamok di Manila." Warta Jenaka, 14 June 1937.

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fighting, "and twenty people died as a result of their action" (ibid.). The story from Manila, Warta Jenaka notes, arrives in Singapore via Reuters. Telegraphic news made amok an exotic term for Malay readers in Perak, one that referenced gun fights in Selangor and intrigue in the deep jungles of Luzon.

When Za'ba wrote his 1941 journalism survey he found five daily Malay newspapers, as he put it, "throughout the country" (Journalism, 246). Warta Malaya and Utusan Melayu published in Singapore, Lembaga across the causeway in Johore, Majlis in Kuala Lumpur, and Warta Kinta in Ipoh. Roff notes that Warta Kinta was associated with the Ipoh-based Times, and it presents an inter-textual world of Malayan journalism in conversation with both the Malay and English papers.[117] In April 1940, one of Warta Kinta's news briefs about Kuala Kangsar announced "Malay Also Runs Amok."[118] A 26 year-old man visiting his relatives went amok with a weapon of theirs: "the people in the village ran crazily and two Malays who were not able to run were wounded by the amok, the police were notified, arrived and captured the amok" (ibid.). Two months later in June Warta Kinta printed: "reportedly a Chinese tobacco planter amoked and wounded a Malay man and woman. The matter which brought about the fight was because of the sale of langsat [a type of fruit]. The Chinese was captured by the police and both of the injured were brought to the hospital."[119] Both stories end with the arrival of the police. As Kuala Kangsar news briefs, no more information is given, the story completed with the amok's capture. Kuala Kangsar was just another place with incidents of random violence, leading to the police, jail, and the hospital for Malays and Chinese alike.

Za'ba felt the greatest effect of reading the newspapers was in stretching what could be said in Malay:

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117 William R. Roff, Bibliography of Malay and Arabic Periodicals Published in the Straits Settlements and Peninsular Malay States 1876-1941, Oxford University Press: London, 1972, page 54.

118 "Melayu Mengamok Pula, Kuala Kangsar," Warta Kinta, 15 April 1940.

119 "Kuala Kangsar, Suatu Pergadohan Amok Telah Berlaku di Kampong [Sang] disini," Warta Kinta, 28 June 1940.

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> But no less far-reaching also is the influence of the Malay papers in modernising and revitalising the Malay language. New ideas and new contents are put into it, and with that new spirit and life. There is no fear that the Malay language is getting out of date. It is a living language and is continually being built up and expanded by the ever growing vocabulary sponsored by, and introduced through the agency of, the Malay newspapers.[120]

Za'ba's defensiveness comes from the fact that the very newspapers breathing life into Malay did so while sometimes predicting its imminent demise. One of the projects to promote Malay language that both pleased and frustrated Za'ba was the development of a Malay-Malay dictionary. In this companion article to his piece on Malay journalism, Za'ba surveyed the new dictionaries as part of his larger critique of literary production in Malay. He did not like what he found, calling the volumes mere "efforts at Dictionaries and Grammars" (Literature, 15). Some of the old dictionaries include the term amok and some do not.[121] The one dictionary Za'ba supported was the 1936 Buku Katan P.BM.P.B. diRaja Johor (Kamus Melayu) ((Belajar atau Mengajar)), which he notes was "published bit by bit" in Warta Malaya with "criticisms invited from interested Malay scholars."[122] Though to Za'ba the Buku Katan was "not reasonably comprehensive, the definitions given too sketchy to be of much help" it represented "the right direction" (Literature, 16). The Buku Katan defines amok as synonymous with a Buginese word "mengaruk," the definition given "mengaruk especially mengaruk with the desire to kill repeatedly."[123] Mengaruk, like "run amuck," refers to somewhere outside of the peninsula. Perhaps it was Warta Malaya readers sending in their suggestions of the term's definition that made it different from the other Malay dictionaries. Their suggestions to Singapore and the Johor

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[120] Zainal-Abidin B. Ahmad, "Recent Malay Literature," Journal of the Malayan Branch, Royal Asiatic Society, 1941, page 250.

[121] Two dictionaries that Za'ba did not mention were one from 1925, which defines "Amok" as "Amok--membunoh orang dengan tiada berketahuan," Mahmud bin Abdullah Al Kadir, Kamus Almudiyah, Mercantile Press: Penang, 1925. A 1928 Roman-character dictionary does not include the term: 'Fa-Izie' 'Kamus Melayu oleh Mohamed Noor Faiz, Perak', Rahmaniah Press: Ipoh, 1928.

[122] Buku Katan P.BM.P.B. diRaja Johor (Kamus Melayu) ((Belajar atau Mengajar)), [?]: Singapore, 1936.

[123] In Malay the Buku Katan entry reads, 'Amuk' "mim. mengaruk terutama mengaruk hendak membunuh banyak2 (mengamuk, diamuknya, amukan, beramuk2kan)," page 55. A more recent dictionary defines defines "mengarok" as "mengarok melakukan tarian perang (pd orang Bugis)," Teuku Iskandar, Kamus Dewan, Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka: Kuala Lumpur 1970, page 42.

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Literary Society via Warta Malaya and the Buku Katan made amok a violent, deadly form of something else. Amok could be defined by things outside, or as Za'ba put it, out of "the country" (Journalism, 246). This Malay quality represented a difference increasingly sealed off, though not necessarily geographically.

Amok as mengaruk represented change. People in Malaya who used the term amok in English thought it was something particular to the peninsula. Yet in Malay it could also describe things happening farther afield, in other places. Amok could even be used to describe the quality of change itself. Almost all the Malay periodicals of the late colonial period included short poetry. Sometimes called syair, these verse-forms were sent by contributors to express concern over large political issues.[124] In 1940, Ahmady Asmara, a 19 year-old former student of the Sultan Idris Training College, sent a syair to the Warta Kinta.[125] His syair, "The Modern Amoks in the East" uses the term mengaruk and mengamok as synonymous:

(By Ahmady Asmara of Penang)
The modern amoks [mengaruk] in the East
From the West it comes strewn
Then amoks [mengamuk] to every corner
To the Malays the modern stains
The East receives it with both hands
Without thinking long about it
Following whatever they want
Even though their dignity is vanishing
The modern goes violently outside
Wearing a coat in the midst of the heat
In the pouring rain wearing thin silk
The night's love is usually warm
Here Ahmady Asmara says
Batik amoks [mengamuk] more than a little
Everything is batik wild
Sarong cloth is from batik
Even that shirt is dotted batik
In their slippers of batik people walk like ducks
Thinking they look most lovely
These new modern batik clothes
The Eastern modern is a commotion

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[124] See for example the large collection in Abdul Latiff Abu Bakar, editor, Puisi-Puisi Kebangsaan 1913-1957, Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka: Kuala Lumpur, 1987.

[125] Ahmady Asmara was a pen name for Ahmad Ismail. In the years just preceding the Japanese occupation he was a frequent contributor to a range of Malay periodicals. Wajah Biografi Seratus Penulis. Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka: Kuala Lumpur, 1981, page 109.

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Even men's fezes are wrong
They copy the cut from the shape of ducks

To Ahmady Asmara in Penang the terms describe the appearance of inappropriate things. The modern is visible in public places, the signal of something wrong. Ahmady Asmara could have sent his syair to any of the other newspapers he wrote for like Sahabat, Saudara, Warta Jenaka, Majlis, or Utusan Zaman. Instead he sent his composition to Perak's new Warta Kinta, near where he had been enrolled as a trainee Malay teacher. What really attracted Ahmady's attention in writing the syair was the batik. His biography in Wajah does not say precisely when he studied in Perak at the Sultan Idris Training College, but in 1937 the school increased its arts instruction to include new subjects from outside Malaya. The school report for the year notes "307. Further experiments in each field of work in the craft school ... genuine Javanese 'batek' (wax printing with copper blocks and dyeing) was started."[126] In the curriculum at SITC "arts, handicrafts, gardening and physical training are considered as important as the ordinary school subjects" and studying batik supplemented the SITC course in basketwork, "the handicraft most suited in every way to the students in the College. It is a native craft; the materials for it are easily obtained everywhere and the tools required are few and simple."[127] Batik arrived at SITC like mengaruk did, a new form to be taught. For Ahmady Asmara, the new batik clothes were in a series with trains, Chinese coolies, headhunters in the Philippines; all reports of new things out of control. Mengamok, mengaruk, described the similar difference of their newness.

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126 "Annual Report on the Social and Economic Progress of the People of Perak for the Year 1937." page 49.

127 E.H.S. Breatherton, "Memorandum on the Sultan Idris Training College and Malay Vernacular Education," Selangor Secretariat Series G, 2847/31, 1931, page 8.

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CHAPTER FIVE

BEYOND BELIEF: A NATIONAL KUALA KANGSAR

"Ghost Stories"
"A cash prize in the amount of $5 will be given every month for each ghost story sent to us."

--notice in newspaper Kemajuan Melayu [Malay Progress], 1 April 1932.

"When I was put on to examining sources for material for an Official History, I looked first for documentation which would give me (and the Historian) a picture of the main thread of events--a framework, a backbone on which to hang side issues. I quickly found this approach to be a mistake; it was not only fruitless but actually misleading. The Emergency is not a sequence of events in which a broad pattern of development can be traced. Even considered in operational terms alone, it is (in a physicist's language) a continuum of random occurrences. It is like one of those maddening jigsaw puzzles that do not have a picture, the random occurrences can be made to fit together geographically, but they do not build up a colour reproduction of a tidy battle scene," page 118.

--J.B.P. Robinson Transformation in Malaya 1956, page 182.[1]

"Malaysian art presents some intriguing ironies and contradictions about the relationship of artists to the art institution, more perhaps than any other country in the region. Our system is more absorbent of rebellion ... dissent is quickly recognized; but it soon loses its lustre and is rendered irrelevant ... In a way, there is no alternative art in Malaysia."

--"What about converging extremes?" artist's statement by Wong Hoy Cheong, 1994, page 7.

Empty houses

Wijaya Mala's short story "Home" [Rumah Tinggal] describes a meeting between a reporter and an old man.[2] The reporter, Mat Jadid, does not have a regular news beat and, unlike his fellow big-city reporters, goes off into the villages in search of local stories. The old man, Haji Tahir, lives in what Wijaya describes as simply "a village," and it is that village's physical architecture that suggests a story to the reporter. Looking at a nearby

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[1] Cited in John Coates, Suppressing Insurgency: An Analysis of the Malayan Emergency, 1948-1954, Westview Press: Boulder, 1992, page 1.

[2] "Rumah Tinggal" might also be translated as "The Abandoned House." Wijaya Mala, Dewan Masyarakat, July 1987, reprinted in Othman Puteh Cerpen Malaysia Selepas Perang Dunia Kedua, Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka: Kuala Lumpur, 1988.

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empty house, one built by a certain Pak Tua, Haji Tahir explains that it remains unoccupied due to a "long story that has become a legend" (Wijaya, 39). Haji Tahir has a story that the reporter might be able to use, and this makes him interesting. Mat Jadid takes this as his cue to start reporting: the narration notes "that is his work, turning on the tape recorder. After the discussion he would transcribe it to paper, edit it, adapt it, and then have it polished by the editors. After that it became substance" (Wijaya, 39). The journalist is the one person interested in such stories; he is the one who can solicit Haji Tahir's legend and then pass it on to others. Mat Jadid turns the legend into something desirable in contemporary Malaysia: journalism.

In Haji Tahir's conversation the focus of the story is on its blocked transmission. The narrator does not name Pak Tua and his wife Mak Tua. Rather he says "they did not get their titles for free, but earned them by their effort in giving whatever needed" (Wijaya, 40). After they die, it is their house that stands in for them, and it attracts Mat Jadid's attention.[3] Though Pak Tua and wife have seven children, all of them have left the village for other places. The children are all successful, described by Haji Tahir as "those with fluency in foreign culture and ideology" (Wijaya, 40). Though Pak Tua's is a family with a name, with important relations, his ancestral home has become an empty house. Haji Tahir says that "every feature of the house has a history" and that is why the house looks like a "feeble old person" [orang tua uzur] (Wijaya, 40). The children though, "have no idea what to do with it," the large vacant house that they cannot sell. The house as an empty, unprotected space takes in spiders, lizards, and ants crawling through, likened to "immigrants who had never before had such a fine home" (Wijaya, 41). Haji Tahir is upset that the house, like the peninsula itself, is left unprotected from foreign elements. The house that their parents struggled so long to build is neglected by the children.

Yet the house that reminds Haji Tahir of the legend also stands in for his explanation of it. The legend is one he knows but cannot tell. It is described to Mat Jadid

[3] It is the Malay Ur-village house, with carved wood under the eaves, strong timber pillars, the express site of Malay nostalgia for rural life.

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as a "legend difficult to understand and difficult to receive, yet one that attracts attention" (Wijaya, 41). The house itself communicates with its own style of narration. People who live nearby note that the house makes sounds in the rain "like someone speaking," in the wind "like someone closing shutters," and when it is quiet "like someone busy at work inside it" (Wijaya, 41). The sounds transmit the skill of the house's builder, for this house was built with such sturdiness to last for seven generations. But the claim is as yet unfulfilled as only three have occupied it so far. Haji Tahir can only repeat the conversations he hears in the old house when the family gathers there for the wedding of Pak Tua's beloved grandchild, and Haji Tahir hears them talking about "war, going to the moon and back, faith and oneness, wages, status, cars, radio and television, issues of national importance" (Wijaya, 43). Haji Tahir, listening to these discussions, sighs "I don't understand people of this generation, when I went to Mecca, the Arabs liked red bicycles. Strange how people know more about others than they know about themselves" (Wijaya, 43). The stories coming from the house would tell them what they do not know of its history, and as Haji Tahir contends, of their own history.

Their neglect has consequences. Haji Tahir quizzes Musa, Pak Tua's oldest son, about what his father did for the village, about his magical powers that long ago drove off evil-doers. Musa promises that someone in the family will come back to live in the house, but no one does. That is when someone in the village says, "the house is haunted" (Wijaya, 44). At this point in the story, Haji Tahir takes the reporter to see the house. Mat Jadid sees people in the village watching the two of them walk to the house, and notes their surprise that he is carrying a camera. But for him the camera is comforting, reassuring him that he is there only as an observer of a story. He also assures the onlookers that he does not want their picture, that he only wants to photograph Pak Tua's old home. Even with the comfort of the camera, he feels something strange when he approaches the house. He senses something frightening about it. Because it is locked they cannot enter, and Mat Jadid feels relieved--he envisions things flying about inside the house that he cannot

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photograph. Instead he takes a photograph of Haji Tahir in front of the house, who instantly imagines it later appearing in the newspaper. Their exchange has been what it was supposed to be when Mat Jadid first turned on the tape recorder.

Acquiring the newspaper story still leaves private concerns. Mat Jadid is uncertain, and says "I don't understand why a beautiful house like this stands empty" (Wijaya, 44). Haji Tahir answers with another story, the tale of the grandson who wanted to sleep overnight in the house. His older sister had asked if he was afraid, but he had replied bravely and slept there with his wife and children. Haji Tahir comments, "even I don't understand, the next day they returned safely to the city" (Wijaya, 45). Mat Jadid wonders. He asks Haji Tahir, "What do you think: if a house is simply left like this, is it the same thing as when a village is abandoned, because there is a reason." "I think so" Haji Tahir replies, "but the matter of Pak Tua and his descendants is different. They are a big family with a name. They look at this house as small and without value" (Wijaya, 45). The mundane explanation does not satisfy. So Mat Jadid asks again, more to his point: "is it true this house is haunted?" Haji Tahir closes the story with the line, "Oh, that's not true. Ghosts are only in the hearts of those who are afraid of them" (Wijaya, 45). The house is indeed empty. Mat Jadid is pulled into line with the absent family, almost. He is made to realize that not knowing a history creates an interior fear, one that is entirely personal.

The great migration of Malaysian young people away from small towns like Kuala Kangsar leaves many houses in its surrounding area empty. Others leave the kampungs, the term commonly used for clusters of free-standing houses, to live in the housing parks [taman perumahan] of attached concrete houses on the urban outskirts. One of my neighbors helped me draw a map of the houses surrounding the kampung area I lived in. Most houses he identified with people's names, or nicknames (i.e. "Nasi Ayam" was the name for the one who sold chicken rice near the market, and "Din Ikan" for the Din who sold fish at the market). On six houses he drew a "k" for "kosong," meaning "empty." Some people are afraid of these old empty "k" houses--in our neighborhood they either

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served as haunts of spirits or, in one case, the illicit home of an alleged drug user. Some such houses are owned by absentee landlords who live far away but for nostalgic or financial reasons are unwilling to take them down. One of these empty houses that gradually decayed into advanced disrepair was torn down during the fasting month, so that when the ghosts return they will not know where to go. Another of the old houses saw a different fate. The house was renovated by raising up the wooden structure and building a new concrete foundation under it, though the builder insisted tearing it down and starting over would be both faster and much cheaper. After five months in Kuala Kangsar in 1994 I moved into one of the abandoned houses. People said that no one lived in that particular house very long, and I was no exception. Old things kept in the basement were identified by friends as particularly dangerous and frightening. They advised me to keep that room's door shut and locked. Its contents, the past owner's collection of books and boxes of clothes, were an untouchable remainder.

But tearing down the old houses does not fill the abandoned space. The industrial life that pulls people from their birthplaces creates in the kampungs new kinds of loneliness. Many in Kuala Kangsar, especially old people, have to endure many hours spent alone. Even with the "k" houses, the neighborhood where I lived was seen by others as enjoyable because so many people were present. A woman factory worker who commutes every day to Kuala Kangsar from a nearby village said it looked wonderful compared to her home. Another factory worker from a village outside Sungai Siput described the village of her youth, in contrast, as one where she only hears the frogs. One of the families in our neighborhood held an enormous wedding for their daughter. The bride's father asked me to accompany him passing out invitations to relatives and friends living in the surrounding area (in the past 15 years the wedding invitation card has become increasingly popular, now people express anxiety as to whether they can attend a wedding for which they have not received a card). Going through the neighborhoods of Kuala Kangsar, Taiping, and Ipoh I was struck by the number of empty houses we encountered,

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the wrong addresses, the people who had moved. Such occasions mark the unknown information about missing people. Yet even within my neighborhood itself there were frequent comments among a range of people that there was no one there--no one out at night, no other small children to play with, no young adults of the same age-set. When some reporters from Kuala Lumpur arrived in the neighborhood to do a story on local crafts, they remarked nostalgically that it smelled like a village. In such a location people still expect there to be neighbors and are disappointed when they find themselves left alone.

The greatest collection of old houses in town is on Chandan Hill, surrounding the Sultan's palace. The British located the palace such that the colonial administration--police headquarters, the rifle range, the residency, the golf course--was located between the town and the palace grounds. Further, the Kangsar River bridge narrows the flow of people in and out of the royal area. The palace is thus a limb projecting out from the town center, isolated from the commercial area. One of the old royal houses on Chandan Hill is made of enormous, yellow-painted concrete, and is frequently unoccupied. The neighbors say that when anyone returns to the house, usually in fancy cars from Kuala Lumpur, there are voices that protest why they do not live in the house.[4] Some people told me of plans to take an old house on Chandan Hill and turn into a museum, but the house's voices present a problem. Their continued vitality as temporary residences rests between familiarity and estrangement.

The most prominent abandoned house in Kuala Kangsar is the palace itself, the Istana Iskandariah. The building now standing was constructed in 1932 and named for then-reigning Sultan Iskandar, the high, white walls surrounding the building and grounds.[5] Just outside the walls is the old residence used during the Palace's construction

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[4] Returning to these houses is a way to remain Malay. As a professor put it in describing the model of the new Malay, "once or twice a year those in the cities are encouraged to return to the villages so they do not cut off their connection with those people who maintain traditional values." Wan Hashim Wan Teh, "Bagaimana Acuan Melayu Baru?" Mastika, October 1993, page 13.

[5] In what charming Winstedt dismissed as the "more-or-less style of the Public Works Department." The new extension was designed by Sultan Idris in the 1960s. Richard Winsted, Start From Alif, Count From One, Oxford University Press: Kuala Lumpur, 1969, page 71.

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in the 1930s, known as the Palace of Memories [Istana Kenangan], which was built in 1931 and re-dedicated in the 1980s as the royal museum. The palace is itself surrounded by a ring road, making it a popular course for locals in cars and motorbikes doing what they call "circling the Istana" [pusing Istana]. Busloads of foreign tourists also pull into town off the expressway for photographs of Chandan Hill before proceeding further north or south, Kuala Kangsar too modest a tourist attraction to merit a longer stop. Cars only remain at the Istana for official functions, when the neighboring fields fill in as temporary parking lots for all the guests driving in for the occasion.

The Istana is seen as empty because the present Sultan of Perak is constantly on the move. When he returns he arrives in Kuala Kangsar in a speeding motorcade of expensive cars, complete with police outriders. Police stand ready ahead of the entourage to stop traffic at the intersections so that the Sultan's journey will not be slowed by other cars. Of course, the moment of transition ends very quickly, and the Sultan is back in place or gone from the royal town of Kuala Kangsar in swift fashion. These rapid movements are difficult for people to follow. I regularly asked people where the Sultan was, and the most frequent answers were Kuala Lumpur, London, and the nearby city of Ipoh (apparently, as one man in Kuala Kangsar memorably put it, shrugging his shoulders). When I met one of the Sultan's retainers by chance on the train to Kuala Lumpur, he described the splendor of the various royal living quarters, and had me pledge in return not to reveal the number of residences the Sultan maintains. The palace staff are constantly present in the building, but people regularly note whether the Sultan himself is there or not. Whenever we drove past the dark walls of the palace at night a friend would tease his grandson that this was the ogre's house [rumah raksasa], the mythological resident standing in place of the traveling Sultan.

The Sultan's absence from Kuala Kangsar is partially due to responsibilities. Under Malaysia's system of rotating monarchy, he served for five years as the supreme ceremonial ruler of the country, based at the National Palace in Kuala Lumpur. As a

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Britain-trained lawyer and former Lord President, he cuts an impressive figure.[6] The rumors of corruption that tail some of his fellow sultans avoid him, the only consistent claim of impropriety being his maneuverings to get his well-educated son into the direct line of succession. When in 1994 the position of King rotated again to another royal house, Sultan Azlan Shah returned to being the full-time Sultan of Perak. Some Kuala Kangsarites thought it appropriate that he mix with the people after this official interregnum in Kuala Lumpur. He might host local events or tour the state as his predecessor frequently did. That he did not doubled for some in the town the sense of royal abandonment.

Ridding the Malay psyche of ghosts

What replaces the Sultan in the palace are stories, though of a particular kind. The palace is always occupied by the large staff assigned to maintain and guard the royal grounds. Several times I went to the Sultan's Office [Pejabat DYMM Sultan Perak] , a large concrete-block building on Chandan Hill housing the offices of the royal staff. My purpose in going was to inquire about any historical materials the Sultan's Office might retain. No, I was told, no old files or manuscripts remain other than a few souvenir copies of the present Sultan's installation. The rest, they said, were sent either to the National Archives or perhaps lost when moving to the new offices or at some other time. This break in textual memory, however, was not lamented. When I asked the secretaries and clerks in the Office what kind of materials might have been lost, they replied that they were not sure. They in turn were somewhat curious in the archival material others had collected, like the old copies of the Adat Lembaga Negri Perak [Customary Code of Perak State] given to the National Archives. But the lack of these materials certainly did not hamper the day-to-day functioning of the Istana.

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[6] Sultan Azlan Shah was born in 1928 in Batu Gajah, a town just south of Ipoh. He studied at the Malay College, University of Nottingham, and received at the bar in London. He returned to Malaya in 1954, and worked through the legal ranks first as a magistrate, later to become Lord President of the Federal Court of Malaysia from 1982 to 1984.

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One day I went to the Sultan's office with a friend who used to tutor the previous Sultan's children in their school subjects, and we met with one of the secretaries and one of the officials. Though we inquired if the Sultan's Office had retained any old books, that another person said they might have, our conversation shifted instead to odd occurrences in the palace. They reported a series of things that happened: a Sikh guard saw children playing on the Istana yard, turned around, looked back and no one was there. A man forgot something, moved oddly and felt as if he could not move, frozen. After moving the throne to the Perak State Museum in Taiping, there was an enormous thunder storm only in the vicinity of Chandan Hill. The lift sometimes went up and down on its own. Some Chinese workers laid down cable without asking the guardian spirit's permission, and then heard a loud banging on their switched-off machine, and in fear they asked for the proper guidance so they could finish quickly and leave. Young, small beings called genie children [anak jin] were frequently spotted, bald, with round eyes and mouths, said to be slippery as squid, with a small-voiced tinkling laugh. The numerous stories, carefully detailed and often repeated around town, substituted for the books that we requested and that the Sultan's Office might once have stored.

The stories are readily available for visitors in a way books are not, though there is uncertainty if the stories will be received. The palace officer told me that our understanding of these things was a personal matter, and his secretary, who stood in the door jamb to hear our conversation, reminded us in both Malay and English that such stories were a matter of belief. Translation might make the transmission possible, but the personal matter is not dependent on the position of others. The Sikh guard and the Chinese workers were parts of the stories and thus belief did not necessarily raise questions of identity. As stories, they were readily narratable. People (like me) might fail to believe them but nonetheless sustain a conversation about the palace and be pulled into it.

The position of Sultan Azlan is similar to the books and yet more complex. He is the first Perak Sultan in a century not originally selected into the Perak hierarchy by the

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British, though his United Kingdom education precludes a relationship with his people. Education is something that has happened to him that cannot be changed, a quality to which he is reduced. For some older people around Kuala Kangsar they consider Sultan Azlan to be, with a smile, of the University. Since university learning is not "dalam," not "inside," it is merely exoteric knowledge. Perhaps because of this among some in Kuala Kangsar, he is a figure of disinterest. People will note, as one elderly man did, that he is too highly educated and that makes it hard for him to mix with society. Books have served to give him something that does not allow him to be with the people. Many in Kuala Kangsar admire him but feel little connection to him. When I told a lawyer friend in Kuala Lumpur that Sultan Azlan is not quite loved in Kuala Kangsar, she understood all too well. But who, she queried, would he ever talk to there? For some reason the Sultan might not be able to communicate. Though when discussing him in Kuala Kangsar people told me they wished he had more contact with the town, they did not necessarily want him to do so with them.

Those in the lower ranks of Perak's large royal population, many of whom still populate Kuala Kangsar, tend to think of the Sultan more often. One afternoon I joined some of them at a feast for three brothers undergoing circumcision. The host was from another state with relatives in Kuala Kangsar and they chose to do all the boys at once since there was not enough time to do them all individually. It takes too much work to get the family together, and there is too much of a ritual crush on the social agenda during the school holiday period, which is the wedding season. On Chandan Hill, in such a state of busyness, the conversation turned to the Sultan. The Istana was formerly, people say, open to anyone who wanted to go in. The only way the Istana can function now politically is as a house. Its powers are understood in local terms of access and hospitality. Lower nobility dislike that they would have to wear a tie, as some imagine, if they would like to meet the Sultan. That these words about the palace's new etiquette would be repeated in my book was even part of a plan to address the well-educated Sultan. Some people at the

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feast could imagine the Sultan reading my thesis and being surprised (in fact he was the only person, other than schoolchildren, who people mentioned as an audience for this project). Their relationship to the educated Sultan would be through a university book. What would startle the Sultan, one of the lower royalty told me, was seeing his family's name (descendant from the banished Sultan Abdullah) in the book. His family had been left out of the line of succession and perhaps for that reason Sultan Azlan had forgotten them. Seeing their name would abruptly remind him of his kinship ties.

The Sultan appears to have exchanged one type of formality for another. The Star reported in 1993 a Perak source who said that for royal functions "un-Islamic practices should not be carried on even though they were handed down by tradition."[7] The Sultan had already made this Perak practice, as the same source told the newspaper "Sultan of Perak Sultan Azlan Shah was not interested with past traditional ceremonies during his installation in 1985" (ibid.). One of the differences was that "the Sultan changed the Tabal Jin to Tabal Adat" (ibid.). The New Straits Times printed an explanation of these "ceremonies stopped" from one of the Sultan's advisors, explaining that before the Tabal Jin was "a belief that it is essential for the 'genie' to get into the Sultan's body for him to rule effectively."[8] The advisor said now by replacing the Tabal Jin with the Tabal Adat the ceremony "is only symbolic."[9] The symbolic practices communicate in a specific way. In regard to the Malay terms of self-deprecation used before royalty, the same palace official said, "the so-called degrading terms are used only in respect and not to prostrate ourselves" (ibid.). That is, the language is supposed to only work one-way. Those who use "degrading terms" of humility do so only to honor the Sultan and not to reflect on their own position. Respect for the Sultan need not have personal consequences, the royal language

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[7] "Perak may drop un-Islamic ceremonies," Star, 12 February 1993.

[8] "Ceremonies Stopped," New Straits Times, 31 January 1993.

[9] "Palace Rituals only Symbolic, says Advisor," New Straits Times, 31 Janury 1993. According to the coronation book of Sultan Azlan Shah, the tabal adat involves the presentation of the state regalia, the Sultan's reception of the "secret of the First Sultan," along with greetings from the court and the Mentri Besar. (This coronation book also dispenses with the historical narrative typical of its predecessors). Pertabalan. 9 Disember 1985 Bersamaan Dengan 26 Rabiulawal 1406, no page given.

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need not express hierarchy, and in fact its symbolism points to the things the Sultan does not believe in. The Sultan's presence is not relevant. His "retirement" of the Tabal Jin ceremony does not reflect on his position, just like the degrading terms do not prostrate those who use them. The mysterious stories that remain in the palace are not connected to the Sultan's practice. Rather they now become a private matter of those who believe in them. The Perak Sultan's relationship to the community is as one who believes differently than they do, and that is why he can occupy the empty house without fear.

Another Malaysian leader occupies a similar position of power. Sultan Azlan Shah is like Datuk Seri Dr. Mahathir, the Prime Minister, in that he is an uncharmed national figure. Dr. Mahathir (the first non-aristocrat to be Prime Minister of the country) is a leader, who, though widely respected for his political savvy and feared for his vindictiveness, does not rule through popularity.[10] He dominates Malaysian politics, having just recently completed in 1997 his sixteenth year of rule. He has proven brilliantly adept at working the quasi-constitutional intricacies of the federal government and UMNO, his political party, to his advantage. But the Prime Minister's formidable power presents an enigma to political analysts of Malaysia. Khoo Boo Teik's perceptive 1995 biography is appropriately titled Paradoxes of Mahathirism, and as he describes it "Mahathir seems to continue to baffle--both in the abstract sense of leaving his watchers stranded in incomprehension and in the concrete ways by which he has outwitted his opponents."[11] Mahathir's strength is not through an appeal to esoteric knowledge or qualities, things he positively revels in debunking. He learned this early, as he explains, "I grew up in a very disciplined home. My father ran it like a classroom. The sound of his cough as he

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[10] Mahathir Mohamad was born in Kedah in 1925 in Kedah. He trained as a medical doctor and graduated from the University of Malaya in 1953. He was first elected to parliament in 1964, expelled from UMNO following the May 1969 riots, but returned to UMNO and parliament in 1974. He became Deputy Prime Minister in 1976 and Prime Minister in 1981. (A contemporary of the Prime Minister's and perhaps his antithesis as politician is Nik Aziz of the Partai Islam SeMalaysia, an opposition stalwart and Kelantan Chief Minister, the only state in peninsular Malaysia not held by the ruling coalition. People in Kuala Kangsar readily refer to Nik Aziz' powers of erudition, humility, and invulnerability, powers attributed to him even by those who would never consider voting for his party).

[11] Khoo Boo Teik, Paradoxes of Mahathirism: An Intellectual Biography of Mahathir Mohamad, Oxford University Press: Kuala Lumpur, 1995, page 3.

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approached our house was enough to send us boys flying back to our books" (Khoo, 195). It is under his leadership that the New Malay program was introduced, to create, as he describes, "Malays who can face any challenge, that can compete without help, that are educated and scientific, sophisticated, honest, disciplined, trustworthy, and efficient."[12] These common qualities reflect Mahathir's rule, the leader who looks ahead and not behind, demanding that Malaysia advance through hard work.

Mahathir's capacity to be different confounds his challengers. Though an ambitious politician, he is well known to despise the flattery and pomp of office. He told a reporter in 1982 after first becoming prime minister, "Initially, when I used to go with Tun Razak [the country's second prime minister], I would not walk on the red carpet. I would walk off it. He would tell me, 'This is laid for you.' I learnt then to gingerly walk on it ... I don't deserve that much respect. I'm nobody. I'm just one of them [the people]" (Khoo, 198). The relationship of Malays in Kuala Kangsar to the PM, as he is commonly called, is a complex one. Though he portrays himself in international forums as an Asianist, one ostensibly interested in Asian values, he argues at home that Malays will only survive if they change. In a speech to religious leaders in 1995 he argued that belief in the obsolete was a Malay problem: "that is the reason why the disease of hysteria only attacks Malays. Supposedly [kononnya] this disease does not attack others because they do not believe in spirits."[13] As an ex-policeman in Kuala Kangsar has it, Mahathir regularly refutes spiritual things, though he employs spiritualists for defense. For offense, the P.M. uses his own methods and therefore stands apart.

In Shahnon Ahmad's 1993 short story "Piem," Piem's scandal is his solitary control.[14] He describes Piem's realm as a drama in which Piem is the writer, the director, and main character. "Actually, it can be said that all the roles in 'Piem' have no function except for that of Piem alone," Shahnon writes, the supporting cast only there about Piem

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12 "Persiapan Untuk Abad Ke-21," Mastika, October 1993, page 6.
13 "Pegang agama bukan tahyul," Berita Harian, 28 January 1995.
14 Shahnon Ahmad, "Piem," Dewan Sastera, December 1993.

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to nod their heads (Shahnon, 25). Piem's power is great enough even to change the role of the royalty in his play. In the production Piem asks, "will the Malays vanish just like that if their Rajas are abolished?" Not quite: "the Malays are still Malays, says Piem, but the new Malays are Malays who are clever, who are brave, who are diligent, and who do not care about moldy traditions" (Shahnon, 26). This is Piem's space, like Mahathir in 1983 and 1993 curbing the powers of the Sultans, inheriting the traditions that he will end.[15] He has the authority to name some things as Malay, and others not.

Mahathir's uncompromising stand produces resistance on varied fronts. Considering their multiethnic readership among urban, educated Malaysians, it is unsurprising that the English-language press is concerned with claims of belief. They feel surrounded by people who believe things, but without the authority of the Sultan or the Prime Minister to reject their reports. A 1994 New Straits Times series of stories titled "Encounters with the Supernatural," described mysterious things in a tone of concerned skepticism. The lead article pronounced that "the widespread belief among Malaysians in the existence of supernatural forces came under renewed scrutiny this week when several scientists and doctors supported the establishment of a national society to research psychic phenomena."[16] Part of this was the contention among professionals that "the orang halus [spirits] are hitting back" (ibid.). A university professor told the New Straits Times that given the pace of development in the country

> 'The jins and their families are being forcibly displaced from their homes in the forests, rivers and seas, and it appears to me that they are hitting back at us,' he said. 'There is no scientific explanation for it but the effects of the backlash by the jins are there for everybody to see' (ibid.).

An accompanying article concerning a road project is prefaced "the description of what followed is difficult for modern people to relate to, but several well-respected local figures

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[15] The first challenge to the role of the Sultans was in 1983, when parliament amended the constitution to remove the necessity of royal assent to legislation. The second occured in 1993, this time to limit the Rulers' power of immunity and of pardon. See H.P. Lee, "The Malaysian Constitutional Crisis: King, Rulers and Royal Assent," in F.A. Trindade and H.P. Lee, editors, The Constitution of Malaysia: Further Perspectives and Developments, Oxford University Press: Singapore, 1986; Harold Crouch, Government and Society in Malaysia, Cornell University Press: Ithaca, 1996, pages 142-148.

[16] "Encounters with the Supernatural," New Straits Times, 3 July 1994.

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tell the story in all seriousness."[17] One such struggle with the jin occurred at the Nuclear Energy Unit of the National University when a staff member in the reactor department, "a Ph.D. holder, became hysterical after seeing 'figures' in the building and had to be treated for demonic possession."[18] The English-language newspapers search for a means to communicate these incidents to their readers who want explanations and evidence. The series of articles includes a sidebar relating, "First-hand experience of demonic possession" (ibid.). What everyone can see is happening are the stories in the newspapers that other people report seeing.

These personal encounters generate rumors that could be stopped if those other people no longer saw them. This interest led A. Kadir Jasin, himself the New Straits Times editor, to take the Malay press to task for publishing such stories in an article titled "Ridding the Malay Psyche of Ghosts."[19] He quotes Johan Jaafar, a columnist for Utusan Malaysia, citing reports in a Kuala Lumpur Malay tabloid "on the so-called hantu lilin (candlelight ghost)" (ibid.). He translates Johan as saying "it is ironic that a society that thrives on luxury cars, cellular phones, air-conditioned offices and the global information superhighway cannot easily do away with ghosts and demons" (ibid.). The report of the ghosts they both cite is not in the New Straits Times or in Utusan Malaysia, but rather in the unnamed Malay paper. That paper's interest is the focus of their concern. Kadir Jasin writes that "The outright belief in supernatural forces among the Malays, or at least their fascination with such phenomena, quite apart from being fed this diet by the Malay Press, has also to do with their inability to think scientifically" (ibid.). Even more mundane reasons might exist, as he points out "a high fever, tiredness and anxiety can all cause hallucination and hysteria. Even overeating before sleep or sleeping in a new place can produce the same effect in a weak person" (ibid.). But what clinches his argument is the efficacy of the ghosts themselves, for "if a person believes in hantu and orang halus, the

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[17] "Battle With Jin for the Right of Way," New Straits Times, 3 July 1994.
[18] "10-year-old Incident Still a Mystery to Top Scientists," New Straits Times, 4 July 1994.
[19] "Ridding the Malay Psyche of Ghosts," New Straits Times, 5 February 1995.

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chances of him or her hallucinating or becoming hysterical are much greater" (ibid.). Like the P.M., Kadir Jasin believes that other Malays believe in these things, and the jin, hantu, and orang halus have an effect on him and his plans for Malaysia as long as they continue to do so.

Let the custom die

In 1946, a new organization called the Malay League of Perak published Hidop Melayu: A Brief Review of Activities of the Malay National Movement.[20] Sultan Sir Abdul Aziz [r. 1938-1948] of Perak wrote the forward, acknowledging

> I heartily welcome the publication of this book which records important developments in connection with the inauguration of the Malayan Union in general and Malay reaction in particular. It is, indeed, a timely effort and should serve as a guide to those who care to study the Malay case against the Malayan Union, and, at the same time, an inspiration to the present and the future generations of Malays (ibid., 1).

The Sultan's concern in the Malay League's activities was in preparing for the future through analyzing the British government's plans for the Malayan Union.[21] He reminds the readers of Hidop Melayu to maintain a measured pace in response to the shock of Britain's post-war plans for Perak:

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[20] Hidop Melayu: A Brief Review of Activities of the Malay National Movement, Malay League of Perak: Ipoh, [1946?]. Its use of English indeed indexes its nationalist credentials. In his forward to a collection of letters written by the Malay royalty in 1946, Haji Hanafi bin Ramli notes, "It is hoped that people will benefit by this publication, the first ever published in English by the Museum. English was the language most of our Fighters of Independence and Nation Builders commonly used forty or fifty years ago" (np). Compiled by Ismail bin Haji Saleh, The Sultan was Not Alone: a Collection of Letters written by Sultan Badlishah of Kedah in his Effort to Repeal the Malayan Union Policy Imposed by the British Government on Malaya in 1946, and other Supporting Letters and Documents Written by Others, The State Museum: Kedah Darulaman, 1989, no page.

[21] The Malayan Union scheme was one to rationalize the crown colonies with the Malay states into one administrative unit, excluding Singapore, and with liberal citizenship policies that would include large percentages of the immigrant population. Aside from its opposition in Malaya, retired Malayan civil service officers like Swettenham, Clementi, and Winstedt rallied against it in London. See James d. V. Allen, The Malayan Union, Yale University Press: New Haven, 1967; Nordin Sopiee, From Malayan Union to Singapore Separation: Political Unification in the Malaysia Region 1945-1965, University of Malaya Press: Kuala Lumpur, 1976, chapter two; A.J. Stockwell, British Policy and Malay Politics During the Malayan Union Experiment, 1945-1948, MBRAS: Kuala Lumpur, 1979, especially chapter four; and Ariffin Omar, Bangsa Melayu: Malay Concepts of Democracy and Community 1945-1950, Oxford University Press: Kuala Lumpur, 1995, chapter two.

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> I am sure all the Sultans are very touched by the unwavering loyalty of the people who, despite the provocation caused by the sudden inauguration of the Malayan Union Plan, have shown a sense of moderation in all recent political demonstrations. I commend the example of the UMNO leaders to all the rayats [common people] in whose interests they, along with the Rulers, are waging this national struggle which, I am convinced, will ultimately succeed (ibid., 1).

For the Sultan, the inclusion of the Perak Malay League in the United Malays National Organization (which in 1946 consolidated such local associations) will bring about gradual change in pursuit of their political goals:

> in conclusion, I wish to appeal to all Malays to remain calm and patient, to be mindful of their religion, time-honoured customs and traditions and to contribute their utmost for the success of the noble mission that UMNO has undertaken on their behalf. I watch with keen appreciation and interest the progress of this national organ (ibid., 1).

The past means caution, a past that Hidop Melayu is itself soon to be a part. The book's introduction promises that it will serve as a "permanent record of historical importance," one that is "compiled specially for the benefit of Malays" (ibid., 2). Events in Perak meant to have repercussions even for those beyond its borders.

An article in Hidop Melayu announces that "Perak Forms First Political Organisation" (ibid., 34). The Perak Malay movement began, they note, with a meeting of what was "Believed to be the first Malay political body in Malaya, the Perak Malay League" a group "formed at a meeting held in Kuala Kangsar on January 27, 1946" (ibid., 34). Instead of describing the meeting, the article depicts the Perak Malay League through a series of lists, including its officers and the heads of the special bureaus: Religion and Customs, Economics, Malayan Union Affairs, Information, Education, and Inter-Relations. The League's reach extends to "a trial membership of nearly 30,000" with "branches all over Perak" (ibid., 34). The list of branches includes Perak's primary towns, with prominent Malay professionals and royalty as branch heads. The list is split, though, between the towns and the men's names in its first half, and the women's groups in its second half: the "Taiping Ladies," the "Ipoh Ladies," and so on. This organizational structure was sufficient to explain the Perak Malay League's existence. Just months after

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its formation the Hidop Melayu authors could recognize it as the first Malay political body in Malaya.

The President of the League was Tuan Haji Abdul Wahab, the Datoh Panglima Bukit Gantang, the former head of the Perak Malay Driver's Association. He is noted as "one of the most outstanding personalities among the Malays today" (ibid., 30). His list of credentials extends from his birth "in Saiong, off Kuala Kangsar," to his education at the Anderson School in Ipoh and in London, and includes that "for the past several years, he has been both a political and religious leader of the Malays."[22] Through his work he built connections. As a person "popular in local social and sports circles," he was in charge of the International Services Section of the Ipoh Rotary Club, though "since the inauguration of the Malayan Union, he has devoted almost all his time for the national movement" (ibid., 30). Abdul Wahab knew the rules for organizations, and duly registered the League with the government under the Society's Enactment.[23] Given the breadth of the Malayan Union scheme, Abdul Wahab's own duties expanded to include the position of Secretary General of the UMNO. When he speaks at the end of his profile he says, "my sole aim is to protect, at all costs, the legitimate interests of my people. I am firm in the faith that our struggle will ultimately be crowned with success" (ibid., 30). His part in the national movement is to help define how to protect his people. What precisely success might entail, however, is left unspecified except as the protection of interests.

Some Malays in Perak, however, followed aims other than those in the Datoh's circle. The Perak Malay League was set up, Hidop Melayu notes, to protect Malays from other Malays. Hidop Melayu also explains this through a list. Among the conditions that brought about the "need for an organisation to represent the political views of the Malays in the State" was the absence of Malay leaders other than those "co-ordinated in the person of the Sultan" (ibid., 35). Since these leaders were compelled to collaborate with the Japanese

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[22] Abdul Wahab's activities were such that "he was appointed secretary and treasurer of the Malay Section of the Perak Patriotic Fund which contributed about $100,000 to the British war effort," page 30.
[23] "Malay Political Movement, Formation of a:" in Perak Secretariat 240/46.

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during the occupation, many were detained by the British Military after their return to the peninsula and "consequently they had not the inclination to safeguard the interests of the Malays when such safeguard was necessary. The Malays were leaderless and in their plight were easy victims of exploitation" (ibid., 35). The "Resistance forces," those that fought against the Japanese, now used the confusion "against the Malays" and "as many as 1,000 Malays were abducted and murdered in Perak alone" (ibid., 35). This situation put Perak Malays under extreme pressure and "With their backs against the wall the Malays were compelled to adopt reprisals as the best method of defense. The local leaders being helpless it was dangerous to allow these reprisals to gather momentum" (ibid., 30). In such a situation, anything could happen. The biggest problem was not the Resistance forces but rather

> Certain Malays of doubtful antecedents with the backing of reactionary forces formed a political organisation with the objects of undermining the loyalty of the Malays to the British Crown and of identifying itself with the Indonesian struggle for independence. It was vitally necessary to counteract these activities (ibid., 35).

At this moment of crisis, Malays in Perak faced a choice of identification, one between the Indonesians and the British. The Perak Malay League's decision was clear if they wanted their antecedents to go unquestioned.

Kuala Kangsar provided, for a brief moment, a site for these affirmations of solidarity. Hidop Melayu concludes that "thus the way was paved for the formation of a strong Malay political organisation" and "to meet the demands of the Malays an inaugural meeting was held at Kuala Kangsar on the 17th January, 1946" (ibid., 35). In the official "Rules of the Perak Malay League" sent in February to the Civil Affairs Officer, Ipoh, the list informs the government "the Headquarters of the Movement shall be at Kuala Kangsar."[24] But the 1,700 Malays gathered there from "all over the State" did not stay in Kuala Kangsar, and after its formation "the League held its first convention at Ipoh on the 23rd and 24th February, 1946" (ibid., 35). Hidop Melayu notes that this brought a change in venue for the association, as "the objects of the League are purely political. Its present

[24] "Malay Political Movement, Formation of a:" in Perak Secretariat 240/46.

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Headquarters are in Ipoh" (ibid., 36). For the League to be political, they could not remain in Kuala Kangsar.

Other groups were active in Perak's smaller towns. The Malays of doubtful antecedents focused on Malay youth:

> Certain forces at work having aims, objects and policies which in our view are retrogressive and have the effect of doing more harm than good appreciate the potential values of the young people. These forces are busy with their insidious propaganda in swaying the minds of the young people. I regret to say that their activities are gathering momentum in Taiping, Kuala Kangsar and Tanjong Malim. The situation is serious and demands instant action (ibid., 38).

These certain forces, according to Hidop Melayu, are not at work in Ipoh. The Perak Malay League from its new headquarters in Ipoh would pull Malay youth, those between 15 and 30, into the safety of their Youths' Organisation. The author claims "I am confident that if any scheme is adopted the League will obtain the full support of the young people and at the same time defeat any attempt to deviate every man, woman and child from the trail that the League has blazed with so much glory and fortitude" (ibid., 38). This new trail of the Perak Malay League gave the children something to follow, without deviation.

The images in the book show the direction of communication in the new political organization. The introduction thanks the Crown Film Unit and a certain Mr. Chan for the use of the photographs in the book, which prominently feature the Kuala Kangsar rally in May, 1946. The visit of Lt.Col. Rees-Williams and Capt. Gammans to Kuala Kangsar was one of nine they made through Malaya in 1946 to seek Malay opinion about the new political changes.[25] At the bottom of the introductory page to Hidop Melayu is a photograph of a large crowd gathered around a platform, captioned "Dato Onn, leader of the Malay Congress at the microphone, addressing the Malay demonstration on the padang

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[25] L. David Gammans (conservative, known in parliament as the "Member for Malaya") and David R. Rees-Williams (labour) were part of a British parliamentary mission to Sarawak in 1946. On their return they both seperately visited the peninsula and then convened in Kuala Kangsar on 28-29 May 1946 for a conference with the Rulers, UMNO, and a mass rally. Stockwell notes that to Rees-Williams, the visit to Kuala Kangsar was "a turning point in the Malayan Union crisis: European observers were impressed by the sincerity of Malay feelings and some of the old warmth returned to Anglo-Malay relations." See A.J. Stockwell, British Policy and Malay Politics During the Malayan Union Experiment, 1945-1948, MBRAS: Kuala Lumpur, page 89.

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at Kuala Kangsar on May 28th, 1946" (ibid., 2). Dato Onn talks to the crowd.[26] Following the photograph of Dato' Onn speaking, a picture of banners reads "posters were carried through the streets of Kuala Kangsar bearing slogans against the Malayan Union. This was the subject of the Malay demonstration before Capt. Gammans on May 28th, 1946" (ibid., 2). Dato' Onn addressed the crowd, but the banners in the demonstration were for Capt. Gammans. Hidop Melayu also displays the crowds in Kuala Kangsar for the reader: a third photograph shows a mass of people identified as the "Crowd present at the padang on the occasion of Lt. Col. Rees Williams and Capt. Gammans' visit to Kuala Kangsar on May 28th, 1946" (ibid., 18). While in Kuala Kangsar, the text notes that Gammans stayed at the Istana by the Sultan's invitation. A full page photograph shows Gammans "in conversation" with Sultan Abdul Aziz (ibid., 22). Dato' Onn spoke to the crowd but the Sultan is like the crowd in speaking to Gammans. The Sultan had to explain to Gammans why his signature was on the MacMichael treaty that brought about the Malayan Union.[27] Doing so put him in the same position as the crowd gathered in Kuala Kangsar.

In March, prior to his visit to Malaya, Gammans read letters from the Sultans to the British House of Commons. They explained how the Sultans' consent was obtained.[28] The Sultan of Perak wrote in his letter

> One or two Malay Chiefs totally disagreed with the signing and all deplored the fact they had not been notified of it in due time. One cannot help regretting the necessity

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[26] Dato' Onn bin Jaafar (1895-1962) was an Old Boy of the MCKK who studied there in 1910-11. Following his schooling, he worked as a reporter in Singapore, and later became the Mentri Besar of Johore from 1946 to 1950. He helped found UMNO, and later left in 1951 to begin the Independence of Malaya Party, one without a strong communal basis. See Ramlah Adam, Dato' Onn Ja'afar, Pengasas Kemerdekaan, Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka: Kuala Lumpur, 1992.

[27] Harold MacMichael, as the British government's Special Representative arrived in Malaya in October 1945. He visited the nine Malay rulers through late 1945 and succeeded, with intimidation, in gaining their assent to the Malayan Union proposals.

[28] As the one Malayan newspaper reported, "In an action that is perhaps unprecedented in the history of Malaya a Sultan has been queried by his subjects for his action. At the closing session of the Perak Malay League Convention at the Town Hall yesterday evening a resolution was passed asking the Sultan to explain the circumstances under which he signed the agreement with the British Government, transferring jurisdiction over the State of Perak to the Malayan Union. A special committee was elected to go into the details of drafting the resolution." "Perak Malays to Ask Sultan to Explain Signing of Agreement," Straits Echo and Times of Malaya, 26 Februrary 1946.

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> for extreme speed in deciding the destiny of a nation when a little delay would have been conducive to wiser counsel.
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> I signed because I was caught in an atmosphere of haste and because I was engrossed in my unshaken loyalty to the British Crown with full confidence that my rights and the rights of my people would not be disturbed. It cannot be said I have agreed to the serious implications in the proposed Malayan Union (Hidop Melayu, 31).

He was upset with the haste, and that the signing might have hidden consequences. The Sultan of Selangor, in his letter, signed because "I need His Majesty and the Government to manage the affairs of my estate with justice. The King is like my teacher and I his pupil. It is only fitting I should be taught by him" (ibid., 32). He added that another reason he signed was that the "Sultan of Johore had signed" (ibid., 32). The Sultan of Johore in turn wrote "I was not coerced and not stampeded and signed quite willingly, but after thinking the matter over I concluded I had signed without scrutinising the agreement as closely as I should and unfortunately did not realise the far-reaching implications" (ibid., 32). The Sultan of Kedah wrote "I was told the matter was personal and confidential and I was not allowed to tell my people what had taken place" (ibid., 32). MacMichael's coercion was of manipulating friendships, misusing the private ties between the Malay rulers and the British. The disrupted relationships were caused by the haste of the post-war conditions, when the Sultans were unable to think of long-term consequences.[29] This meant that other Malays, among them those in the Perak Malay League, had to speak in their place.

The men in the Perak Malay League, however, could not speak to Malay children. The loyalty of the youth was also sought by the Malays of doubtful antecedents and therefore the League had to turn to the Malay mothers for help. The greatest fascination with the peninsular Malay national movement expressed in Hidop Melayu is the

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[29] In MacMichael's 1945 notes of his meeting with Perak's Sultan Abdul Aziz, he focuses on the Sultan's reputed interest in returning to pre-war conditions: "Then the Sultan came straight to his main point--his intense and genuine fear that the Malays would be submerged in their own country. It was this which he stressed throughout the interview, and which inspired the list of detailed points that he shortly produced. He confirmed emphatically that the Malays, who had known civilisation for less than a century, were backward compared with the Chinese, who had been a civilised people since long before Christ, or the Indians, who had benefitted from two hundred years of British influence. The very existence of the Malays as a people therefore depended on the continuance of British protection." Colonial Office 537/1588, "Sultan of Perak." 1945-6.

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participation of Malay women. One of the photographs shows a woman speaking above a large Union Jack, with the caption "Che Maznah, Taiping Malay woman leader, at the microphone addressing the demonstration put on by All Malay Society, Kuala Kangsar for the benefit of Capt. Gammans and Lt.-Col. Rees Williams M.Ps." (ibid., 22). Few women speak in the text of Hidop Melayu, but the men speak about the women's new adeptness in public speaking. The Datoh Panglima Bukit Gantang defended their participation in a piece titled "Memorandum on the Entry of Malay Women in Politics." Only Malay women can stretch the limits of being Malay, as "It is our national trait to strike an attitude and hold fast to it along the passage of time" (ibid., 21). This presents a problem, since for Malays "it has come to pass that we are rigid instead of elastic, static instead of progressive" (ibid., 21). This reproduces itself in the home, and

> In their only setting, namely, their life of simple domesticity, our women live in ignorance and in bringing up their children our women impart that ignorance and some of its undesirable implications to their children who attain as we have attained men's estate with a serious handicap in the battle of life against men and women having more agile minds and more advanced views (ibid., 21).

By turning to Malay women, the Perak Malay League is able to look ahead to the future. Abdul Wahab argues "This in itself is a long term policy. We can educate the men politically but we cannot reach down to their children unless we rope in their mothers. When their mother's political consciousness is roused they will make a good political background for their children" (ibid., 22). The Perak Malay League's strategy is part of a long-term struggle, one in which they have time. They have to think strategically for the future since the rulers failed to do so. When the women take the microphone to speak politically, they are addressing the future, a future that will be continuous with the conditions of the present.

A writer with the pseudonym "Malayan," a non-Malay of twenty years residence in Malaya, described this as a "women's awakening." He recounts the shock over "the emergence of the women, including charming girls discarding their traditional purdah of the kampongs," something that "has astonished everyone in Malaya" (ibid., 18). In some

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cases, women out-numbered men at the anti-Malayan Union rallies and on one occasion, Malayan adds, the Sultan of Perak's wife led a procession. Malayan concludes, "yes, Malay women have changed and changed with a vengeance" and he is impressed by the reaction to it: "Their still more unbelievable growth in political consciousness have amazed even their own men" (ibid., 19). The most outstanding achievement of the women, for Malayan, was a concert they staged in Johore "entirely by themselves" in July 1946. A team of actresses performed a play, one that was "a dramatisation of Dato Onn's modern rendering of the Malay saying-- 'let the child die, but not the custom.' The new quotation is: 'let the custom die, but not the child,' which has been adopted as a national slogan of the movement."[30] The women perform what Dato' Onn says, a dramatization that reverses the famous adage. As a "national slogan" it suggests that the women as mothers will protect the children from custom through to adulthood so that they can fulfill the aims of the movement. Their protests against the Malayan Union were filled with slogans. When Gammans and Rees-Williams continued on to Kedah after Kuala Kangsar they found "all vehicles, including rickshaws and bullock-carts carried banners containing national slogans" (ibid., 25). On the bottom of the page describing these messages in Johore, Kedah, and Kuala Kangsar is a repetition of the slogan in bold relief, reading "'Let the Custom Die, But Not the Child' --Dato' Onn." This particular national slogan suggests a new means to be Malay by not being Malay anymore.[31] Malay women immersed in the realm of custom are in the position to deaden its effects.

Other customs were at stake in the unfolding Malayan Union plans. In Kuala Kangsar, Capt. Gammans reports, one of the Malays remarked to him "you have destroyed in four weeks something that took you 80 years to build up" (ibid., 25). The British

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[30] Page 20. This pepatah, or advice couplet, has been a staple of criticism among Malay intellectuals since the 1930s. In a recent rendition, "for several decades this pepatah has been controversial; that is 'biar mati anak jangan mati adat.' Critics and Malay intellectuals including religious leaders are of the opinion that this pepatah is one of the causes of Malay backwardness." "Tidak Semua Bahasa Melayu Negatif," Utusan Malaysia, 16 December 1995.

[31] For a careful analysis of such a nationalist project, see Benedict Anderson, "Time of Darkness, Time of Light," Language and Power, Cornell University Press: Ithaca, 1991.

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custom for 80 years was to maintain the custom of Malay rule through the Sultans. The other slogan that Hidop Melayu repeats in the book is "We Want Protection, not Annexation" (ibid., 33). This appeared on a banner that the Ipoh Malay Youth League held for Gammans and Rees-Williams. To be annexed was not to be able to say "we" clearly. At Kuala Kangsar, the "Perak Malays declared inter-alia:"

> At this assembly, we feel bound to reiterate that we shall continue to consider the agreement not binding on us and to protest against the Malayan Union Scheme. While we are loyal to His Britannic Majesty, we beg leave to mention that to be brought within the scope of the Foreign Jurisdictions Act of 1890 is a step calculated at our complete disappearance from the political world. We were and still claim to be independent Malay Muslim sultanates (ibid., 5).

Others seemed to have different concerns. A "Malay friend" asked Malayan, why "Britain is so anxious about the Malayan Union when the Chinese and Indians are so indifferent about the whole thing?" (ibid., 5). Certain customs, some of the Sultanate, some of the British, had been disregarded. At the Second All-Malay Congress in March 1946 (a meeting that led to the formation of UMNO) in Kuala Lumpur, the Congress resolved that the British Malayan Union scheme

> to create a Union Citizenship with equal right without discrimination or race or creed has the effect of wiping from existence:
> (a) the nine Sovereign Mohamedan Malay Kingdoms ... (b) the Malay race having its own land and Rulers, (c) ... depriving the Malays of their birth rights is hereby declared to be an undue imposition of a devastating act on those whose loyalty to the British Crown is unquestioned (ibid., 12).

UMNO meant preserving the Sultans through replacing them. Abdul Wahab argued "We are none the less loyal to our ruler even if we who had blindly followed his bidding now criticise his actions" (ibid., 21). Malay women on the stage in Johore acted out what Dato Onn said about custom. If the customs were to die people some day could think of anything, speak in front of large crowds. But not yet. At the Congress in Kuala Lumpur, the Malay Nationalist Party wanted UMNO to be something else and walked out of the meeting. They did so when UMNO turned down the suggestion "to adopt the Red and

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White flag of Indonesia as the official UMNO flag."[32] Indonesia's slogan of "Merdeka" did not translate for UMNO in 1946, which went under the slogan "Hidop Melayu," a phrase often translated as "long live the Malays." In the revolutionary conditions of 1946, UMNO focused its attention on the children. The challenge for the children would be to continue this new Malay custom of being Malays without custom.

Crowning the next sultan

Other customs had to be restarted after the occupation. The Sultan's Office handles the official business of the Sultan. The royal activities are recorded in files, the oldest of which have been turned over to the National Archives. The files retained in the Archives begin in 1945 after the end of the Japanese occupation, and continue to the 1970s.[33] Sultan Abdul Aziz described the occupation as "The whole administrative system of Malaya which any country would have been proud of, was broken in bits till none was left. The Sultans and Chiefs were left in retirement except at times when they wanted us to act as their propaganda officers."[34] A concern following the occupation/retirement was to make the Sultan mobile again. One of the earliest files, "Registration of Plates of Cars Owned by Royalty" notes that "2. The official car H.H. the Sultan is the only vehicle which should

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[32] Ahmad Boestamam, Carving a Path to the Summit, Ohio University Press: Athens, 1979, page 15. These memoirs werer published in Utusan in 1972, and Ahmad Boestamam recounts "then the vote was taken. The result was the MNP proposal lost by ONLY ONE VOTE to the proposal that won, that of the UMNO symbol that continues to today," page 69. Boestamam led the MNP delegates and their supporters out of the hall with "our battle cry--Merdeka! [Independence!]," page 71.

[33] The style of the files, with titles, minute papers, and enclosures all kept in continuously growing folders, are very similar to the State Secretariat files from the colonial period. The Perak Sultan's files were kept mostly in English until the mid-1960s, and the chops used to stamp the documents remained in English even longer [e.g. "Chief Clerk Office of the Secretary to H.H. The Sultan of Perak, Kuala Kangsar"].

[34] "A letter from His Highness Sultan Abdul Aziz of Perak to his friend W.P. Hume in 'British Malaya'. January, 1946." In Ismail Haji Salleh, The Sultan was Not Alone, The State Museum: Kedah Darulaman, 1989, page 43. The Sultan's "retirement" during the occupation was one of farming: "In front of the palace of Sultan Abdul Aziz, Sultan of Perak, is an area of 40 acres, in readiness for the purpose, and during this short period 30 acres have been cultivated with sweet potato, tapioca, maize, ragi, padi, castor, cotton, papaya, pineapple, etc. The Sultan himself every day comes down to the farm, planning. The Sultan, with about 60 persons, works hard and diligently. Cattle-sheds and chicken runs have been prepared for keeping buffaloes, cows, ducks and fowls." Syonan Shimbun, June 9 1944, cited in Byungkok Soh, From Parochial to National Outlook: Malay Society in Transition, 1920-1948, Ohio University, Ph.D. Dissertation, page 213.

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bear a title plate. Any other cars owned by H.H. must carry ordinary registration numbers," a notice signed by the Road Transport Department.[35] Like re-registering the cars, the files were re-started (if indeed they had been stopped during the occupation). But many of the post-war concerns remain secret, even in the National Archives. None of the deliberations between the British government and the Perak sultanate, for example, about the Malayan Union are available in the archives. The Sultan's political role in the negotiations, as found in the files, is replaced by other matters.

Following the occupation, the Sultan's office attempted to account for the Perak Regalia. Regaining lost items was tied to the return of the British. A letter from 1945 reports, "attached is a new list of the Perak regalia. In the reign of the late Sultan His Highness Sultan Idrus [r. 1887-1916] certain articles of the regalia were stolen, but no records of the stolen articles are available."[36] This happened again in December 1941, when amid the confusion of the Japanese advance from the north, "Between the 8th and 23rd of December 1941 the following articles of the regalia were found missing": "1. one pair gold dragon Armlets for the Sultan 2. one pair gold dragon Armlets for the Sultanah 3. two gold chains (Rantai Bunga Nior) 4. four gold receptacles from the sireh box" (ibid.). Without the records, nothing could be done about the losses from Sultan Idris' time. However, the memo notes that this "second theft was duly reported to the Kuala Kangsar police. While investigations were going on the Japs invaded the country. I reported this matter to the first Japanese State Officer but no action was ever taken" (ibid.). Perhaps with the removal of the Japanese, interest in searching for the lost items would appear again.

On 29 March 1948, Sultan Abdul Aziz died. On 31 March, the Raja Muda of Perak, Raja Yussuf, was sworn in as Sultan. Less than a month afterward the Sultan's secretary wrote to Abdul Wahab, now Perak's first Mentri Besar, that "His Highness the

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35 Sultan Perak Files 152/45, "Registration of Cars Owned by Royalty."
36 Sultan Perak Files 175/49, "Photographs of Regalia."

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Sultan has asked me to address you on the subject of his Installation."[37] The position of Perak Mentri Besar was now between the Sultan and the British. The new Sultan knew that the High Commissioner, Sir Edward Gent, would be going on leave on 15 August, and the Sultan's secretary wrote to Abdul Wahab to ask him in his new capacity, that "His Highness would very much like to have his Installation before the departure of His Excellency so that both His Excellency and Lady Gent could be present at the ceremony. Could you be good enough to make the necessary arrangements?" (ibid.). Abdul Wahab now had political connections useful to the Sultan's Office in reaching the High Commissioner. The Secretary wrote that through notes he had "just got hold of" from Sultan Abdul Aziz' 1939 installation, the government then spent $25,000 in 1939 and now requested $30,000. He said, "I have explained to His Highness the present financial position of the State and he said he would agree to a smaller show" (ibid.). Perak's government had responsibilities in post-war reconstruction, ones that went well beyond the office of the Sultan, and the extravagance of the occasion had to be decreased accordingly.

With Sultan Yusoff's installation approaching, the Sultan's secretary reported in 1948 about the regalia that "Items 1,2, &3 must be worn at the Installation Ceremony, which will not be complete without them. The only thing that we can do is to replace them. I had some pictures of them but those too are missing."[38] In Kuala Kangsar they thought the records might be elsewhere, and wrote to the Royal Asiatic Society, an organization "whose good designs and old pictures are usually kept" (ibid.). In having the "designs and dimensions" of the old pieces the Sultan's Office could make new ones. To safeguard against repeating these circumstances where parts of the regalia went missing, in 1949 a full inventory was taken, and the names of the parts were fully translated (ibid.). Though some of the pieces of the regalia retained specific names, such as the "1. Pedang Kerajaan" translated in parentheses as "Sword of State;" the "3. Trapang" noted as "A Kris with gold

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[37] In Perak Secretariat 4473/48. Abdul Wahab is addressed by his title, "Dear Toh Gantang." He became Mentri Besar of Perak on 1 February 1948.

[38] Sultan Perak Files 175/49, "Photographs of Regalia."

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handle and Sheath;" most of the names appeared only in English: "29. Two small octagonal silver Sireh boxes complete with beetle set," "33. Sixteen silver spears," "34. Sixteen Umbrellas with silver handles." The last of these is listed is simply "45. The Throne" (ibid.). The inventory of the 45 sets of items photographed was not complete, since one piece, the Airgrette, was "stored at the United Malayan Bank, Kuala Kangsar."[39] By turning the Perak regalia into photographs and English terms, the Sultan's office attempted to prevent losing anything more. They wanted to be certain that somewhere the State Regalia was remembered as complete.

The regalia was not the only part of the installation ceremony that needed special security. For these functions, the Sultan's Office pulled out its old blueprints. The police offered a report for "Proposed Police Control at the Installation of His Highness the Sultan of Perak on 12th August 1948."[40] The date suggested the police thought the Sultan would get his wish and be installed before High Commissioner Edward Gent went on leave. The officer in charge, under the request of the Mentri Besar, noted that his report was "based on the Police Scheme made out for the Installation of the Late Sultan in 1939" (ibid.). 280 police reinforcements were to supplement the Kuala Kangsar Police. The major concern in the police report was the provisions for cars. Vehicles entering Kuala Kangsar for the Installation were to be divided into six categories, "Staff Cars," "Privileged Cars," "Press Cars," "Police Cars," "Guest Cars," and "Other Cars." These classes of cars would be distinguished from each other by a system of colored disks on their radiators. The only detail the police were unable to foresee was how exactly the parking would work: "the Committee should consider as soon as possible the actual wording and colour of all passes, parking tickets and notes to be sent to Guests together with their invitation cards" (ibid.).

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[39] It was stored there perhaps because of its special heritage. According to the installation book of Sultan Yusof, "this Aigrette was bought by Sultan Idris when he visited Great Britain, and it was his personal property, but after his death it was purchased by the Government and added to the State Regalia," Rotary Club of Ipoh, A Souvenir of the Installation of H.H. Sir Yussuf Izzudin Shah as Sultan of Perak, Caxton Press: Ipoh, 1949, page 19.

[40] In Perak Secretariat 4473/48.

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They knew how to handle crowds arriving in Kuala Kangsar, to move smoothly in and out of the town.

But 1948 was not 1939. On 18 June a state of Emergency was declared throughout Malaya after the death of two British planters near Kuala Kangsar in Sungai Siput.[41] Against the Sultan's wishes and the initial planning of the Kuala Kangsar police, the installation was delayed until April 1949, more than a year after Sultan Abdul Aziz died. Perak was a center for the struggle over power between the rebels in the jungle and the state security forces, expanded locally and backed by Commonwealth troops. In a letter from the Mentri Besar to the Sultan, Abdul Wahab pointed out that the conditions would make the affair "embarrassing to the police" to have a large detachment for security.[42] Though small, private celebrations were allowed, the Mentri Besar thought the moment "not in consonance with the mental state of the people" (ibid.). At the time it appeared the delay would only be a matter of a few weeks "until conditions improve" (ibid.). The war-time conditions of the Emergency increased the police risk of gathering people in Kuala Kangsar.

To replace the invitations the state would not send, the Sultan sent his own. A large file contains the plans to celebrate the birthday of the uninstalled Sultan within the grounds of the palace on 15 January.[43] The minute papers in the Sultan's office file give the "sitting arrangements" planned for the function, with "Two yellow chairs will be placed on the daise of the throne for H.H. and H.E. the High Commissioner. H.H. will his seat on the right of H.E."[44] Other invitations were sent to gather the Sultan's community in Perak.

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41 Writing about the incident, in a dramatic tone, Noel Barber claims "There seemed to be no pattern--except perhaps one: to make sure the people of Malaya realized from the start that this was a war of terror none could escape." Noel Barber, War of the Running Dogs, William Collins: London, 1971, page 24. For later surveys of Emergency strategy, see Anthony Short, The Communist Insurrection in Malaya, 1948-1960, Muller: London, 1975; Richard Stubbs, Hearts and Minds in Guerrilla Warfare: The Malayan Emergency 1948-1960, Oxford University Press: Singapore, 1989; and John Coates, Suppressing Insurgency: An Analysis of the Malayan Emergency, 1948-1954, Westview Press: Boulder, 1992.

42 Sultan Perak Files 4473/48, "His Highness Sultan Yussuf Izzudin Shah, Installation of."

43 Sultan Perak Files SPK 622/48, "Birthday of HH the Sultan 15th Jan 1949." This was to be a formal affair, and the Malay guests had to be reminded, "Rajas and chiefs and staff of HH on duty will attend the ceremony in full ceremonial Malay dress (with Tengkolok)."

44 Sultan Perak Files SPK 622/48.

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Two weeks before the event, a message marked "urgent" went out from the Sultan's office to the respective District Offices in Perak. The Sultan's secretary asked "It is intended to invite community leaders, who are not State or Executive Councillers, to this function. I shall be thankful if you can kindly suggest the names of these, who, in your opinion should be invited" (ibid.). The eight districts were then each allotted a specific number of "Malays," "Eurasians," "Europeans," "Ceylonese," "Chinese," "Indians," and "Pakistanis" to invite.[45] Under the Federation of Malaya, the Malayan Union's replacement, many of those invited by the Sultan were not citizens.[46] The celebration's schedule reserved a time for the "reading and presentation of addresses by Community Leaders."[47] The elites of each community could speak to the Sultan, on this occasion at least, as equals.

The Sultan, in turn, replied to their speeches as if they remained part of his old colonial realm: "We are very pleased to hear the congratulatory speeches of the royalty and notables, and all the representatives of the groups resident [sekalian bangsa pendudok] in the state on the occasion of our birthday."[48] The only group excluded from the Sultan's birthday wishes were those in the jungle: "our state at this time is experiencing an anxious situation, caused by a small group of criminals who are trying to destroy our state and ruin the peace that exists among its inhabitants" (ibid.). Given such stress, the occasion was a time to put aside the struggles of the past. By the Sultan's advice those at the celebration had their part to play: "We invite residents of all groups in our state through their headmen and representatives present today, to sit down with the people and forget about prior disagreements so as not to add to the great disorder in our state" (ibid.). The uncertain conditions of the Emergency made it a time to host guests in Kuala Kangsar, not crowds. Some people had to be excluded. The Sultan closed with the reminder that the guests have

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[45] Ibid. The numbers were distributed by community and district, 56 Malays, 16 Eurasians, 74 Europeans, 26 Ceylonese, 70 Chinese, 46 Indians, and 26 Pakistanis. A plurality came from Kinta.
[46] The Federation of Malaya agreement in 1948 replaced the Malayan Union though it continued the Malayan Union's plan of unifying the peninsula under a central government, with the major change of more restrictive provisions for immigrant citizenship. See Ariffin Omar, Bangsa Melayu: Malay Concepts of Democracy and Community 1945-1950, Oxford University Press: Kuala Lumpur, 1995, chapter four.
[47] Sultan Perak Files SPK 622/48.
[48] In Sultan Perak Files SPK 622/48.

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an important role in the work "toward governing ourselves" (ibid.). The Sultan on his birthday asked all his subjects to forget the past that they might become citizens in the future.

The Sultan was finally installed on 16 April 1949. The High Commissioner attended and addressed the guests as did the Community Representatives.[49] One extra group of people, however, were also in attendance for this public function, again invited at the last minute. On 4 April the Secretary of the Installation Committee sent a "very urgent" message to the District Officers and Assistant District Officers that the Mentri Besar wanted to make an addition to the guest list.[50] "The Hon'ble the Mentri Besar Perak" wanted them "to nominate one Malay from your District to represent * at the Installation of His Highness the Sultan of Perak as a guest of the State" (ibid.). To fill the asterisk, handwritten at the side, was the following list: "2 Padi Cultivators, 2 Fishermen, 1 Coconut Cultivator, 1 Rubber Cultivator, 1 Buffalo Rearer, 2 Ordinary Peasants (Husband + Wife), 2 Sakais [aborigines] (Husband + Wife), 1 Licensed Midwife (from Govt. Servant), 1 Pengasoh to HH [aide to the Sultan], 1 Mining Labourer" (ibid.). Given the short notice, the Secretary asked that the names and addresses be wired immediately so that the invitations could be sent, and added that "I am to say that the Government will defray all reasonable expenses and if necessary you may give him an advance. Accommodation will be provided for him at Kuala Kangsar" (ibid.). The State Government would invite, as if by (almost) oversight, some of Perak's new Malayan Federation citizens to attend the installation of their state's Ruler. They would be like the Community Representatives, except that they stood for an occupation, not a people (the "Ordinary Peasants" and "Sakais" being the curious categories in this series). As prospective citizens in one-day independent Malaya, they represented the Malay population in Perak, which in 1947 was just under 40% of the

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49 As termed by the Programme of Ceremonies and Festivities, ibid.

50 In Perak Secretariat PK4473/48.

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inhabitants of the state.[51] The last-minute invitations split the old colonial rank of community with the new electoral power represented by the Mentri Besar and those who were to be his voters.

Yet the language to describe these new relationships was not quite available. The Souvenir booklet of the installation was sponsored by the Rotary Club of Ipoh, of which Mentri Besar Abdul Wahab was a member. The Ipoh Rotary Club addressed the Sultan from the conflicting positions between the Community Representatives and the Malay guests of the state: "As Rotarians we are proud of the service you rendered to the State, and of the position you occupy in the hearts of all your subjects."[52] They added, though, "May we express our loyalty and devotion to you, and our genuine pleasure in serving you and our fellow-citizens, by striving, through Rotary International, to foster and firmly establish understanding, goodwill and inter-racial harmony among the business and professional men of the State" (ibid., np). The Perak businessmen served the Sultan as subjects and their customers as citizens. Since they produced the souvenir and solicited the contributions to it, they note on the cover in bold print that it was distributed with "all rights reserved."[53] The words spelling out "H.H. Sir Yussuf Izzudin Shah," (in smaller typeface than "Rotary Club, Ipoh") advertised the sponsoring organization. They offered the Sultan's office another option between that of citizen and subject.

Their booklet of advertisements and good wishes told the history of the Sultanate. The souvenir book notes that "Perak is ruled by a dynasty that claims descent from the last Malay Sultan of Malacca, Sultan Mahmud who was driven from Malacca by the Portuguese in 1511. There is sufficient evidence to show that the Royal Family of Perak has

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[51] M.V. Del Tufo, Federation of Malaya and the Colony of Singapore, A Report on the 1947 Census of Population, Crown Agents for the Colonies: London, 1949. Del Tufo, superintendent of the census, counted in Perak's 955,707 population 360,631 "Malaysians," 444,509 "Chinese," 140, 755 "Indians," and 2,762 "Europeans," 1,978 "Eurasians," and 5,868 "Other Communities," pages 132-3.

[52] Rotary Club of Ipoh, A Souvenir of the Installation of H.H. Sir Yussuf Izzudin Shah as Sultan of Perak, Caxton Press: Ipoh, 1949.

[53] As businessmen, many contributed their congratulations to the Sultan in the form of advertisements: "The Borneo Company Limited and Borneo Motors" for instance wished "H.H. The Sultan of Perak a long a prosperous reign," page 16.

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maintained an unbroken succession since 1528" (ibid., 9). The Rotary Club knows of sufficient evidence to follow Perak's genealogy. Where they do not, there are people available to ask: one footnote marks "We are indebted to Y.A.M. Raja Kamaralzaman, O.B.E., Raja Di-Hilir for this information. Sultan Idris sent a genealogical table of the Perak Royal House to Sir William Taylor, and the original copy is at the Malayan Information Agency in London" (ibid., 11). The book includes such a table, and even if it is not the original one Raja Kamaralzaman (Raja Mansur's son, Sultan Abdullah's grandson) knows where the original is. The narrative skips through Sultan after Sultan, including Sultan Idris "of illustrious memory" and Sultan Iskandar "who earned for himself a worthy place in the annals of Malayan history" (ibid., 13). The narrative only gains any specificity with the then recently-deceased Sultan Abdul Aziz, who

> during the Japanese occupation, his courage and steadfastness served as an example to others, and helped to hold the various communities together until the day of liberation. When communal strife broke out following the re-occupation, Sir Abdul Aziz travelled extensively over all the affected areas promoting peace and inter-racial harmony (ibid., 13).

Unlike his predecessors, Sultan Abdul Aziz's reign merits description because of the communal problems.

At the end of the Installation book a parallel "History of Perak" accompanies the text to supplement the narrative of "The Royal House of Perak." This focuses on the struggles of the past century, and ties the current problems into an earlier history of difficulty. In a long account of Perak's problems in the 1870s, the narrative notes

> since May, 1871, Perak was disturbed by domestic troubles arising from the election of Raja Ismail as Sultan (25th) and as successor to Sultan Ali (24th) in preference to Raja Muda Abdullah who had failed to attend the obsequies of Sultan Ali. In 1873, Raja Abdullah sought British recognition, but the British Government refused to recognise both Raja Abdullah and Sultan Ismail (ibid., 34).

The situation only cleared when Sir Andrew Clarke arrived in Singapore and "with definite instructions, espoused the cause of Raja Abdullah, and had Sultan Ismail deposed" (ibid., 34). Following the rationalization of the Perak Sultanate, Governor Clarke selected a British Resident, and caused more problems: "The Resident's task was of immense and

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novel difficulty, but Mr. Birch made it worse by adopting a role of mentor" (ibid., 34). The new Resident, Birch, "got into loggerheads with Sultan Abdullah and the Chiefs on the question of the regulation of taxation," and thus the text notes Sultan Abdullah "called a meeting of chiefs at Durian Sa-Batang (20th July, 1875) which decided to remove Mr. Birch and drive out the British" (ibid., 34). Though the Perak Resident was killed, the problems caused were solved quickly: "The murder of Mr. Birch led to a military expedition, but there was little serious fighting and the country soon settled down" (ibid., 34). The death of those responsible shifts the narration of Perak's history to two quotes from unacknowledged sources. The first of these describes Sultan Idris as "'a most enlightened ruler, who was from the first a strong and intelligent advocate of British methods of administration'" but does not attribute the source of the sentiment. The second one is for the British Resident who served during the time of Sultan Idris, Hugh Low, said to be "'the real author of the prosperity of Perak, and incidentally, of the other Malay States'" but again without attribution (ibid., 36). Sultan Idris during his reign might have advocated the methods authored by Low, but the voice describing these changes comes from somewhere outside, as if an authority greater than the author's is needed to explain the new regime that followed the war in Perak.

This is the only moment when the past speaks. The history in Sultan Yusoff's souvenir book concludes that following Sultan Idris and Resident Low, "since then the history of Perak has been one of peace and prosperity" (ibid., 36). Perak's history finishes with a brief listing of the twentieth-century Sultans and the administrative accomplishments that happened during their rule. Even the Japanese occupation does not disturb the peace of Perak, since "the Sultan was permitted to function as a nominal ruler" (ibid., 36). Only the Malayan Union plans trouble this rapid summation: "The British re-occupation forces established a Military Administration in September, 1945, and on 1st April, 1946 this gave place to a new form of Civil Government known as the 'Malayan Union'" (ibid., 36). The Sultan could not face the challenge alone, so "the Malay Rulers and the United Malay

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National Organization opposed the Malayan Union, and after lengthy negotiations the 'Federation of Malaya' came into being on 1st February, 1948" (ibid., 36). The former Sultan's last official role was to relinquish his authority to the Perak state government under the new Federation: "Sir Abdul Aziz had the unique privilege of setting up the new State and Executive Councils a few weeks before his death" (ibid., 36). He ends his reign through passing his power to the new offices formed to succeed him and administer Perak via a different means.

The Sultan's realm of Kuala Kangsar

Like the regalia missing from Kuala Kangsar's Istana Iskandariah, the Sultan often left the royal town. The Sultan's drivers through the first years after the occupation claimed "subsistance" and "night allowance" while on duty during his visits to Ipoh.[54] Since the Sultan spent considerable time there, to reduce costs the State secretariat suggested "that YH [Your Highness] to declare Ipoh as headquarters also because YH is now living in Ipoh as much as in Kuala Kangsar" (ibid.). The Sultan replied in January 1949 to settle the matter, "Secretary, Ipoh is also my headquarters as Kuala Kangsar so allowance needs not be paid" (ibid.). The same was true in the Raja Muda's case, whose district was Teluk Anson, and the Sultan's Office suggested "I believe YTM [Yang Teramat Mulia] has a house of his own in Ipoh where his second wife resides. It appears to me, therefore, that Ipoh is also as much the headquarters of the Raja Muda as is Teluk Anson. Isn't this a similar case to that of the Sultan?" The Raja Muda countered in his own handwriting, "H.H. [His Highness] house is also his HQ in Ipoh in my case it not my HQ," to which the secretary replied "YTM, maybe your official HQRS is not Ipoh, but you live more there than you do in TA. So both must be considered your headquarters" (ibid.). The state government located in big-city Ipoh left the small towns of Kuala Kangsar and Teluk Anson unstrategic, the term "headquarters" making anywhere in Perak an appropriate

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[54] Sultan Perak Files 27/49, "Ipoh to be H.H. the Sultan's 2nd Headquarters."

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site for the Sultan to live under the war-time conditions of the Emergency. Ipoh readily replaced these royal residences.

In the newly-federated State of Perak, the Sultan moved out of Kuala Kangsar by another means. The Sultan's picture, distributed throughout the state, made his image part of official iconography. A thick file from 1950 contains requests for the Sultan's photograph for posting in schools, offices, the army mess, and to be given as gifts.[55] In 1951, the Perak state government sent a letter to "all heads of State departments in Perak" to rationalize the procedure of asking for photographs. The state secretary in Ipoh took over the task of distributing the Sultan's likeness, as "Copies of Photographs of His Highness the Sultan of Perak are available in this office--size 10" x 8" on art paper" (ibid.). The secretary added that "These photographs were specially ordered for distribution to schools, clubs, Government offices etc." (ibid.). Those interested were asked to "please be good enough to let me know your requirements" (ibid.). To reach the Sultan in the photograph one wrote to the Perak state government in Ipoh, not the Sultan's Office in Kuala Kangsar.

Yet the Istana Iskandariah itself remained in the town. The pressure of the Emergency around Kuala Kangsar threatened the security of the palace. In 1950 the police head in Kuala Kangsar sent a letter to the Sultan's secretary asking for improvements to the Istana to be made, "From a Police and a security point of view."[56] The first of these was for a larger room to house "the increased guard which is now posted to the Iskandariah." The other change was more comprehensive:

> The second improvement, which I have considered for some time, is the construction of a wall, or some form of suitable fencing round the Istana grounds. This would greatly improve security generally and also enable a thorough check to be made of members of the public entering the Istana grounds at the time of functions: no proper check is possible under present circumstances (ibid.).

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[55] Sultan Perak Files 296/50. The letters of request were composed in both English and Malay. Addressing the Sultan as a picture was bilingual.

[56] Sultan Perak Files 333/50, "Two Improvments of Istana Iskandariah from a Police and Security Point of View."

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The state engineer asked in 1951 about such a project: "Can this be looked upon as an Emergency job?" (ibid.). The local officials in Kuala Kangsar considered the palace to be at risk from the rebels, but others felt the problem to be the local population encroaching on the royal property. The Sultan's chief aide wrote "I think this is very necessary for the reasons which I had previously mentioned in my letter no. 8x9 otherwise the palace compound + garden will soon be a common grazing-ground + a public park" (ibid.). Without the funds available, the aide was even willing to have the Government install a barbed-wire fence put up around the Istana: "This is urgently needed to prevent stray cattle and goats from entering the Astana Garden and also as a precautionary measure during the emergency" (ibid.). The pressure of the Emergency, and of the inhabitants of Chandan Hill, increased interest in sealing the often-empty Istana off from Kuala Kangsar itself.

The space of the palace became one more suited to temporary occupation. As the Perak royal family dispersed, the palace became a special backdrop for Perak ceremony. In 1952 the Sultan's Office decided to create a "kepala isti'adat" [head of ceremonial custom] to manage the palace's increasingly specialized role. Yet the Sultan's staff was uncertain how to rationalize the official functions under one person. In the proposal to create a "Kepala Isti'adat" a minute suggests "nobody has a clue as to what is wanted but everybody including myself is agreed on the necessity for this appointment."[57] A letter to the Sultan's office from the Mentri Besar, Abdul Wahab requests

> that you should draw up a list of his powers, duties and responsibilities. For each item please say who is now covering or exercising it at the present moment and what is proposed to do with the officer if & when his jurisdiction is taken away from him. Since secretary to HH is pressing for this appointment he should be asked to give his views.

The duties and responsibilities among the lower nobility would lose their jurisdiction over these matters. Letters were also sent out to other states to determine how they handled these functions. The Sultan's Office then typed up a sheet determining "Powers and Duties of 'Kepala Istiadat'" to detail what should be done. The Kepala Istiadat, under "Powers,"

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[57] Sultan Perak Files, SPK 70/52.

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was "a. To summon meeting of Rajas & Chiefs b. To advise on 'Adat & Istiadat c. To give order to carry out the Adat and Istiadat [custom and ceremony] at the Istana of H.H. the Sultan" and under "Duties" was "to be responsible for Adat and Usages, especially during ceremonies" (ibid.). These included installations, funerals, birthdays, and "8. All other ceremonies to be held at the Istana of the Sultan at which Adat and Istiadat are to be observed" (ibid.). The last of these specified the task to broadcast from the palace news some in the royal family might not know: "9. To inform the Sultan, Bakal [future] Sultan, Titled Rajas and Major Chiefs:--[in the event of] Death of the Sultan, Bakal Sultan, Titled Rajas and Major Chiefs including their wives" (ibid.). The Kepala Istiadat made sure that even as the royalty moved away from town, they would still know what everyone in Kuala Kangsar knew.

Since the Sultan was often elsewhere, the ceremonial role of the palace changed in other ways. The Sultan's absence from Kuala Kangsar was filled by the presence of visitors to the town.[58] Many of them arrived in Perak as part of national civics tours undertaken during the first years of independence. In 1958 the Sultan's office collected over four hundred requests for admission to the palace, from groups as diverse as Kemuning Estate, the 4-H Club, the Malacca basketball team, the Bagan Serai Civics Tour, Standard Oil, Young Farmers Club Batu Gajah, and the Guru2 Pahang [Pahang teachers]. Most of them were granted access to the "compound only," and reminded "Note. Visitors must be properly dressed. No camera is allowed into the Istana. Permit is to be produced to the police at the gate" (ibid.). The visitors appeared at the Kuala Kangsar Istana just as the British once did, making it the place to visit when in Perak's royal town.

In the national space of independent Malaya, Kuala Kangsar replaced history with custom. The town became one place among many. In 1957, Berita Harian was published as the first Malay national newspaper in roman characters. In its first issue's editorial, titled "We Publish in Roman Characters," they explain "this morning the Straits Times

[58] Sultan Perak Files 1/58, "Permission to Visit the Istana Iskandariah, 1958;" and "Pelawat2 ka-Istana Iskandariah" Sultan Perak Files SPK 61/60.

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becomes two languages. With their simultaneous publication in Kuala Lumpur in Berita Harian, Malayan people will be able to choose."[59] This would bring people together, for "by publishing a Malay paper by a famous English press, Malays will be brought closer to the non-Malays" (ibid.). The newspaper notes that "one of the Chinese papers said not long ago, that one of the obstructions from achieving unity in Malaya was because the different groups had no place to meet" (ibid.). In the pages of Berita Harian, Kuala Kangsar would be just one of these small places where people would meet in the newspaper. In most issues in its first years of publication the Berita Harian published a column called "Voices of the Regions" [Suara Daerah], in which Kuala Kangsar made frequent appearances. The appearance of Kuala Kangsar in the Suara Daerah was as anyplace, producing the news typical of any of Malaya's regions in the late 1950s. These included the fact that the Kadi's office did not like its location next to a movie theater,[60] that the names of all the offices and the officers in the District Officers had their signboards changed from English to Malay,[61] and that there were increased incidents of break-ins in neighborhood houses.[62] Kuala Kangsar in the new national newspapers of independent Malaya was just one place among many. Berita Harian worked like Kuala Kangsar once did but no longer needed to, a place where people could meet in Perak and then disperse.

Heroes in another time

Perak's part of national history is not in Kuala Kangsar. UMNO brought together the Malay associations like the Perak Malay League into one all-peninsular organization, but they settled in Ipoh. The colonial government attempted to fit together in the immediate pre-independence period all the trappings of a unified state, and a university was established in Singapore in 1948 to help prepare for independence. Among the university's

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59 "Kita Siar Dengan Rumi," Berita Harian, July 1, 1957.
60 "Suara Daerah," Berita Harian, 4 January 1958.
61 "Suara Daerah," Berita Harian, 20 February 1958.
62 "Suara Daerah," Berita Harian, 7 July 1958.

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plans were for a history department, one composed of soon-to-be expatriate scholars (the first Malaysian to hold a chair in history in the University of Malaya was not until 1963).[63] The study of history, however, was a difficult task since

> it is clear that the University is not well placed to be a centre of historical research. Documentary material for Malayan history, so far as it exists at all, is to be found mostly in other countries. It may be that first-hand sources relating to local history exist, but it seems that anyone wishing to make investigations based on original local material would have a limited choice of subjects.[64]

The first Master's thesis produced in 1952 under its tutelage was M.A. Mallal's about Birch.[65] Mallal claims in his introduction

> Practically all the historians on this period of Malayan history have little to say of J.W.W. Birch and his assassination, and at least one, because of 'bitter controversies,' feels it inexpedient to discuss the events of 1874 and 1875 in Perak (ibid., iii).

The post-occupation University of Malaya introduces a new field of inquiry, that of "Malayan history" to supersede the old state histories like those of Selangor, Pahang, and Perak. These Malayan histories, to Mallal, do not say much about Birch's death. Yet in two hundred pages he works carefully through the colonial scholarship--Wilkinson, Swettenham, period newspapers, Plunket's The Enquiry into the Perak Outrages all of which describes the rebellion at great length. His struggle among the limited choice of subjects suggests something elusive in colonial scholarship, that one who studies the Pasir Salak rebellion has "little to say." Mallal's conclusion, repeating that of Swettenham from 1895, argues "by the action which his [Birch's] death made necessary, the State of Perak gained in twelve months what years of 'advice' might never have accomplished" (ibid., 197). Perhaps as a writer considering colonial scholarship in the new university, Mallal felt one can only repeat the same thing over and over again. In 1952 it is perhaps no longer inexpedient or bitterly controversial to discuss the events, but to do so carried no guarantee

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[63] See Choy Chee Meh nee Lum, "History of the Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society," Journal of the Royal Malaysian Branch, Royal Asiatic Society, 1995, page 112.

[64] "Report of the Commission on University Education in Malaya," Government Press: Kuala Lumpur, 1948, page 46.

[65] M.A. Mallal, J.W.W. Birch: the Causes of his Assassination, University of Malaya: Singapore.

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that there would be more to add. The event does, however, remain a foundation, productive of both modern history and modern Malaya, but not of places called Perak or Kuala Kangsar.

Just prior to Independence, the focus was on personalities, not places. The establishment of the Federation of Malaya in 1948 brought together negotiations and preparations for the end of colonial rule, a fait accompli that generated memories of Britain's entrance into Malaya. Amid these, Birch and the rebellion against him formed an important story. Preparations for self-rule amid the Emergency also brought Malaya a highly sophisticated telecommunications network.[66] In 1956, the year preceding independence, Malayan radio ran a series of historical lectures entitled "Malayan Pioneers," including "Birch, Perak's First British Resident."[67] The stories narrated were biographies, to portray the emergence of multi-ethnic Malaya as nation-in-waiting, the deferral of Independence until the end of the war. These tales carry a tone of masculine triumph, democratically diverse: Raja Chulan "A Great Malay: A Great Gentleman," K. Tamboosamy Pillay "A friend of every man," Loke Yew "The Man who Built Bentong." Birch's story stands out, however, for its unabashed bad news. The radio address opens with the blunt line "this is the story of a man who was a failure" (ibid., 46). Noting Birch's arrival in 1875, the story continues

> within a year he had been killed. Afterwards they said he had brought it on himself. Had he not been over-bearing? Wanting in respect for Malay custom? So he had. I am not here to defend him, but rather to explain what he was and what he did (ibid., 46).

Birch failed because he did not know Malay culture, and his colonial ignorance brought on his death. Like Mallal, the feature ends with Swettenham's contention that Birch's death compressed colonialism's time in Perak. Birch's failure, through not knowing and not

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[66] To reach all the inhabitants of the peninsula the radio links needed to be comprehensive: "Terrorist activity also provided the direct justification for the creation of a complex VHF radio network for the Police. This was the top priority job for the Telecommunications Department. Radio Stations were built on hill-top by the Public Works Department and good roads were cut through the jungle to these hill-top stations." G.A. Langley, "Telecommunications in Malaya," The Journal of Tropical Geography, May 1963, page 80.

[67] John Gullick and Gerald Hawkins, Malayan Pioneers, Eastern Universities Press: Singapore, 1958.

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respecting Malay culture, produced the knowledge by which Perak became something else than what it was before. The knowledge of this knowledge, that Birch's failure was ignorance, opens room for other men to learn what he did not know.

The late-colonial radio personalities, Malaya's great men of the past, were not however the post-Independence project. Writers in Malay rather attempted to consolidate a field of Malay culture. As Darus Ahmad puts it in the introduction to his book Malay Reflections, though he had been researching since 1949 and the book was not yet ready, he wanted to publish to coincide with the return of sovereignty to the Malays.[68] He says for guides he turned to the Sejarah Melayu, the books of Winstedt, Teeuw, and Hooykaas, and the history series Sejarah 'Alam Melayu, and ends with the pledge "Independence!" [Merdeka!] (Darus, np). The question that independence raises for Darus is one of origins, asking first where the word "Malay" came from, and his search for things Malay is guided by comparisons with other Asian peoples. This history is knowable in history, though the old chronicles are not necessarily to be trusted: he says "luckily if a historian forgets something, there are others who note it for later scrutiny, and because of this, whether something was misnoted or just missed, it is not a problem for us to investigate it today" (Darus, 12). He is confident that the national history is both available and distinct from that of others.

Malay Reflections shows that the presence of Malay people forms the boundary of Malay space, and his task is "introducing and differentiating our Malay descendants (Malay Race) and our states" (Darus, 15). But this presents a problem, for there are no physical traces left on the landscape. Darus argues "we were not bequeathed with clear and obvious signs from our ancestors like books of literature or history" nor other proof like the great wall of China, the Egyptian pyramids, or the Arab Ka'ba. Instead in Malaya, he says "we have nothing like that" (Darus, 19). What Malays do have is a sense of refined manners and an inherited will to protect what is Malay, those being "the characteristics of heroism

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[68] Darus Ahmad, Pancharan Melayu, Sinaran Bros: Penang, 1957.

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and bravery" (Darus, 20). Malays hold tight to their ancestors in saying, "Malays will not vanish from the earth" (Darus, 20). These sentiments have helped them remain distinct amid acutely adverse conditions, something which has held back the progress of Malay culture. Darus claims "in our land we do not have the high cultural achievements, and what we do have is an imitation of the outer shell, while the content is empty or in the simplest form only" (Darus, 22). The reasons for this are the pressures of the economy: "we have not created an original cultural level of high quality. This must originate from our people's economy [ekonomi] (with "iktisad" in parentheses) which is handicapped" (Darus, 24). Malays depend on outsiders even for daily sustenance, forced to rely on imported food given Malaya's emphasis on industrial commodity production (Darus, 25). The pressure of the economy links Malays via their own specific forms of derivative cultural practice.

Darus suggests that Malays might be most Malay in following others. But Darus wants something more than this, and points to past strategies for transmitting Malay qualities between the generations. He looks to the Sultan's palaces but dismisses them, since though they "have been useful as a place to guard custom, the palaces of our Rajas are too divorced from the actual activities of our society, so that our palaces are not at the vanguard of a living culture appropriate with the changing times" (Darus, 28). These conditions affect the challenges of teaching children. They have customarily been taught via adages, taboos, and prohibitions. "According to the opinion of contemporary people," Darus notes, "it appears our elders [orang tua2 kita] told lies to their children" (Darus, 35). The fact that old people [lapisan tua] hold on tightly to custom is exemplified "by the proverb that goes, 'let the child die, not the custom'" by which "one can imagine how tightly they held on to a custom" (Darus, 37). Darus agrees that though they have indeed lied, but "those lies contained a positive intent meant to teach and educate substantial things" (Darus, 35). If one is to study these old messages clearly one would find, Darus argues, that they "contain a hidden secret," otherwise on their face they only appear archaic and obsolete (Darus, 37). He says that whether one wants to retain these old methods or

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dismiss them is a choice, "and depends what each of us decides in our own hearts" (Darus, 39). Darus goes on to describe the specific facets that exemplify Malay artistic practices, including martial arts, dance, top-spinning, and singing [seni silat, ronggeng, joget, tari piring, main gasing, hadzrah, zapin, rodat, and kuda kepang] (Darus, 42-50). To list these makes them available for selection. The last section of the book talks about literature, and Darus concludes that modern writers are untied to the familiar practices, "putting out their opinions like a hawker who lets his customers select what things they want" (Darus, 70). The past might hinge on this question of choice and representation.

This new Malay field differentiates the stories of the rebellion, and introduces the narrative of Pasir Salak as one with a cast of characters. One such panoply of heroes, far different from the radio personalities, appears in 1957.[69] M.Inabry's The Perak War, a comic book, begins with the profile of five Malays convicted by the British for conspiring to kill Birch. Sultan Abdullah, Raja Ismail, Pandak Indut, Dato' Sagor, and Dato' Maharaja Lela carry distinctly patriotic qualities, and in the case of the latter "surely he could be called a hero of the homeland [tanah air] ... he remained strong not wanting to bow to the foreigner's flag" (Inabry, np). The drawings that introduce the characters do not face the reader, but rather glance sideways at each other. These characters are set in conflict: "at that time Perak was in the midst of a dispute ... Sultan Abdullah and Raja Ismail were not on good terms. Raja Yusof was dissatisfied because he did not become Sultan" (Inabry, 2). Birch enters introduced as a "diplomat of the British Government" coming to order the anarchic conditions in Perak, plagued by thieves and pirates, with the rich exploiting the poor. Above Birch's sketch, in full military uniform and wearing a plumed hat, is a map of the peninsula with the contours of Perak in light relief. The Perak War is one piece of a larger set, as the drawings of the panels provide discrete scenes. The action unfolds as a series of meetings between which are panels where Birch and the Perak heroes are drawn sitting alone, contemplating the decisions at hand.

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[69] M. Inabry, Perang Perak, [no publisher], 1957.

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The novelty of the comic-book form subverts the captions that narrate a standard tale.[70] Many of the captions are inside boxes that resemble scrolled paper, as if they were the papers themselves that record the story of the Perak War. The figures in the comic book act out events that have already happened and have been written down. The drama throughout is Birch's attempt to take control of the state via gaining the power of taxation. When a scroll-like caption describes how Birch sends the letter to Sultan Abdullah on 30 September 1875, the drawing of Birch clutches a scrolled letter (Inabry, 7). In the frame following, Sultan Abdullah is drawn reading the letter while a scrolled caption reveals his thoughts in doing so. The caption notes that though Sultan Abdullah signed his power over to Birch out of fear of losing his position to his rival Raja Yusof, "inside he was certainly torn between his love of his rank and his love of the land" (Inabry, 8). Perang Perak then tracks how the signed letter was sent to Singapore, "printed many times," and posted in every village in Perak. The final box in the frame is without caption, and is the letter itself that "surrenders all work in administering the State of Perak to the British" and is signed by Sultan Abdullah "2.10.1875" (Inabry, 11). This is the one point in the story when the captions and the drawings converge. When Sultan Abdullah is torn between signing the proclamation and the love of his homeland, the decision has already been made on the paper in the caption. Posting the letter, however, leaves no such ambiguity, as if Birch's decisions are not part of the contingency of the story.

The collection of five heroes that opens The Perak War do not live to see its end. The last page of the story shows three different frames at three different times. The first is of a ship, explained to be Sultan Abdullah and his chiefs being taken to Singapore and then to exile in the Seychelles. The second shows a grave, said to be that of Sultan Abdullah returned and buried in Kuala Kangsar in 1922. The third shows Raja Yusof on the throne as Sultan with J.G. Davidson, his British advisor, kneeling before him (Inabry, 25). The

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[70] In fact, the text borrows heavily on that of its precursor, in some cases following word-for-word from the 1939 book published for Sultan Abdul Aziz' installation (which was itself 'lifted' from colonial education materials), as if there were no other sources for the story's prose.

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consequences of the Perak War send Sultan Abdullah away, only to appear in the new royal town of Kuala Kangsar buried at his grave site.[71] His replacement is Sultan Yusof, the rival who pushed him into signing the document. Raja Yusof, not introduced at the beginning of the book, prospers by avoiding any relationship to the documents that doom the others. The drama is internal to the heroes and villains of politics and warfare, though similar to Mallal reading the British sources, The Perak War is part of a past that has not ended.

Perak independent

Abdullah Haji Musa's Perak History, Then and Now covers the field of Perak history, still not yet absorbed into the national story.[72] In the "introductory words" he writes

> Actually, the reason I was pushed to compile this book named 'Perak History' is from seeing the long absence of study books in general schools (Malay school) compared to school books of other groups in this state, though we all know that books are called the 'treasury of knowledge,' yet if there remain few study books in our language, then it will certainly be difficult to undertake the development of our mother tongue (Abdullah, np).

Writing this history is about developing language, of providing materials so that students will be able to say more at another time. "In regard to the contents of this historical volume," Abdullah says, "the writer admits they are not complete but it is sufficient for the level of school children" (Abdullah, np). There is clearly more to know but these are enough for what students need.

In Abdullah's book the rebellion is just one incident among many. Abdullah describes the old Perak dynasties of Gangga Nagara and Bruas, and details the Perak Sultans from Sultan Mudzaffar Shah I in the sixteenth century to Sultan Yusuf in 1948. But his history is not chronological, and he focuses on specific moments of outside influence on Perak, those of the Achehnese, Bugis, Siamese, the "Kompeni Inggeris," and

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[71] Similar frames show the fates of the rest of the characters, Raja Ismail in Johore, and the others hung in Matang, pages 23-24.

[72] Abdullah Haji Musa, Sejarah Perak Dahulu dan Sekarang, Qalam: Singapore, [1957?].

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the Japanese. The events of the 1870s earn the greatest detail. For Abdullah, Birch was a person with a strategy: "At that time even though the Sultan did not want to put his signature on the document given to him, Birch's side used strategy to win the hearts of Perak residents" (Abdullah, 84). To do so Birch "visited various places throughout the entire state, even to the villages on the river" (Abdullah, 84). His reception was mixed, as "At the time of his visits to the villages there were those among the residents who liked him, and also those who hated him, and those villages where he was not allowed to visit" (Abdullah, 84). Those who receive Birch and those who refuse him are not portrayed as being different. They give no reasons for whether Birch should or should not be in Perak.

The various reactions, though, do not provide a means for Birch to survive in his new post. Abdullah describes the ambiguity of the event where "the nobility of Perak looked for a means to destroy J.W.W. Birch." Though the royals made plans, when "finally Birch was killed by Perak people" they were only "said to be under the agreement of the Sultan and the Perak nobility" (Abdullah, 85). The struggle is portrayed as a series of negotiations. In the case of Sultan Muda Ismail and Raja Yusuf these are in the form of "secret" deals with Governor William Jervois in Singapore (Abdullah, 85), and because of this pressure Sultan Abdullah signed an agreement to "surrender his power" to Birch (Abdullah, 86). When a delegation of chiefs at Pasir Salak was informed of these plans, the response was "Ahh! When Dato' Seri Maharaja Lela heard the Sultan's pronouncement his anger immediately rose, and said that in this matter he did not agree" (Abdullah, 87). From this the Malays at Pasir Salak came to hate Birch.

Birch dies in a state of surprise. Yet in Abdullah's account it is not clear what the problem was, whether the plan of the nobility came to fruition or if indeed there really was such a plan. After "the Malays suddenly arrived, attacked, and shredded the proclamations and stabbed Md. Arshad," they went down to the river to Birch's boat "then attacked the place where Birch was bathing" (Abdullah, 89). From inside his hut, "when a spear pierced the wall of the bath house Birch was startled and fell into the water." Birch only

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dies after being beheaded when his sunken body resurfaces "at that moment there appeared person named Si Putum (according to some stories, that Si Putum was a Batak)" who finished Birch off (Abdullah, 90). Si Putum is the only one among those involved in the attack with a name, and Abdullah suggests that he might have been an outsider to the village.[73] The one event dramatized in Abdullah's Perak History, Then and Now might not identify Perak at all.

The narrative suggests that unlike the Sultan, Dato Maharaja Lela chose to refuse Birch. But like the appearance of Si Putum, even the efficacy of this choice is uncertain. Abdullah ends the book by describing the developments in Perak state government following the Japanese occupation. When Perak entered the federation of states, he says, "His Royal Highness the Sultan of Perak chose the honorable Dato' Panglima Bukit Gantang to become the first Chief Minister of Perak State" (Abdullah, 143). When for health reasons Abdul Wahab was forced to step down, "a young person was chosen by the people, that is Mr. Ghazali bin Haji Jawi" (Abdullah, 143). When the Sultan consents to the people's selection "this means that His Royal Highness was already aware that His state's progress was not built by Him, but rather built by His people because He agreed with the wishes of His people" (Abdullah, 143). The story of Perak ends with these burdens and responsibilities of choice.

Sultan Abdullah in 1875 occupied a position comparable to Sultan Yusof in 1957. A. Talib Haji Ahmad's Bloodshed at Pasir Salak, 1961, shows the first signs of a break in the link between the rebellion and the present.[74] Birch's arrival in Perak meant that "the pride of the Malay rulers, the nobility, and all the Malay commoners as a sovereign and independent people vanished for decades until 31 August 1957" (A. Talib, 17). The fulfillment of the rebellion in independence brings to the enthusiastic narrative more characters, more information, and more possibilities. This expansion, however, only

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[73] Abdullah includes a drawing captioned "Pasir Salak village, on the banks of the Perak River. Place of the murder of J.W.W. Birch," facing page 90. (The Malay text reads "Kampong Pasir Salak, tepi sungai Perak. Tempat terbunoh-nya J.W.W. Birch"), which does not emphasize any agency in the incident.
[74] A. Talib Haji Ahmad, Darah Mengalir di Pasir Salak, Pustaka Antara: Kuala Lumpur, 1961.

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occurs with the removal of the immediacy of a colonial past. In 1961, describing 1875 hinges on knowing secrets, the crucial hidden truth of the event. Pushing aside the usual sources, Talib follows the testimony of old people: "to my wise readers I wish to acknowledge that this book could not have been prepared without the help and guidance from old people [orang2 tua] of our homeland [tanah ayer] who still remember this distant incident."[75] A. Talib's dedication of the book is to these old people who have given him "explanations and direction about this history" (A. Talib, np). Their memory keeps the story in line with contemporary events.

The living recollections of people in Perak that open the story for the author also ties it to the desire for knowledge. The old people recall hundreds of British sepoys killed in the long battles, of heroes in every district of Perak, and of Malay women killing the colonial troops beside the men. They also depict a relation of knowledge not predicated on Birch's ignorance. The British Administrators of the 1870s are eager students, their means to colonize Perak is "to study as intimately as possible" the customs of the state. The new British Resident, like Talib himself, employs an informant who "looks for information needed by Birch which was said necessary to help the Perak people live in the civilized age" (A. Talib, 25). The informant, Mat Saman, works for Birch to uncover the structure of Perak society, and thereby learns the hidden truth of the murder.

Talib's book further abstracts the story through a careful analysis of the political and economic conditions for colonial intervention in the peninsula. Anarchy does not bring Birch to Perak, but rather the struggle with Chinese mining interests over tin revenues. In the climactic killing of Birch, however, these intricate machinations are overtaken by a willful mistake, the British failure to follow their informant's report. The Dato' Maharaja Lela's people of Pasir Salak, though angered over the new taxation policy, do not kill

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[75] A. Talib, no page given. A. Talib Haji Ahmad wrote an earlier book called Riwayat Kinta. The publisher, in an opening "word of gratitude" notes that "we feel proud of the book Riwayat Kinta because this is the first time a book like this has been published." The author opens that "history must stay with what is true, not in the colonial manner where they emphasized concealment for political reasons." His Riwayat Kinta, he says, "is not a novel but rather a chronicle," one handed down from the words of relatives he lists by name. A. Talib Haji Ahmad, Riwayat Kinta, Pustaka Rusna: Kuala Lumpur, 1959, no page.

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Birch. Instead it is his Batak nephew, Bunga, who "makes up his own mind" to do so (A. Talib, 31). Talib further individualizes this attack on Birch through Bunga's running amok, and this Malay pathology becomes the secret of the story. Mat Saman, the informant, escapes from Bunga's wild violence and warns his British superiors of what has happened. However, he is shocked as his report is twisted around by the British [di putar balek] to blame Perak's nobility for the attack. British forces, eager for expansion, destroy the Perak resistance and install the new colonial regime. The story ends in 1922 (the year that ex-Sultan Abdullah finally passes away) like the others. But Bloodshed at Pasir Salak has a postscript--Bunga and Mat Saman meet again after many years of moving about Perak. They eat together, acknowledge kinship, and promise never to open the secret [berikrar tidak membuka rahasia] of the real killer of Birch (A. Talib, 50). As an ending, 1875 becomes interior and inaccessible, though Talib's description of this insider knowledge frames the narrative. The ephemeral presence of old people who can relate the story, whose testimony describes the distant event, makes the eventual disappearance of Pasir Salak possible.

The shift to recuperate Pasir Salak's landscape extends from the struggle of defining Malaysia itself. The Federation of Malaya expanded in 1963 to become Malaysia, including the North Borneo territories and Singapore with the peninsular states. Yet the federation was rocked twice in the 1960s, first by Singapore's expulsion in 1965, and then by the riots of 1969. Post May 1969, the increasingly centralized state attempted to disassemble some of the old colonial structures. The educational system, only modestly reconstituted from British days, slowly developed a new curriculum to reflect the new activist possibilities in public discussion. This was in no small measure spurred by the increase in Malay faculty and students in the expanded university system. Buyong Adil's 1972 Perak History begins with an introduction from the Chief Editor of Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, its publisher.[76] He hopes that those reading the book will increase "our

[76] Haji Buyong Adil, Sejarah Perak, Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka: Kuala Lumpur, 1972.

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national spirit as Malaysian citizens" and that yet more "bumiputeras [those officially classed as indigenous] in our country will advance to write the history of our homeland [tanah air] for the generation to come" (ibid., np). Malaysian citizens may read the new history, but Malays were to write it. Given the new pedagogy of the schools, middle-age people in Perak recall the period of the 1970s as one where the leaders of the Pasir Salak rebellion went from being rebels to become heroes. The practical result of the new heroism was not, however, to retrieve a hidden past of old people's memories obscured by time. Nor was it to trace the continuous line of the Perak Sultanate to Kuala Kangsar. Buyong Adil himself gives a narrative of the 33 Sultans from Muzzafar Shah I to then-reigning Sultan Idris, but then turns back at the close of his book to re-examine at length the 1870s of the Perak War and the Larut War. Rather the means to recover the history of Perak, and the heroism of its leaders, was in digging through the underbrush of the Pasir Salak area itself.

Pasir Salak reappeared as if by an accident of chronology. In the leaves of Mallal's thesis in the National Archives someone placed a newspaper cutting titled "How the First British Resident in Perak was Killed in 1875."[77] The anonymous newspaper reader in the archives, following the reporters from the English newspaper, realized on the anniversary of his death that Birch had been forgotten. After traveling to Pasir Salak, the journalists claim this same forgetting among the villagers there:

> James Birch to them is just a forgotten episode of history. No one wished to recall the days of subjugation by the colonial masters--and even last November 2 which marked the centenary of his death at the hands of Malay warriors went unnoticed (ibid.).

However, after trekking 45 minutes through mud and water to the site of the small cemetery, the reporters find

> Birch's grave is among seven Christian ones which stand proudly as the only concrete structures and landmark in the kampung [village] ... Apparently it is the cleanest and best-kept area in the water-logged kampung whose population of 500 is mainly rubber tappers and farmers (ibid.).

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[77] "How the First British Resident in Perak was Killed in 1875," New Straits Times, 18 January 1976.

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The villagers have maintained the grave but want to forget what it might mark. Other relationships have also extinguished, as the villagers tell stories of "people going to the cemetery for the four-digit lottery. However, the practice died out 'probably because no one ever profited from the numbers obtained'" (ibid.). Birch's grave stands clean and well-maintained, but without apparent connection to those in its proximity.

From 1976 to 1978 the National Museum gazetted dozens of Perak historical sites, not unlikely as a result of this kind of publicity over missed centenaries and neglected heritage. Dato' Sagor's grave, off a small road near Matang where he was executed, is one of those recovered. Dato' Sagor's descendants earlier told the reporters visiting Pasir Salak that they did not know where he was buried, and that there was a story he would not die when the British tried to shoot him or hang him, and finally was put to death with acid. Near Matang a large marker captions the site, a raised concrete tomb surrounded by a wire fence. The signboard, in Malay, reads: "the British accused Dato' Sagor of conspiracy in planning the murder, and he was hanged on the 20th of January, 1877." For the Museum, the terms of Dato' Sagor's death and burial are clear. The certainty of the Museum makes the heroes' graves and the site at Pasir Salak part of a Perak historical geography, together with the refound Sultan's tombs in abandoned riverbank villagers. Dato' Sagor's numerous relatives and others can now locate his grave via official guidebooks published for that purpose.

The impetus behind the recovery of the landscape corresponds with an enhanced relationship between children and the state, to teach a history their parents might not know. Hamzah Hamdani's 1977 book Datuk Maharaja Lela, Hero of Perak anticipates the formal implementation of a new curriculum.[78] The preface notes

> starting in 1978, the Education Ministry will introduce in stages a new syllabus in history education. The proposed new syllabus will contain several additions and approaches to build national characteristics, a feeling of 'weness' [kekitaan] toward society and country, international understanding and critical thinking (Hamzah, iv).

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[78] Hamzah Hamdani, Datuk Maharaja Lela, Pahlawan Perak, Syarikat Buku Uni-Text: Petaling Jaya, 1977.

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The "Adventures of the Heroes and Heroines of the Homeland Series" is specially written so that teachers and students "can more easily gain the reference materials of history learning and the instruction that they study" (Hamzah, v). Like the lost graves now carefully marked, the rebellion becomes more readily accessible, and will help develop not only critically-thinking students but those capable of feeling the unity of the country. The series editors thank teachers, writers, and professors who provided the knowledge for the books. This gives the author an official voice, for the book is not written by Hamzah but rather retold [diceritakan semula]. The story already exists for the Education Ministry then to bring to the country's school children, a book now retelling other books.

In such a project Hamzah's text presents the drama as one between competing forms of authority, for in 1875 Perak is like a home threatened by Birch's presence. In the text the Datuk Maharaja Lela exclaims, using the royal pronoun, "I will not bow to the British colonizers. I will not allow them to step in Pasir Salak. This is our state, we cannot allow the British to become Raja in our house" (Hamzah, 7). Yet the firm patriarchal rule of the nobility inside Perak's house makes Birch feel safe. After gaining Sultan Abdullah's signature on the document acknowledging British control, Birch says it will be easy to do his work since "he believed the people [rakyat] would not challenge him. The people were loyal to the raja because they could not oppose the raja. If they opposed, that was treason" (Hamzah, 8). Though the title points to Datuk Maharaja Lela, under such a regime of loyalty Mat Arshad, Birch's translator, is the figure of identification. When Mat Arshad arrives in Pasir Salak to post notices of Birch's new power, Hamzah describes "in short, Mat Arshad was in a no-win situation. 'To swallow meant death to his mother, to spit meant death to his father.' The people of Pasir Salak were his people, but he was employed [makan gaji] by the British"[79] This dilemma appears with the rewards that the British offer in response to the killing, since "some of the greedy Malays felt happy with the offer. They were ready to capture those 'enemies' of the British. Their hearts were

[79] Hamzah, page 19. The Malay text reads "pendek kata, Mat Arshad serba salah. *Ditelan mati emak, diluah mati bapa.*"

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tempted by the large reward" (Hamzah, 46). Three men wanted in connection with the killing "were captured by the Malays who wanted that reward from the British" (Hamzah, 46). The school children headed toward national characteristics are not to be heroes but rather those negotiating competing loyalties. They imagine the difficulties between working for the British or following one's people, likened to choosing between their fathers and mothers. The intimacy of the book--the conversations, the moral dilemmas--suggests a new accessibility. Yet for all its confidence of representation, the story closes on an indeterminate note: "finally, the hero of Pasir Salak was hung in Matang (some stories say they were hung at the main jail in Taiping)" (Hamzah, 52). The detail remaining open heightens the sense of uncertainty of the difficult choices.

The sense that all the details are not known questions the efficacy of the written and oral sources, especially the combination of the two. In 1979 Utusan Malaysia printed a story "Confirmed: Seputum Killed Birch."[80] The story reads like a journalistic account of Birch's death that appears contemporary, but only after considerable detail does the reporter tell it is from a "British report" on the trials of the accused recently received from England by N.A. Halim, an officer in the National Museum. Utusan contends "at minimum, the trial reports reveal Seputum as Birch's murderer, and rights the homeland's historical facts" (ibid.). Among the books corrected is Darah Mengalir di Pasir Salak, and its claim that Birch's death was brought about "by Si Bunga who went amok" (ibid.). The reporter then turns to old people living near Pasir Salak to inquire about the different stories surrounding the events of 1875. Their accounts challenge the contention that two instead of three British attacks defeated Pasir Salak's defenses. Utusan queries: "the problem now is, can these oral stories become the basis of a discussion to revive again the truth of this historic incident?" (ibid.). The previous generation's oral accounts of A.Talib Ahmad are dropped from consideration. Rather these new oral sources, "strengthened by the reports from

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80 "Sah: Seputum Bunuh Birch," Utusan Malaysia, 11 September 1979. Reference from Abdullah Zakaria b. Ghazali, "Pembunuhan J.W.W. Birch: Suatu Kajian Tentang Pembunuhnya," Jebat, 1979/1980.

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Seputum's trial, have confirmed that Seputum killed Birch" (ibid.). This also "proves initial research" done by the Central Perak Association of Literature Writers and Patrons that "Seputum was of Malay descent" and not Batak "as noted in Perak State History" (ibid.). The new oral sources disprove the old oral sources, when seconded by the old British records. Identifying Seputum as Malay makes the rebellion an unmistakable nationalist act.

But as a narrative internal to the Malays the burdens of choice become yet greater. A 1982 teen novel, The Hero of Pasir Salak, maintains the focus on loyalty but shifts the perspective to that of Perak children themselves.[81] The rebellion is now a story that needs no introduction, one that begins in the middle of Perak several months prior to Birch's death. The story opens "one day in March 1875," and enters a fictional universe, with daily events and lively characters. Deli, the protagonist, learns what the changes in Perak mean when his friend Lamin arrives in Pasir Salak. Lamin brings a story about his river journey from Durian Sebatang and says: "when we arrived in Bandar Bharu, someone detained our boat." Deli, not understanding, asks "who?" Lamin replies, "who else if not the colonial lackeys [anjing penjajah] ?" When Lamin details the encounter with the colonial tax collectors, Deli's astonished reply is simply "evil!" as he "grits his teeth to hold back his anger" (Mohd Ismail, 4). Later Pak Itam, Deli's father, tells his son they will defend their village, and Deli feels "he himself now hated the English more though he had yet to see the shape of those people who aim to conquer his village" (Mohd Ismail, 7). Deli is certain of how he will choose though he has yet to experience matters himself.

The danger in not knowing what to think is to be of suspect loyalty. The colonizers that Deli had yet to see turn out to be Malays, those who work for the English. Deli later relates the story of Lamin to his friend Akub. Akub sighs "hmm. Who knows, Deli. Even I feel strange. Why are so many of our people willing to become the lackeys of those white people!" Deli answers, now a person with knowledge: "they're blinded quickly, Akub.

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[81] Mohd Ismail Sarbini, Pahlawan Pasir Salak, Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka: Kuala Lumpur, 1982.

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See a little money, and they forget who they are. They don't even know their own people!" (Mohd Ismail, 9). This is the possibility that runs throughout the story, and everyone is under suspicion. In another scene a crucial message from Bandar Bahru warns of the imminent visit of the colonial forces to Pasir Salak. The people of Pasir Salak gather around the Datuk Maharaja Lela, who expresses his anger at "those Malays willing to become British coolies." When one of the villagers adds that they do it to become rich quickly, Datuk Maharaja Lela answers with a hiss, "if there are Pasir Salak people willing to do that, I'll rip their guts out!" (Mohd Ismail, 24). But when one of the youths replies to this challenge with a spirited call to drive the colonizers out, the Dato counsels patience. These are to be deliberate moves, following his authority.

The rest of the story focuses on who among them might be disloyal. The Datuk Maharaja Lela warns the village "to be wary with outsiders who enter our area, because now there are many people in Bandar Baharu who have become colonial lackeys" (Mohd Ismail, 32). A boy named Lamsah appears in Pasir Salak, claiming to be a victim of the colonial forces, but after the residents take him in he starts asking questions and earns their distrust (Mohd Ismail, 57). Sure enough, he burns down a guard house and Datuk Maharaja Lela terms him a traitor (Mohd Ismail, 79). When the Pasir Salak boys think of Birch's camp they do not focus on the British Resident.[82] Deli and his friends attempt to imagine the conditions in Bandar Bahru, "full of notices posted up by the colonial lackeys" and "packed with Malays willing to do their bidding" (Mohd Ismail, 94). The British forces remain entirely peripheral to the story except as a point of attraction for other Malays, who then attract the interest of Deli and his young friends in Pasir Salak. The boys must guard against the danger that they will be enticed like those at Bandar Baharu, and this remains after Birch is killed. The story closes with the shout "we wooooooon!" and the report that there have been no casualties on the Pasir Salak side (Mohd Ismail, 136). In doing so the rebellion is one meant to protect Pasir Salak from Bandar Baharu and the

[82] Birch's name is largely absent from the story and he appears only to be killed in the Pasir Salak resident's defense of their village, lead under the cry "atttaaaaaack!" page 135.

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victory is not the death of Birch, but rather their display of unity in the face of temptation. At the book's close the village youth pledge that they will "defend the earth of Pasir Salak" no matter what the consequences (Mohd Ismail, 140). In performing the pledge they hope to avoid being tempted like the other Malays, lost in not knowing themselves, and they repeat the words as people of Pasir Salak and nothing more.

The historical complex

The pedagogical relationship between the rebellion and the young people is a salient feature in developing the site of Pasir Salak. Twenty years after the New Straits Times sent reporters through mud and water to find Birch's grave, the Malay daily Utusan Malaysia devoted one of its weekly tourism columns to the refurbished site. Pasir Salak recalls school: "to those of you who love history and have read the story in the history books of the last fifteen years, the name Pasir Salak is surely still fresh in memory."[83] The national experience of knowing Pasir Salak highlights its earlier insignificance, since "looked at before, Pasir Salak was not unique" (ibid.). Fifteen years ago only Pasir Salak residents remembered the "black tragedy in their village" [tragedi hitam], an ephemeral part of "Perak heritage which would vanish at any moment" (ibid.). What saved Pasir Salak from disappearance? The Chief Minister of the State, Ramli Ngah Talib, as a descendent of Dato' Sagor felt it his responsibility to "restore this almost-forgotten historical area" (ibid.). Ramli's access to generous state resources built the Pasir Salak Historical Complex [Kompleks Sejarah], a prime tourist destination with all the modern facilities. Indeed the Complex is elaborately appointed, with three exhibit halls, a jetty over the estimated site of Birch's death, the old British monument marking his passing "in the line of duty," and the larger form of a Malay dagger that towers over it. Located far off the main highway, the site still attracts over two thousand visitors a month, mostly tourists negotiating the narrow village roads in large tour buses.

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83 "Pasir Salak menyimpan catatan sejarah bangsa," Utusan Malaysia, 28 May 1995.

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Two Malay houses form the center of the tranquil complex, and the newspaper advises "if you are looking for a place to bring the family to relax during school holidays, choose Pasir Salak" (ibid.). Given this emphasis, a 1992 children's book, The History of Pasir Salak, takes as its storyline the visit of a young girl and her family to the Complex.[84] The introduction explains that the book is part of another "series about local history" one that "will help give children the understanding of the homeland's history [sejarah tanahair] in an effective style to raise their interest in useful reading" (Saidatul, iii). As they near the complex Mariam asks her father what is in Pasir Salak, for she has not yet learned of it in school. Her father answers, "there is a memorial [tugu peringatan] built by the British to mark the place where Birch was killed. The Perak state government [kerajaan negri Perak] then built the memorial to recall the sacrifice and heroism of the Perak Malay heroes in resisting the British colonizers" (Saidatul, 5). When the family arrives at the Complex, the site itself does not attract their attention. What they comment upon is the fact that it is Sunday and many other people are looking at the displays [pameran]. Mariam remarks that the place is "beautiful." Her father replies, "yes it is beautiful and historic" (Saidatul, 14). Reading about Pasir Salak, like looking at other people looking at displays, encourages students to engage in further "useful reading."

A major interest of visitors to the Complex is to take photographs. Aside from the memorials, a mannequin of Birch in a black, Victorian-era suit attracts interest, with families arranging themselves around him for a group picture. His is the only figure in the site, unmistakable though uncaptioned, aside from the drawings and photographs of the Malays involved in the rebellion on the walls. Mariam's family notices that other people are posing for photos near the dagger, and her brother is insistent that they do the same so he can show his friends in Kuala Lumpur later. The text includes a drawing of Firdaus' father photographing him in front of the monument. The Complex as a historical landscape makes possible a history of Pasir Salak in which each visitor becomes a part, one they can

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[84] Saidatul Safiah Ariff, Sejarah Pasir Salak, Pustaka Mawar: Klang, 1992.

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then take home to show others. Only in the last chapter of the History of Pasir Salak is the "the incident at Pasir Salak" referenced, an addition to the story of their journey and picnic. 1875 becomes progressively more contemporary.

The representations of representation themselves reflect the complexities of representing a history without Malaysia. The brochure handed out to visitors scrupulously avoids the use of the term, though the killing of Birch is continually connected to the emergence of the independent nation-state.[85] Advertised as "The land of the Malay Warriors," the brochure describes its history as the "initial moment in the era of uprising" and "from that moment the movement to liberate [memerdekakan] the homeland [tanahair] began--until finally the independence of the Malay land [tanah Melayu] was reached in 1957--bringing an era of democratic government to this country" (ibid.). The only place in the brochure where Malaysia is mentioned at all is in a quote of the Chief Minister himself, the only passage in English, at a 1992 meeting outside the country in Singapore: "Pasir Salak is the first area in Peninsular Malaysia to stage a rebellion against British Colonalist and is accepted by many academics as the cradle of Parlimentry [sic] democracy in Malaysia" (ibid.). The rebellion as a cradle produces the parliamentary configuration of Malaysian post-independence politics, where communal parties rule in a coalition dominated by UMNO. The carefully gerrymandered Malaysian parliamentary constituencies sustain UMNO as the dominant partner in the ruling coalition.[86] UMNO's capacity to represent the "Malay view" in coalition politics "behind closed doors" is traced back at Pasir Salak to the conspiracy of the Perak nobility, whose heroism is then akin to UMNO's own. Under construction next to the Complex is a time tunnel [terowong masa] that the Star says will depict "the events from the era of Malacca's glory, to the fight against the Malayan Union, formation of UMNO, the independence of the country and modern

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85 "Kompleks Sejaraha Pasir Salak, Peta dan Panduan," Yayasan Perak: Ipoh, [nd].

86 For more on the origins of the National Front coalition, which restructured the older Alliance coalition in 1974, see Diane K. Mauzy, Barisan Nasional: Coalition Government in Malaysia, Marican and Sons: Kuala Lumpur, 1983.

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Malaysia."[87] The old lineage from Malacca's glory extends to a Malaysia represented by its parliament, designated only as modern, and when the brochure of the historical complex speaks of Malaysia it is from outside the country in reference to its fractions.

A plaque inside one of the heritage houses [rumah kutai] at the Complex does describe the events and aftermath of the rebellion in reference to Malaysia.[88] This "important moment in the modern history of the Malays" is one with "wide implications, and could be said to give form and shape to contemporary Malaysian society" (ibid.). The resistance of the Perak people prevented the colonization of Malay land as happened in the Straits Settlements of Singapore, Penang and Malacca. A meeting of the people [orang ramai] elected for a British advisor to come to replace Resident Birch in Perak, and "with this, Malay land has never been colonized, only administered" (ibid.). The resistance at Pasir Salak planted "the seed of nationalism which rose in 1946" and "lit the fire of independence that was fulfilled in the country of Malaysia on 31 August, 1957" (ibid.). Yet this is only with the "place of the Sultans, the special rights of the Malays and Islam placed on the high, glorious throne of the constitution [perlembagaan]" (ibid.). This plaque, placed on National Day of 31 August, 1990, negotiates via mixed metaphors the tension between a rebellion that both staved off and propelled colonial rule and yet brought about the nationalist movement and independence from colonialism. The form and shape of Malaysian society, like absent colonial power, leaves blank the population Pasir Salak does not account for.

The assertion that Malaysians do not read is an item of great interest for politicians and the press. Reading, or more precisely the reading habit [tabiat membaca], is deemed necessary for Malaysia's technological advance towards 2020. Many people in Kuala Kangsar told me that complete research on Pasir Salak requires lost books, ones either burned by the Japanese or hidden by the British. Even without the lost references more

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[87] "Fort and House to be Reconstructed." Star, 16 April 1992.

[88] "Pemberontakan Melayu di Pasir Salak 1875," Ikhsan RNT, 31 August 1990.

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books about Pasir Salak keep appearing. Talib's superseded Bloodshed at Pasir Salak was translated into English and published in 1990, though no author is acknowledged, nor any prior date of publication given.[89] The rough English of the translation lends to some curious slips. The most striking is when Singapore is notified of Birch's death: "while the British troops were destroying the fort of Sultan Abdullah and his chiefs, the government of the Straits Settlements was gathering its aeroplanes and soldiers for dispatch to Perak" (ibid., 34). Between "aeroplanes" and "kapal perang" [war ships] historical specificity might drain from the story, and planes fly in the nineteenth century. These are books made for the reading habit, detachable from a story ever closer to the present.

Yet the story of 1870s Perak retains great attraction. Kee Thuan Chye's play "We Could **** You, Mr. Birch," was staged in Kuala Lumpur to packed houses over a short run in 1994.[90] The "We" of the title references broadly, and the playwright dedicates the play to "all Malaysians, especially the young." In this satiric depiction of 1875 the focus is not on heroes: the Malay royalty are exploitative slave holders, the British are arrogant and vicious, the Chinese are venal middlemen between the two. But the real villain of the play is the confident Malaysian bourgeoisie, whose obsession with cellular phones, the mercurial stockmarket, and trendy nostalgia Kee ridicules. Though, Kee cautions, this is "by no means a historical play;" and throughout he struggles for a language in which to depict "sensitive issues" in a script that requires (like any publicly-performed play in Malaysia) police approval for staging.[91] At one point after a lament by Birch over the Sultan's duplicity, the actor playing Dato' Sagor heads into the audience to ask several random people "who ensures that the government of a country does not do exactly as it pleases?" (Kee, 10). At another point when Sultan Abdullah rails against Birch's usurpation of power, the actor playing the Sultan turns to the audience and says,

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89 Nor Azian Hashim, translator, Bloodshed in Pasir Salak, Pustaka Antara: Kuala Lumpur, 1990.

90 The script is in Kee Thuan Chye, "We Could **** You Mr. Birch," Ready Print: Kuala Lumpur, 1994.

91 See Tan Sooi Beng, "Counterpoints in the Performing Arts of Malaysia," in Joel Kahn and Francis Loh Kok Wah, editors, Fragmented Vision: Culture and Politics in Contemporary Malaysia, Allen and Unwin: Sydney, 1992, page 285-286.

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> What happens next in this play was supposed to have been something else originally, but the playwright decided to take it out for fear that it might offend some people and result in severe repercussions. It could be that he realised that society is not yet ready to take itself less seriously, but that's probably an excuse. It's more likely that he got scared and chickened out. And he censored himself. He decided to replace it with the following (Kee, 11).

Kee's exclamations of speechlessness recall older claims that there is nothing more to say about the Birch incident. Indeed some of his critics say he should return to the 1875 documents, the court transcripts, Birch's journals, the parliamentary papers and then write a historical drama rather than an inappropriate dark comedy. "They Forgot You, Mr.Birch" said one headline, the review arguing "about the Birch incident in history, the play said absolutely nothing."[92] Perhaps so. Kee looks to a point where he might speak, where anything could be spoken. Or at least be seen to be. And for a society that might take itself less seriously, a point where it might not matter?

A sustained academic study of the rebellion has not appeared since Mallal's over forty years ago. Historiographical interest in Kuala Kangsar has been even more slight. The substantial popular interest in Pasir Salak's past substitutes for the modern history of Perak post-1875 enacted in colonial places like Kuala Kangsar. Yet in the Historical Complex old books about Perak history lay open in display cases under glass. Like the claim that some academics consider the rebellion to be the cradle of parliamentary democracy in Malaysia, the books offer proof that the events have been studied and origins determined. The colonial infrastructure in Kuala Kangsar remains, ungainly updated to meet the new challenges of Malaysia's industrialization, as new generations move through the town. In a strikingly porous society, social struggles over the past elude ready public formation. Perhaps outside the aims of a particular historiography written in the irrepressible, elusive presence of Malaysia, Perak's remembrance contains a possibility the present might yet be something else, forged somewhere in a process of hesitant characterization.

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92 "They left you out, Mr Birch," Star, 18 December 1994.

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POSTSCRIPT

UNLAWFUL ASSEMBLY

The children's history of Pasir Salak contains suspicions about loyalty. In it, Malay heroism and bravery proves necessary to counter the possible actions of other Malays. In Perak prior to the Japanese occupation, the Malay College students, the drivers, and the secret society members all formed different kinds of social affiliations. Their work, though, is not part of nationalist historiography. The 1000-page History of the Malay People's Struggle, for instance, devotes 20 pages to the "years before the second world war."[1] The historical interest in Malay nationalism in that volume focuses instead on the period when competing conceptions of Malayan and Malaysian nationalism proved the greatest challenge.[2] To some people, a Malaysian nation might one day be created, perhaps in the year 2020, but not now.[3] Though they live together, it is as if people have to wait before they can trust each other.

A history of movement and the lives it leaves in transit runs counter to a belief in the past. Throughout this research and writing, ghosts have been a constant presence. Certain kinds of ghost stories are pleasurable, because like academic research, their narration predicates a future retelling. Those not repeated are like the research encounter (that for propriety, perhaps) remains unwritten: they are a private promise the writer's text represents more than it says. One of the legacies of twentieth-century violence in the Malay peninsula is of people not talking. In Kee Thuan Chye's play about Birch, one of the characters is able to publicly express this silence. The lack of a national history is lonely, but something that Malaysians are able to share together, like the diverse audiences that laughed at Kee's quip. Ensuring children will remain similarly silent and

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[1] Ibrahim Mahmood, Sejarah Perjuangan Bangsa Melayu: Suatu Penyingkapan Kembali Sejarah Perjuangan Melayu Menuju Kemerdekaan, Pustaka Antara: Kuala Lumpur, 1981.

[2] See Ariffin Omar, Bangsa Melayu: Malay Concepts of Democracy and Community 1945-1950, Oxford University Press: Kuala Lumpur, 1993.

[3] The creation of a Malaysian people is indeed one of the 2020 goals. See for example, "MB: Malaysians need common identity," Star, 30 April 1997.

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yet affiliated in the proper way is the state's challenge in preparing for 2020, a date when Malaysians are pledged not only to share public space but perhaps to be able to talk about it.

Young people in contemporary Malaysia--sometimes called the "Vision Generation"--face considerable anxiety about their ties to other kids. In a weekly section of the Malay daily Utusan Malaysia called Teen Messenger, is an advice column by Kak Akmar, directed toward addressing their troubles. As her name suggests, Kak Akmar is an older sister to the teens, and answers their problems or appeals for attention with Muslim pieties and the good practical suggestions typical of such columns. Most of the teenagers' concerns are over loneliness, the writers enclosing pictures of themselves and their addresses in hope of finding friends or pen pals elsewhere in Malaysia. 20-year old Effa is perhaps typical: "I am interested and moved to find pals through Teen Messenger to end the solitude of being alone in my home. I am the youngest of six but now alone here. In hope that there is someone who would want to know humble little me."[4] As 21 year old Jefri more bluntly put it, "I want to find lots of pals to end my boredom."[5] The correspondents usually specify that they are not looking for anyone in particular. Their sentiments of being alone and bored in Malaysia's depopulated villages and more anonymous urban areas give Kak Akmar an opportunity to show teens how they might find the friends they seek.

During my stay in Kuala Kangsar and Kuala Lumpur over 1994-1995 the social interest in loneliness focused on the problems of public association. Almost all young adults had left the kampung neighborhood I lived in, and those who remain expressed unease about being left behind. Parents looked to the future as yet more severe trouble for their children, as an article in Utusan forecasted, if the year 2020 was 9,232 days away, that also meant 45,568 social problems to go.[6] Of course the loyal advice

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4 "Bermesra dengan Akmar," Utusan Remaja, 15 April 1994.

5 "Bermesra dengan Akmar," Utusan Remaja, 21 October 1994.

6 "9,232 Hari ke 2020, 45, 568 Kes Sosial," Utusan Malaysia, 21 September 1994.

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columnist and my Kuala Kangsar neighbors were not the only ones concerned about the state of Malaysian society. In a 1994 speech before the UMNO General Assembly, the Prime Minister himself noted that though Malay businessmen had now reached "world class," something new had appeared: "our family institutions are weak. Fathers and mothers are not able to control their children. Exposed to the conditions of city life with extraordinary freedom, many of our kids have been afflicted with social diseases like lepak, bohsia, and drug abuse."[7] The glory of Malaysia heading towards what the government terms full development meets the serial contagion of modernity. The public problems of city life referenced by the Prime Minister inflect the domestic space of the letters to Kak Akmar's column.

The ease with which politicians locate such social diseases in the cities suggests that they are a corollary of economic change. Like the foreign trade that has made parts of Malaysia prosperous, the social problems are imports from outside the country. Yet the loitering practices of Malay boys, referred to by the Prime Minister and popularly termed "lepak," and the reputed promiscuity of Malay girls, called "bohsia," reflect specifically Malaysian habits of youth association. The local terminology indexes their distinctly home-grown quality in contrast to social problems originating elsewhere. The unnerving visibility of Malay boys on street corners, and the suspect invisibility of Malay girls' sexual practices, make possible an extension of national concerns to fill the private realm of youth loneliness. The interest in lepak and bohsia under these conditions comes from the sense that youth practices might compromise Malaysia's future as a country that one day will have public life.

To define lepak loitering as a threat requires specifying the dangers that it presents. The struggle over lepak's definition reveals that Malay boys and young men risk waiting too long, by doing nothing they might in fact do anything. In January 1994 a five-month, multi-university, six thousand-informant study was undertaken to measure

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[7] "UMNO Pembela Maruah Bangsa," Utusan Malaysia, 19 November 1994.

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the frequency and implications of lepak among teenagers. The study's operational definition was that "a teenager lepaks if he gathers and remains in a public place without any special purpose other than chattering or laughing."[8] Its release in mid-1994, under the title The Loitering Activities in Teenage Circles met criticism that this definition was too general. The New Straits Times argued that "any act resembling that of hanging out is perceived in a negative light" and what is needed is a sharper definition that would

> encompass dimensions such as the frequency and duration of loafing, extent of nothingness in the doer's mind, productivity and opportunity costs, location, age group, the doer's intentions, the activities construed as loafing, the impact of the trend on society and whether it is done individually or as a group.[9]

The lepak as a doer of nothing caused anxiety among the Malaysian worrying strata: the study found many of those surveyed were also involved in drugs, smoking, viewing pornography, premarital sex, etc. The newspaper concluded "Have we exaggerated the lepak problem? Obviously not. Sociologists now say that lepak--once considered a lazy but harmless way of relaxing--can lead to immoral activities as well."[10] That lepak indeed might have a special purpose is proof positive that the media hand-wringing over the issue was not for nothing.

These indigenous qualities of lepak--lazy but conceivably harmless--differentiate it from the linked problem of bohsia. As a government youth official put it, "Boh-sia is a new virus stemming from the lepak problem which is out of control."[11] Lepak is a "problem," bohsia a "virus," one producing the other and infecting Malay youth. For bohsia, potential ambiguity resides in the very term of its description. The popular etymology of bohsia is from a Hokkien-dialect Chinese phrase meaning "no sound," specifically young women who consent to sexual encounters with young men without saying anything.[12] The no sound then refers to their lack of negotiation, the most

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[8] Samsudin A. Rahim, Tingkah Laku Lepak di Kalangan Remaja, Kementerian Belia dan Sukan Malaysia: Kuala Lumpur, 1994, page 24.

[9] "Getting to the Root of 'Lepak' Problem," New Straits Times, 21 June 1994.

[10] "Immoral Side to Lepak Culture," New Straits Times., 27 April 1994.

[11] "Johor Going Undercover to Tackle Boh-sia Woes," Star., 9 October 1994.

[12] "Teen Slang with Hokkien Origin," Star, 20 November 1994.

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scandalous facet of the arrangement. The Malay phrase sometimes used to explain bohsia is "seks percuma"--free sex, though not in the sense of many partners, but rather as in free-of-charge. Outside the bonds of courtship and marriage or the financial exchanges of prostitution, unreproductive bohsia/seks percuma seems out of the realm of understanding. The foreign terminology, some argue, perhaps masks its true nature, and one Malay politician sternly offered that "the Chinese terms of bohsia ... be replaced with [the Malay] sundal (slut)."[13] His hope was that "a strong term like this would deter youths from getting involved in such activities" (ibid.). The sense is that the girls do not know what they are doing, and that the correct term might fix for them bohsia's true hideous nature--that there should be no ambiguity, like lepak, within which bohsia might be acceptable.

The different iconography of lepak and bohsia also reveals the distinct but linked realms these social problems represent. Photographs of lepak in newspapers depict familiar scenes of boys standing on street corners or sitting in urban shopping areas. They wear casual clothes typical of the urban lower class, and their faces are visible to the camera. Bohsia girls, in contrast, are photographed for newspapers in mug shots, with black bars added across their eyes to prevent their identification. If group pictures are taken it is at night with backs turned to the camera to preserve anonymity. The studies meant to investigate the problems share similar differences. The lepak study, with six thousand informants, produced a book full of statistics profiling the average lepak youth. Bohsia girls emerge as biography, individual stories of family or school problems that led them into illicit relationships. The visible, aggregate quality of lepak boys contrasts with the hidden, individual depiction of bohsia girls. The lepak's public presence might obscure private pathologies, while the bohsia's domestic problems create improper social encounters.

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[13] "S'gor may Introduce Laws to Curb Loitering," Star, 6 December 1994.

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Similar to the bohsia virus emanating from the lepak problem, the two are related in the small towns. For boys I knew in Kuala Kangsar, there is a palpable sense that in hanging out in public they run the risk of police trouble. Nightly gatherings on the road side in 1994 included discussions of kids being picked up by the police for lepak. The claim that one will be arrested for hanging out, in fact, then developed as a kind of wry greeting among Malay boys: "loiterers get arrested!" [lepak kena tangkap!]. These modest forms of solidarity are less available for Malay girls. Loitering groups themselves maintain surveillance on the passing traffic, and catcalls of "bohsia" are applicable to any girl outside of the house, especially if she is thought worthy of suspicion by being alone or is somehow deemed dressed indiscreetly. The kind of unease boys feel outside under reputed police threat then doubles for passing girls. In Kuala Kangsar, a prime lepak place is near the bridge to Chandan Hill, a spot where many young women get off from factory buses at the end of their work shifts. The boys gathered around then hassle and flirt with the young women as they head home. Attempts by the local authorities to divert the boy's energy into sports and other activities were proposed, as was a youth curfew to curb promiscuity. When boys complain that they have nowhere to go, it is as if they are being identified inappropriately, expected to be inside the house like the targets of their taunts properly should be. These competing, conflicting schemes unfold within the profound changes of an industrial economy.

But Malaysia's rapid industrialization is of course not possible without the earlier shifts in social life that prepared people for it. In 1956, the year just prior to independence, Ahmady Asmara published a book entitled Boys and Girls in Danger.[14] Even with a foreword that ends "Merdeka!" the paperback is a lament about youth that does not envision independence bringing change, or any kind of politics at all. Ahmady depicts an interior world, and assumes a comfortable class position, an urban location, and great dangers for social mixing. No matter the title, boys drop out of the discussion

[14] Ahmady Asmara, Pemuda Pemudi dalam Bahaya, A. Radhuan: Penang, 1956.

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focused instead on girls. Ahmady considers that "girls active socially in the dangerous western manner" imperils continued Malay existence for "perhaps one day in the future the Malay people will lose their culture, including customs, refined etiquette, and also lose their religion" (Ahmady, 20) due to their socializing. For girls to be "sosyial" risks that Malays will become something else. Ahmady's prescription is to confine children to the house: "closely guarded, and those under watch must be made more diligent and dutiful toward their studies rather than their free time" (Ahmady, 28). Their parents have to take the responsibility of ensuring that their children remain Malay, since the great social changes are out of their hands. "If we look at today's youth we see a great difference with youth a quarter century earlier," Ahmady compares, and "all the more in the youth who will come a quarter century hence, we surely feel they will be tempted to be even more different" (Ahmady, 45). The century's grinding progress projects the home as the only safe place to remain Malay.

Ahmady Asmara says that western practices are the danger, but they are not necessarily enacted by westerners. Ahmady's vision of the future problems proves prescient in Abdul Aziz Hassan's 1968 novel, Uncle Ngah Returns, when socially active Malay girls prove unrecognizable.[15] Abdul Aziz writes of Hamzah, a man put into Taiping prison in 1948 for twenty years for murder and then let out, Rip Van Winkle-style, to return to the new world of post-independence Malaysia upon his release. Hamzah, referred to by his family as Uncle Ngah, finds the new country to be too "free" [bebas] to his prison-accustomed eyes. His most telling comment shows the nightmare of Boys and Girls in Danger come true, when Hamzah walks through Kuala Lumpur with his niece. He comments on the activities of some Chinese girls, but his niece corrects him:

'they're Malay, Uncle Ngah! Why are you ashamed to look at them?'

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[15] Abdul Aziz Hassan, Pak Ngah Balek, Timor Press: Kuantan, 1968.

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> 'Look at the tight pants they are wearing. Looking at their actions, their dress, the language they are using, I never would have guessed they are Malay,' said Hamzah with surprise.
> 'The times have changed, Uncle. Everything is free.' ...
> 'Independence ... before independence it was not like this. With independence it is as if everything is free to the point where there is no shame or shyness any more' grumbled Hamzah (Abdul Aziz, 52).

Only via the twenty-year gap of his imprisonment can Uncle Ngah see the difference of independence that is invisible to his niece. Though he cannot differentiate the girls' Malay qualities she still can, and it is in their discussion of his unease that they understand this difference. They need to remind each other how to measure the changes.

Uncle Ngah went to prison in Taiping in 1948, the Perak town with the Kamunting camp for political detainees. In 1948 the Federation of Malaya first enacted Emergency regulations to battle the communist rebels. Both the camp and the regulations, though modified with independence, still remain in place. The most famous Emergency regulation is the Internal Security Act (ISA), which provides for detention without trial without limit to anyone alleged to threaten national security.[16] The ISA is an intimate part of contemporary Malaysian life, since a wide range of well-known politicians, academics, journalists, and religious figures have been detained under its provisions. Some former detainees liken detention to education and release to graduation: as Al-Arqam's leader Ashaari termed it after his 1994 arrest, the experience of detention was like a "security university," and a similar phrase is used by the academic Kassim Ahmad in the title of his 1982 book about the ISA, The Second University.[17] Such ISA detention is sometimes depicted as a rite of passage for ambitious people who run afoul of the state's interests, and therefore ISA detentions do not necessarily destroy

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[16] For the 1960 provisions to the Act, see Awther Singh, Emergency Laws in Malaysia, Quins: Johore Bahru, 1981, part one; for histories of ISA use see Harold Crouch, Government and Society in Malaysia, Cornell University Press: Ithaca, pages 79-82, and Anne Munro-Kua, Authoritarian Populism in Malaysia, Macmillan Press: London, 1996, chapter 8.

[17] Kassim Ahmad, The Second University, Media Intelek: Petaling Jaya, 1983. Ashaari's quote is from "Ashaari Tells Ex-followers He is No Longer their Leader," New Straits Times, 30 October 1994. The newspaper reported, "During his brief 'university stint,' he was blessed with the opportunity to have frank and open discussions with the religious authorities and was able to study in depth the true teachings of Islam. 'Following these discussions and consultations, I have realised that I have committed two major errors related to the faith of the Muslims and the country's security.'"

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careers but sometimes serve to launch them.[18] A famous ex-detainee is Deputy Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim, the man groomed to be the country's next leader. He learned about rules while studying at the Malay College in the 1960s and was later held under the ISA in 1974 for his part in student protests about the exploitation of peasant farmers. "Graduated" from both institutions, his prospects look undiminished indeed.

These cases help integrate the ISA into everyday Malaysian life. Familiarity with the ISA is measured in how its punishments are imagined by many Malaysians in precise terms, not fantastic. Over an evening preparing for a wedding feast during the same period Ashaari was undergoing his interrogation, a group of middle-class men in Kuala Kangsar discussed what must be happening to him and his underlings: sleep deprivation, psychological tricks, exposure to extremes in temperature, and isolation, all of which could have come from any ISA account. The notion that Ashaari might confess to his alleged wrongs without such duress brought only derisive laughter from the group. The specificity and perhaps even modesty of the state's presumed tools of coercion marks state tolerance--given this power the state need not be more abusive of its targets.

The most flagrant violations of human rights have not been characteristic of the Malaysian state (especially in comparison with the techniques of neighboring regimes). Yet it is between what it could do and what it does that the state holds its power.[19] The Emergency helped deliver the institutional structure of the independent state, and its regulations offer the extra-constitutional source of power from which the regime counters its threats. It is not that the ISA continues the counter-insurgency methods of the Emergency, but is rather an opposite strategy: the ISA works to remind people that the violence of the Emergency once worked. Malaysian leaders are quite honest that the ISA

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[18] The detention narrative itself is a growing part of Malaysian political literature: including Abdul Aziz Ishak, Special Guest: The Detention in Malaysia of an Ex-Cabinet Minister, Oxford University Press: Singapore, 1977; Kua Kia Soong, 445 Days Behind the Wire, Resource and Research Centre, Chinese Assembley Hall: Kuala Lumpur, 1989; and Syed Husin Ali, Two Faces: Detention Without Trial, Insan: Kuala Lumpur, 1996.

[19] For a careful analysis of hierarchy and tolerance in Indonesia, see Saya Shiraishi, Young Heroes: The Indonesian Family in Politics, Southeast Asia Program: Ithaca, 1997, chapter five.

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cannot be relinquished, for it legally goes beyond the constitution to be certain that there is a place for challenges to its authority.[20] Those whom trial law might prove unable to address may be legally imprisoned under the ISA indefinitely. The ISA assures the Malaysian executive of being able to reach as far as need be, always within the provisions of the post-Emergency constitution.

For all the changes that 2020 promises, the end of the ISA is not one of them, a colonial inheritance that predates Malaysia itself.[21] But the Emergency regulations, like the sensitive issues, are unlike the popular concerns over bohsia and lepak that focus arguments about how Malays might live in the Malaysian future. In most ISA narratives, the detainees recount at length how they were taken from their homes at night by the police. The arrests are not generally on street corners or at political protests, but the very place Malaysian families are supposed to be. As the President of the Malaysian Council for Child Welfare put it, "all it takes is 20 minutes of quality time with your children each day and that will get rid of bohsia and lepak tendencies among our youth" adding rather ominously that the "10 to 20 minutes each day will save our future generation from going to ruin."[22] Only proper management of the home can guarantee a future that is not determined by time at school or at work. The kids themselves told the lepak researchers their recognition of the problems, and the Loitering Activities in Teenage Circles report concludes

> in general teenagers have an awareness about their current situation. Their comments that teenagers like to waste time, like to follow trends, are rude, easily influenced, don't have aspirations, don't think about the future, need guidance, are too free, and need advice, show that teens are sensitive about what has been said about them by others. Teens might want to 'exit' from these negative opinions but they are short of information, knowledge, and the guidance to do it.[23]

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[20] See for example, "Negara Masih Perlu ISA: PM," Berita Harian, 6 February 1996.

[21] For an analysis of the expansion of the late-colonial state, see Timothy Harper, The Colonial Inheritance: State and Society in Malaysia 1945-1957, Ph.D. Thesis, Cambridge University, 1991.

[22] "20 Minutes is All it Takes, Says Zaleha," Star, 2 October 1994.

[23] Samsudin A. Rahim, Tingkah Laku Lepak di Kalangan Remaja, Kementerian Belia dan Sukan Malaysia: Kuala Lumpur, 1994, page 13.

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Loitering youth know that their activities are suspicious and that their interests are wrong. They told the researchers, like some of them in Kuala Kangsar told me, that they have no where to go. Rather than a critique of public life in Malaysia, public strategy turns to sealing off domestic space from the outside, an outside temptingly over sexual and languorously under active. The concerns about their leisure activities outside the house prepares youth for an adult life of possible suspicion even in their homes.

The past provides little company with which to face the lonely future. Returning to Teen Messenger, the kids looking for friendship write to Kak Akmar. They send their pictures that they might see themselves, and imagine themselves to be seen by others. A girl named Amy writes that she is "looking for friends to fill the empty time,"[24] and a boy Hassan adds that "compared with sitting alone in my room, it is better for me to look for acquaintances. I want to meet anyone."[25] Their loneliness lacks specificity. The kids feel alone in not being watched, and sense they face a problem. In reply to a certain Azura's letter, Kak Akmar writes "this sickness of loneliness is dangerous ... if you don't cure it you will end up mentally disturbed. Surely many readers of this space are willing to entertain your lonely heart."[26] In Malaysia, friendship columns in Malay newspapers expanded in the 1950s with increased literacy and the militarization of the society to fight the communist rebellion, when large numbers of Malay men involved in counter-insurgency left their homes for police and military bases.[27] Kak Akmar's new recruits develop this kind of sociability, and present their pictures and messages of gentle longing before a newspaper public. Even, or especially, alone in their rooms Malay youth need not be solitary, need not be on street corners or in illicit trysts, waiting for the fulfillment of the future.

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[24] "Bermesra dengan Akmar," Utusan Remaja, 1 July 1994.
[25] "Bermesra dengan Akmar," Utusan Remaja, 17 June 1994.
[26] "Bermesra dengan Akmar," Utusan Remaja, 15 July 1994.
[27] See for example "Sahabat Hiburan," Hiburan, 15 May 1954, and on.

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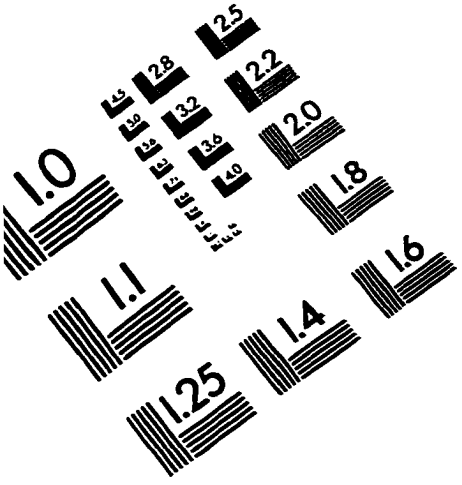
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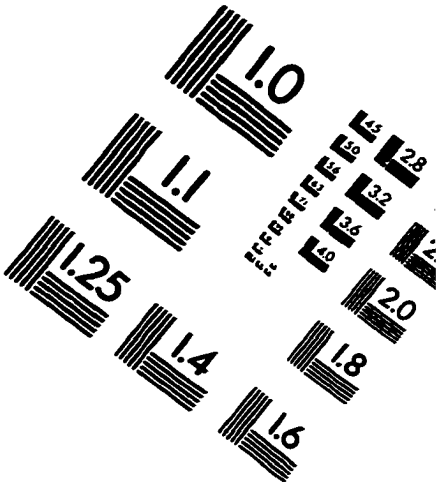
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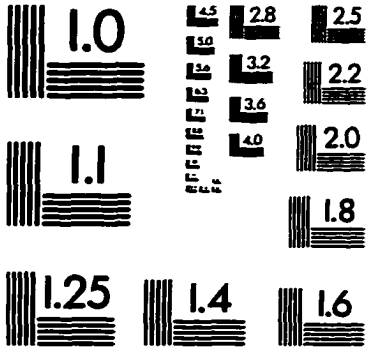
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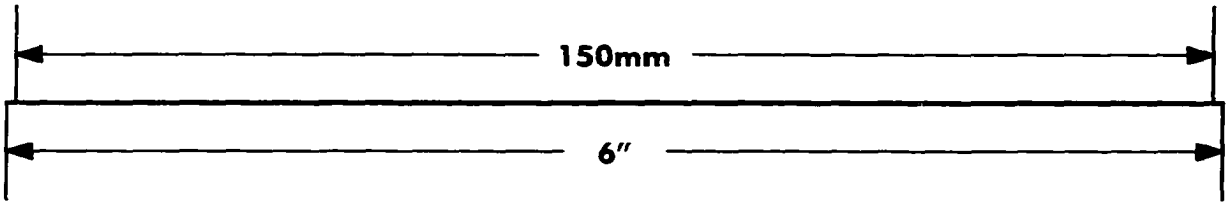
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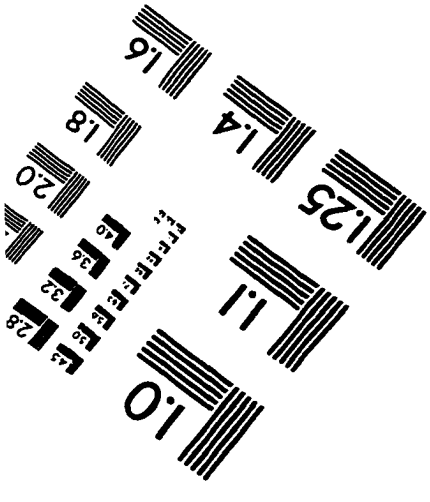
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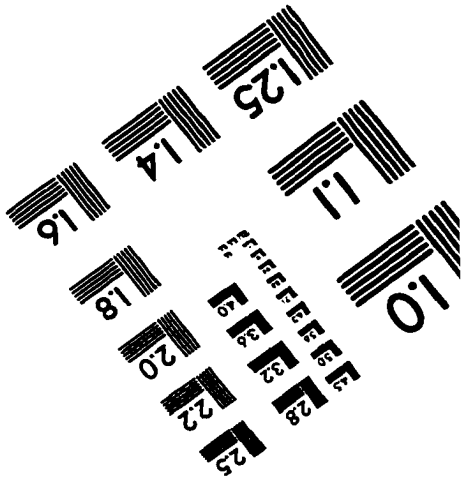












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